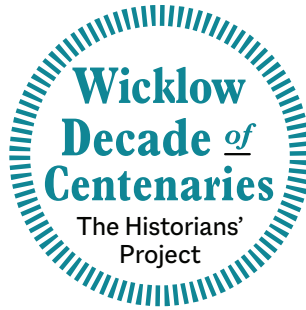


Wicklow

AND THE

War *of* Independence





Wicklow and the War of Independence

First published in 2021 by Wicklow County Council
County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town A67 FW96

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Design: aworthycause.net

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ISBN 978-0-9533904-9-6

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She has published essays on local and family history in vols. I and II of *Greystones: its buildings and history*, *Journal of the West Wicklow Historical Society*, *Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society Journal*, *Bulletin of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland*, *Journal of the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society*, *Federation of Local Historical Societies Journal*, and *Offaly Heritage*, as well as on www.countywicklowheritage.org. She is currently chairperson of Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society.



John Finlay is a founding member and long-standing chairman of the Wicklow Historical Society. A well-known local historian, he is author of many articles on local history and of *Footsteps through Wicklow's Past* (2013), a book that tracks the evolution of his native town from the first settlers to the end of the Civil War.

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John Goodman is a long-standing committee member of the Wicklow Historical Society and has published several articles in its annual journal. He researched and appeared in the 2014 RTÉ documentary, 'My Father's War', which documented the experience of broadcaster Gay Byrne's father in the First World War. He is a regular speaker for the Western Front Association and is chairman of Leinster Regiment Ireland. He is the Co. Wicklow representative for the Council of Irish Genealogy Organisations and has spoken at the UCC Genealogy Summer Schools on researching First World War soldiers. He has also given several talks for Wicklow and Wexford Library Services on the Irish experience of the First World War.

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Brian White has written extensively on the history of Bray and Enniskerry. His books include *County Wicklow Database 432-2006*; *The way to Bray: 150 years of the Railway*; and *The Little Book of Bray & Enniskerry*. He has appeared on television and radio interviews for RTÉ, the BBC and French station TV5, and he has contributed articles to Bray Cualann Historical Society, national and local newspapers and the Wicklow Heritage website hosted by Wicklow County Council.

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Jim Rees has been researching the town and environs of Arklow for the past forty years. He has published nine books and hundreds of articles for historical journals and general magazines. He has a first-class MA in Local History Studies from NUI Maynooth and is currently working with the Royal Irish Academy on compiling the *Irish Historic Towns Atlas*.

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Brendan Flynn is a retired secondary school teacher who served in An Forsa Cosanta Áitiúil for 38 years. He comes from a family with a long military tradition and has a keen interest in the military history of Wicklow. He has lectured and published widely on the theme. He was actively involved in the County Wicklow 1798 Bicentennial Committee, and he worked with the Wicklow County Committee and Woodenbridge Development Association to create the beautiful County Wicklow Great War Memorial in Woodenbridge.

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Men of the Royal Irish Constabulary,
1920. Photo: © IWM Q 71728

Foreword

The **Wicklow Decade of Centenaries Programme** supports the development of initiatives at county and community level to re-examine and commemorate significant events, individuals and groups during the revolutionary years (1912–23) in County Wicklow. I believe that as part of this project, this publication, which is focused on Wicklow’s experience of the War of Independence (1919–21), contributes to this goal by combining local stories and experiences with local research and scholarship via access to local archives. In doing so, it promotes a greater understanding of historical events and their legacies and thus encourages communities toward further exploration and reflection. It is a tangible demonstration of the benefits of free public access to authentic local archival sources, including online access to digitised local archives such as those available on the Wicklow County Council website **www.wicklow.ie**.

It is fitting that the Wicklow County Archives Service is honouring the work of County Wicklow’s historians in this way—historians who serve their communities by documenting our county’s history and heritage for generations to come. In his ‘Machnamh 100’ address, President Michael D. Higgins challenged us to ‘engage with our shared past in a manner that is honest, authentic and inclusive, and as might assist a healing of conflicts that cannot be forgotten.’ The contributors to this volume have risen to that challenge with stories of revolutionary Wicklow that are comprehensive, balanced and inclusive.

Frank Curran

Chief Executive

Wicklow County Council

April 2021



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



Supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023 initiative and Wicklow County Archives, Wicklow County Council



Map of southeast Ireland, Johnston, 1920. Alamy Stock Photo

ARKLOW - Jim Rees

Preparing for war: 1918–19

In April, May or June, 1918, John Broy, who was the quartermaster of the Kynoch's munitions factory in Arklow, told his captain, Matt Kavanagh, that he had a brother Éamon (Ned) in the Dublin Metropolitan Police, who was posted in Dublin Castle and was willing to give information if he could be put in touch with 'the right person'. As Kavanagh had no contact with GHQ at that time, he handed the message to Micheál Staines who, in turn, transmitted it to headquarters.

In April 1918, conscription was extended to Ireland. This caused a backlash of anti-British sentiment throughout the country. Within days, 200,000 people had signed a pledge against it. Anti-conscription meetings were held throughout County Wicklow and, as a result, membership of the Irish Volunteers swelled.¹ Arklow was no exception to the general disquiet, although anyone working in Kynoch's was exempt from conscription as each employee had been issued with a card declaring their work to be of value to the war effort.²

Conscription gave the republican movement the boost it so badly needed. An incident in Arklow recalled by Matt Kavanagh indicated the mood of the people:

Sometime in either June or July 1918, two special constables, who were guarding Kynoch's munitions works, were arrested, through mistake, by the RIC for carrying firearms. These men were from Wexford and local people, equally mistaken, believed that they were IRA volunteers. A hostile crowd formed to attempt to rescue them, stoning the police. A baton charge was ordered, as a result of which eight members of the local company were arrested.³



Matt Kavanagh (1895–1973), Arklow Company Captain, later Commandant of the IRA East Wicklow Brigade .
Photo: Courtesy of Jim Rees

These eight men were tried before a special criminal court, one of the first such courts set up in the country. Kavanagh, working with M. J. Dwyer, a solicitor practising in Arklow and later County Wicklow Registrar, briefed Cecil Lavery, who defended the eight men without remuneration (Lavery later became a judge of the Supreme Court from 1950 to 1966), that GHQ had issued instructions that the men were to recognise the court. Two men were sentenced to two months in jail, and the other six were acquitted. One of those convicted was not a member of the IRA.

Gathering arms

Matt Kavanagh wasn't happy with the fact that his Arklow company had no access to small firearms, a situation he discussed with Seán McGrath. McGrath, who was secretary of the Self-Determination League in Great Britain, was married to Annie Redmond from Arklow. Because of that family connection, McGrath spent his annual leave in the town. He told Kavanagh that he could supply revolvers if arrangements could be made to have them collected in Liverpool. Kavanagh placed an order for £50 worth, which would pay for ten revolvers and 500 rounds of ammunition. The drop was to be made at an address near Edgehill railway station in Liverpool. Kavanagh decided to collect the weapons himself. When he got there, however, he was informed that they had already been collected for GHQ in Dublin.

This was a great disappointment to Kavanagh, but worse was to follow. Very soon after Kavanagh's arrival home, Tom Cullen, often described as Michael Collins's bodyguard, and who would later hold the rank of Major General in the Free State army, arrived in Arklow and ordered Kavanagh to accompany him to Dublin immediately. Their destination was Cullenswood House on Oakley Road in Ranelagh, where Kavanagh met Collins for the first time.

Collins started off with a terrible harangue and abused me at a frightful rate for daring to interfere by tapping a Headquarters source of supply for arms. Micheál Staines, who was present during this interview, said something on my behalf, whereupon Collins appears to have changed his views towards me. He shook hands with me and congratulated me for trying to secure arms. He said that there were some people trying to avoid getting them. He agreed to give me six revolvers for cash and three hundred rounds of ammunition. They were not the type of revolver I was actually

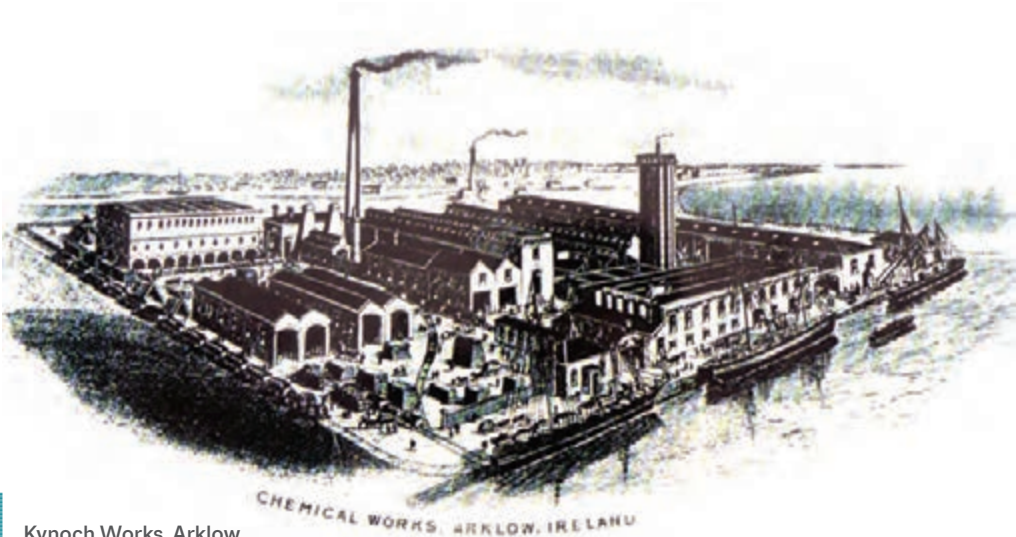


Cullenswood House, Ranelagh, Dublin, where Matt Kavanagh met Michael Collins. Aftermath of destruction by Auxiliaries, March 1921. Photo: Courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland.

looking for, but a .38 revolver made by Harrington and Richardson of America. I got these just before the general elections in 1918.⁴

Collins's remark about 'people trying to avoid getting guns' might have referred to an incident in Bray in which nine out of ten rifles sent to there were returned to HQ.⁵ Despite winning Collins's approval, Kavanagh and most, if not all, Wicklow Volunteer officers were outside the inner circle of the republican leadership in 1918. Kavanagh admitted that he didn't even know where GHQ was, as he was not 'sufficiently well known in the movement to be told.'

This was a situation he wanted to change. He went to the Sinn Féin offices at 6 Harcourt Street in Dublin to try to make contact with someone in GHQ. It was suggested that he write to Seán McGrath, which he duly did, using the Harcourt Street address to add legitimacy to the letter. By a quirk of fate, McGrath was arrested in England on the platform of Rugby railway station



Kynoch Works, Arklow.

a few days later and among the items in his possession was Kavanagh's signed letter. McGrath's subsequent trial was something of a cause célèbre. Implicated with him was a man called Burrowes, manager of the Midland Gun Company, who was also arrested. Both were charged with exporting arms to Ireland. They pleaded that the arms were for the Ulster Volunteers. Burrowes received a sentence of six months' imprisonment, and McGrath got twelve months. Kavanagh seems to have escaped implication through the letter, but from then on he had close contact with GHQ, being named as one of the principal organisers in the south Wicklow and north Wexford region.⁶

The war in Europe ended on 11 November 1918 and the first general election to be held since 1910 got under way in December. As elsewhere, County Wicklow Volunteers acted as personation agents at polling booths, helping to ensure the enthusiastic return of the two Sinn Féin candidates, Seán Etchingham and Robert Barton. Barton was arrested two months later.

Kynoch's closure announced

In early 1919, Kynoch's re-announced its intention to close the Arklow factory. Earlier indications of closure had been made with notices issued to employees in March 1918, but negotiations had won something of a temporary reprieve. With the need for munitions now back to peace-time levels, the company was no longer viable. It had lost its commercial explosives markets and there was no option but to close the factory. Or so it was claimed. There was an outcry from those who felt the town deserved better because it had contributed greatly to the war effort. The reality was that there was another underlying reason behind the

closure: the rise of militant nationalism, especially in the wake of the landslide election of Sinn Féin in December and the sitting of the First Dáil in January. Local pressure, however, did wrest one concession: the closure would be phased over two years.⁷

Just as the introduction of conscription to Ireland in April 1918 had acted as a recruitment campaign for the newly formed IRA, the end of World War One saw many of those new recruits fall away. A further major blow to republicans in the south Wicklow area was the arrest in March 1919 of Jim O’Keeffe, OC of the 5th Battalion. O’Keeffe never returned to his post, and the Brigade OC, Séamus O’Brien, carried out O’Keeffe’s duties as well as his own, until Jack Holt was appointed Acting OC.⁸

Boycott of RIC

In early 1919, the Dáil introduced a strategy that had worked well in the 1880s – a boycott of RIC personnel and anyone who had dealings with them. This, it was hoped, would put sufficient pressure on RIC members and their families to affect morale and even reduce numbers. Nationwide, resignations from the force increased and recruitment fell. In Wicklow, things were so quiet that it was deemed safe enough to close rural barracks so that personnel could be transferred to more potentially dangerous locations around the country.⁹

Raids for arms

The Arklow company continued to carry out raids for arms on private houses, netting about thirty shotguns and some old revolvers. One of the best weapons to come into their possession was a British army issue .45 Webley revolver which was lifted from the coat of an army officer at Woodenbridge Golf Club¹⁰ and used to keep the sentries quiet in an arms raid on Kynoch’s soon afterward. Three Lee Enfield rifles and 150 rounds of ammunition were taken. Matt Kavanagh and his men must have been pleased with this success, but once again GHQ burst his bubble. The raid was reported in the local paper and came to the notice of GHQ, which demanded that the rifles and ammunition be handed over, presumably for redistribution to a more active company.

The rest of 1919 was quiet in Arklow; the following year, however, saw an increased level of action by the local company.

Notes

- 1 Christopher M. Byrne, who in 1914 had taken it upon himself to organise the first County Wicklow Irish Volunteer companies, remained active in the intervening years. He was organising Volunteers again in 1917, and as a Rathdrum Poor Law Guardian, he made his strong Sinn Féin leanings known wherever and whenever possible. At a meeting of the Rathdrum Board of Guardians in October 1918, he gave notice that at their next meeting he would propose that 'the pictures of the English monarchs hanging in Ashford dispensary be immediately removed.' While not exactly a declaration of war, it is indicative of the feelings running in the county. (Wicklow County Council Archives, Rathdrum Board of Guardian Minutes, 20 Oct 1918, quoted in Brian Donnelly, *For the betterment of the people* (Wicklow, 1999), 35-36).
- 2 One such card was exhibited in Arklow Maritime Museum until recent years.
- 3 Matthew Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 4.
- 4 Matthew Kavanagh, BMH, WS 1472, 3.
- 5 Henry Cairns and Owen Gallagher, *Aspects of the War of Independence and Civil War in Wicklow 1913-1923* (Bray, 2009), 3. 3. Why these rifles were returned is unclear. A public collection in Bray had raised £38, which was given to HQ. In return, ten rifles were sent out. A committee meeting was called to discuss how to distribute the weapons, but it was decided that they should be returned to HQ and a refund requested.
- 6 Frank Henderson, BMH.WS821, 84 and 94.
- 7 Jim Rees, *Split personalities, Arklow 1885-1892* (Arklow, 2012).
- 8 Cairns & Gallagher, 14. Also, Matthew Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 5.
- 9 Cairns & Gallagher, 17.
- 10 Matthew Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 11.

ARKLOW - Jim Rees

The war escalates: January to June 1920

The final days of 1919 and the early days of 1920 saw some significant developments in republican politics in Arklow. Matt Kavanagh was promoted from Company Captain in Arklow to Brigade Adjutant. The exact date of the promotion and therefore its place in the sequence of events is in some doubt. Meanwhile, Jack Holt, who had been Acting OC of the 5th Battalion since Jim O’Keeffe’s arrest the previous year, was confirmed in that position.¹

Ireland’s first female council chairperson

On 15 January, Sinn Féin member and former member of Cumann na mBan, Maria Curran became one of the first women urban councillors in the country and her appointment to the chair of Arklow Urban District Council made her the first female council chairperson in Ireland.² She was also Matt Kavanagh’s aunt. Her appointment not only reflects her strength of character and the respect with which she was regarded by her fellow councillors, but also the republican politics that had now taken hold in the council, a fact confirmed by a council resolution passed on 19 March, 1920.

[That this Council] hereby acknowledge the authority of Dáil Éireann as the duly elected Government of the Irish People, and undertake to give effect to all decrees duly promulgated by the said Dáil Éireann in so far as same affect this Council, and direct that copies of this Resolution be forwarded to the Republican Minister for Foreign Affairs for transmission to the Governments of Europe and to the President and Chairman of the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America.



Maria Curran, one of the first female urban councillors in the country, elected in 1920.

Photo: Arklow Maritime Museum

Sinn Féin's establishment of the Dáil the previous year had not, of course, been recognised by the British government. Under British law, it was a unilateral declaration of independence—an act of treason. Arklow UDC's resolution was therefore also treasonous. As agents of the British government, the RIC regularly demanded the minute books of the council, either hoping to find statements for which councillors could be charged with sedition, or simply to impede in the council's workings. To thwart such inspection, on at least one occasion, Maria Curran hid the book in the chapel belfry across the road.

Munitions factory raid

February saw several events on the military front. Joe Kelly was both the intelligence officer in the Arklow company and an employee of Kynoch's, which was in a two-year phased process of closure. He informed his company captain that a quantity of gelignite was due to be shipped out. Matt Kavanagh, who was still either Arklow Company Captain at that time or was newly promoted to Brigade Adjutant, lost no time in assembling other members to carry out a raid. Kavanagh selected ten volunteers—Joe Kelly, Mickey Greene, Jack Holt, William Cleary, Myles Cullen, Bob Hickson, Laurence White,³ John Kavanagh, Andy Holt and James Dolan—to carry out the raid on 5 February, with himself in charge. The explosives were in the process of being loaded on to the *Dandelion* for shipment to Kynoch's factory in England. The raid was made all the more dangerous by the fact that some of the material was in 'an unfinished state'.

We held up the sentry and seized his rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition. We captured two and a half tons of gelignite made up in half-cwt. boxes and got successfully away with it. None of it was re-captured although the town and beach were raked for it night and day. On instructions from GHQ the major portion of the gelignite was sent on to Dublin by rail in suit cases, per Tom Gaffney who was a guard on the railway. A quantity of it was handed over to Mick Newport for the North Wexford Brigade. We also had to send the rifle and ammunition to Dublin. Later, some of the gelignite was used to destroy Aughrim and Redcross RIC Barracks which had been vacated.⁴

Andrew Kavanagh was part of the follow up efforts to distribute the stolen gelignite. He had joined the Arklow Company in 1917 at the age of 16, but had



John Kavanagh.
Photo: Courtesy of
Jim Rees.



Kynoch's munitions
factory extended
for over a mile along
North Beach, c. 1900.
Photo: Courtesy of
Jim Rees

left the town to work in Newbridge and Nenagh, returning in 1919, where he was active again until moving to Liverpool in January 1920. He spent six months there before returning home in June 1920.

When I came back I took part in operations for the purpose of getting this gelignite into the hands of Dublin IRA. It had to be raised from the dump and, because of it having become frozen, it was doubly dangerous. We packed it in fish boxes camouflaged with fish on top and put it in charge of the guard on the mail train who conveyed it to Dublin, to our headquarters, where it was diverted to different parts of Ireland. I understand it turned out to be very useful. The guard on the train was Ted Crowley; he lived at Barton Street, Tinahely.⁵

This raid was a valuable contribution to the military capability of the IRA, but it was also a great propaganda coup, given the heavy security around Arklow in general, and the Kynoch factory in particular. Any euphoria felt by Matt Kavanagh's volunteers, however, was short-lived. There was a constant threat of informers and the presence in Arklow of 'a lot of ex-RIC, ex-servicemen, ex-officers, naval and military and their families [was] a source of worry...'⁶

Shooting in Rathdrum

Exactly one week later, on 12 February,⁷ Brigade OC Seamus O'Brien was shot dead in Rathdrum by members of the RIC. Details of the event are disputed, with republican accounts and RIC versions being diametrically opposed.⁸ One thing both sides agreed on was that O'Brien's revolver proved ineffective. This weapon had been loaned to him by Matt Kavanagh and was probably one of the Harrington & Richardson .38s that Michael Collins had given Kavanagh in 1918, and about which Kavanagh had reservations (See p. 12).⁹

Whatever the truth of the killing, the brigade was now left without an OC. In response, GHQ told Matt Kavanagh to call a brigade council meeting in Avoca at which the delegates from the various companies were informed that major changes in the structure of the region were to be implemented. The most important of these was that the old 4th (north county) and 5th (south county) Battalions were to be amalgamated as the East Wicklow Brigade, with Matthew Kavanagh as OC. Tom Quigley was to be his adjutant.

Black and Tans arrive

The nationwide boycott against RIC personnel and their families resulted in decreased numbers within their ranks. To counteract this, advertisements appeared in British newspapers offering high wages to new recruits. Ten shillings a day was too good to resist, especially for out-of-work, battle-hardened, ex-army personnel. By October, there were 2,000 of these individuals who, because of a shortage of full uniforms, wore a mix of the RIC uniform and that of the British army. This hybrid garb gave rise to the name Black-and-Tans. In addition, ex-British officers were attracted by £1 a day to join another new force, the Auxiliaries. The Black-and-Tans and the Auxiliaries were subject to neither military regulation nor law of the land. It was their role to terrorise the populace into withdrawing their support of the IRA. Although these new forces were mainly despatched to the most troubled areas, such as Tipperary and Cork, they were soon to be found in every part of the country, and they quickly established a reputation as an undisciplined gang of ruffians who, though efficient in military engagement, excelled best at terrorising the defenceless. One local story, preserved in an audio recording made in 1987-88, is indicative of the reputation for menace and drunken indiscipline that followed the Black and Tans:

A young woman was returning home from her place of work. Because of the time of year it was dark though not particularly late as she made her way up the Rock road. As she neared the house occupied by the Kavanagh family, she heard and saw a lorry load of Black-and-Tans. Because of reports of their activities filling the countryside, she looked for cover.

She jumped in behind the ditch and waited until they had gone down the road a bit. They were that drunk in the lorry they started shooting the cattle below at Chapman's. They were up on top of the Rock. They thought they [the cattle] were men. She waited behind the ditch and listened to what was going on until they had finished. Then she crept along the ditch until she got in home.¹⁰



Remains of Dillon's Cross meat market, Cork, after Black and Tan attack, December 1920.
© IWM Q 107756

A hero's welcome

Republican prisoners in Mountjoy staged a mass hunger strike in the spring of 1920 to demand recognition as political prisoners. Their demands were ignored. Across the country, protest marches and work stoppages were called and widely observed. Charlie Gaule was the secretary of the Transport & General Workers' Union in Arklow; he was also a member of the Urban District Council. In April, he called on local workers to down tools and join in the national protests. It proved very successful, with business in the town being brought to a standstill. The *Wicklow People* praised the selfless action of those willing to forego a day's wage in order to show solidarity with the hunger strikers. Nationwide pressure prompted the government to release the sixty-nine strikers, one of whom was Andrew Holt from Ferrybank, Arklow. When news of his impending release became known in late April, plans were immediately set in place to give him a hero's welcome.

When his train pulled into the station at 7.30 p.m., he was greeted by a crowd estimated at between two- and three thousand people. Amid the cheers, a brass band struck up and led a procession from the station to Parade Ground, then to Main Street and across the bridge to Ferrybank. In Main Street, however, they came across a military motor wagon carrying several armed soldiers. Some of the women and girls in the huge crowd started cat-calling the soldiers, but they decided not to react and when the procession had passed, they drove towards the station where they transacted their business before heading back down Main Street and crossing the bridge to return to their camp. By the time they reached Bridge Street, however, they again came on the procession and again they received some verbal abuse from the women and girls. Tempers were rising, and one of the soldiers told the driver to drive through the crowd. This led to some of the men in the crowd getting involved and soon several clusters of fist-fights were under way. No one was badly injured and the soldiers climbed back into the wagon. The matter seemed at an end. However, about an hour and a half later, some soldiers, fuelled by alcohol, climbed over the perimeter fence of their temporary barrack and headed back towards the centre of town.

'Drop and fire'

By now it was almost ten o'clock and the large crowd had dwindled to pockets of people chatting. A small group of men was at the corner of Bridge Street and Main Street. A couple of RIC personnel strolled down the street and, as they turned into Bridge Street, they saw the disgruntled soldiers coming across the bridge and

their attitude left little room for doubt that they were looking for trouble. The RIC officers advised the men to get home quickly, but as they were about to leave, the sergeant in charge of the soldiers ordered his men to ‘drop and fire’. Shots rang out. A bullet tore through one of the policeman’s uniform but did not hit flesh. Philip Dowling was shot through the lung and died within minutes. John Kavanagh, a grand-nephew of Maria Curran and nephew of Matt Kavanagh, was severely wounded through the shoulder.

There was an outcry, with both sides predictably giving very different accounts. The *Wicklow People* published the nationalist interpretation of events while the *Wicklow News-Letter* supported the British army version.¹¹ The former wrote of how ‘the people themselves did not give sufficient cause for the use of the death-dealing weapons’, while the latter would later refer to Dowling being ‘shot in a riot’.¹² It was a sad affair that greatly marred the celebrations to welcome Andrew Holt’s return from prison. It was also an incident which shows how confused allegiances could be at that time. Philip Dowling’s father was an ex-RIC sergeant and his brother Michael was also an RIC man who was killed in an ambush in Keadue, County Roscommon, eleven months later. The local RIC sent a wreath to Philip Dowling’s funeral. Within a week of Michael’s death, ex-Sergeant Joseph Dowling would lose a third son in a year when Joseph junior died in New York, a victim of the flu epidemic there.

The official verdict of the coroner’s court was that the army had fired ‘without justification.’ Although Sergeant Blain of the Lancashire regiment was named as the man who gave the order to ‘drop and fire’, nothing was done to bring him to justice.

Local elections

Local elections were held on 1 June, and Sinn Féin won eleven of the twelve seats on the county council; Lord Powerscourt won the single unionist seat. Some of the Sinn Féin candidates were in jail, including Robert Barton of Glendalough House. His incarceration was condemned by his council colleagues and he was elected to the chair in his absence. Christopher M. Byrne was also absent – he was on the run. A tricolour was produced and draped across the council table. Felix O’Rafferty from Arklow was one of the eleven Sinn Féin councillors who could take their seats. He was a forty year old publican with a premises at 34 Lower Main Street.¹³ His brother Joe was also a publican who had a separate pub in Main Street, the back bedroom of which was used as the GHQ of the Arklow Company.¹⁴

Notes

- 1 Matthew Kavanagh, BMH, WS 1472, 11.
- 2 Dolores Tyrrell, 'Maria Curran, Pioneer Woman Councillor' in *AHSJ* 1987, 10-12
- 3 Sometimes spelt with a 'y'.
- 4 Matthew Kavanagh, BMH, WS 1472, 12-13.
- 5 Andrew Kavanagh, BMH, WS 1471, 2.
- 6 Andrew Kavanagh, BMH, WS 1471, 2.
- 7 Matt Kavanagh recalls this as 11 February.
- 8 Henry Cairns and Owen Gallagher, *Aspects of the War of Independence and Civil War in Wicklow 1913-1923* (Bray, 2009), 19.
- 9 Matthew Kavanagh, BMH, WS 1472, 3
- 10 This account was given to me in the late 1980s on the condition that the source remain anonymous.
- 11 *Wicklow People*, 1 May 1920 and 8 May 1920; *Wicklow News-Letter*, same dates.
- 12 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 26 Mar 1921.
- 13 Census of Ireland, 1911. This is now 'Kenny's of the Harbour' pub.
- 14 *Arklow, the official guide* (Cheltenham, 1927), 31, advertisement for 'Central Hotel'. Evidence given at Matt Kavanagh's court martial states 'the pub of Joe O'Rafferty, Main Street' as the place of arrest and therefore the Arklow company HQ. This now The Old House.

ARKLOW - Jim Rees

'Whole time engaged': July to December 1920



Arklow RIC barracks, directly opposite the Catholic Church . Photo: Courtesy of Jim Rees

By mid-1920, there were about eighty RIC men in the barracks on Parade Ground and 'half a company' of the Sussex Regiment in a temporary military barracks.¹ Despite this presence, the IRA companies in the Arklow area continued to be active, destroying abandoned barracks at Aughrim and Redcross and burning huts used by British soldiers in and around the Kynoch complex. In July, five such huts were heavily doused in petrol and set alight. They had been used by members of the Cheshire Regiment, which had been transferred out a few days before. Now, only one of the huts was available for use by the incoming Royal Engineers. Bray man David Frame had bought the complex from Kynoch's in November 1919 and he brought a claim for malicious damage for the amount of £5,000. He was awarded £3,000.²

Andrew Kavanagh from Ferrybank joined the Arklow company in 1917, while still only sixteen.³ He left Arklow a few months later to work in Newbridge, County Kildare and later in Nenagh. He returned in 1919, more mature and eager to take on greater responsibility. In late autumn 1920, Tom Quigley ceased to be Brigade Adjutant and Andrew Kavanagh was appointed as his replacement.

This meant that by the end of 1920, the two main positions in East Wicklow, Brigade OC and Brigade Adjutant, were both held by Arklow men.⁴

Four attacks on Arklow Barracks

Since his return Andrew Kavanagh was, in his own words,



British army photograph of bombs used by the IRA 1920-1921. Photo: IWM Q 107748

... [the] *whole time engaged on Volunteer work going with despatches to the Captains of the various Companies in the battalion and also acting as courier to a guard on the railway who brought despatches to and from G.H.Q. He was on the Shillelagh line and did not come to Arklow at all. I was constantly engaged on that. During a raid on Avoca Manor House, we captured some obsolete revolvers and a small keg of blasting powder which we seized and dumped nearby. We arrived home early in the morning. Next day we returned and commandeered a car at the Valley Hotel. The driver, Mr. Jackson, Carlow, drove us back into town with our booty, the keg of blasting powder which we [had] dumped.*⁵

There were four attacks on Arklow barracks during 1920. The barracks had been built in around 1720, was well positioned in the centre of the town, contained a large contingent of police and soldiers and stood well back from its twelve-foot-high perimeter wall. An open attack would have been suicide. Instead, the IRA opted to throw pipe bombs over the wall. These were made by Matt Kavanagh from short lengths of rainwater pipes and metal boxes taken off cart wheels. Gelignite, unwillingly supplied by Kynoch's, was stuffed into these and the ends sealed with wooden plugs, through one of which a small hole was drilled for a fuse. The barracks stood directly across from the Catholic church. Strategically, although it meant danger to the general public, it was decided that attacks should be launched when there were a lot of people milling about. In that way, the attackers could blend in with the crowd rather than having to make their escape across open ground.

The time selected for these minor attacks was when the people were coming out from Sunday evening devotions. On the occasion of the first attack we used a cart wheel box bomb. The man who was selected, especially because of his height to throw it, was Myles Cullen, Captain of the Arklow Company. He had previously practised throwing stones of similar weight. When Cullen threw the bomb it struck the top of the wall and came back among the congregation. Cullen had to take it with the fuse still burning and throw it again. We came to the conclusion that a wheel box bomb was too heavy for throwing any height or distance and discontinued making them. We then concentrated on the rainwater pipe type ... The first three attacks were carried out by seven or eight men each time. One man threw the bomb and the remainder, who were armed with revolvers, acted as a covering party, and to warn civilians to keep clear.⁶

Perhaps worried that civilians might be injured, the IRA adopted a new tactic for the fourth and last attack on the stronghold.

The last attack on the barrack was made by Jack Holt and myself on the main gate. We placed a rain pipe bomb underneath the main gate at about 10 o'clock one night. Having lighted the fuse we ran for cover but the fuse went out and we had to light it again. Before we succeeded in getting round the corner for cover we were blown down by the force of the explosion. The RIC came out through a smaller gate and fired at random through the town. The following night they came in uniform and wrecked my home. They looted the shop, taking everything in the window. This was my home and the residence of my aunt, Maria Curran, who was Sinn Féin chairman of the Arklow Urban District Council.⁷

The extent of the damage to the barracks was negligible, and the courts awarded the Receiver for the RIC £30 the following January.⁸ Such harassing operations meant that the Arklow Company was 'responsible for making it imperative for the British forces to have garrisons in Arklow, Rathdrum, Wicklow and Kilpedder', making it impossible for the British to deploy these troops to other parts of the country.⁹

Kynoch's factory raided

In October, the IRA raided Kynoch's munitions factory, netting 25 hundredweight (cwt) of TNT, which was put in a car and conveyed to Dublin. They returned on 13 November and took 13 cwt of TNT and destroyed much of the remaining factory stock in the river. This action was initiated by Joe Kelly who reported the presence of the explosive. Those involved were Leo and Jimmy Fitzgerald (from Dublin) and locals Michael Mulligan, Mickey Greene, Anthony Kavanagh (not to be confused with Andrew Kavanagh), Joe Kelly, Robert Tyrrell (Mahon's Lane), Paddy O'Brien and Jack O'Brien.¹⁰ Most of the haul was dispatched to Dublin, and a few days later, Michael Collins, perhaps to mark his appreciation, fulfilled a promise he made to Matt Kavanagh by sending ten grenades and 125 rounds of ammunition to the Arklow company.¹¹

There were no casualties in the Kynoch raids, however, there were casualties in other parts of the country and Arklow Urban District Council passed a resolution in sympathy with the families of IRA Volunteers who had been killed. As a result of this, the council offices were raided.

IRA meeting raided

The increased activity in the town and environs could not be allowed to go unchecked. As Brigade OC, Matt Kavanagh had been spending a lot of time at GHQ in Dublin as well as organising and taking part in raids in Arklow. On one occasion, his superior officer at GHQ warned him not to return to Arklow because the Black and Tan presence had been increased in the town and they were looking out for him. However, Kavanagh had planned a brigade meeting, and so he returned despite the risk involved. Notes alerting the various company captains to the planned meeting had to be drafted and copied. Each note was addressed with just the words, 'O.C., Arklow', 'O.C., Johnstown', etc., with no individuals being named. This work was being carried out on 14 December in the Arklow HQ, Joe Rafferty's pub. Present were Matt Kavanagh, the Brigade Adjutant Andrew Kavanagh, and Arklow Company Adjutant Paddy Kelly, 'when the place was surrounded by soldiers of the Sussex Regiment.'¹²

Betrayal, or careless talk?

The three men and the papers in their possession were taken into custody. Matt Kavanagh noticed that some of the soldiers were improperly dressed, wearing

‘camp slippers’ rather than regulation boots. From this, he surmised that they’d had little time to prepare, as if they had been roused from their billets and were acting on information just received. The fact that there were no RIC present also suggested that this was a spur of the moment response to a tip rather than a planned action. But who could have informed? Matt Kavanagh maintained that nobody in Arklow, ‘except [blank space in record] and my Adjutant, who was arrested with me, knew of the house we used as headquarters and also as a covering address for GHQ correspondence.’ This is a strange statement. Firstly, it is difficult to accept. Surely the local company members knew. Surely the Raffertys knew? Surely some of the tipplers in the pub, volunteers and non-volunteers alike, knew? In a small town, would not half the population have known? Secondly, he mentions only one adjutant being arrested with him, when in fact there were two present — Andrew Kavanagh (Brigade Adjutant) and Patrick Kelly (Company Adjutant). One of the GHQ organisers had felt that the Arklow HQ would have been better located on a boat in the harbour rather than in such a conspicuous place.¹³ When the time came to ask questions about the arrests, GHQ decided to take a lenient view, preferring to believe that it had resulted from carelessness in ‘discussing the nature of Headquarters documents in a public house to the manager of the military barracks canteen.’¹⁴ This is an even more remarkable statement. Careless talk was bad enough, but careless talk to the ‘manager of the military barracks canteen’ should have warranted serious repercussions. Oddly, nothing happened.

The three IRA officers were brought to the military barracks at Arklow and interrogated, but none disclosed any information. They were then transferred to Wicklow Gaol. The owner of the pub and his son were also arrested but were kept in custody only until the two Kavanaghs and Kelly had been removed to Wicklow.

British trap foiled

The British felt that they could use the captured documents to entrap all the company captains in the brigade by arranging a false brigade meeting in Barndarrig. British agents were despatched from Dublin, claiming to be attached to IRA GHQ. They were soon found out.

One of the Cumann na mBan girls from Wicklow, Kathleen Treacy, whilst visiting me in the jail at Wicklow a couple of days after my transfer there, informed me that there was a gentleman going

around the county wearing a Fáinne and stating that he was an officer from General Headquarters. He informed them in Wicklow town that he was sent down from GHQ to reorganize the county and convene a meeting, for the purpose of appointing somebody to replace me and take reprisals for my arrest. I immediately got suspicions, as I had never notified GHQ of my arrest, nor had any notice of my arrest appeared in the press and I told her to let the lads outside know and be extra cautious.

Some days afterwards, I heard that this alleged GHQ organizer had used the correspondence, which I had already addressed, made an effort to contact the various OCs of the Companies for the purpose of convening a meeting at Barndarrig Hall of all the Company officers. It was a Brigade Council mobilisation. He actually contacted local Sinn Féin leaders in each area and asked them to transmit the correspondence to the OC of the IRA. They were instructed by circular to bring a list of the men, arms, ammunition and equipment of each Company area with them. The ruse was upset, due to the suspicions of the men.¹⁵

It was C. M. Byrne who was the first to be uneasy about this 'order from GHQ.' To discover the trap, he used the Irish penchant for unpunctuality to very good effect: 'if they were British agents they would expect us, as military men, to be there on time, while if they were our own crowd they would not mind us turning up late.'¹⁶ Byrne managed to get word to all the companies to turn up late for the meeting. Only the Rathdrum company captain, Paddy Curran, and his adjutant Gerry Morrissey, arrived at the designated venue at the designated time. Curran was arrested and put into the back of a lorry. Morrissey tried to make a run for it, but was captured. By the time the latecomers arrived, the British had decided that no one else was coming and departed with just the two Rathdrum men.

They had a revenge of sorts that night when they went into Wicklow town and, getting the names of well-known Sinn Féiners, W. O'Grady, U.D.C., and John Byrne, from the police, they beat them up and arrested the Chairman and Secretary of the local Sinn Féin Cumann. But their well laid plans fizzled out.¹⁷

Andrew Kavanagh was later to state that he was still in Arklow military barracks when Curran, Morrissey and three other men (probably those mentioned

above who were arrested in Wicklow) were brought in, but this is unlikely. He was more likely to have been in Wicklow Gaol for two reasons. Firstly, their arrests took place at least several days after Kavanagh's—by which time he'd been transferred to Wicklow—and, secondly, they would most probably have been brought directly to the local jail. Wherever he was, Kavanagh said that he recognised one man as a spy and he warned the others.¹⁸

More arrests and raids

On 28 December, two weeks after the Arklow arrests had been made in Rafferty's, a large force of military personnel and police surrounded the houses in Abbey Street and made a thorough search of every building. Despite the raid lasting 'a considerable time', nothing suspicious was found, but one of the residents, William Cleary, a volunteer in the Arklow company and boot maker by trade, was taken into custody, brought to Wicklow Gaol and later transferred to Dublin. Other arrests had been made in the preceding weeks. Some of these detainees were released after a short detention, but others, like Cleary, were taken to Wicklow Gaol. A raid on the home of Thomas Furlong, conducted with uncharacteristic restraint, was reported in the *Wicklow People*:

*Presses were scrutinised and drawers and beds examined, as was also a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Pictures and photographs taken away, including some snaps of friends in America. As well as a newspaper and some old copies of Nationality, as well as some books and receipts of the I.N.G.W.U. Dennis Keogh, who happened to be in the house at the time, was arrested. Furlong said that the officer in charge was very courteous and allowed Mrs. Furlong and family to move about unmolested.*¹⁹

Andrew Holt, who had been on hunger strike in Mountjoy before his release, and his father John, a member of Arklow UDC, had been arrested at their house on Ferrybank and taken into custody around Christmas time, along with other men from the town and district. They were kept at the military camp in the old Brick & Tile Works but were released just before New Year. Other men from the



Cottages in the Fishery, Arklow.
Photo: Courtesy of Jim Rees

town and district who were arrested at the same time were not released and were removed to Wicklow. On New Year's Eve, military and police personnel paid a visit to the Fishery area, where more searches were made. In the house of Michael O'Brien in Old Chapel Ground, Michael's two young sons, Patrick and John, were arrested.²⁰

The coming new year promised interesting times.

Notes

- 1 Andrew Kavanagh, BMH.WS1471, 3.
- 2 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 15 Jan 1921, 29 Jan 1921.
- 3 Andrew Kavanagh, BMH.WS1471, 1.
- 4 Matt Kavanagh, 'Wicklow - 1920' in *The Capuchin Annual 1966*, 590.
- 5 Andrew Kavanagh, BMH.WS1471, 3.
- 6 Matt Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 13-14. Presumably, Cullen had been promoted when Matt Kavanagh became Brigade OC in February.
- 7 Matt Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 13-14.
- 8 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 29 Jan 1921.
- 9 Matt Kavanagh, 'Wicklow - 1920' in *The Capuchin Annual 1966*, 590.
- 10 Henry Cairns and Owen Gallagher, *Aspects of the War of Independence and Civil War in Wicklow 1913-1923* (Bray, 2009), 25.
- 11 Hilary Murphy, *The Kynoch Era in Arklow* (Wexford, 1976), 64-5
- 12 Matt Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 7. Also, Andrew Kavanagh, BMH, WS 1471, 4.
- 13 Christopher M. Byrne, BMH.WS1014, 11.
- 14 Matt Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 7.
- 15 Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 9-10.
- 16 Christopher M. Byrne, BMH.WS1014, 12.
- 17 Byrne, BMH.WS1014, 13.
- 18 Andrew Kavanagh, BMH.WS1471, 4-5.
- 19 *Wicklow People*, 1 Jan, 1921
- 20 *Wicklow People*, 8 Jan 1921

ARKLOW - Jim Rees

Conflict continues: 1921

Wicklow was regarded by the British as being a relatively quiet county during the War of Independence, and it escaped the martial law that was imposed on Wexford, Kilkenny and several Munster counties at that time.¹ Nonetheless, life was far from normal in Arklow and environs as the conflict moved into 1921.

Military raids

On Thursday morning, 6 January 1921, a lorry load of British military personnel descended on the premises of William Wolohan, a hairdresser in Bridge Street. The party searched the house for about ten minutes and were obviously looking for someone rather than merely making a nuisance of themselves. A rumour was circulating that a young man on the run was on the premises. On exiting the premises without a fugitive, the soldiers approached a group of men who were standing on the corner of Bridge Street and took away two individuals named Fitzgerald and O'Brien. They were detained briefly before being released without charge.²

The following week, more searches for 'two wanted men' were carried out. The unnamed fugitives appear to have had several narrow escapes, and the fact that they were still believed to be in the town suggests that they were locals. Several houses in Lower Main Street (Weadick, Doyle, Tutty and J. New) were raided, as was Daniel New's shop in Main Street. On 15 January, the *Wicklow People* carried a report of another raid:

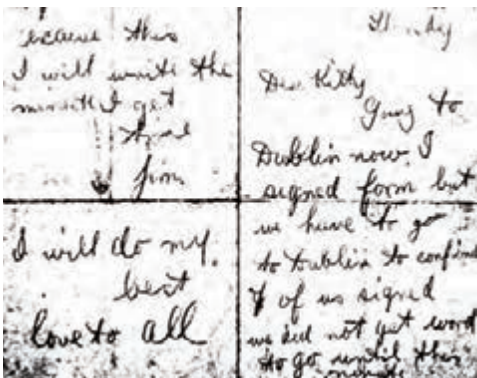
*On Wednesday evening about 6 p.m. they [the military] raided the pub of J. O'Rafferty and ordered him to close the premises until further notice. When he asked why, he was simply told that it was ordered by the competent military authority. As far as is known, Mr. O'Rafferty is not active in politics, and the only apparent reason for the closure is the fact that three young men were arrested there some weeks ago.*³

Stationmaster robbed

One night towards the end of January, the stationmaster Mr Kenny answered a knock on the door. A masked man ordered him to hand over whatever money was in the safe. Kenny denied that there was any money there as he lodged the takings in the bank every evening. At this stage, two more masked men entered. The taller of the two new arrivals told Kenny that he knew that the money had not been lodged that evening. With a revolver now pointed at him, the stationmaster accepted that he had no alternative but to open the safe. The intruders took the entire contents of about £120 (about £5,900 at today's value)⁴ of which only £25 belonged to the railway company, the rest being the property of Kenny and R. Hiney the station goods clerk, which they had put in the safe for better security.⁵

Ammunition found

Two days after the incident at the station, the police were again raiding houses and arrested Patrick O'Reilly of Upper Condren's Lane, where five rounds of ammunition were found. He explained that his sister had found them in the street and they didn't know what to do with them. He was freed a month later only to be re-arrested the following week without charges being brought.⁶ He was taken to Wicklow Gaol where quite a few other Arklow men were being kept. William Cleary was one of these but he was moved to Dublin and charged.



Prisoner at Wicklow Gaol Jem Hunt-Tyrrell smuggled this note to his wife Kitty. It's not known if it dates from the War of Independence or the Civil War. The original note is in the possession of the Hunt-Tyrrell family.

THURSDAY

DEAR KITTY

GOING TO DUBLIN NOW. I SIGNED FORM BUT WE HAVE TO GO TO DUBLIN TO CONFIRM. 7 OF US SIGNED. WE DID NOT GET WORD TO GO UNTIL THIS MINUTE.

EXCUSE THIS. WILL WRITE THE MINUTE I GET TIME

JIM

I WILL DO MY BEST

LOVE TO ALL

A spy uncovered and assassinated

As a prisoner in Wicklow Gaol in January, Matt Kavanagh was visited by a Wicklow member of Cumann na mBan, who gave him a description of a British agent who had posed as an organiser from GHQ. As chance would have it, a few nights later, he actually saw this agent escorting two prisoners into Wicklow Gaol where he started beating them. A couple of months later, after he had been transferred to Kilmainham, Matt Kavanagh again saw the agent.

I remembered his face distinctly later, on seeing him during my courtmartial at Kilmainham courthouse. While I was awaiting trial in one of the cells under the courthouse, I saw him walking with a military officer on a bank overhead, outside in the yard. I asked a friendly disposed British soldier, named Roper, who was guarding me and my fellow prisoners, to find out who this man was. He went away to enquire and when he returned, he informed me that he was a Sergeant Dunny of the Royal Garrison Artillery, stationed at Tallaght, Co. Dublin, and living at Inchicore. He said he never wore a uniform and he understood that he had a telephone in the house. I had the information about this man conveyed to Michael Collins direct and, to the best of my knowledge, he was found shot some time later in a field at Inchicore.⁷

More military raids

In February, the three men who had been found with the incriminating papers in O'Rafferty's pub in December 1920 were court-martialled in Kilmainham. Andrew Kavanagh and Patrick Kelly were sentenced to two years' imprisonment, commuted to one year, and Matt Kavanagh, probably because of his higher rank, was sentenced to five years' penal servitude. This was later reduced to two years.

Military raids on homes continued throughout the month, most without success, but in one garden on Harbour Road, 47 sticks of gelignite were found and the owner of the house, John English, arrested. These were probably part of the haul stolen from Kynoch's some months earlier. English's garden and those adjacent were dug up, as were sections of Pound Road (now Rockview Terrace), which backed on to English's premises, but nothing more was discovered. English appeared before a court martial at Kilmainham courthouse

a few weeks later. He was a sailor and was able to prove that he had been away and could not have taken part in the raid. He denied all knowledge that his garden had been used as a place to hide the explosives. After fifteen minutes of consideration, the court found him not guilty.⁸

The military also called to a house owned by the Kelly family on Tinahask around this time. One of the sons was suspected of being an IRA volunteer and his arrest had been ordered. When the soldiers arrived, they found the young man seriously ill. Afraid of causing a riot, the soldiers left. When Kelly died a few days later, his family and friends claimed that the raid had contributed to his death. Tinahask is in the heart of the Fishery area, a close-knit community. His funeral was a large one, even by Fishery standards, and it was as much a display of anger at the military intrusion into the sick man's home as it was a demonstration of respect and support for the bereaved family. When the funeral procession reached the cemetery, a large police presence was already in place at strategic points. It is believed that they were there either to prevent a republican military display or were looking for someone they believed might attend. They did not interfere with the burial.

At the end of February, Joe O'Rafferty's public house was raided once again. Shortly after nine on a Saturday night, the military arrived and demanded the keys from a Mr Moore, O'Rafferty's employee, who was on duty. Moore handed over what keys he had and said that the rest were in the possession of O'Rafferty, who was in the domestic part of the premises. The soldiers went through to the back and searched the house. They later emerged with O'Rafferty in custody. He was first taken to the military camp at the Brick & Tile Works and later transferred to Wicklow Gaol and then to the Curragh. Permission was given to re-open his pub in April, but he was not released until June under an order of the Appeals Tribunal.⁹



Gregg's Hill, the Fishery, Arklow
Photo: Courtesy of Jim Rees

Deserter apprehended

Also in February, the army raided a premises on Lower Main Street where a man named O'Neill had his home and furniture shop. The soldiers took O'Neill's son into custody. O'Neill junior was a British soldier who had decided that the king's shilling was no longer adequate recompense for a dangerous life in khaki and had deserted.¹⁰

Objectional inscription

Mickey Greene of St Brigid's Terrace in Abbey Street, an active Volunteer who would later become a very important figure in Arklow during the Civil War, was arrested in April. Someone had painted crossed flags (which flags they were was not specified in the *Wicklow News-Letter* report on the incident) on the parapet of the Navvy Bridge over the railway. Also painted on the stone wall was 'an objectional inscription' (sadly, also not specified). Military personnel on patrol a short time later met the eighteen-year-old Greene and a young companion named Somers. They were stopped and questioned at Mahon's Lane and taken into custody. Somers was released the same evening, but Greene was detained in the military camp before being transferred to Wicklow Gaol. The flags and inscription were obliterated with smeared tar.

Starving Arklow of finance

Sixty-year-old Martin Stankard of Ferrybank was also arrested in April. His crime would appear to have been collecting rates for Arklow UDC, which was openly republican in its political complexion and resolutions. The British authorities responded by attempting to starve it of finance. Stankard had taken on the job of collecting rates just two days prior to his arrest. He was not in good health. He had survived the Kynoch explosion in 1917, but had sustained near-fatal injuries. It was generally believed that he would not survive imprisonment. Notwithstanding this, he was brought to the military camp and transferred to Wicklow with Mickey Greene.

Stankard's job was taken by Paul Frith who was also lifted within a few days of his appointment, which put the council under further pressure.

The council are again faced with the problem of getting in money to keep the essential services going. The last six months has seen: William Butler, who held the position for years, resign owing to difficulty about commission and lodgements; Mr. D. Keogh held the position for a few days then resigned as he could get no lodgings in the town; Martin Stankard also resigned after two days owing to the reaction of the authorities and the fact that his health could not allow him to undergo prison treatment. When he was arrested last week, Mr. Hurley, though appointed, declined to act; Mr. Frith was elected. The result is that there is a balance of

*uncollected rates from last year of over £1,400, while the collection for the present half-year has hardly even commenced.*¹¹

Lethal ambush at Inch

May saw an escalation of republican activity, with another hold-up of the mail train at Woodenbridge. When the train pulled into the station at about midnight, two armed men entered the guard's van and carried off a couple of mail bags. The bags were found the following day in Ballyarthur Wood with a message in blue pencil that the letters had been 'censored' by the IRA.

By far the most serious event in May was the ambush of a military patrol just south of Inch, when an auxiliary constable was shot dead and a sergeant badly wounded. They had left their barracks at Coolgreaney on bikes at 11 o'clock that Saturday morning to do their weekly shopping, the sergeant leading, Constable Dupris¹² behind and two other constables a little further back. When they reached the gorge-like section of the road just past Inch, they were fired on from the high embankment on the right-hand side. Dupris, a 24-year-old from Margate in Kent, was fatally hit through the right lung, while his sergeant was hit in the left arm and right leg just above the knee. The embankment runs for about 150 yards and is about 60 feet high, with ample vegetation to conceal the estimated 30 ambushers who had rifles and shotguns. The two RIC men who had lagged behind turned back to Inch post office, from where they telephoned Gorey RIC barracks. Two cars and an armoured car were immediately dispatched. A Dr Nolan and nurse Kimber also rushed to the scene. While they were on the way, the attackers made their escape.

Although the attack was carried out by the Johnstown company, it was the people of Gorey who bore the brunt of the reaction. Dupris's body was brought to Gorey, where the shopkeepers were ordered by the RIC to close their businesses while the body was brought through the town and the order was given that one person from each house was to attend the funeral. As a reprisal, all markets and fairs in the vicinity were cancelled until further notice and riding bicycles was also forbidden, day or night.

One of the attackers later told his story to the Bureau of Military History:

At day-break, the Column moved into the ambush position at the Cuttings, about three hundred yards on the Gorey side of the village of Inch. The Cuttings was situated on the main Dublin-Wexford road,

about five miles north of Gorey and a corresponding distance south of Arklow. Because of trees and the twisting nature of the road, we could not be seen from Inch village. In Inch there was a telephone exchange. The Column lay in a high bank overlooking the road. Information had been received by the Column that a lorry load of R.I.C. and Tans would be coming to Gorey on this particular Saturday morning. However, this lorry did not come through Inch but, as we learned later, it by-passed Inch. By 11 a.m. the lorry had not arrived. As this was the first Saturday in May, there was a fair in Gorey and a cycle patrol of six R.I.C. men and Tans were sent from Coolgreaney to Gorey via Inch. Fears of being ambushed forced the enemy police patrols to travel in extended formation at this time and, for that reason, they were usually in groups of two stretched out at intervals of about a quarter of a mile. When this cycle patrol passed through the Cuttings, the order was given by the O.C. to fire. One policeman, named Duprey, was killed and another was wounded. The other four escaped. This position was most suitable for an attack on a lorry, but not for an ambush on a cycle patrol because the police were too far apart. Also, the road was too twisting with numerous corners very close together. Some of the men wanted to go down to the road and collect the guns off the dead and wounded men, but the O.C. was against it and for a very good reason, because our position was extremely dangerous. The O.C. pointed out that we could easily be surrounded because three roads enclosed us in a triangle whose longest side would be only about one mile. Accordingly, we pulled out and hid for the rest of the day in Ballinstreagh Woods. As a reprisal against the killing and shooting of the R.I.C. at Inch, Gorey fair was dispersed and the house of Mrs. Margaret Veney an ardent Republican supporter was burnt to the ground by the enemy.¹³

Hoyne's Hotel raided

On 8 June, one-time hunger-striker in Mountjoy, Andrew Holt, was arrested. The military had called to his house but he wasn't there. As they widened their search around the town, they met him on the bridge and took him into custody without giving him a reason. A few hours later, the military raided Hoyne's Hotel and caused such disturbance as to attract a large crowd. They were searching for someone in particular and all the guests were interrogated, but no one was arrested.



Glenart Castle flying the union flag, 1903.

Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

Glenart Castle burned

On 9 July, a length of rail was lifted from the line and a telephone pole was cut down about a quarter of a mile from Woodenbridge. On 10 July, Glenart Castle was targeted. The only occupants at the time were the caretakers, Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Prestage. At the inquest in October, Prestage stated that he locked up as usual on Saturday night and discovered the blaze at 6.30 the following morning and raised the alarm.

*... a fire in the central hall burnt itself out, but another fire under the grand staircase was unfortunately more successful and practically all the new portion of the castle was burnt out ... The 5th Earl spent enormous sums on the castle, practically rebuilding it and it was one of the finest houses in Ireland ... There had been the most beautiful and valuable furniture ...*¹⁴

Some of the furniture was ‘saved by superhuman efforts of police [and] military’. Fortunately, many of the paintings, some of which were ‘of national importance’, had been removed before the fire to the main Proby estate at Elton near Peterborough in England for safekeeping. In September, Colonel Proby claimed damages of £51,000 and the following month a judgement for £37,000 for damage to the house and £9,000 for the furniture was made at Wicklow Quarter Sessions.

Truce and Treaty

The day after Glenart Castle was set on fire, a truce between the IRA and the British came into effect. The truce was a hiatus in which hope for a negotiated settlement was real, but both the British and the IRA continued to plan for extended war in the event that agreement could not be reached. According to Frank O’Connor, Michael Collins ordered his men to strengthen their numbers and to train harder than ever before. He also organised ‘bigger and better gun-running, and during August the first shipload of arms reached Arklow.’¹⁵

After the truce, IRA men could now walk around in uniform without fear of arrest. One encounter reported by the *Wicklow People* in September sums up that rather strange time:

*An exchange of compliments took place at Woodenbridge a few evenings ago. Some of the Arklow police who were travelling in the vicinity met an officer of the IRA who was accompanied by a lady. The police saluted the officer which was very becomingly returned. He was in uniform.*¹⁶

Despite this, some things were still forbidden. Robert Tyrrell of Mahon’s Lane was arrested by the RIC for putting up posters calling for the continued boycotting of a local trader who persisted in dealing in goods from Belfast. While he was in custody, the RIC tore down the posters.¹⁷

In November, to mark the fifty-fourth anniversary of the execution of the Manchester Martyrs,¹⁸ a procession ‘much larger and far more striking than anything that has been seen in the town was held in Arklow’.¹⁹ The newspaper report told of ‘hundreds’ of members of the IRA from Arklow and the outlying districts. A large number of men and women joined the procession making it increasingly bigger. In front was a memorial banner followed by the Ancient Order of Hibernians brass band, accompanied by torch bearers. The colourful

turnout marched through Main Street to the 'Dead March' and to the 'Soldier's Song' on the return journey. The event took place 'without the slightest hitch and with the greatest order and decorum'.

December 1921 saw the signing of the Treaty in London, bringing an end to the War of Independence. Prisoners-of-war were now allowed to return home. Andrew Kavanagh was among those released from Mountjoy on 19 December.

Notes

- 1 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 8 Jan 1921
- 2 *Wicklow People*, 8 Jan 1921
- 3 *Wicklow People*, 15 Jan 1921
- 4 CPI inflation calculator.
- 5 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 29 Jan 1921
- 6 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 29 Jan 1921; 19 Mar 1921; 26 Mar 1921
- 7 Matt Kavanagh, BMH.WS1472, 9
- 8 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 26 Feb, 1921
- 9 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 30 Apr 1921, 4 June 1921
- 10 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 12 Feb 1921
- 11 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 30 Apr, 1921
- 12 Various sources use the alternatives Dupree and Duprey.
- 13 Thomas Dwyer, BMH.WS1198, 31-2
- 14 *Wicklow People*, 16 July, 1921
- 15 O'Connor, F., *The Big Fellow*, 155. O'Connor does not specify where he got this information.
- 16 *Wicklow People*, 3 Sept, 1921
- 17 *Wicklow People*, 24 Sept 1921
- 18 Three men executed in Manchester on 23 November 1867 for killing a police sergeant guard as they tried to rescue captured Fenians from a prison van.
- 19 *Wicklow People*, 26 Nov, 1921

ASHFORD - Sheila Clarke

‘A sense of duty’: Margaret Somerville, the Great War and the War of Independence

Margaret Hall Clinch Somerville was born in Oxfordshire, the daughter of a Witney brewery and banking family. Her husband, Bellingham Arthur Somerville, was an RIC District Inspector who had served in Armagh, Down and Cork. The couple had seven surviving children. After transferring to Wicklow Town, Bellingham Arthur served there for three years prior to his early retirement, for health reasons, in 1891. In 1893, it was Margaret’s wealth which enabled the couple to purchase for £1,800 the then dilapidated Clermont House, situated on 70 acres, and to fund the renovations and extension. Prior to Clermont, the family lived in rented houses at Seaview and Friars Hill in Wicklow Town and at Ballyhenry House, Ashford. Bellingham Arthur was a keen amateur photographer, a hobby which his children continued. He began the first of his collections of photographs at Clermont during the building renovations in 1894. The negatives were printed onto glass plate in the darkroom situated in a wing of the house.



Margaret Somerville.
Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville

The Great War

The Somerville children were taught at home by tutors and governesses and their social activities consisted of games of hockey and tennis with children of other families in the area such as the Croftons, the Tighes and the Truells. William (otherwise known as Bunt), James (Jim), Gualter (otherwise known as Pat) and Regi decided to make careers for themselves in the British Army, following the tradition of many landed or Church of Ireland families.



William Somerville
Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville



James Somerville
Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville



Regi Somerville
Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville

William, Lt. Col, was in the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, and he served in France. In 1919, he commanded the 8th Battalion Machine Gun Corps, as part of the international force assigned to protect Allied interests in northern Russia during the Bolshevik revolution. He was awarded the DSO + Bar.

James, Lt. Col, was in the Royal Artillery, serving in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), Egypt and Palestine. He was awarded a DSO.

Regi was born in Clermont in 1897, three years after the family had taken up residence. In 1916, when Regi was 18 years of age, he followed his brothers into the army, feeling a 'sense of duty'. He joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and served in France at Vimy Ridge, in Belgium at Passchendaele and with the Machine Gun Corps in Italy.

Pat, Captain, was born in Ballyhenry House, Ashford, in 1894, where the family resided while Clermont was being restored. He served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment with the British Expeditionary Force and was captured following the Battle of Mons, at Zonnebeke, near Ypres, in October 1914. Pat made numerous failed attempts to escape from his POW camp in Krefeld, situated northwest of Düsseldorf, Germany. He succeeded in his attempt to escape from Strohen POW camp in 1917. He safely crossed into Holland, having walked more than 100 miles over three days and nights and having forded several rivers, before crossing safely to the War Office in London. For his exploits, he was awarded the Military Cross.

The following is an extract taken from his debriefing report to the War Office:

On 21st October 1914, during the Battle of Mons, near Ypres, our trench was heavily bombarded by German troops and 16 of us were captured. Having been disarmed, we were then ordered to run towards the German trenches some distance away and, as we did so, the German soldiers opened fire on us, killing three of our men before we could reach the trenches. The remainder of us were then transported by cattle trucks and taken by rail,

arriving at Liege station three days later and thence to Crefeld [sic: Krefeld] POW camp in Belgium.

At Crefeld the Commandant of the prison was very popular with the prisoners and we found him to be pleasant and polite. However, the conditions later became harsh, the rules and discipline were severe and many cruelties by individual Germans were experienced by us. Once, I was permitted to go to the town where the dentist undertook to supply three crowned teeth. Having sawed off three decayed teeth in my upper jaw and before the new crowns could be fitted, new regulations were issued, and we were forbidden to go into town. I suffered a great deal of pain and inconvenience as a result. Another time, after maps and a compass were found in my possession the court martial sentenced me to 14 days in solitary confinement in a dark cell measuring 10x6 with just one spot on the floor where it was possible to read.

In March 1917 after a failed attempt to escape, the court martial sentenced me to five months solitary confinement. In May 1917, we were transferred from Crefeld to Strohen, where the conditions were very poor. We were often dreadfully hungry, the food was quite inedible, the smell from the pits was abominable, the dust and flies made life unbearable and diarrhoea was prevalent all the time. The rules and discipline seemed to have been drawn up to irritate and drive the men almost to mutiny.

Three months later, we were transferred to the Wesel camp north of Cologne where the food was good, we had acorn coffee for breakfast, fish, rissoles or boiled beef for dinner The prisoners



Pat Somerville, pictured on the right, managed to smuggle his camera in his breeches on the long journey to Krefeld POW camp. Pat with a Russian officer. Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville



were a mix of British, French and Belgians and parcels from home were delivered regularly.

In August 1917 we were returned to Strohen where conditions were harsh, food parcels were damaged unless the food came in tins. After two months I escaped in company of Lieutenant Wingfield and two other officers but we were recaptured three days later. Sentenced to 14 days solitary, I was placed in a 6x7 bitterly cold cell with one hour a day exercise.

On the evening of 6th November 1917, I finally escaped Strohen POW camp, crossing into Holland three days later after a walk of over 100 miles and fording a number of rivers.

Then, I made my way to the War Office in London.

The War of Independence

At the start of the Great War, Margaret Somerville had provided help in one form or another to a very depressed Rathnew village. It is said that she paid the wages of every man from the village who had recently enlisted in the army until such time as their first payment came through from the War Office. When the war ended, she and her youngest daughter, Edeline, together with Aileen Crofton who then lived at her family home in Marlton House, Wicklow Town, assisted with the written applications to the War Office for the pensions of the returned local ex-soldiers in 1919.

Although her husband had died at home in Clermont in 1916, when his sons were at war, Margaret Somerville had reason to be grateful when the armistice was signed



on 11 November 1918. Her four sons had survived. Almost every other family in Rathnew had suffered great losses. Early in 1919, Margaret was anxiously awaiting their return. The deadly Spanish flu was raging at that time throughout the continent, and her sons were among the many thousands of ex-soldiers making their way home, sometimes after a long wait for a place on a homeward bound ship.

However, she now had a new cause of concern for her sons' safety. The War of Independence had begun in January 1919 and the local republican Volunteers were busy carrying out the national plan of civil disobedience and disruption. Her family had been targeted before. Her youngest son, Regi, had been ambushed whilst driving his motor bike at the top of Ballinabarney hill in 1915, before he had left for training camp in England, in the mistaken belief that he was Pat, his older officer brother.

So, when the Somerville family car along with its chauffeur was hijacked by the local brigade of the IRA, Mrs Somerville was livid.

The Somervilles' chauffeur was Isaac Langrel. He had been the coachman at Clermont before the purchase of the family car. He and his wife

This photograph was taken on the Avenue in Clermont by one of the family in 1919. Mrs Somerville had given a party for the children of Rathnew in celebration of the safe return home of her four sons. Most, if not all, of the children pictured had suffered the death of a father, brother, uncle, grandfather, cousin. Unfortunately, the names of the children were not noted at the time. Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville



Chauffeur and car outside Clermont House, 1920. Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville

Margaret had two sons, Isaac and Harry. Both had served on the front and they too were making their way home. Isaac was for a time reported as 'missing in action' until he had been discovered in a POW camp in 1915.

After the car was returned the next day, Mrs Somerville instructed her chauffeur to summon the local Volunteers and to bring them immediately to Clermont. Remarkably, Langrel succeeded in getting them to appear. Perhaps it was curiosity on their part that led them to agree. Mrs Somerville was known to be quite a formidable woman.

On arrival, the Volunteers were lined up in the drawing room. Mrs Somerville sternly declared. 'I am English, the Union flag flies on the roof of this house and I have four sons who have been at the front and are trying to make their way home.' Through the force of her personality, and because the local Volunteers were keenly aware that many men and women from Rathnew village were employed both inside and outside of Clermont, Mrs Somerville was able to secure an undertaking that her four sons would not be targeted on arrival home, even though they were officers in the British Army.



Clermont House, July 1908. Photo: Courtesy of Bill Somerville

BRAY - Henry Cairns



Bray RIC, August 1921. Photo: Courtesy of Henry Cairns

Bray at war 1920-21

In January 1920, in response to ongoing attacks on the RIC, advertisements appeared in the British newspapers for recruits for police service in Ireland. The pay was 10 shillings a day. New recruits began to arrive in Ireland in late March and because of a shortage of police uniforms were dressed in a mixture of army trousers and RIC tunics, hence their nickname 'Black and Tans'. By October, there were over 2,000 of these men in the country. In addition, a second force was recruited from ex-British officers and were paid £1 a day. They were divided into companies of 100 and were sent to the most troubled areas. This force became known as the Auxiliaries and they were not subject to trial by civil courts. Both these forces were recruited from battle-hardened

men and their notoriety stemmed from the ferocity of their violent tactics.

The Bray Company of the IRA continued to parade weekly, and in the spring of 1920 at a parade held in the Shankill Volunteer Hall, members took an oath of allegiance to Dáil Éireann administered by the Dublin Brigade OC Dick McKee. At this parade, the company OC Michael McGarry resigned in favour of Laurence O'Brien, a more experienced man. McGarry was then elected 1st Lieutenant. Thomas Mooney, a pawnbroker's assistant was elected 2nd Lieutenant; Jim Brien, Bray Adjutant; Jim Toole, Bray QM; and Mick Brien, Abbeyview, Intelligence Officer.

The attacks begin

On 29 April 1920, Sergeant John Brady RIC, a 50-year-old Bray man, became an early Wicklow victim of hostilities when he was killed in an IRA attack on Rush barracks, Co. Dublin. Shortly afterward, in May 1920, an attempt was made to attack a military lorry at Crinken on the Bray Road, and throughout the Bray Company area, telephone, telegraph and post office equipment was destroyed, while in Newcastle, a raid for arms was carried out on the home of a British Officer, the captured arms being transported to Bray by rail on a commandeered railway truck.¹ On 19 May, the *Evening Mail* reported that a Flying Column of the 11th Hussars had been posted to the Powerscourt Estate in Enniskerry. Supplied with armoured cars and lorries, this unit immediately began to patrol the mountainous districts of County Wicklow which had previously been patrolled by the RIC in a motor lorry. It was also reported that the military was to take over the workhouse at Loughlinstown, the inmates having been transferred to the Dublin Union.

Local elections 1920

The local elections on 1 June 1920 resulted in a landslide victory for Sinn Féin. Out of 12 seats, Sinn Féin won 11 with the 12th going to Lord Powerscourt, a Unionist. The first meeting of the new County Council took place on 18 June. The elected members were:

Robert Barton, Sinn Féin, Annamoe.

Christopher M. Byrne, Sinn Féin, Glenealy.

Joseph Campbell, Sinn Féin, Enniskerry.

William Grainger, Sinn Féin, Carnew.

Patrick Healy, Sinn Féin, Rathdangan.

Bernard Kelly, Sinn Féin, Tinahely.

Andrew Kinsella, Sinn Féin, Tinahely.

Joseph Lynch, Sinn Féin, Bray.

Patrick Murphy, Sinn Féin, Bray.

Felix O'Rafferty, Sinn Féin, Arklow.

John Redmond, Sinn Féin, Greystones.

Lord Powerscourt, Unionist, Enniskerry.

Robert Barton was proposed for the chair, his imprisonment was deplored and his release demanded. He was unanimously elected in his absence. The Vice-Chairman, Joseph Campbell unfolded a tricolour and placed it on the table amid scenes of great enthusiasm. A resolution supporting Dáil Éireann was passed unanimously and Christopher Byrne, who was 'on the run', was accorded a warm welcome. In early June, the IRA in Wicklow Town warned local girls against fraternising with members of the Crown forces. In September, a party of Volunteers from the Bray Company was engaged in felling trees on the Killarney Road in preparation for an ambush on the 'curfew' car, when it was surprised by a military patrol. In the ensuing engagement, Volunteer Joe Cullen was wounded.

The Killing of Volunteer Willie Owens

On 4 December, Crown forces raided the Sinn Féin rooms in Sunnybank, Little Bray. The premises were ransacked and Patrick Waldron, Nicholas Mulvey, Patrick Sutton and Thomas Martin were arrested. The homes of these men were searched and they were removed to Dublin. On the evening of 10 December, a raid was carried out on the Volunteer Hall in Shankill, Co. Dublin (C. Company area). The raiding party was composed of members of the Cheshire Regiment under Major Shore, based on the Powerscourt Estate. A meeting of C. Company officers had just finished and some of the men were playing cards when the military arrived. The men were placed against the wall with their hands up and searched. A shot was fired from another room and section leader Willie Owens fell dead with a bullet in the head. Originally from Shankill, Owens had been working in New Ross and was on the run from there. Two other members of the company were arrested, Dan O'Rourke and James Murphy. O'Rourke was found in possession of a revolver, while Volunteer Tom Brien of Bray managed to escape. The funeral of Willie Owens took place on 21



Volunteer Willie Owens, shot dead on the evening of 10-11 December 1920.
Photo: Courtesy of Henry Cairns

December from St. Columcille's Hospital to St. Peter's Cemetery Little Bray. On the previous day, a secret military enquiry was held into the killing. The Owens family expressed dissatisfaction at the decision to hold the proceedings in camera. The military issued Mr. Thomas Owens, father of the deceased, with two orders, one permitting the burial of his son the other warning him against any procession or demonstration connected with the funeral. The second order was ignored, and the funeral was one of the largest held in the locality in many years. The coffin was carried by Volunteers, carriages and cars formed a long procession and there was a large gathering of mourners waiting at the church. At Shankill village and at Little Bray, crowds gathered in support. The military made no attempt to interfere.

After the death of Willie Owens, members of the Enniskerry section including Stephen Barry, Mick Dunne and Tom Fox² made several plans to assassinate Major Shore, but to no avail.

Raiding for arms

According to OC Andy McDonnell,³ in about April 1921, because of the chronic shortage of weapons, C. Company began raiding houses again. A list of people

licensed to have firearms was hanging in Bray Post Office. This list was copied and the houses raided. In most cases, it was found that the weapons had already been handed in to the police but, a few more shotguns were added to the company's arsenal. The company's arms were distributed between three dumps. The first was in Lord Plunkett's moat near Old Connaught, the second was a large wooden box buried in Shanganagh, the third was temporarily in the disused railway tunnel around Bray Head which was stocked with some shotguns and revolvers handed over by the Wicklow Town company. Soon afterwards, these weapons were moved to a new dump in an empty cottage near Shanganagh. This operation was carried out by Tom Sutton, Seamus Mac Sweeney and Tom Brien.

C. Company raided Bray Town Hall and took the Council's books, which were handed over to P. J. Farrell, Clerk of the Rathdown Board of Guardians. About this time, the company commandeered a stock of picks and shovels and crosscut saws from the council stores. These tools were used for trenching roads and felling trees, etc.

Three Crossley Tenders belonging to the British Army were stolen in Dublin and driven to Enniskerry where they were burned. Raids for arms continued in the C. Company area but with little success, however a few revolvers were purchased from IRA GHQ and at the end of the year, the battalion OC Andy McDonnell and Vice OC Brian MacNeill cycled to Bray with some hand grenades, which they handed over to 'Steenie' Mulvey whom they met walking along the Dargle Road eating a bag of chips. Mulvey gave his chips to the hungry cyclists.

First attack on Bray RIC barracks

By the end of 1920, the RIC barracks at Ashford and Roundwood had been abandoned. C. Company organised several ambushes on the roads leading to Bray in January and February 1921, but none of them came to anything. In early April 1921, two British army ambulances arrived on goods wagons at the goods yard in Bray, and Tom Sutton, Seamus Mac Sweeney, 'Lukey' Leggett, Peter Ledwidge and Tom Brien went to burn them on the orders of the Company OC. They climbed the railings carrying tins of petrol and commandeered a large drum of oil. The petrol and oil mixture was poured over the vehicles and within seconds they were a mass of flame. In the following days, the Bray section cut down six telephone poles on the Dublin Road, starting at Woodbrook.



Jack Sterling, Volunteer, Bray.
Photo: Courtesy of Henry
Cairns

The Bray section of C. Company had pressed for an attack on the RIC barracks. The Brigade staff eventually agreed, but when the plan was presented to the Battalion Council for approval, it was decided to make it into a much bigger operation in which the whole Battalion would take part.

The plan provided that the Bray section would play the major role, while the other companies would take up positions around the outskirts of the town to prevent the arrival of reinforcements.

The RIC force in Bray at this time was about 40 men, with a detachment of 20 Black and Tans in the Courthouse and a contingent of the Essex Regiment occupying the Royal Hotel. These three positions were surrounded by barbed wire entanglements with sandbag defences in strategic positions and steel shutters on all the windows. The defenders were equipped with revolvers, rifles, Lewis light machine guns, hand grenades and as much ammunition as they required. In addition, they had rockets to fire to summon help.

C. Company on the other hand had six good revolvers, three Lee Enfield service rifles and a small supply of hand grenades. However, in advance of the attack, which was planned for Saturday 11 April, additional arms and ammunition were transported into the area.

About an hour before the attack was to commence, Brian McNeill the battalion QM called on the Company OC and cancelled the attack. The reason given was that someone was working on supplying a small cannon and it would be better to wait until it was available. The cannon never materialized and permission was given for the original plan to be put into effect on the evening of Saturday 18 April. The personnel involved were: bombing party, Jack Sterling and Mike McCarthy; riflemen, Laurence O'Brien 1st Lieut, Tom Sutton, Pat Brien, 'Lukey' Leggett and Tom Brien.

The attack began at 10pm when Sterling and McCarthy moved into position at the wall under the Courthouse. They lobbed their hand grenades at the door of the barracks and beat a hasty retreat down the Mill Lane. They were seen by a Black and Tan from the Courthouse who opened fire, but they escaped unhurt. The door of the barracks was usually left open, but on this occasion it was closed and the grenades exploded harmlessly on the footpath outside.

Laurence O'Brien, the Company OC retold the story:

After the bombs were thrown, a few minutes were allowed to let our comrades and any civilians in the area to get clear. We had taken up position at 9.55pm under cover of the low wall on the Dublin side of the Dargle River, within 50 yards of the barracks. There were only 3 service rifles available for the attack and these were used by Vols. Tom Sutton, Pat Brien and myself. After our bombers were safely away, we opened fire on the police who had come out of the barracks to investigate the explosions, they beat a hasty retreat and concentrated fierce fire on the Main Street and Bray Bridge.

The firing continued unabated for about half an hour. After our first volley, we ceased firing but remained in position until the firing from the barracks died down. We then directed a second volley at the barracks, this resulted in a second fierce fusillade similar to the first one again directed up the Main Street. We again held our fire until the enemy fire died down and then gave them a third volley. Rockets were sent up summoning help and firing continued unabated until re-enforcements arrived 2 hours later.⁴

The rifle section men had arranged to sleep away from home, but the arrival of the Auxiliaries made this impossible as they were firing wildly along the Quinsborough Road and roads leading off it. Laurence O'Brien made his way to his home on Duncairn Avenue, where his wife noticed that he was bleeding freely from the chin and that his shirt was soaked in blood. The wound was quickly dressed and the blood soaked clothes burned in the kitchen range, before the Auxiliaries kicked in the door and arrested him. The men who were arrested that night stated that they were beaten with rifle butts by the Auxiliaries, but O'Brien was at pains to point out that no local police took part in the beatings. All eight men arrested were taken to Arbour Hill prison in Dublin.

The following evening, Brian Mac Neill, Battalion QM, held a meeting of company officers and appointed Tom Sutton OC and Jack Sterling Adjutant.

Extensive damage was caused to the town centre with almost every shop window broken in the lower Main Street and the west end of the Quinsborough Road. The report on the attack in the *Wicklow People* on Monday 18 April 1921 stated that the barracks, courthouse and an eight-man police patrol who were in the vicinity of the picture house, Quinsborough Road, were attacked at about 10.45 pm. The police returned fire and an engagement took place in front of Duncairn Terrace until the police succeeded in reaching the house of Detective Inspector Lowndes where they took cover. Later that night, the following were arrested: Johnny McCaul (Town Clerk), Owen Brien, Laurence O'Brien, Tom Martin, Jack Martin, J. and P. Hoey, J. Kenny, J. O'Toole and P. O'Brien and P. Martin of the Urban District Council.

Report to IRA GHQ on the attack of Bray Barracks on 18th April 1921.⁵

The OC of C. Coy sent two men armed with bombs as near to the barrack as they could safely go, these two men landed the grenades at the door of the barrack both exploding simultaneously. The enemy made no reply. The OC then took up a position on the golf links with six men, across the river from the barracks and opened fire. The enemy then replied with volleys of rifle and machine gun fire and sent up a verey light. The OC then withdrew his men and dismissed them. Military reinforcements arrived later from Enniskerry camp.

Ammunition expended - 24 rounds of .303

Casualties - NIL

Second attack on Bray RIC barracks

On 6 May, Bray barracks was attacked again. *The Wicklow People* reported that alarming bursts of rifle and machine gun fire were heard in Bray when a sustained IRA attack on the barracks and courthouse took place. The assault began when two grenades were thrown at the rear of the barracks followed by a volley of rifle fire. According to the report, the courthouse was struck by rifle fire from St. Paul's churchyard (C. Company always denied using the churchyard) and the Mill Lane. No casualties resulted on either side.

Report to IRA GHQ on the 6 May attack⁶

On the evening of May 6th 1921, 6 men of C. Company carried out an attack on Bray RIC barracks. 6 picked men under the command of the 1st Lieut Tom Sutton [Laurence O'Brien was in jail], took up positions on the Quinsborough Road and the Golf Links. Our men opened fire on the barracks and threw 2 hand grenades. The action was not sustained. The enemy replied with machine gun fire, rifles and grenades, concentrating on the Main Street and the Golf Links, Verrey lights went up and reinforcements were called for. Our men withdrew, having gained their objectives. Ammunition expended: 16 rounds of .303 and 2 hand grenades.

After this attack, the troop numbers in the Royal Hotel were raised to 100 men and barbed wire entanglements and sandbags were put in place.

Attack at Claffey's Grove

Having received information that a British Army lorry passed regularly along the Dublin Road, it was decided that C. Company should ambush it. The site chosen for the ambush was Claffey's Grove, a row of cottages and a pub situated roughly where the entrance to Shanganagh Cemetery is now. Two weeks were set aside for this operation. The first week would be taken by the Shankill section under section leader Josie Faulkner and, if nothing happened, the second week was allocated to the Bray section under Pat O'Brien.

Nothing happened during the first week, so the Shankill section pulled out and the Bray section took over. The Bray men taking part in this operation were Pat O'Brien, Tom Sutton, Stephen Mulvey, Seamus MacSweeney, Mick Brien, Jack Sterling, Tom Brien, 'Lukey' Leggett and Mike Scarff. They were armed with three Lee-Enfield service rifles, an assortment of double and single barrel shotguns loaded with buckshot, revolvers and a few hand-grenades. Tom Brien in his statement says that they waited nine nights before the enemy lorry appeared.

On the Thursday evening at about 9pm, a military lorry was observed travelling at high speed in the direction of Bray. When it was about 30 yards away from the ambush position, the riflemen, Mulvey, Brien and Sutton, opened fire. The lorry began to zigzag and fire was returned. As it passed the ambush site, the shotgun men opened fire and Seamus MacSweeney threw a hand-grenade,



Stephen Mulvey (centre, facing camera) meets Sean Lemass (right), 1947. Photo: *Irish Press*

which exploded immediately behind the lorry. All the while, the enemy's bullets cut through the trees above the Bray mens' heads. As the lorry passed the ambush position, Tom Sutton jumped over the wall, took up a firing position on the roadway and continued to fire at the enemy until they disappeared out of sight. The Bray section then withdrew, and dumping their weapons at Plunkett's moat, made their way home.⁷

GHQ intelligence reported that one soldier was killed and two wounded.

Mistaken identity, fatal consequences

Laurence O'Brien was released from jail a month after his arrest and took command of C. Company again. He was not long free when on 13 May 1921, Laurence Brien, a gardener, was shot entering his home at School Lane beside the Town Hall by Black and Tans. He died at 2 am the following morning. Laurence O'Brien believed that Brien was shot in mistake for himself.



British Army road clearing operations at Carrignovac, Ireland, 10 June 1921. © IWM Q 107762



Laurence Brien. Shot dead at Bray Town Hall May 1920.
Photo: Courtesy of Henry Cairns

Roads blocked

During the month of June, roads around the county were made impassable. Trenches were dug, trees felled, telephone poles cut down and telephone equipment destroyed. These activities were carried out on a large scale and imposed a heavy burden on the Crown forces. They reacted by rounding up large numbers of civilians, especially republican sympathisers, and forcing them to fill in the trenches, though some flatly refused to work.

Attack on Enniskerry barracks

On 27 May 1921, the IRA attacked the RIC barracks in Enniskerry. The attacking party consisted of a rifleman and a bomber armed with a revolver and three hand-grenades. The military camp was 140 yards away and the barracks was covered by a machine gun from there.

When the attack began, the bomber threw a grenade at the front of the barracks. When the bomb exploded, the rifleman fired two rounds at the front

of the barracks while the bomber went to the rear and threw another bomb. The rifleman fired three more rounds and the bomber threw his last bomb. When this exploded, both men retreated safely. The military replied with volleys of rifle fire, which continued for hours. It was concluded that the barracks was impregnable to grenade and rifle fire and too hazardous to assault because of the commanding position of the nearby military camp.

Several other unsuccessful operations were mounted in the run up to the Truce, including an attempt to ambush a Military Despatch rider on Ballymahon Road, an RIC patrol at the top of the Putland Road, an Auxiliaries patrol at Crinken and Black and Tans on the railway line at the Back Strand.

Notes

- 1 P. J. Brennan, BMH.WS1773
- 2 Statement of Volunteer Tom Brien in application for IRA pension.
- 3 Andrew McDonnell, BMH.WS1768
- 4 Laurence O'Brien, BMH.WS252
- 5 GHQ Reports 18.4.1921
- 6 GHQ Reports 6.5.1921
- 7 MacSweeney, Séamus, 'The Fight in Bray' in *Dublin's Fighting Story, 1916-21* (*The Kerryman*, 1948).

BRAY - Henry Cairns

Truce to Civil War in Bray

On 22 June 1921, at the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, King George V appealed for peace between Britain and Ireland, and two days later, Éamon de Valera received an invitation to peace talks with Lloyd George. On 9 July, as a preliminary to these talks taking place, a truce was agreed between de Valera and the British Commander General Macready. The truce came into effect at 12 noon on 11 July. There was a strong desire for peace throughout the country, and the truce was welcomed with great rejoicing.

There was a brief 'honeymoon period' during which the Volunteers were feted. However, the mood of merchants changed quickly. While commandeering of provisions had been tolerated during hostilities, merchants now rejected IRA 'IOUs' and demanded payment in cash.

Bray Urban District Council debated the terms of the treaty during its last meeting of 1921. After a lively debate, J. M. Magee moved the following resolution, 'That we, the B.U.D.C. desire to place on record our approval of the peace terms secured by the Irish Plenipotentiaries which, while not satisfying to the full the aspirations of the Irish People, present a reasonable basis for settlement of the age-old question'.

Policing in Bray was being carried out by both the RIC and the Irish Republican Police. There was, however, little or no co-operation. Petty sessions were held in the Courthouse and republican courts were held in the Town Hall. Owing to the numerous bank robberies which had taken place in the recent past, the Hibernian Bank in Bray was placed under armed guard by the republican police.

During the first weeks of the truce, the RIC in Bray had taken the opportunity to destroy a number of captured bombs by throwing them into the sea at the Back Strand.

The vote on the Dáil Treaty debate was taken on 7 January 1922 with 64 votes for the treaty and 57 against. The five Wicklow TDs voted as follows: For – Robert Barton and C. M. Byrne. Against – Erskine Childers, Art O'Connor and Donal Buckley.¹ This result meant, in effect, that Dáil Éireann was recommending to the people that they should accept a treaty which would

put their own parliament out of business and replace it with a provisional government, with Michael Collins as chairman, as a temporary measure to pave the way for a constitutional 26-county Free State.

British withdrawal from Bray

On 9 January 1922, British Army personnel began to dismantle the barbed wire entanglements around the Royal Hotel, Courthouse and RIC Barracks and on 12 January, they evacuated the hotel and marched down the Quinsborough Road to the railway station on their way home. A subsequent search of the hotel turned up a list of people who were to be arrested in the event of a breakdown of the truce. The following week, the two Shankill men, Josie Faulkner and James Sheehan, imprisoned for their part in the attack on Bray RIC Barracks were released from Mountjoy and welcomed home.

The British withdrawal now began in earnest. On Saturday 21 January, units of the Cheshire Regiment, stationed in Wicklow Town, Arklow, Shillelagh and Rathdrum, left by train en route to Colchester.



Brigadier Andy McDonnell.
Photo: Courtesy of Henry
Cairns

A week later, it was the turn of Enniskerry RIC Barracks, where on the departure of the police, the tricolour was raised and the Republican Police took up duty. Greystones was next; 28 RIC men evacuated the coastguard station which was used as a barracks. Once again, the Republican Police took over security in the town.

On Monday 13 March, the remains of Staff Capt. Rooney were brought from Navan via Bray to his home place of Roundwood for burial. Capt. Rooney contracted fever while serving a 15-year sentence in Dartmoor Prison. His coffin, which was borne on a Crossley Tender, was draped in the tricolour and guarded by a firing party from the Navan Brigade. On the same day, the RIC Barracks in Bray was evacuated. It was taken over by Brigadier Andy McDonnell accompanied by Comdt. Walsh and Capt. Kelly on behalf of the IRA. Head Constable Taylor, RIC, brought the party on a tour of inspection of the premises and



Bray RIC Barracks, 15 Dec 1921. Includes C. Sullivan, J. Dunne, P. Sugrue, S. O'Flaherty, G. Mills, P. Flynn, M. Maddock, T. Millen, P. Keaney.
Photo: Courtesy of Henry Cairns

the building was then signed for. A British military guard, accompanied by an armoured car, came as an escort for the departing police. The police started to leave at about 11.30 a.m. Many people shook hands with them; one person was seen to wave a Union Jack. At about noon, a detachment of the IRA marched up Castle Street in fine order. The party halted at the Courthouse and was cheered as it entered the barracks. The Courthouse was handed over to William Toomey, Sub-sheriff for the county.

When McDonnell took over Bray Barracks, his Volunteers were poorly armed. They had only a few rifles between them and some officers had pistols, as many weapons had been directed to the northern counties to counter the unionist assault on the nationalist populace. Between 1920 and 1922, hundreds of people in the north, mostly nationalists, were killed and wounded, and many thousands were driven from their homes. In the newly emerging state



Ernie O'Malley, c. December 1920. 'B. Stuart' is the alias under which he was arrested. Photo: UCD Archives P189/400 Papers of F.X. Martin

of Northern Ireland, the war continued against the British Army, the RUC and their Special Constabulary, which now numbered over 50,000 men. Pro- and anti-treaty factions were becoming more and more polarized, but there was agreement that arms and equipment of anti-treaty units were to be handed over to the Provisional Government to be sent north. These would be replaced, but not by weapons handed over to the Provisional Government by the British, thereby avoiding a diplomatic incident if weapons were captured.

Anti-Treaty meeting

An anti-treaty meeting was held on St. Patrick's Day 1922 at Bray Town Hall. About 1,000 people attended, together with St. Kevins Pipe Band. The speakers included Robert Barton TD (who, although he had signed the treaty and voted for it in the Dáil, took the anti-treaty side in the coming Civil War), Art O'Connor, TD, Donal Buckley, TD, Frank Gallagher, Joseph Campbell and Erskine Childers, TD, all of whom spoke against the treaty and demanded the retention of the Republic.

Men from the Dublin no. 2 Brigade had taken over Kilbride camp from the British on 21 March 1922. Lieutenant Pat O'Carroll of Naas (later West Wicklow battalion OC) was ordered to take 25 men and proceed to Beggars Bush Barracks to collect

arms and equipment. When they arrived, they were regarded with suspicion and refused entry, as it was known that their OC, Brigadier Andy McDonnell, was anti-treaty. McDonnell took the law into his own hands, commandeered a lorry, loaded it up with weapons and equipment and drove back to Kilbride camp. Republican forces in the county had little or no resources and survived by commandeering food and clothing. Bray Coastguard Station had been occupied by republicans on 5 April. On 2 May, there were complaints from the Dublin & South Eastern Railway that this group was removing at least one bag of coal from Bray Station every day without paying for it.

Divisions deepen

A general election was scheduled to take place on 14 June 1922. In an attempt to avoid civil war, Collins and de Valera signed a pact whereby Sinn Féin would nominate a joint panel of pro- and anti-treaty candidates in the same proportions as the outgoing Dáil. The plan was to form a coalition government in the likely event of Sinn Féin winning a majority, but Collins broke the pact on the eve of the election. During the first few months of 1922, the anti-treaty side enjoyed numerical superiority over the Provisional Government forces, however they failed to consolidate their advantages. With the divisions between pro- and anti-treaty factions growing daily, the Free State army was gaining in strength. Supplies of British weapons and equipment were arriving all the time. These included thousands of Lee-Enfield rifles, hundreds of machine guns, 18-pounder artillery pieces, armoured cars and Crossley Tenders and trucks. Their manpower situation also improved dramatically, with numbers reaching 8,000 by June. Many men from the disbanded Irish regiments in the British Army were now enlisting, all with invaluable military experience.

Civil War hits Wicklow

The Republican Army Council decided that in order to maintain the cohesion of its forces, it was necessary to set up a military HQ in Dublin. Accordingly, on 13 April, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Dublin Brigade occupied the Four Courts. On 11 May, armed men raided Bray and Shankill railway stations, taking away and burning bundles of newspapers.

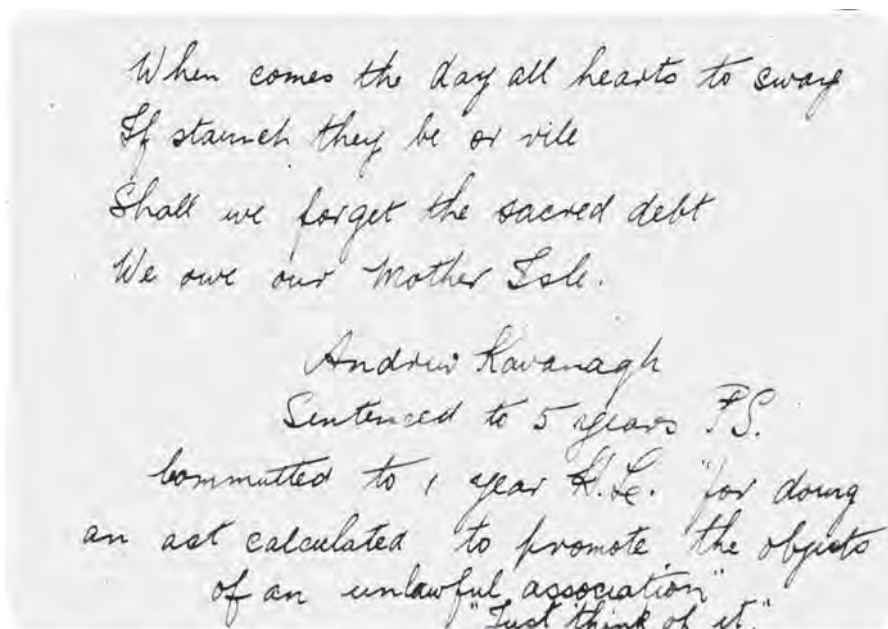
On 28 June, pro-treaty forces attacked the Four Courts using artillery and armoured cars. On Friday 30 June, the garrison at the Four Courts surrendered and over 100 men marched out under a flag of truce, having first destroyed their



Group of National Army soldiers and officers, 1923.
Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

weapons. Six men, including Ernie O'Malley, escaped. Previous to this, on 27 June, when intelligence was received on the intended attack on the Four Courts, Oscar Traynor, OC Dublin Brigade, issued a mobilization order. Comdt. Andy McDonnell, OC of the Dublin No. 2 Brigade, was to move his men to Blessington, where he was to join up with Michael Sheehan's column from Tipperary.²

The Dublin No. 2 Brigade held several other barracks and strongpoints in south County Dublin and east Wicklow. On 1 July, it abandoned these, setting fire to many, and began to make its way across the mountains to a consolidated position in Blessington, where it joined with companies from Wicklow, Kildare and Carlow. McDonnell supervised the burning of Bray Courthouse and RIC Barracks, while his men commandeered supplies of food, clothing, boots and blankets, meticulously leaving receipts in the name of the IRA for each item. A total of 25 motor vehicles were commandeered and loaded with men and supplies. The column set off over Calary Bog to Roundwood, the Sally Gap and on to Blessington. Many of the vehicles had to be abandoned due to overheating caused by overloading and the hilly nature of the roads.



Extract from Joe Lynch's autograph book Mountjoy Jail, 1920.

Photo: Courtesy of Henry Cairns

When Ernie O'Malley arrived in Bray a few hours after McDonnell's departure, he found that the fire in the barracks had gone out. He had the building doused with petrol and made sure that it was well alight before making his way over the mountains. He caught up with McDonnell at Sally Gap and proceeded with him into Blessington, where they found Harry Boland in charge.

Roadside ambushes, raids and arrests

On the evening of 12 July, Free State troops travelling by motorcar along the Bray Road to Enniskerry were fired on at Vallambrosa. Reinforcements arriving from Bray were also fired on. The Free State troops succeeded in encircling their attackers and captured three of them, however five more made good their escape. Three days later, lorries taking republican prisoners from Bray to Dublin were ambushed on the Bray side of Deansgrange; rifles and a Thompson machine gun were used by the attackers. There were no casualties.

Widespread Free State raids and arrests took place in Bray during July. The

premises of W. Leggett on Green Park Road, F. Leggett on Ravenswell Row, Joe Lynch on Herbert Road and T. Waldron on Dargle Road were searched. Mr. Collier of the Wicklow Garage Co. recovered two of his charabancs, which had been commandeered by Republicans on their way to Blessington at the beginning of the month and were abandoned on the Long Hill, Rocky Valley. Cars commandeered around Enniskerry were also recovered. On Tuesday 11 July, a strong column of Free State troops, accompanied by armoured cars, passed through Bray. Free State soldiers based in the Royal Hotel Bray raided the Town Hall and removed the telephone, stating that it was being used improperly.

By the end of October, it was possible to mobilise only 27 men for the whole of the 4th Battalion of the Dublin no. 2 Brigade, with not enough weapons for all. Ernie O'Malley reported that 70% of the men and 90% of the officers in the Brigade area had been arrested and the area between Bray and Arklow was in Free State hands.

Notes

- 1 *Wicklow People*, 7 Jan. 1922
- 2 Macardle, Dorothy, *The Irish Republic* (London, 1968), 652

BRAY - James Scannell

Two weeks in Bray, Easter 1919

Local newspapers and the proceedings of Bray Urban District Council (UDC) and the Rathdown Board Guardians reveal that even as the War of Independence was gathering pace across the country and the Spanish flu was exacting a heavy toll, in many ways, normal life continued in extraordinary times.

Saturday 12 April

Bray Petty Sessions

Sir Albert Meldon presided at a sitting of the Bray Petty Sessions (District Court), at which he was joined on the bench by Col. G. Rowan-Hamilton, Mr. M. Langton, Mr. Wellington Darley, Mr. W. Sullivan (RM), Mr. V. C. Le Fanu, Mr. J. W. Reigh, Mr. F. Jameson, and J. Cuddy. The police representative was District Inspector H. B. Molony.

Influenza death

Sir Albert Meldon opened the proceedings by stating that the magistrates had learned with great regret of the death of Constable McGoldrick who had died from influenza, which was widespread in the town and had affected nearly every household. The District Inspector thanked the magistrates for their expression of sympathy, stating that the deceased had only been married for a short time and had been cut off in the prime of his life.

Boy banished

In the case of the much adjourned proceedings against Shankill boy Andrew Rourke, Sergeant Hurst (Ballybrack) said that the boy had left the district but was not in Scotland where his father had promised to send him. His father said that he would not be brought back and Sir Albert Meldon, in dismissing the case without prejudice, said that if



Bray Esplanade, 1924.
Photo: Courtesy of Wicklow
County Library

the boy returned to the district, Sergeant Hurst could reinstate the charges against him. Shankill police station had been closed at the end of March 1918 with policing of the Shankill district divided between Bray, Enniskerry, and Ballybrack stations.

Cottage repossessed

Mr. David Frame, Bray Head House, was granted a decree for possession of a cottage occupied by Mr. Thomas McDonald at Newcourt. Mr. O'Dwyer, solicitor for Mr. McDonald, wrote stating that there was a claim under the Workmen's Compensation Act by Mr. McDonald against Mr. Frame for hearing at the next Quarter Sessions as his client's half-wages had not been paid and he had advised his client to submit to the demand for possession. Mr. J. J. Murphy, solicitor for Mr. Frame, said that Mr. McDonald had met with an accident while employed by Mr. Frame and that the compensation proceedings were pending, but that Mr. Frame had to comply with the instructions of the insurance company.

Butter and milk watered down

Sergeant Wall, Food Inspector, summoned Mr. James Cleary, Main Street, Bray, for 'having sold butter containing excess water.' Mr. McDonnell, solicitor for Mr. Cleary, applied for an adjournment on the grounds that Mr. Cleary was ill. He added that he had notified Sergeant Wall and the Drumkeen Dairy Company, Co. Limerick, that he would be seeking an adjournment and that although he sent the letter to them the previous Wednesday, it had not been received in time. Mr. Bradley, solicitor for the dairy company, said that they had been brought into the case as the manufacturer of the butter under warranty. The adjournment was granted. Mr. Denis Flynn, Glencormack, was summoned by Sergeant Wall for 'selling new milk which had been adulterated with 10% added water.' Mr. McDowell, who appeared for Mr. Flynn, said that his client was astonished when he received the summons and that he could not understand how the water got into the milk seeing that he milked the cows and delivered the milk himself. The only explanation that Mr. Flynn could offer was that he fed his cows on mangles, which made for very poor feeding. Sergeant Wall said Mr. Flynn had ten cows and sold his milk mainly in Little Bray. Sir Albert Meldon, in finding the case proved, said that this was a very serious offence as the milk was sold amongst the poor who were paying a high price for it and that it was terrible that they should receive adulterated milk. Mr. Flynn was fined £3, with 14s. costs.

Donkeys wandering

Patrick Flanigan, one offence, and Margaret Gaynor, two offences, both from Captain's Avenue, Little Bray, were summoned for allowing donkeys to wander on the road, and were fined 2s. for each offence.

Lorry abandoned

Constable Moore summoned Mr. Robert Comey, Green Park Road, Bray, for 'leaving an obstruction on the public road at Bray Bridge.' In his evidence, the constable said that he found two large parked lorries laden with timber and was told that one of the men deserted his lorry and had gone to Calary Races. District Inspector Molony told the court that the County Surveyor had complained about these obstructions. Mr. Comey was fined 10s. and costs.

Road death witnessed

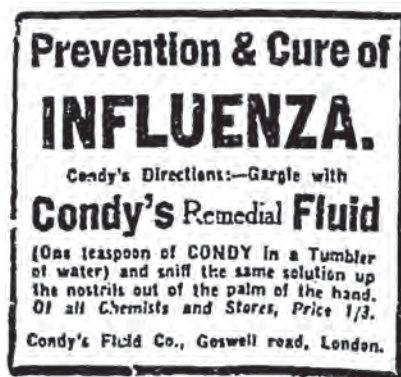
In Dublin, at an inquest into the death of 54-year-old Mr. John Sheehan, 3 Albert Place, Charlemont Street, Dublin, who died in the Meath Hospital as the result of injuries received from being knocked down by a military motor lorry, the principal witness was Mr. John Whitmore, engine driver, Bray. Mr. Whitmore said that on 22 February, he and the deceased were being driven from Peamount to Dublin. At Drimmagh, they alighted from the car and a military lorry following behind struck the deceased and broke both his legs. The jury returned a verdict attributing negligence to the driver.

Sunday 13 April

Spanish flu

The funeral of Constable McGoldrick, Esmonde Terrace, Bray, who had died from influenza the previous Friday, took place to St. Peter's Cemetery, Little Bray. Aged 29, he was a native of Middleton, Co. Cork, and had served as policeman for eleven years. Prior to being transferred to Bray in September 1918, he had been stationed in Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow. Married for only eight months, his wife had also been seriously ill with influenza when he died. Graveside payers were recited by Rev. Fr. Healy, C.C. The chief mourners were his wife, brother, father-in-law, and brother-in-law.

The two weekly local newspapers reported widely on the third wave of the influenza pandemic, known as the 'Spanish flu', which was still affecting people in the town, with doctors overworked, many people still contracting it, suffering it, or left debilitated by it. One product advertised for the prevention and cure



of influenza was 'CONDY'S Remedial FLUID' which users were urged to gargle and snort by placing 'one teaspoon of CONDY in a tumbler of water and sniff[ing] the same solution up the nostrils out of the palms of the hand.'

Monday 14 April

Bray UDC

Mr. J. M. Magee, Chairman, presided at a meeting of the Bray Urban District Council. The attendance included Mr. M. Langton (JP), Mr. J. Metcalfe, Mr. G.

Byrne, Mr. J. Bergin, Mr. M. Traynor, Mr. P. J. Dunne, Mr. J. Plunkett, Town Clerk Mr. J. McCaul, and Town Accountant Mr. P. Devitt.

Mr. J. Metcalfe, in accordance with his notice, moved that all increases granted to Council employees by way of war bonuses should be regarded as permanent increases in wages. After a short discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

Coal prices and supplies

The Town Clerk advised the meeting that he had been in contact with the town's coal merchants and the Coal Controller concerning fixing the price for coal. Mr. Collier had suggested that Bray should adopt Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire from 1920) prices plus the extra rates and dues which would amount to about 2s. 6d. per ton. The Coal Controller stated that he saw no need to send down a representative to Bray as they should be able to resolve the matter themselves, adding that in Dublin merchants were allowed 12s. 6d. per ton to cover distribution costs plus 1s. 2d. per ton profit in addition to the cost of the coal. Mr. Collier from Messrs Miller & Co. and Mr. Maxwell from Messrs Heiton & Co. attended this part of the meeting. No agreement was reached after extended negotiations. However, Mr. Collier said that he would willingly hand over his concern to the Council to operate if he was guaranteed a profit of 1s. per ton on his coal. A committee consisting of the Chairman (Mr. J. M. Magee (JP)), Mr. Metcalfe, and the Town Clerk (Mr. John McCaul) was appointed to look into this matter.

Accepted as contractors for supplies to the Council were Messrs J. E. Griffin & Sons, Brooks Thomas & Company, Raverty's Medical Hall, Tonge & Taggart, R. Foley, P. Keegan, the Electrical Apparatus Company, the Imperial Lamp Company, Messers Faulkner, Dublin, and George Foster, Bray. Mr. Metcalfe urged the Council to ensure that all these suppliers should only employ trade union labour.

Gas prices

A letter from the Board of Trade in connection with the Alliance & Dublin Consumers Gas Company's application for permission to increase the price for gas stated that it would allow the company to increase the dividend paid to shareholders but would limit the increase in prices. The Gas Company also submitted a letter relating to the proposed reduction in pressure to consumers which was referred to the General Purposes Committee to consider. Mr. Metcalfe said that the Council should ensure that the Gas Company kept the gas up to standard and suggested that they should have it tested as there was more air than gas in the supply.

Buying Irish

Messrs Lawlor & Deignan, in reply to a query raised at the previous Council meeting, confirmed that the material used to supply a new uniform for the Car Inspector would be of Irish manufacture. However, they did not reply to the query asking whether the material would be made by trade union labour and on the suggestion of Mr. Metcalfe the meeting decided to make inquiries about this issue.

May Day

It was decided to grant the workmen Labour Day (1 May) as a day off.

Council seat vacated

It was decided to declare the seat of Mr. Thomas O'Reilly vacant. A seat could be declared vacant if a councillor did not attend meetings for a period of six months without a valid certified reason, such as illness. The Chairman and Mr. Traynor said that Mr. O'Reilly had stated that he did not intend to remain a member of the Council. The Town Clerk said that he would write to Mr. O'Reilly and place the matter on the agenda for the next meeting.



Bray Main Street, c. 1900. Photo: Courtesy of Wicklow County Library

Wednesday 16 April

Sentenced to hard labour

Mr. Michael J. Hoey, Tuam, son of Mrs. Hoey, Duncairn Avenue, Bray, was sentenced to one year's imprisonment with hard labour. Mr. Hoey had been tried by General Court-martial in Galway on 25 March for 'having in his possession a number of documents describing the process for destroying telegraph wires and railways lines, and containing plans for attacks on police barracks and instructions for the destroying of bridges and the unlawful taking of arms and ammunition with the intention of using the information contained therein for the purpose of committing the acts referred to in contravention of the Defence of the Realm Regulations.' Mr. Hoey had acted as election agent

for Dr. Cusack, MP, and was a brother of Mr. James Hoey, Bray, who had been sentenced to three months of imprisonment the previous winter for illegal assembly by taking part in a public meeting outside Bray Town Hall on 15 August 1918.

Station clock reinstated

At Bray Railway station, the public clock, which had been missing for some time, much to the irritation of passengers, was reinstated with new faces after being repaired by a clock maker.

Rathdown Board of Guardians

Milk prices

Mr. C. M. McGowan chaired the weekly meeting of the Rathdown Board of Guardians, at which one of the items discussed was a letter received from the Local Government Board in which they indicated that they were prepared to approve a price of only 1s.8d. per gallon supplied by Mr. Doyle for the remainder of the contract. If, after advertising the contract, no lower offer was received, the board was empowered to cancel the contract and to enter into a new arrangement with Mr. Doyle for the supply of new milk at 1s.8d. per gallon. The Clerk reminded the meeting that the guardians had asked to the Local Government Board to approve a price of 2s. per gallon, which they had refused, and that when the guardians asked the Local Government Board to approve a price of 1s.9d. per gallon, this letter was the reply they received. The guardians ordered that the contract be advertised and that Mr. Doyle be informed of this.

Thursday 17 April

Fire on Upper Dargle Road

At around 6 a.m., a fire broke out in a shed at the back of the residence of Mrs. Noctor, Upper Dargle Road, Bray, where furniture belonging to a Mr. Doyle was being stored. The alarm was raised and the Bray Fire Brigade, assisted by Constables McCabe and Kenny, and a number of people, took part in the fire-fighting operation, but most of the furniture was destroyed before the fire was finally extinguished.

Good Friday, 18 April

Cottage Hospital

A public meeting scheduled to take place in the Town Hall that evening to discuss the proposed community-funded Cottage Hospital for Bray was cancelled. It was re-advertised for Easter Monday; however, it was further postponed and was finally held in the Town Hall on Monday 28 April. Despite the great community support this project enjoyed, it never came to pass, due mainly to the proximity of St Columcille's hospital in Loughlinstown and reduced government spending in the aftermath of the Great War.

Easter Saturday, 19 April

Theft, vandalism and good weather

On the Esplanade, during an inspection visit by Mr. Kohler from Messrs Dobbyn and Son, Watchmakers, Dame Street, Dublin, to check on the six coin-slot weighing machines that had been installed there the previous year, he discovered that two were missing and two were badly damaged. As Mr. Kohler had not inspected the machines for some time, he was unable to determine when the machines had been stolen or damaged.

Good weather brought out many visitors to Bray and the surrounding area with plenty of motor traffic in evidence as well as numerous cyclists. Roundwood and Glendalough quickly became overcrowded with visitors.

Easter Sunday, 20 April

War memorial, St Patrick's, Enniskerry

St. Patrick's Church, Powerscourt, Enniskerry, which had been closed for alterations for several weeks, re-opened for worship. The closure had been to facilitate the construction of a war memorial in the form of new brass Communion railings and the construction of a chancel. There was a large attendance at the Service, which was conducted by the Rector, Rev. H. C. S. Mecedry, assisted by Rev. W. F. Boyle. Lord Powerscourt read the Lessons, and the Roll of Honour recording the names of those killed in the war was read by the Rector. The 'Last Post' was sounded by Sergeant Howell, O.T.C. After the sermon, the rector dedicated the war memorial.



Quinsborough Road, Bray, c. 1900. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

In Enniskerry, a large trade union meeting took place at which four bands were present, two of which came from Bray. Speakers included Mr. J. Metcalfe, President of the Bray Trades Council, Mr. Harmon from Ballybrack, and Mr. O'Neill from Dublin.

Easter Monday, 21 April

Accident at waterfall

A visitor to Powercourt Waterfall sustained a serious injury while playing on a see-saw with some children. She was found to have sustained an injury to her spine. The ambulance of Messrs Miller & Co., Bray, brought her to her home.



Princess Patricia Hospital, formerly the International Hotel, Bray (opposite train station).
Photo: Courtesy of Wicklow County Library

Tuesday 22 April

Bray UDC

No quorum

A special meeting of Bray Urban District Council scheduled to discuss the Town Clerk's estimate of rates for the coming year (1919/1920) was unable to take place due to a lack of a quorum as only three councillors, Mr. George Byrne, Mr. Michael Traynor, and Mr. J. Metcalfe turned up.

National events, April 1919

01 APRIL — Fifty-two members of Sinn Féin attended the second meeting of Dáil Éireann at which Seán T. O'Kelly was elected Ceann Comhairle and Éamon de Valera President of Dáil Éireann.

02 APRIL — Constance Markievicz was appointed Minister for Labour, the first Irish female Cabinet Minister (the only one for sixty years) and the first in Western Europe.

15-19 APRIL — A general strike called by the Limerick Trades and Labour Council, known as the Limerick Soviet, took place with strikers running the city as a protest against the declaration covering of most of the city of Limerick and its surroundings as a 'Special Military Area' under the Defence of the Realm Act.

18 APRIL — 1,000 delegates from all over Ireland attended the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis in Dublin. Éamon de Valera was elected President of the organisation.

19 APRIL — Sinn Féin proposed an Executive Council of the Irish National Alliance to challenge the right of any foreign parliament to make laws for Ireland.

Wednesday 23 April

Rathdown Board of Guardians

Pay increases

Mr. T Clarke (JP), presided at the weekly meeting of the Rathdown Board of Guardians.

Mr. T. Murphy proposed that the cook, gate porter, and the cab driver employed at the workhouse be granted an increase of 10s. per week in their wages in accordance with the request made on their behalf by the Bray Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. In reply to various questions, the Chairman said that the cook was paid £37 a year and had left the Richmond Hospital to come to them and that if he had stayed there his salary would now

be £110 per annum; the gate porter, Mr. Farrell, received only £28 per year and had to support a houseful of children while the cab driver received £49 per year, adding that increases for these men had been refused previously by the Local Government Board. The motion was passed unanimously.

Bray UDC

At a meeting in Bray between the coal merchants represented by Mr. Collier and Mr. Maxwell, and the Council represented by the Town Clerk and Mr. J. Metcalfe, to fix the price of coal for Bray, the coal merchants offered to supply standard coal at 59s. 6d. per ton, 2s. more than the price offered at the last meeting of the Council.

Thursday 24 April

Bray UDC

Electricity works

Mr. A. D. Price, Engineering Inspector for the Board of Trade, held a public inquiry in Bray Hall into the application of the Bray Urban District Council for a loan of £5,000 to cover the extension to the electricity works operated by it, covering the installation of new equipment and the laying of cables to new areas. The Council was represented by Mr. J. J. Murphy, Solicitor. There were no objectors to the loan application. Town Clerk Mr. John McCaull outlined the reasons at length for the loan application and revealed the Council's financial state and, given the refusal of the Treasury to advance loans for this purpose, indicated that the funding could be raised by private mortgage. He was followed by Mr. William J. Sowter, Manager of the Bray Electric Light Works, who outlined the technical aspects of the current operation, provided details of the equipment that was needed, and indicated the proposed scheme was dependent on the removal and re-installation of equipment during the long days of summer, ideally within the next three months as during this period, no reserve equipment would be available. Mr. Martin Langton, Chairman of the Council's Electric Light Committee, also spoke in favour of the loan. The Inspector, on closing the proceedings, said that the result would be made known to them in due course.

Friday 25 April

Countess visits

Countess Markievicz, MP, and Mr. Seán Etchingham, MP for East Wicklow, were the guest speakers at an open-air meeting of the O’Rahilly Sinn Féin Club outside the Town Hall. Mr. James Hoey presided. Countess Markievicz gave a lengthy address covering a variety of issues which were greeted with applause by the large crowd present. She urged people to support the co-operative movement as she felt that the policy of England at that time was to open in Ireland branch shops of the big English companies in order to squeeze out the small Irish shopkeeper and to secure a firmer economic grip on the country. At the end of her address, she was presented with a bouquet of flowers by two girls, the Misses O’Reilly, on behalf the O’Rahilly Sinn Féin Club. Mr. Etchingham addressed the gathering in Irish and thanked them for electing him, concluding by urging people to learn the native language and to join the national movement, for the present was the time of national salvation. The following night, Mr. Etchingham addressed a public meeting in Market Square, Wicklow Town, in which he asked those present to join the Sinn Féin clubs and the Irish Volunteers, to learn discipline and self-control and to give Countess Markievicz a hearty welcome the following day when she was due to visit and address them.

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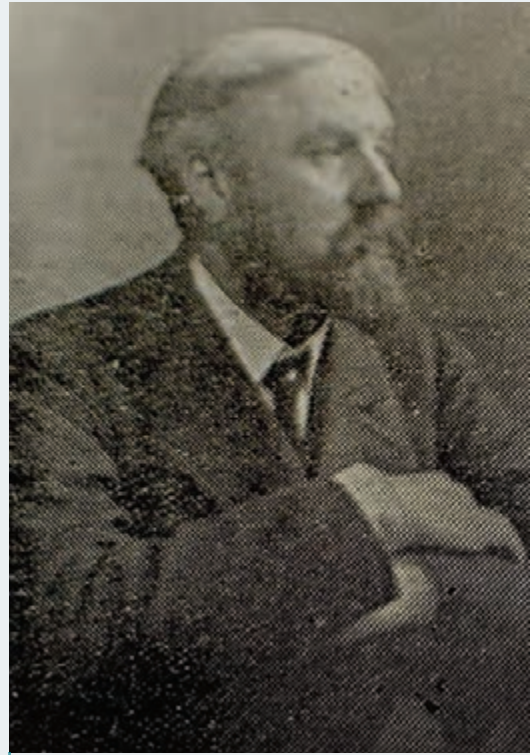
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CARNEW - Kevin Lee

The assassination of Coollattin land agent, Frank Brooke, 30 July 1920

In 1887, Francis Theophilus Brooke became the eleventh of the fifteen consecutive land agents who guided the Coollattin estate through 282 years of smooth operation from 1695 to 1977. During the dark years of the mid-nineteenth century, none were more adroit stewards of lands, resources and tenant farms than Robert Chaloner Sr. and his son Robert Chaloner Jr. In their combined 26 years of administration, they served the population of the estate in times better and worse, richer and poorer, abundance and famine. Father and son shared a highly developed sense of moral obligation, a respect for transparency, and an ability to make consistently wise decisions in difficult circumstances. As representatives of the Earl Fitzwilliam, they had day-to-day responsibility for the entire Irish enterprise, and that required constant interaction with the tenants on Coollattin lands. While issues regarding Coollattin leases were often brought to them by their own estate staff, many of the Chaloners' interventions were in response to appeals for justice made directly by the tenants themselves. Those cases often concerned matters of a deeply personal nature. Thanks to their scrupulous record keeping, we still have access to the full range of problems they dealt with and the solutions they engineered.



Frank Brooke. Photo:
Courtesy of Kevin Lee



7th Earl Fitzwilliam. Photo:
Courtesy of Kevin Lee



Carnew Castle. Photo: Kevin Lee

The agents who succeeded the Chaloners were different. Unlike their predecessors, their roots did not lie in Yorkshire. Frederick Ponsonby, Captain McNeill and Frank Brooke came from the Irish Protestant landed class whose power depended on the maintenance of the union with Britain. The appointment of Frank Brooke as agent in 1887 reflected the growing opposition of the 6th Earl Fitzwilliam to the prospect of Home Rule. Ironically, William E. Gladstone and Charles S. Parnell, the two politicians fronting the Home Rule movement, had for many years been close friends and allies of the 6th Earl. Both men had enjoyed the Fitzwilliam hospitality and the lavish entertainment provided at Coollattin House. Demands by tenants for fair rents and security of tenure for Irish farmers received a sympathetic hearing from the Yorkshire-based earl. However, any effort to sever the union between the two islands was anathema to his thinking. His political utterances were backed by unsuccessful efforts to establish branches of the Unionist party, first in Shillelagh and later in Carnew.

In 1902, William de Meuron Fitzwilliam inherited his grandfather's title. He also inherited Frank Brooke as agent on his Irish estate at Coollattin. Brooke came from near Colebrooke Park, just outside Brookeborough, a village near Lisnaskea in County Fermanagh. He was a cousin of Basil Brooke, later Lord Brookeborough, who served as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland from 1943 until 1963. Like the rest of his family, Brooke was a prominent member of the Orange Order, immersed in extreme unionist politics. In a general election held in late 1885, Frank Brooke, representing the unionist cause, had stood



Grave of Frank Brooke, Shillelagh Churchyard. Photo: Kevin Lee



Commemorative tablet in Shillelagh church. Presented by Frank Brooke's widow. Photo: Jerry Cassidy

unsuccessfully in opposition to Henry Campbell in the south Fermanagh constituency. Campbell was a nationalist. He was also a secretary to Charles S. Parnell. Brooke was appointed as agent on the Coollattin estate in 1887, just one year after William Gladstone's first Home Rule bill for Ireland had failed to get through parliament. The appointment also came in a period when the 6th Earl Fitzwilliam was vehemently opposed to Home Rule.

Frank Brooke had many irons in the fire. He was a Deputy Lieutenant in both Co. Fermanagh and Co. Wicklow. In Fermanagh, he was a Justice of the Peace. He was chairman of the Dublin and South Eastern Railway Company, director of the National Bank, director of the Norwich Insurance Company, steward of the Irish Turf Club and member of the Kildare Street Club, an almost exclusively protestant and Anglo-Irish gentleman's club. Brooke spent a number of days in Dublin each week, where he stayed in either the Kildare Street Club or the Shelbourne Hotel. He was close to the earl and took part in some of the highly intelligent and mechanically minded Fitzwilliam's eccentric pursuits, including in 1904, a failed expedition in an ill-suited vessel to the Cocos Island off the coast of Costa Rica to discover buried treasure. Brooke's son was the manager of a large ostrich farm in South Africa, and he made an extended visit to that country between 1911 and 1914.

It was Frank Brooke's relationship with Field Marshal John French which was to prove his downfall. In May 1918, French had been appointed Lord Lieutenant and Supreme Commander of the British Army in Ireland. During the War of

Independence, he directed operations against the IRA. He appointed Brooke a member of the seven-man privy council. He also took Brooke on board as a private adviser. The two met frequently to discuss tactics and soon found themselves on the IRA's blacklist. Michael Collins, the IRA's Head of Intelligence, instructed his elite hit squad, the 'Twelve Apostles', to assassinate both French and Brooke.

The Wicklow connection

The treatment meted out by the courts to Robert Barton probably gave extra cause for the inclusion of Brooke on the hit list. Barton was a close friend and confidante of Michael Collins. In February 1919, at speeches given in Shillelagh and Carnew, Glendalough native Barton threatened vengeance on both French and Brooke for the incarceration of Shillelagh-born nationalist, Tom Fleming. Barton was charged with sedition and was sentenced to three months of penal servitude. On St Patrick's Day 1919, Barton made a daring escape from Mountjoy Prison. He left behind a cheeky note for the governor informing him that he was leaving due to the fact that the room that he had in Mountjoy did not reach his standards. He said that he would, at a later date, be sending a servant to collect his luggage.



Paddy Daly, one of Michael Collins' 'Twelve Apostles' and one of Brooke's assassins. Photo, May 1922, shows Daly in National Army uniform. Wiki Commons

On 19 December 1919 the Apostles made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate French at Ashtown on the fringes of Dublin's Phoenix Park. A party of eleven IRA members ambushed the two cars in which French and his bodyguards were travelling. The Lord Lieutenant escaped unhurt while IRA man Martin Savage was fatally wounded. During the summer of the following year, the IRA stalked Frank Brooke in Dublin, but could not find the right opportunity to kill him. Three Apostles, including infamous IRA hitman Vinny Byrne, were instructed to travel to Coollattin and do the job there. Travelling by bicycle, they stayed with fellow Apostle Tom Keogh in Knockanna, and from there they travelled to Coollattin for a reconnaissance. The squad reported back to Dublin that dense shrubbery lining the roads through the estate would make an assassination difficult and escape thereafter even more so. They were ordered back to the capital.

During the last week of July 1920, Brooke travelled to Dublin, as was his custom. On Friday 30 July, he attended an executive meeting of the Dublin and South East Railway. The meeting took place in the boardroom at Westland Row railway station. Once the meeting concluded, Brooke went to his private office at the station accompanied by Mr. A. T. Cotton, a fellow director and the Irish Traffic Manager of the London and North Western Railway Company. Shortly after noon, four of the Apostles arrived at the hallway of the station, undisguised and nonchalant. While one kept guard at ground level, three went upstairs and into Brooke's office where they saw him standing between the window and the fireplace. They then fired a hail of bullets and Brooke died instantly. Cotton managed to escape the gunfire by diving under a table. On the return down the stairway, Paddy Daly asked fellow assassin James Slattery, 'are you sure we got him?' Unsure whether they had fulfilled their mission, the two men returned to the meeting room and fired two further bullets into the prostrate body of Frank Brooke. Later, a loaded revolver was found in his pocket. He never had time to reach for it. No one heard the hit as the killers had timed their entrance to coincide with the passing of a noisy train on the tracks outside Brooke's window.

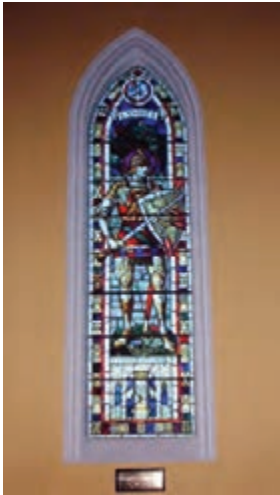
Frank Brooke had feared for his safety. In his will, he stated that 'if I am killed by any of these blackguards I want George and Dermie to get as much as possible out of the government'. A compensation of £25,000 was made to Brooke family within a month of his death.

Frank Brooke was interred alongside the remains of his first wife Alice in the churchyard in Shillelagh. His funeral was a sombre occasion. Former tenants walked two deep and carried floral wreaths in front of the cortège as it proceeded slowly from his residence, Ardeen House, to the church. The mourning party included Earl Fitzwilliam who had travelled from Yorkshire for the occasion. Brooke was the only land agent at Coollattin to be assassinated, and his murder was totally unrelated to the discharge of his duties there. In Coollattin, he had been popular and known as an efficient and fair-minded agent, chairman of the Union Board of Guardians, and Justice of the Peace. At local level, he was also the President of the Shillelagh Sports Committee. On this committee, he



Ardeen House, Shillelagh, the residence of Frank Brooke. Now a Cheshire Home. Photo: Kevin Lee

John French (1852-1925)
British Army officer who as
Lord Lieutenant of Ireland
survived an assassination
at Ashtown as he was about
to be driven to his residence
at Phoenix Park, Dublin, on
19 December 1919. An army
sergeant points to one of the
bullet holes, Pictorial Press
Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo



Stained glass window
in Shillelagh Church to
the memory of Frank
Brooke. Presented by the
Fitzwilliam family
Photo: Jerry Cassidy

worked harmoniously with men, such as Shillelagh hotelier Pat Kenny, who were wholly opposed to him politically. Commencing in 1896, this committee, under the rules of the GAA, organised an annual sports day held on the village Fair Green. Prizes for the athletics and cycling events were provided by Coollattin estate and were presented by agent Brooke. From 1903 and 1909, it was Brooke who had single-handedly negotiated the transfer of many thousands of acres to the ownership of tenant farmers, offering terms more favourable than those granted on most Irish landed estates. In recognition of that work, his former Coollattin tenants had thrown a party for him at Coollattin House where they presented him with three inscribed silver cups and a silver dessert service. Now they grieved his loss, unaware of the split personality that was Frank Brooke: few knew of his ultra-loyalism and fewer still suspected his role as an active adviser to those fighting against the establishment of an independent Irish republic. The 7th Earl Fitzwilliam had no interest in Brooke's politics, and in fact took no side, even as the Irish War of Independence was raging. As the IRA was planning and perpetrating the assassination of his agent, William Fitzwilliam's prime concern lay in the design and construction of his private nine-hole golf course in his beloved Coollattin.

CARNEW – Kevin Lee

Carnew Emmets GAA club and the growth of nationalism from 1888 to the War of Independence



The golden jubilee celebration of the 6th Earl Fitzwilliam and Lady Fitzwilliam in 1888. This photo was taken at the cricket ground in Coollattin. The man on the extreme left with a piece of paper in his hand is agent Frank Brooke who was gunned down by the IRA at Westland Row railway station in July 1920. Photo: Courtesy of Kevin Lee

Lavish living

William Spencer Wentworth acceded to the title 6th Earl Fitzwilliam in 1857. He was the longest serving of the Earls Fitzwilliam, holding the title for 45 years until his death in 1902. During his tenure, expenditure on the sprawling Coollattin estate was extravagant. Notable buildings such as Ardeen House and the Town Hall in Shillelagh were built during this period, along with many humble homes for estate workers and tenants. The Woodenbridge to Shillelagh railway was also

built, with intermediate stations at Aughrim, Ballinglen and Tinahely.

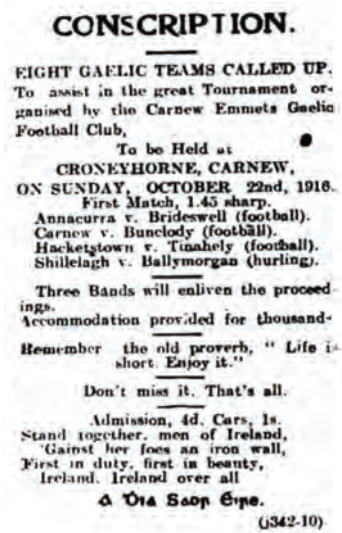
Arguably, the local reverence and respect accorded to the Earl and his wife Lady Harriet accrued from the manner in which money generated by the family's coal mines in Yorkshire was splashed out on entertainment and lavish living at Coollattin House. Every major event in both the British royal family and the Fitzwilliam family was marked by ostentatious revelry.

Lavish spending

The marriage of the Duke of Wales and the Princess of Denmark in 1863, the death of Lady Harriet Fitzwilliam at Coollattin and the arrival of the Fitzwilliam heir apparent, Lord Milton, to take up residence in Carnew Castle all provided occasions for the slackening of the Fitzwilliam purse strings. In 1888, the golden jubilee of the Earl and his wife was marked by a three-day bash in the grounds of Coollattin House. On the first day of the celebration, almost 3,000 children were transported to Coollattin House, where every conceivable type of swing, swinging boat and merry-go-round had been installed for their use. The children were provided with a meal served in the then two largest marquees ever erected in Ireland. Tenants of the estate were entertained in the marquees on the following day. The catering was entrusted to the English firm of Wright, as there was no firm in Ireland capable of providing so many meals at the one time.

Money expended on catering and society events at the big house was matched by expenditure on the provision of facilities for sporting and recreational activities. On the outskirts of Carnew, in the townland of Umrigar, what might nowadays be described as a sporting 'centre of excellence' was developed. Central to this facility was a racecourse which was laid out, built and maintained by staff from the building yard at Coollattin. It had a jumps course, a hurdle course and a flat course. Drainage work was carried on the wetter parts. There was a viewing stand, jockeys' room, bar, etc. It attracted runners and riders from some of the country's best-known stables.

The facility at Umrigar also had an athletics track, a cinder cycling track and a cricket ground. The stand, pavilion and changing room also provided facilities for cricket matches and athletic sports meetings. A history of the exploits of teams representing Carnew Cricket Club has yet to be written, but there is a record of a match and a return match with a team representing Wicklow Town. The encounters between the two teams were marked by hostility. On



Wicklow People advertisement (7 October) for the 1916 football tournament. World War 1 was in progress. The wise boys in the Emmets club were having their own take on 'CONSCRIPTION'.

play a game due to the advent of darkness. In October 1889, the *Wicklow People* reported that the young men of the town had convened a meeting with the aim of resurrecting the team. Significantly, the Carnew club was now given the name the 'Esmond Kyan G.A.C.' after one of the iconic Wexford leaders of the 1798 Rebellion. Kyan, a native of Monamolin, had fought with distinction on the British side during the American War of Independence. Back home, he threw in his lot with the insurgents and commanded the artillery at the unsuccessful siege of Arklow on 9 June 1798. It was here that he lost his left arm when struck by a cannonball. More significantly, from a Carnew point of view, it was Kyan who led the raiding party that torched the newly built Coollattin House. On 20 June 1798, he unsuccessfully sought to save the lives of the loyalists who were executed on Wexford Bridge. It profited him little—he himself was executed on the same bridge one month later, on 20 July. In naming the club after Kyan, the people of Carnew were making a statement.

Progress in expanding the influence of the GAA in both Carnew and Shillelagh stalled during the 1890s. This was no doubt due to the enduring influence and patronage of Coollattin House, which continued to invest in winning local hearts and minds. In May 1893, the annual sports in Shillelagh, now held under GAA rules, had as its patrons Earl Fitzwilliam and Lady Alice Fitzwilliam. Frank Brooke, the agent, was its Honorary President.

As the century ended, Carnew GAA club was revived once more. Now, in another blatant rejection of the politics of the Coollattin administration, the club was named 'Kruger's Volunteers' after Paul Kruger, the Boer leader in the war being waged against the British in South Africa. The Fitzwilliam heir, Lord Milton and Frank Brooke's son were both serving with the British army during this campaign.

As the 20th century dawned, the Carnew club grew from strength to strength. The rising popularity of the rejuvenated games can to a large extent be attributed to two of the town's prominent nationalists, club president Michael O'Toole

and Croneyhorn farmer John McCrea, a prominent nationalist in south Wicklow and member of the Carnew branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. In May 1913, McCrea was co-opted to Wicklow County Council to fill the vacancy left by the late Michael Byrne (JP) of Coolalug House. His sons Bob, Jim and Pat were all later active in the struggle for Irish freedom. Pat was employed in a shop owned by his brother Bob in Rathmines in Dublin. He was active in the Volunteers and was injured while fighting in the GPO during Easter week, 1916. In a daring attempt to spring General Sean MacKeown (Mac Eoin) from Mountjoy Prison, Pat, dressed in British army uniform, drove a stolen armoured car into the prison precinct. Later, on 15 June 1920, together with fellow Wicklow members of Michael Collins' 'squad', Tom Keogh and Tom Cullen, he was one of those sent to Gorey to assassinate District Inspector Percival Lea-Wilson, who while stationed in Dublin, was the officer responsible for the mistreatment of 1916 leaders Tom Clarke and Seán Mac Diarmada. Lea-Wilson was walking to his home from the RIC station in Gorey. At Gorey railway station, he bought a copy of the *Irish Times*. As he walked reading the paper, he was gunned down on the road leading to Ballycanew.



General Seán Mac Eoin,
c. 1917-22. Wiki Commons

McCrea's field

John McCrea provided the Carnew Emmets club with a playing field on his farm. The new playing facility now replaced the one developed by Earl Fitzwilliam at Umrigar as the town's most popular sporting venue. It was here that the young men of the town trained and played tournament games against some of the country's most prominent Gaelic football teams. At Umrigar, Jack Molloy had been a star cricketer and opening batsman; he now abandoned the willow bat and went to McCrea's field to hone his skill as a footballer. Two members of the team, the captain Jim 'Cox' Byrne and Michael 'Gunner' Behan were fine proponents of the game and acquired a cult status throughout the county. The Carnew club, when advertising tournament games, invited patrons to come to see the magical skill of 'Gunner' Behan.

The tournaments staged in McCrea's field created a great buzz in the area. In August 1909, the famous Dublin team, McBride Mitchels, came by train to Shillelagh where the players were entertained to lunch in Kenny's Hotel.

GAAELS, DON'S MISS THE GREAT
TREAT IN STORE FOR YOU
AT SHILLELAGH
ON NEXT SUNDAY, MAY 1st,
When the O'Donovan Rossas (Dublin
1909 League winners) will travel down
with their renowned inter-county players
to meet the far-famed Carnew Emmets
(county Wicklow championship finalists
1908-1909).
Also Clonegal v. Carnew Dwyers.
COME AND SEE THE "GUNNER"
AND HIS TACTICS.
FIRST MATCH AT 1.30 P.M.
Admission, 3d. Ladies, free. (p)

Footballer Michael 'Gunner' Behan acquired something of a cult status. Here patrons are being urged to come to watch his 'tactics'. *Wicklow People*, 30 April 1910

After dinner, they were conveyed by horses and carts to the playing field in Croneyhorn. The leading cart displayed a magnificent Carnew Emmets banner, which had recently been commissioned by the club. The visitors were led onto the field by the Carnew Brass Band. Prior to the game, the teams had their photographs taken. Carnew won the toss and played against the breeze in the first half. At half time, Carnew led by 1-4 to 0-1. Only one point was scored during the second half, with Carnew winning 1-5 to 0-1. It was a good year for the emerging club. It reached the county senior football final but was beaten by Rathnew.

Seven years later, on Easter Sunday 1916, Carnew won the county junior title, defeating Donard in a game

played in Tullow. In the senior football final of the same year, in a game played at Mount Pleasant, the Emmets played a draw with arch rivals Annacurra. They were awarded the title when their opponents failed to turn up for the replay.

The growth of Carnew Emmets GAA club both reflected and influenced the changes in local politics in the years between 1888 and the War of Independence. By 1919, the sporting focus in Carnew had shifted from the Coollattin racecourse, athletics track and cricket ground at Umrigar to the GAA ground located on the farm of John McCrea in Croneyhorn. The impressive oak used in the viewing stand, lounge and changing rooms at Umrigar was taken down and redeployed by the townsfolk to make furniture and home improvements. The townland of Umrigar no longer echoed with the shouts of excited spectators or with the music of British army bands. The people of Carnew had chosen to play their sport independently of the big house; the next step was to secure national independence.



The Carnew Emmets team of 1909. Photo: Courtesy of Kevin Lee.

Back Row: Thomas Cullen, Michael O'Toole (President), Edward Travers (Vice President), N. Lynch (Treasurer), D. O'Sullivan (Assistant Secretary).

2nd Row: P. J. Moynihan (Secretary), A. McDonald, T. Murphy, G. Keogh, O. O'Neill (Goalkeeper), J. Brennan, T. Brennan, D. Cullen, J. Bowe, John McCrea.

3rd Row: P. Browne, P. Austin, P. Murphy, M. Gray, James Byrne (Captain), J. Condrón, J. Somers, M. Condrón.

Front Row: William Birch, M. Behan, James McCrea, M. Doyle, Michael Redmond, P. Doyle.



Carnew Castle c. 1865-1914.
Photo: By kind permission of
the National Library of Ireland

DUNLAVIN – Chris Lawlor

The War of Independence in and around Dunlavin: January 1919 to June 1920

On Saturday 4 January 1919, the *Nationalist and Leinster Times* carried a report on a large meeting in Baltinglass on 29 December 1918, called for the purpose of supporting the invitation of President Wilson of the USA to Ireland (one of several invitations issued by towns all over the country). One of the principal speakers was from Dunlavin, and it is probable that many Dunlavin people were in attendance that day. Thomas Fleming from Shillelagh apologised on behalf of the newly elected Robert Barton (Sinn Féin), who could not be there, and he gave a rousing speech, stating that ‘the people of Ireland were not looking for Home Rule. Absolute independence was the object, and when they returned Mr. Barton by five to one, they voiced that claim ... [that] seventy-five per cent of the people here in west Wicklow had voted for absolute independence’.¹ Dunlavin man John J. Cunningham also addressed the meeting, offering congratulations on the return of Mr. Barton. Cunningham told the gathering that

they had proved to the world ... that Ireland stands for complete independence. The Irish Party had brought the country to destruction, and it was not in Westminster that redress was to be sought. The rights of small nations must be recognised at the Peace Conference ... Some people say that abstention from Westminster is wrong. A few months ago, when conscription was sought to be imposed on the manhood of Ireland, the Irish Party opposed it on the floor of the House of Commons, but they failed. The voice of the people on their own soil had done what the Irish Party could not do across the water, and so the fight for independence must be carried on at home. They had shown by their votes that their wish was to see Ireland, their native land, as free as it was in the days of Saint Patrick.

The meeting ended with ‘patriotic songs’ and ‘a large procession, headed by the local Pipers’ Band and Cumann na mBan’.² On Sunday 5 January, when Robert

Barton did speak at a meeting in Baltinglass Town Hall,³ his appearance brought further focus on the new political reality in west Wicklow, and throughout the country: Sinn Féin republicanism had replaced Irish Parliamentary Party nationalism as the political voice of Ireland. The Volunteers were re-forming and Sinn Féin MPs were not going to take their seats in Westminster. Sinn Féin invited all 105 Irish MPs to meet in the Mansion House in Dublin. The twenty-six Unionists and six remaining Home Rulers refused the invitation, but twenty-seven of the seventy-three Sinn Féin MPs attended. Most of the others were still incarcerated following the 'German plot'. Michael Collins and Harry Boland were absent because they were organising de Valera's daring escape from Lincoln Jail. The Mansion House meeting constituted the First Dáil, and the new TDs (as opposed to MPs) reasserted the 1916 'Declaration of the Irish Republic', passed the 'Democratic Programme' (of social reforms)⁴ and issued a 'Message to the Free Nations of the World', which was read to the House by west Wicklow TD Robert Barton.⁵ On the same day, a small group of Volunteers led by Sean Treacy killed two RIC constables at Soloheadbeg in County Tipperary, an incident usually taken as the start of the Irish War of Independence (also known as the Anglo-Irish War) of 1919–21. Following the Dáil's declaration of the Republic, the reorganised Volunteers took to calling themselves the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

The opening months of the War of Independence were quiet throughout County Wicklow.⁶ The presence of the British army at the Curragh, Naas and the Glen of Imaal caused difficulties for the IRA in Dunlavin and its hinterland. One observer noted that 'the North Kildare brigade as well as that of West Wicklow found little scope for manoeuvring their manpower in the national interests, as every call from headquarters was closely watched by the army of occupation, whose base may be said to be at their very doors'.⁷

The county was geographically fragmented and Wicklow IRA Volunteers found themselves serving in different divisions. The west of the county was covered by three divisions. Thus, for example, Hollywood was included in the First Eastern Division (Kildare Independent Battalion and later 7th Battalion, Kildare Brigade),⁸ Vallemount was included in the Second Eastern Division (Third Battalion, Second Dublin Brigade)⁹ and Dunlavin was in the area covered by the Third Eastern Division (Sixth Battalion, Carlow Brigade).¹⁰ Study of the military records from the immediate Dunlavin area is further complicated by the fact that Dunlavin village was almost on the very northeastern extremity of the geographical area covered by the Third Eastern Division, with the result

that Volunteers from County Wicklow townlands in Dunlavin parish and townlands adjacent to Dunlavin within its County Kildare hinterland found themselves attached to different IRA units to men in and around the village itself. This meant that, for example, while William (Bill) Esmonde of Dunlavin village was a captain in A Company (Dunlavin), 6th Battalion, Carlow Brigade,¹¹ Patrick Byrne of Tubber (Tober), Dunlavin, was a Volunteer in C Company (Hollywood), 2nd North Kildare Battalion, Kildare Brigade,¹² while William Litchfield of Usk, Dunlavin, was a Volunteer in E Company (Kilgowan), 6th Battalion, Carlow Brigade.¹³ The IRA divisional areas are shown on the map below, adapted from P. Kane’s witness statement.¹⁴



Map by Padraig Kane BMH. WS1572, with author’s amendments and additions showing Dunlavin’s position in the IRA divisional commands. The Carlow Brigade area is outlined in colour.

Building tensions

There is no mention of the War of Independence in the Wicklow County Council agenda in February 1919, when the items put down for resolution included declaring a vacancy on the County Council in consequence of the death of veteran nationalist Joseph Dunne of Merginstown, Dunlavin; filling five vacancies (including the one caused by Dunne's death) on the county committee of agriculture; appointing the council's moiety of the school attendance committee of the Dunlavin division; and considering and approving a county-wide scheme for the treatment of venereal diseases.¹⁵ However, as sporadic violent incidents began to occur throughout the country, elsewhere there were indications that the conflict was beginning to affect everyday life in the county. Wicklow GAA passed a resolution stating that it 'considered the action of the Central Council as arbitrary in suspending all civil servants from the GAA without taking the opinion of the Gaels of Ireland, and calling for an immediate withdrawal of the order'.¹⁶ The GAA ban on civil servants and public servants such as RIC constables who served the Crown happened against a backdrop of IRA preparation in county Wicklow,¹⁷ where 'local commanders were still drilling and training their members'.¹⁸ This was certainly the case near Dunlavin, where half of the men of A company, 6th Battalion, Carlow Brigade, were involved in 'parades, field training, dispatch work, intelligence duties and police duties under arms' during 1919.¹⁹ No record exists of the activities of the other half of A company, which included Dunlavin village;²⁰ however, it is probably safe to assume, given the small number of violent incidents in the immediate vicinity of Dunlavin during the year 1919, that it was engaged in similar pursuits.

Incidents of arson

In March 1920, Wicklow County Council unsuccessfully appealed an award of £700 to Alice Elsie Tynte in respect of seventy cocks of hay burned on Copeland's farm at Plezica, Dunlavin the previous year.²¹ On 3 January 1920, the *Nationalist and Leinster Times* reported on a meeting of the Dunlavin branch of the County Kildare Farmers' Union at which R. G. Dixon presided. Two members of the branch had been the victims of arson as their hay had been incinerated. A reward of £50 was offered for information about those responsible.²² Incidents of arson during the War of Independence survived in local folk-memory in Dunlavin until the later decades of the twentieth century. According to local lore, the targets of the campaign were mostly larger farmers and gentry figures from the landed classes.

The oral history of these attacks on property portrayed them as republicans striking a blow against local establishment figures.²³ However, contemporary sources such as newspaper reports reveal that the attacks happened against the backdrop of the labourers' dispute. It is possible (perhaps probable) that the mostly second-hand accounts given in the late twentieth century merged the two conflicts in local folk-memory. It is also very possible that some local men were involved in both the agitation connected to the labourers' dispute and the activities of the IRA at this time.

As 1920 progressed, there were other signs of disruption as the War of Independence escalated. The Dáil had established its own courts by decree in June 1919.²⁴ A year later, there were no cases to be heard at the petty sessions of Dunlavin.²⁵ Lord Monteagle observed the 'Sinn Féin courts are steadily extending their jurisdiction... [which] shows the growing and remarkable capacity of the Irish people for self-government'.²⁶ In June 1920, Dunlavin patients needing treatment in the local infirmary were redirected from Baltinglass to Naas,²⁷ as the military was now in occupation of Baltinglass workhouse.²⁸ This occupation occurred in response to increased levels of violence. Saundersgrove House (between Dunlavin and Baltinglass) was burned out on 8 May 1920, and many smaller RIC stations were abandoned and incinerated about this time.²⁹ Saundersgrove had passed into the ownership of the Tynte family of Dunlavin,³⁰ and they were later awarded over £26,000 compensation to be levied off the county.³¹ The destruction of Saundersgrove prevented its potential occupation and use by the military, but there was a possible symbolic motive too: its former owner, Morley



Memorial stone on Dunlavin green commemorating the Dunlavin massacre. Photo by the author.



Saunders Grove (Saundersgrove) House, Baltinglass
c. 1865-1914. Destroyed in 1920. Photo: By kind
permission of the National Library of Ireland.

Saunders, was vilified locally for his part in the infamous Dunlavin massacre of 1798.³² He was singled out for dishonourable mention in the broadside ballad 'Dunlavin Green'.³³ This ballad was identified by Eamon Broy (the spymaster of Dublin Castle) as one of the songs 'of the patriotic variety' which inspired his youthful republican ideals.³⁴

The IRA was active across the locality during this period. There were arson attacks in Ballitore, Donard, Stratford-on-Slaney and Dunlavin.³⁵ There were also sporadic violent incidents in the vicinity of Dunlavin from April to July 1920. Twenty-six Volunteers took part in the burning of Ballytore (Ballitore) RIC barracks. They included Thomas Flood of Ballinure and John Deay of Spratstown.³⁶

Six Volunteers, including Patrick Stynes and Chris Murphy of Grangecon were involved in an ambush at Colbinstown, and another six, including Denis Byrne of Baltinglass, were involved in an attack on the town's RIC barracks. Byrne also took part in the Colbinstown action.³⁷ James Dempsey and Patrick Travers of Blackrath were part of an eighteen-strong IRA contingent that raided Colbinstown station for mails.³⁸ The RIC station and courthouse in Ballymore-Eustace also came under attack from a unit of eighteen local Volunteers, including Arthur Doran and James Winders.³⁹ Incidents such as these indicate that the IRA in Dunlavin and its hinterland was gaining the upper hand on the local gentry, magistrates and other authority figures. Of these, most vulnerable of all were the RIC constables in Dunlavin, who were now overtly targeted by the IRA and shunned by many Dunlavin residents. A concerted campaign of shootings, boycotts, intimidation and arson led to many RIC retirements and resignations, and discouraged recruitment.⁴⁰ There was a heightened state of tension in the Dunlavin area as the War of Independence moved into the second half of 1920.

Notes

- 1 Fleming's percentage was slightly inaccurate. Over 75% of voters had chosen Robert Barton. In the general election of 1918, the west Wicklow electorate of 11,683 (7,898 men and 3,775 women) had a total poll of 7,609 (65.18%) who voted thus: 6,239 (82%) for Robert Barton (Sinn Féin) and 1,370 (18%) for The O'Mahony (Irish Party); a Sinn Féin majority of 64%. <https://electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1918&cons=237> (visited on 22 Jan 2019).
- 2 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 4 Jan 1919.
- 3 Paul Gorry, *Baltinglass chronicles 1851-2001* (Dublin, 2006), 172.
- 4 J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985* (Cambridge, 1989; reprint 1990), 40-1.
- 5 Chris Lawlor, *The little book of Wicklow* (Dublin, 2014), 105.
- 6 Kevin Cullen, 'The R.I.C. and the I.R.A. in Wicklow's War of Independence' in *Journal of the West Wicklow Historical Society*, vii (Naas, 2013), 64.
- 7 Christian Brothers Monastery, Naas, Annals of the Naas Christian Brothers, vol. 1, f. 4.
- 8 Irish Military Archive [hereafter I.M.A.], I.R.A. nominal rolls, MSPC/RO/510, f. 3.
- 9 I.M.A., I.R.A. nominal rolls, MSPC/RO/23, f. 2.
- 10 I.M.A., I.R.A. nominal rolls, MSPC/RO/560, f. 3.
- 11 I.M.A., I.R.A. nominal rolls, MSPC/RO/560, f. 15.
- 12 I.M.A., I.R.A. nominal rolls, MSPC/RO/510, f. 17.
- 13 I.M.A., I.R.A. nominal rolls, MSPC/RO/560, f. 27.
- 14 I.M.A., Bureau of Military History [hereafter B.M.H.], witness statement of Padraig Ó Catháin, Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny, WS1572.
- 15 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 8 Feb 1919.
- 16 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 22 Mar 1919.
- 17 The general 'list of operations carried out by the 6th Battalion, Carlow Brigade' includes no operations from 1919. All events on the list happened in either 1920 or 1921. I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A67, ff 27-35.
- 18 Cullen, 'The R.I.C. and the I.R.A. in Wicklow's War of Independence', 64.
- 19 I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A67, f. 73.
- 20 I am indebted to Mr. Hugh Beckett of the Irish Military Archive for his assistance in this matter. The documents in question may never have been submitted, they may have been lost or destroyed, or they may have been filed elsewhere, though the latter possibility seems unlikely.
- 21 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 6 Mar 1920; *Leinster Leader*, 6 Mar 1920 and *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 13 Mar 1920.
- 22 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 3 Jan 1920.
- 23 I am indebted to the late Mr. Dudley Kirwan of Uppertown, Dunlavin, for this information.
- 24 Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (London 1937; revised ed., 1968), 322.
- 25 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 5 Jun 1920. There had also been no cases in Baltinglass petty sessions in April, *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 17 Apr 1920.
- 26 *Irish Times*, 5 July 1920.
- 27 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 26 Jun 1920.
- 28 The occupation was carried out on Wednesday, 19 May 1920. Gorry, *Baltinglass chronicles*, 181.
- 29 Gorry, 180-81.

- 30 Mark Bence-Jones, *Burke's Guide to Country Houses: Ireland*, vol. 1 (London, 1978), 255.
- 31 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 16 Oct 1920. Saundersgrove was rebuilt, but not on as grand a scale as the former house, causing one of its later owners to refer to it as 'the Free State cottage'. I am indebted to Mr. Donal McDonnell of Coolnarrig for this piece of information.
- 32 Chris Lawlor, *The massacre on Dunlavin green: a story of the 1798 rebellion* (Naas, 1998), 76-7.
- 33 There are four known versions of this ballad. Three of them, the standard form of the ballad published in Hodgart (ed.), *The Faber Book of Ballads*, 202, a broadside from the White Collection (T.C.D., White collection, OLS-X-1-530, no.31) and the version transcribed in the Shearman papers (N.U.I.M., Shearman papers, xvii, f. 127v) are reproduced in Chris Lawlor, *The longest rebellion* (Dublin, 2007), 117-19. The remaining version, which was sung by the late Mr. Ned Dunne of Dunlavin (National Folklore Collection, U.C.D., Tom Munnely Collection, Audio recording TM 0363/B) is reproduced in Chris Lawlor, 'The Dunlavin massacre: two ballads of 1798' in *Journal of the West Wicklow Historical Society*, iv (2007), 144-45. All four versions vitriolically vilify Morley Saunders.
- 34 Colonel Eamon Broy, BMH.WS1280.
- 35 Henry Cairns (ed), *Wicklow in revolt: a history of County Wicklow from 1913-1923* (Bray, 2016), 104.
- 36 I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A67, f. 27.
- 37 Ibid, f. 15.
- 38 Ibid, f. 27.
- 39 I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A62, f. 7 (paginated as 4).
- 40 Cullen, 'The R.I.C. and the I.R.A. in Wicklow's War of Independence', 62-3.



Dunlavin c. 1900-30. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

DUNLAVIN – Chris Lawlor

The War of Independence in and around Dunlavin: July 1920 to July 1921

The local elections of June 1920 were the first to use the proportional representation system of voting, and in Wicklow they returned an overwhelmingly republican chamber of Sinn Féin and Labour councillors. The first meeting of the council was held on 18 June, and the newly elected Councillor Christopher M. Byrne (1880–1958), who was on the run from the authorities, was briefly present. Robert Barton TD was unanimously elected chairman of the council. Barton had escaped from Mountjoy Jail on the night of 16–17 March 1919, but was recaptured in January 1920 and tried by court martial. At the time of this meeting, he was incarcerated in Portland prison in Dorset. Joseph Campbell was elected as vice-chairman and became the acting chairman in Barton's absence.

Baltinglass pledges allegiance to Dáil Éireann

The monthly meeting of Baltinglass Number One District Council was held in Dunlavin on Tuesday, 13 July 1920. This was the first time a council meeting was held in Dunlavin, and 'a Sinn Féin flag was unfurled in the courthouse during the proceedings'.¹ Chairman John J. Cunningham presided over the attendance of James Byrne, J. Murphy, John J. Carroll, Denis Fay, John Kelly, A. J. Metcalfe, J. Hayden, J. R. Dagg (clerk) and P. J. Foley (engineer). Among the items of local governance discussed at the meeting were cottage rents, the building scheme for labourers' cottages, estimates for the repairs of existing cottages, maintenance of the pumps in Dunlavin, payment of expenses pertaining to the Allotment Order, inspection and repair of the Hollywood sewer and work on the roads in the Glen of Imaal. However, some other items discussed had a decidedly more political flavour. At the time, both the British parliament and the fledgling Dáil claimed to be the rightful government of Ireland. There was no ambivalence in the council on the matter. The following resolution, proposed by John J. Cunningham and seconded by James Byrne, was passed

unanimously: 'That this Council of the elected representatives of Baltinglass No. 1 Rural District Council hereby pledge our allegiance to Dáil Éireann, the legitimately elected and constituted parliament of the Irish Republic ...' It was agreed to send copies of the full resolution to the republican Minister for Foreign Affairs for 'transmission to the governments of Europe and to the President and Chairman of both the Senate and House of Representatives in the USA'. The forces of law and order were also contested between Westminster and the Dáil and two legal systems were vying for control. In light of this, and to support the Sinn Féin courts, the clerk J. R. Dagg, who was a Justice of the Peace, was called upon by the council 'to resign his J.P.ship'. This motion was proposed by J. Hayden and seconded by John J. Carroll. Three financial claims

Your Vote Determines Your Future.

The Irish in old times were famous for their Manufactures and Trade. Their Industries were destroyed one after another by the English Parliament, so as to keep all wealth in English hands—the Poor Laws left to the Irish nothing but starvation. In 1583 the Parliament of Ireland consigned the right to develop Irish industries. What did 18 years of its wretched freedom...overthrow, so soon—as for the Men and Women of Wicklow?

Tillage was revived and encouraged, so that it stretched as far as 1,500 feet up the mountain sides. Corn Mills rose all over the country; those at Shillelough are fine as any in their day. Well-paid work for men was opened in the gold mines of Cronelane, in the rich lead mines of Glenmahon, and the copper mines of Ballymartagh and Cronelane. The metal was sent to be refined at the great Arklow Works before it was shipped abroad, and Arklow grew rich by its furnaces, and by the shipping that thronged its busy port. Iron was smelted at Shillelough, often referred to locally as “the Forge.”

The famous old Irish Woollen Trade sprang again to life. In Rathfron a Woollen Hall was built for sale of hosiery and fannels of all free country wools. The sales in 1744 were £55,000 (about £100,000 in our money to-day), and in 1790 had risen to £75,000 (about £125,000 now). There were 300 workers at Greenore, near Rathfron, making superfine woollen cloth; they left their homes to fight under Fish in the great battle of Gleneshare. Wicklow Men had a Cotton Industry too. At Strahill—once

Slaney, £50,000 was spent in building a factory, employing 300 workers, many of whom had a weekly wage equal to about £3 now. To-day it is a vast ruin. Baltinglass and Dunlavin produced Linen. The wide streets and fine halls tell of prosperous days. Weaver Square and the Discall Green in Baltinglass are proofs of the existence of industries long dead.

The finest quality of Skin Hats were made near Tagher (Roundwood), and the Iron Moulds for their Manufacture are still to be seen.

It was Wicklow brains and Wicklow money which built up these industries, with the sympathy and aid of a Parliament in Ireland.

Trade and Industry were, without pity, killed together when the rule of Irish affairs was voted by an enemy parliament beyond the sea. That is why Wicklow is poor to-day.

“I swear to you that there are blood and brains in Ireland yet, as the world one day shall know.”—**JOHN MITCHELL.**

“Ireland her own, Ireland her own, and all therein, from the soil to the sky. The soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland: to have and hold from God alone who gave it: to have and hold to them and their heirs for ever, without rent or service, faith or fealty, rent or tender, to any power under heaven.”—**THOMAS DAVIS.**

Wicklow can be rich and prosperous again, when Ireland secures her Freedom.

Vote for BARTON
THE SINN FEIN CANDIDATE,
— AND —
An Independent Ireland.

Sinn Féin election handbill for Robert Barton (West Wicklow candidate in 1918). By kind permission of theNational Library of Ireland

in relation to the burning of Blessington police barracks were also submitted, along with an expenses claim from the engineer, P. J. Foley, for measuring the distance between Hacketstown and Rathvilly police barracks. The council decided to ignore all these claims.

Support for Jim Larkin and Robert Barton

Another resolution passed at the meeting related to James Larkin, the workers' leader during the 1913 Dublin lockout, who had since gone to America and was imprisoned there for labour activities.² This resolution, proposed by Denis Fay and seconded by John J. Carroll, read:

That we, the members of the Baltinglass No. 1 District Council, demand the release of James Larkin, who is at present undergoing a sentence of between five to ten years in Sing Sing prison in America, and that he be allowed to return to Ireland to take up his duties as General Secretary of the I.T.G.W.U. That copies of this resolution be sent to the American Consul, Dublin, the Republican Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Larkin Release Committee.

The last train to Tullow at Colbinstown, 27 January 1947.
Photo: The collection of the late Jack Thomas.



A third resolution concerned Robert Barton, the TD for west Wicklow. Proposer John J. Cunningham and seconder Denis Fay had no trouble in getting support for it: 'That this council demand the release of our worthy representative, Mr. R. C. Barton T. D., and request the [IRA] Volunteers to hold Brigadier General Lucas as a hostage until Mr. Barton is set free'.³

Outside of the council chamber, the republican message was relayed at west Wicklow gatherings, which Dunlavin people would have attended, such as the aeridheacht (open-air gaelic festival) in Blessington in August (at which the Dunlavin Fife and Drum band played, and which was addressed by TDs Donal Buckley [Ó Buachalla], Art O'Connor and Roger Sweetman),⁴ the aeridheacht in Donard in September (which was addressed by Countess Marckievicz, among others),⁵ and at local GAA gatherings, which were also addressed by members of the Dáil.⁶

IRA activity

The local IRA was also active in the Dunlavin region during 1920. A number of Volunteers, including Richard Keating of Usk, Dunlavin, and James Kenna of Milltown, Dunlavin, were involved in a variety of activities, including Belfast boycott raids,⁷ the destruction of RIC barracks, a mail raid at Colbinstown station, the capture of maps and magazines from the RIC, burning income tax books, collecting arms, assisting in a mail raid in Kildare Town, an arms raid on Ballysax rectory, carrying out armed police duty at republican courts martial (including those of prisoners named Hanley for cattle stealing and Kelly and Holt for cycle theft), continuous road blocking and trenching, and ongoing intelligence and despatch duty.⁸ The mail raid at Colbinstown station took place on the morning of Wednesday 18 August. When the goods train travelling from Sallins to Tullow arrived at Colbinstown station, it was held up by a party of armed men, who took the mail bags for Grangecon, Baltinglass and Tullow.⁹

In September 1920, the Baltinglass Number One District Council received malicious injury claims from Miss Tynte of Tynte Park House (for the destruction of a shed), Thomas Molyneux (for firearm loss) and W. C. Merrey, the clerk of the petty sessions (for the loss of official books, forms, etc.). The council took no action.¹⁰ Molyneux also resorted to the official court system to seek compensation. His claim was heard by the judge at Baltinglass quarter sessions (held in Bray) in October. Molyneux's solicitor argued that the offence fell under the heading of 'riotous assembly by three or more persons with the object of causing terror'. Molyneux and his family were at prayers, the court was told, when armed men burst into his house and made off with a shotgun and a rifle. The judge dismissed the case, ruling that he could not allow such a claim because, if he did so, he 'did not know where it would end'.¹¹ Intimidation against the RIC also continued apace, and was successful enough to force resignations.

In September 1920, Baltinglass Number One District Council read and approved a communication from the Dáil recommending that every effort should be made to find work for these former constables.¹² Threats against the RIC were also extended to those who worked with them, and in the same month Dunlavin doctor Edward Lyons responded to the council's requests that he resign his magistracy and cease medical attendance on local RIC members. Lyons complied with the first request, but refused the second, stating in correspondence that he

*must claim privilege ... his mission in life was to attend the sick of the district ... in all countries the priest and the doctor are left free to carry out their duties ... the prevention of infectious diseases is important ... not long ago such a case occurred in Dunlavin barrack [and] by seeing the sick man early he stamped out the infection. Had he not been free to act there would have been an epidemic of scarlatina in the town. There is the possibility [now] of an epidemic of smallpox ... a rapidly spreading disease which, if not got hold of immediately, would spread all over the country.*¹³

Lyons's plea seems to have been successful as there is no record of any action being taken against him.

Ongoing disruption in west Wicklow

Council minutes record the ongoing impact of the War of Independence on life in Dunlavin during the period from October to December 1920. The Baltinglass Number One District Council again met in the village in October, this time in the Foresters' Hall. The dangerous condition of burned-out buildings, including Baltinglass courthouse, and three malicious injury claims for arson, as well as one for damage caused by rifle fire, were among the items discussed. In all these cases, the alleged perpetrators were the Black and Tans. Other damages claims presented at the meeting included the cutting down of trees at Donard 'during the raidings' and the loss of furniture at Blessington RIC barracks; the order of the council was that these claims be ignored.¹⁴ Sporadic violence continued in the vicinity of Dunlavin throughout the back end of the year. The police report of August 1920 noted that 'Dunlavin was in



Tynte Park, Dunlavin.

Photo: *Irish Independent*



John Lawlor and his wife Bessie (née Lambert). Photo: Author's collection.

a worse state of unrest than most of the country'.¹⁵ In December, when Sergeant Brophy, who had been stationed in Wicklow Town, was transferred to Dunlavin RIC station, it is probable that he was more than a little anxious.¹⁶ On 2 February 1921, the RIC in Dunlavin was shaken by the involvement of two of their temporary constables (Black and Tans) in the murder of Robert Dixon, Justice of the Peace, at Milltown. The case was labelled 'The Dunlavin Tragedy' and made headlines in the national press. Constable Arthur Hardie committed suicide the following day, and Constable William Mitchell was subsequently tried and executed for the crime.¹⁷ It has been suggested that the case soured 'the relationship the R.I.C. had built up with unionists and the farming community'.¹⁸ It certainly made for uncomfortable headlines for the British authorities at a time when the war in Ireland and the conduct of the Black and Tans was coming under increasing international scrutiny.

The IRA remained active in and around Dunlavin in the first half of 1921. It was involved in disrupting communications and road trenching around Dunlavin,¹⁹ intelligence and despatch work, policing under arms and carrying out raids for goods included in the Belfast boycott. It also attacked Dunlavin RIC barracks and conducted a mail raid on Harristown railway station. Volunteers involved in these actions included, among others, Christopher O'Toole of Spratstown and Thomas Flood of Ballinure.²⁰ Nine Volunteers ambushed and captured an army supply lorry en route to the army camp in the Glen of Imaal at Tynte Park, Dunlavin. The Volunteers exchanged fire with the three soldiers on board. Two soldiers were captured, their uniforms burned and their weapons taken—two rifles and a revolver. About twenty Volunteers ambushed a six-man RIC patrol at Colbinstown, wounding two policemen. The local IRA were joined by Volunteers from other units for the Colbinstown ambush, and they in turn aided another company in an attack on Baltinglass RIC barracks. Five local Volunteers also ambushed and captured a despatch rider, his revolver and his motorbike.²¹ In addition, John White of Rottenhill, Rathasallagh, had his motor car damaged by 'persons unknown acting



Prisoner huts for Company A at Rath Camp, the Curragh, Kildare 1921. Photograph taken with smuggled camera by IRA prisoner Joseph Lawless. Courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland



Three internees at Rath Camp. Photo by Joseph Lawless, 1921. Courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland

in a seditious and unlawful conspiracy'.²² In May, Alf Metcalfe of Crehelp was among the fourteen Volunteers who attacked Hollywood RIC barracks,²³ and shots were fired at Dunlavin police barracks on Wednesday 8 June. The RIC returned fire and suffered no casualties.²⁴ The Dunlavin attack may have been prompted by the arrest of local IRA Volunteer John Lawlor two days earlier.²⁵

Truce

On 11 July, when news of a truce and a cessation of hostilities broke on a largely unsuspecting public, A Company (Dunlavin), 6th Battalion, Carlow Brigade had fifty-six active officers and men, and the following members interned at the Curragh: Captains Laurence O'Toole (Spratstown) and Joseph Deering (Milltown) and Volunteers John Lawlor and Joseph Grennan (Dunlavin), John Smyth (Grangebeg) and Henry 'Hal' English (Fryanstown)²⁶ were interned in the Rath Camp;²⁷ P. Lawlor (brother of John) of Dunlavin, was interned in Hare Park Camp.²⁸ The fate of internees such as these was only one issue that would have to be addressed in the long and uncertain negotiations that lay ahead. The truce had come into force, but the consequences of the terrible divisions that it would cause were as yet unknown.

Notes

- 1 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 17 Jul 1920.
- 2 Manus O'Riordan, 'Larkin in America: the road to Sing Sing' in Donal Nevin (ed), *James Larkin: lion of the fold* (Dublin, 1998), 71.
- 3 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 17 Jul 1920.
- 4 *Leinster Leader*, 24 Jul 1920.
- 5 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 18 Sep 1920.
- 6 *Leinster Leader*, 4 and 11 Sep 1920.
- 7 The Belfast boycott (of goods which originated in the North) was approved by the Dáil in August 1920 in response to developments there, including the eruption of violence, the proposal to establish a special constabulary and the threat of partition becoming enshrined in the Government of Ireland Act (which was eventually passed in December 1920).
- 8 I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A67, ff 76-9.
- 9 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 21 Aug 1920.
- 10 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 18 Sep 1920.
- 11 *Leinster Leader*, 16 Oct 1920.
- 12 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 18 Sep 1920.
- 13 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 18 Sep 1920.
- 14 *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 16 Oct 1920.
- 15 The August police report is quoted in Kevin Cullen, 'The R.I.C. and the I.R.A. in Wicklow's War of Independence' in *Journal of the West Wicklow Historical Society*, vii (Naas, 2013), 68. The report also stated that Baltinglass was 'in a state of terror'.
- 16 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 11 Dec 1920.
- 17 For a brief account of the Milltown murder case, see Chris Lawlor, *The little book of Wicklow* (Dublin, 2014), 90-102. The case is the subject of a separate essay (entitled 'The Dunlavin Tragedy') in this publication.
- 18 Kevin Cullen, 'The R.I.C. and the I.R.A. in Wicklow's War of Independence', 70.
- 19 *Leinster Leader*, 12 Mar 1921.
- 20 I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A67, ff 28-9 and 74.
- 21 I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A67, ff 78 and 84.
- 22 *Leinster Leader*, 5 Mar 1921.
- 23 I.M.A., I.R.A. brigade activity reports, MSPC/A62, f. 15 (paginated as 12).
- 24 *Leinster Leader*, 11 Jun 1921.
- 25 National Archive, Kew, London, Prosecution of John Lawlor; believed leader of IRA; 6th June, 1921; Dunlavin, County Wicklow; to be recommended for internment; released 9th December, 1921, WO35/125/64 [C693683], f. 1.
- 26 I.M.A., I.R.A. nominal rolls, MSPC/RO/560, ff 16-7.
- 27 James Durney, *Interned: the Curragh internment camps in the War of Independence* (Cork, 2019), 246 and 272. Thomas (rather than John) Smyth of Grangebeg is listed in this work.
- 28 James Durney, 226.

DUNLAVIN – Chris Lawlor

The ‘Dunlavin tragedy’: Murder, suicide and the execution of William Mitchell in 1921

In 1920, due to a shortage of Royal Irish Constabulary recruits in Ireland at the height of the War of Independence, the British authorities began to recruit new members in Britain. These ‘Black and Tans’ carried out many atrocities during the war, including multiple killings of civilians throughout Ireland, but only one of them, Constable William Mitchell, was ever executed for murder. This crime occurred at Milltown, Dunlavin, on 2 February 1921.

The story of the murder, the subsequent suicide of Mitchell’s co-accused, Constable Arthur Hardie, and the consequent court martial and execution of Mitchell, transfixed people throughout Ireland.¹ The murder victim, Robert Dixon, was described in contemporary records as an ‘auctioneer’, but locally he was known as a ‘cattle dealer’ who had attended cattle sales the previous day and had cash in the house on the night he was murdered. Dixon was a justice of the peace and a leading figure in both Church of Ireland and wealthy landholding circles.² His status may well explain Mitchell’s unique fate.³

In local lore, Mitchell is remembered as a Black and Tan, but contemporary records describe him as an RIC constable. However, Black and Tans were recruited as temporary constables, and so the apparent anomaly is moot. Conflicting reports also exist regarding Mitchell’s nationality. Contemporary press reports state that he was English, but the historical record shows that he was Irish,⁴ had emigrated to England, fought in World War One and returned to Ireland as a Black and Tan.⁵ Perhaps there was a reluctance in the Irish print media to claim a Black and Tan charged with murder as ‘one of our own’.

Court Martial

On Monday 18 April 1921, at a court martial in the City Hall in Dublin, William Mitchell pleaded ‘not guilty’ to the charge that he did ‘at Milltown, Dunlavin, County Wicklow, on 2 February, murder Robert T. Dixon, JP’.⁶ Mitchell was



The former Dixon house at Milltown, Dunlavin. Photo taken by the author.

defended by counsel, and so the case of the Milltown murder began.

The prosecution opened the case by laying out the known facts: Robert Dixon was a farmer, an auctioneer and a magistrate for the district, and there was no known reason why his home should be targeted, or he murdered on that night. At about 12.30 a.m., a loud knocking was heard at the door of Milltown House, Dixon's home. James Dixon, the son of the murdered man, came downstairs, and despite no lights being on, he could see two figures outside through the glass panel in the door. When he asked who was there, they answered 'military', and demanded that the door be opened. James asked them to wait until he got dressed. He went upstairs, alerted his father and returned to the door armed with a poker from the fireside. However, when he opened the door, the two masked men burst in, brandishing revolvers and a flashlight and demanding

money. Robert Dixon was now in the hall and he took money from his trouser pockets. The intruders fired a shot in the hall and threatened the householders. At this point, Dixon senior went upstairs, but one of the men followed him. The prosecution contended that this was Constable Hardie and that, while on the stairs, he fired the shot that would kill Dixon. Meanwhile, James had been wounded twice and was lying on the downstairs floor. At this point, the two ladies in the house attacked the intruders with sticks, causing them to run away. One of the women then cycled to Dunlavin to notify the authorities and fetch a doctor. When Dixon's house was searched, two hats belonging to Constables Hardie and Mitchell were found. A flashlamp from Dunlavin RIC barracks was also found, as well as spent bullets from service revolvers.

On parade the next day, Mitchell's revolver was found to have been recently fired and Hardie's revolver was found to be bloodstained. The Head Constable stated that twenty rounds of ammunition were also missing. The clothing of the accused and of Hardie were found to be bloodstained. The prosecution argued that, even if Mitchell had not fired the fatal shot, he accompanied Hardie and was equally guilty in the eyes of the law.

In his testimony, James Dixon confirmed the prosecuting counsel's opening statement, adding that once inside the house the men had called for a light, and that Robert Dixon went upstairs to fetch one. One intruder followed his father upstairs and the second man remained in the hall. The first intruder came down the stairs and the witness grappled with the second intruder:

With my right hand I grabbed the revolver and pushed it behind his back. The man who was struggling with me shouted at his comrade not to shoot. I managed to wrest one revolver away and stepped back, but the man who had come down the stairs fired and struck me in the left shoulder. I also fired, but my gun did not go off. The man fired again and shot me in the hip. I fell and heard more shooting, but got up again and went for one of the men. I fell a second time and one of the men rushed over to me and hit me on the head with the butt of his revolver.

The witness also said that the second man had a moustache and wore grey clothes.

The victim's daughter, Kathleen May Dixon, then gave evidence. She confirmed her brother's account. She said she got her father onto the sofa and her brother

sitting in a chair, before getting dressed and cycling to Dunlavin for the doctor. As she was dressing, she saw the two men outside the window. One man called the other 'Bill'. When the witness returned with the doctor, she found the flashlamp on the table and two hats on the floor.

The dead man's sister, Martha Jane Dixon, then told the court that after the shooting, she hit one of the intruders on the head several times with a stick and that blood was pouring down his face. She stated that on the following day, a district inspector showed her the corpse of a dead constable in Dunlavin. The prosecuting counsel asked if she had identified the body, and she answered 'Yes, he was one of the men in my brother's house the previous night'.

The court then heard medical evidence, involving technical information about Robert Dixon's wounds. The doctor remained with him, but he died after about an hour. Dixon's son had wounds in the left shoulder and about the hips. He was operated on, and was in a very critical condition.

The police evidence was heard next. District Inspector Laurence Delaney deposed that the police reached Milltown at about 5.30 a.m., but Robert Dixon was already dead. His son was in an upstairs room. Bullet marks were found on the walls of the hall, and a sergeant found a standard RIC issue flashlamp from Dunlavin barracks. The police returned to Dunlavin at about 9 a.m. The constables in the station were instructed to parade and produce

their revolvers and ammunition. Scotsman Constable Hardie⁷ was found to have a fresh cut on his forehead and another cut on the top of his head. Hardie's revolver was bloodstained, and he could not produce his hat. Mitchell was found in possession of a 'fouled' revolver. Twenty rounds of ammunition were also missing from the barracks strong room, near the day room. The police witness went on to relate how both constables were relieved of their arms, ammunition and accoutrements and placed under police supervision. While under



The former RIC barracks in Dunlavin, now the village Garda station. Photo taken by the author.

supervision in Dunlavin barracks, Hardie committed suicide with a service revolver. Constable Mitchell was then arrested and charged with murder.

The Dunlavin barrack orderly on the night of 1-2 February, Constable Thomas Cuddy, testified that the accused told him he was leaving the barracks after the ten o'clock roll call. Later on, the accused came into the dayroom and said that he was going to the strong room. Mitchell spent about a half a minute in the strong room, where the ammunition was kept. Hardie also went into the strong room a little later on. At about 11.30 p.m., the witness saw three constables, including Hardie and Mitchell, in their room drinking stout. At about midnight, Hardie asked the witness for the flashlight, as he wanted to go to the rear of the barracks. The witness identified the torch in court. Later on, the witness heard an iron door, such as the one on Mitchell's room, being opened. He went to investigate and found the room empty, but later, sometime after 1 a.m., he heard voices coming from the room. The witness identified the hats recovered from the crime scene in court as the property of Mitchell and Hardie.

Constable Cuddy told the court that Constable Hardie was later missing from parade. During a search of the barracks, he entered Hardie's room and found him dead. A recently fired revolver was lying on the bed and there was blood flowing from Hardie's chest. Another constable testified that the shed at the rear of the barracks had been locked at 5.30 p.m. on 1 February. There were three bicycles there and the key was hanging in the kitchen. At 9 a.m. the following morning, the police witness found the shed door open and noted bicycle tracks in the yard.

A statement taken from Mitchell on 7 March was then read to the court. He stated that he had been drinking in the morning, and he had returned to the public house in the afternoon. He continued drinking that evening and ended up in the hotel beside Dunlavin barracks. He couldn't remember being on roll call that night, but remembered talking to some other constables in the barracks. He couldn't remember leaving the kitchen at all. The next thing that he remembered was being woken up early on the morning of 2 February by someone shouting. Everyone was confused and he had been told that someone had been shot. He went back to bed until about 8 a.m. The constables were later asked to parade in the dayroom with their guns, ammunition and civilian suits. The inspector kept his property. He did not know that he was under supervision, but he was arrested the following day. Mitchell stated that he had fought in France for three years during the Great War. He had been blown



William Mitchell, executed at Mountjoy Gaol, 7 June 1921.

Photo: Courtesy of D. J. Kelly, author of *Running with crows: the life and death of a Black and Tan*.

up at the Somme in 1916 and had been wounded again in 1918, before being pensioned off. Since the war, drink affected him badly, causing him to suffer with his nerves and making him suggestible and easily influenced. He was thirty-three years old and was married. His wife was expecting a child. He had been among the first to volunteer to join the RIC. He ended his statement by saying that he had joined with good intentions, to prevent this sort of thing and not to provoke it. The defence and prosecution counsels both addressed the court and the judge advocate summed up before the court formally closed.

When the court re-opened, District Inspector Laurence Delaney acted as a police character witness and testified that Mitchell had joined the RIC in November 1920 and was transferred to Dunlavin on 1 January 1921. He was a clean and apparently sober man and no complaints had been brought against him. He discharged his police duties efficiently and well. The counsel for the defence produced evidence that Mitchell had spent four years in the army and according to his commanding officer he was smart, intelligent, steady and a hard worker. The president asked Mitchell if he wished to address the court, but he did not. The court closed and the charge of murder was considered.

Execution

The sequel to the trial of William Mitchell was short-lived. He was found guilty of the murder of Robert Dixon and of the attempted murder of his son. He was removed to Mountjoy Gaol and there, on the morning of 7 June 1921, he was hanged by the neck until dead in accordance with the sentence of the court martial. On the same day in Mountjoy, IRA Volunteers Edmond Foley of Galbally, County Limerick, and Paddy Maher of Knocklong, County Limerick, were also hanged for their part in the rescue of Sean Hogan at Knocklong Railway Station on 13 May 1919.⁸ According to press reports, William Mitchell walked steadily and firmly from his cell and met his death bravely. His remains still lie within the walls of Mountjoy.

Notes

- 1 In addition to many detailed reports in the local press, the case of the 'Dunlavin tragedy' was also widely reported in the national press. For example, Mitchell's arrest was reported in the *Irish Independent*, 5 Feb 1921. The court martial was the lead story in the *Evening Herald*, 18 Apr 1921 and featured in the *Irish Independent* on both 19 and 20 Apr 1921. Mitchell's sentence was included in the *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1921. Mitchell's execution was detailed in the *Irish Independent*, 8 June 1921 under the by-line 'How he met his death'. The murder and arrest featured in many press reports in February and the court martial and sentence were headline news in April and May, while the execution was widely reported in June.
- 2 Chris Lawlor, *Canon Frederick Donovan's Dunlavin 1884-1896: A west Wicklow village in the late nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2000), 39. See also, *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*, 30 November 1894.
- 3 Chris Lawlor, *The little book of Wicklow* (Dublin, 2014), 90.
- 4 D. J. Kelly, 'A Black and Tan executed', in *Journal of the West Wicklow Historical Society*, viii (Naas, 2015), 95.
- 5 D. J. Kelly, *Running with crows: the life and death of a Black and Tan* (United Kingdom, 2013), 199-200.
- 6 *The Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 23 Apr 1921. The following information about the murder, suicide, arrest, court-martial, verdict, sentence and execution is constructed from this and other local press reports from *The Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 5 Feb, 12 Feb, 26 Feb, 12 Mar and 4 Jun 1921, *The Leinster Leader*, 12 Feb, 19 Feb, 9 Apr, 23 Apr, 4 Jun and 11 Jun 1921, and *The Wicklow People*, 5 Feb 1921 (as well as the national newspapers from the period February to June 1921, see endnote 1), unless otherwise stated. In addition, some information taken from National Archive Kew, War Office Papers, Death of Robert Gilbert Dixon, 2nd February, 1921, Milltown, Dunlavin, County Wicklow (WO 35/149B/1); Death of Constable Arthur Hardie, RIC; 31st February (sic), 1921, Dunlavin, County Wicklow (WO 35/151B/11) and Death of Constable William Mitchell, RIC, 7th June, 1921, HM Prison Mountjoy, Dublin (WO 35/155B/14) has been included.
- 7 Hardie was born in Stirling on 23 Mar 1897. Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: a short history and genealogical guide with a select list of medal awards and casualties* (Dublin, revised ed., 2016), 235.
- 8 http://webpages.dcu.ie/~foxs/irhist/june_1921.htm (visited on 20 January 2006). Ed Foley had taken part in the rescue but Paddy Maher had not. For an excellent account of and insight into the miscarriage of justice against Maher, see David Dineen, 'Paddy Maher: a judicial murder' in University of Limerick, *History Studies*, vol. 16 (2015), 31-41.

ENNISKERRY - Brian White

Enniskerry 1916–22

The Deane Oliver family

Richard Edward Deane Oliver, Royal Engineers, was killed in action at the Somme, 7 September 1916, in his 26th year. Richard was baptised in Powerscourt Church in 1890. His grandfather was Edward Falconer Litton, QC., who at the time lived at Valclusa, Enniskerry.

Richard was educated at Aravon in Bray and at Trinity College Dublin, where he graduated with a degree in Engineering. He gave up a job on the Manchester Ship Canal to take a commission in the Royal Engineers. He was killed instantly by a sniper while constructing a new line of trenches. He is remembered on the Roll of Honour in the Christ Church, Bray, at a memorial in Aravon and on the family grave in Powerscourt churchyard.

Losing Richard was only the beginning of the family's troubles. Richard's father, Charles Deane Oliver, who lived at Rockmills House, near Fermoy, Co. Cork, was Chief Engineer of the Department of Agriculture, and of the Congested Districts and Fisheries Boards. He was responsible for a great many of the harbours in the south and west of Ireland, and for opening up Arklow harbour in 1915. In 1919, the year he retired, Rockmills House was attacked by masked men, who shot him in both thighs. Then, in the spring of 1921, the IRA burnt Rockmills and the family, having lost everything except their lives, was forced to flee to England to live with relatives. They did return, however, to live productive lives in the new republic.

Charles Deane Oliver was born on 3 June 1861. He was the son of Richard Charles Deane Oliver and Katherine Hawtayne (d. 1911). He married Maria Charlotte Litton, daughter of Hon. Edward Falconer Litton, in 1888. He died on 6 February 1945 at age 83. He was educated at St. Columba's College and at Trinity College.



Burial inscription of Richard Deane Oliver
1916, St. Patricks, Enniskerry.
Photo: igb-web.com

Children of Charles Deane Oliver and Maria Charlotte Litton

1. Richard Edward Deane Oliver b. 21 Feb 1890, d. 7 Sep 1916
2. Elizabeth Catherine Deane Oliver b. 11 May 1895, d. 7 Aug 1953
3. Kathleen Maude Deane Oliver b. 15 Jan 1897
4. Silver Margaret Esther Deane Oliver b. 29 Jun 1899



British troops in Wicklow. Photo: *Irish Life*, 28 May 1920. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

The War of Independence

- » On 22 May 1919, Alfred Anderson, described as a Sinn Féiner from Sligo, was arrested in Enniskerry and returned to Sligo. A warrant for his arrest had been issued by the Sligo court for causing an unlawful assembly in Sligo.
- » In 1920-21, gatherings of three or more people were banned in Ireland. There was also a curfew between 10 pm and 5 am. This curbed the social life of the village. Dance halls and public houses had to close early. The bus and rail companies had to re-arrange timetables and all services ceased at 9.30 pm.
- » Locals in Enniskerry and environs raided equipment from road contractors, quarry tool sheds and local farms and dug trenches in the road to halt military motor cavalcades. There are recorded incidents of the military rounding up men to refill the trenches.



A cavalry patrol in Enniskerry. Photo: Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland - *Irish Life*, 28 May 1920

- » The King's Royal Hussars, based in Rathmines Barracks, Dublin, patrolled south County Dublin and north County Wicklow. Patrols started in Rathmines and included Rathfarnham, the Glenree valley, Enniskerry and Bray.
- » In May 1921, a mail car was held up near Kilcrouney. Intercepting mail cars yielded cash and money orders. In the period 1 January 1919 to 18 October 1920, a total of 741 raids on mail cars took place in Ireland.
- » On 27 May 1921, the IRA attacked the RIC barracks in Enniskerry. (See Henry Cairns, p. 59).
- » In July 1921, two police constables were sitting in the coffee room of the Powerscourt Arms hotel when shots rang out. One shot passed through the cap of a constable and grazed his forehead. Both constables returned fire but the assailant escaped unhurt.
- » Several farmers in the area had haycocks and sheds set on fire, typically for one of three reasons: the rebels wanted to destroy any evidence they were

staying in a shed, the military found that the shed was used by the rebels and then destroyed it, the owner was passing information to the police or military. To this day, the specifics of each case remain unknown.

- » Lochner's Pork Butchers of Bray was instructed to leave parcels of meat at the Silver Bridge on the Bray to Enniskerry Road. When Mr Lochner opened his shop a few days later, he discovered payment for the goods.
- » In 1925, Eppels Film Ltd of Dublin made the film *Irish Destiny*, which depicts the War of Independence. One of the locations used for the film is Enniskerry village. It shows a group of dancers in front of the clock tower in the village and a raid by a Black & Tan unit.

Civil War

Lord Powerscourt allowed the military to camp on his estate. When the police barracks was destroyed by armed men on 8 July 1922, Lord Powerscourt claimed compensation and made the parish hall available as a temporary barracks.

In June 1922, a raid took place at Enniskerry post office. The postmistress Mrs Snow and her assistant Miss Byrne were unhurt. The raiders took £27 in cash and postal money orders. The cash box was found abandoned in Dalkey.

A second raid took place at the post office on 25 July 1922. Miss Byrne refused to give the raiders the keys and they fled without any cash. In December 1922, the postal authorities gave Miss Byrne a merit cheque for her bravery.

Raids also took place on farms and hardware stores and items stolen included shotguns and ammunition, foodstuffs and clothing. Raiders stole foodstuff from the shop of Michael Tallon of Enniskerry on 8 July 1922; they also took his motor car. Abraham Chatterton, who lived on the Powerscourt estate office on Kilgarron Hill, had his car stolen on 7 July 1922.

GREYSTONES – Rosemary Raughter

Greystones during the revolutionary period, as revealed in the Bureau of Military History Witness Statements

Bureau of Military History

The Bureau of Military History (BMH), established in January 1947 under the auspices of the Department of Defence, had as its stated objective:

To assemble and co-ordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the movement for independence from the formation of the Irish Volunteers on 25 November 1913 to 11 July 1921.¹

In order to fulfil this aim, statements, both written and oral, were gathered from a range of individuals engaged in some way with the events of the period. By the time the project terminated, 1,773 witness statements had been recorded, mostly from members or former members of organisations such as the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Sinn Féin, the Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan. Statements by constitutional nationalists, unionists and members of the Crown forces or British administration were also featured, but in much smaller numbers, and there were some surprising omissions; most notably, 1916 leader, Taoiseach of the government that established the BMH, and future President of Ireland, Éamon de Valera, failed to record a statement.

Access to witness statements

While the process of collection came to an end in 1959, there was considerable uncertainty about where the material should be stored, and to what extent and for how long the guarantees of confidentiality extended to witnesses should be observed. The BMH had begun its work a little over three decades after the cessation of hostilities, and despite the fact that its brief extended only to the signing of the Truce in July 1921 (and thus excluded the especially divisive topics of the Treaty negotiations and the Civil War), many issues of sensitivity

remained, a fact not lost on Richard Hayes, Director of the National Library from 1940 to 1967, and member of the BMH advisory committee:

If every Sean and Seamus from Ballythis and Ballythat who took major or minor or no part at all in the national movement from 1916 to 1921 had free access to the material, it may result in local civil warfare in every second town and village in the country.²

In the event, the collection, which as well as witness statements included ancillary documents, press cuttings, voice recordings and photographs, was lodged in a strong room in Government Buildings. No decision was made at the time as to when the material should be released, to the frustration of historians of the period such as Professors Robin Dudley Edwards and F. X. Martin, who decried the 'official iron curtain' which barred them access to an unparalleled source of information on the revolutionary period.³

The long-awaited release of the material finally took place in 2003, following the deaths of the last surviving witnesses. The statements then became available to researchers working in the Military Archives at Collins Barracks and (by way of duplicates) in the National Archives. In 2012, following a process of digitisation, and just in time for the opening of the Decade of Centenaries, the Bureau of Military History website was launched, making the collection available free of charge to all researchers, and vastly increasing the possibilities for historical investigation at both a national and a local level.⁴

Greystones

While an online search of the witness statements produces twenty-four mentions of Greystones, not all are of equal interest or indeed of any significance to the period: Patrick McCartan, for example, was living in Greystones when he made his statement in 1952, but he had no connection with the area during the revolutionary period.⁵ Other statements mention the town, not for any event occurring there, but rather for the lack of activity. Patrick J. Brennan, for instance, while noting the existence of an RIC barracks at Greystones, records that the scarcity of revolutionary activity in the general area could be attributed to the fact that it was 'thickly populated with a none too friendly people.'⁶ Laurence O'Brien remarked that, while companies of Volunteers were organised in Bray, Shankill and Enniskerry, an attempt to organise a section in Greystones proved unsuccessful,⁷ while Christopher Byrne mentions the IRA East Wicklow Battalion's difficulty in recruiting support in the locality because

of its very strong loyalist element, and the presence of a

*modern plantation of Unionists who had made money in Dublin and come to live in Bray, Greystones and Enniskerry districts ... We had no farmers' sons, or very few, in the Volunteers, and the working lads we had were depending on those employers; at that time there was no one else to give them employment.*⁸

Witnessing the Rising

Despite this apparent quiescence, however, three quite dramatic stories do emerge from Greystones in the BMH files. The first of these is related by George Chester Duggan junior, a civil servant in the British administration in London and Dublin, whose family had a holiday home at Ferney East, one of the two houses now making up Carraig Eden.⁹ Duggan was one of several brothers, two of whom, Captain George Grant Duggan and Lieutenant John R. Duggan, were killed, 16 August 1915, at Gallipoli.¹⁰



Carraig Eden, Greystones, 2011, former holiday home of George Chester Duggan, witness to the Rising. Photo: Flickr, Creative Commons

Eight months later, the bereaved parents, George and Emilie Duggan, were spending the Easter weekend at Greystones, when they received word of the outbreak of the Rising in Dublin. As manager of the Provincial Bank at College Street, George senior felt it his duty to return to the city and to take up residence in the bank for the duration of the crisis. He was present, therefore, later in the week, when the building was raided by a group of British soldiers under the command of a young and inexperienced subaltern and a drunken sergeant. Wrongly convinced that the building was being used by rebel snipers, the soldiers took an extremely threatening attitude towards Duggan. According to George junior, his father appealed to the subaltern to assert his authority over his troops:

My father took him into the drawing-room and showed him the photographs of my two brothers in uniform, one a Captain in the Royal Irish Fusiliers, the other a Lieutenant in the Royal Irish Regiment, who were killed in August, 1915, at Swla Bay in

*Gallipoli, fighting with the 10th (Irish) Division. This convinced the subaltern of the truth of my father's assertions, and he ordered the party to leave the Bank.*¹¹

In 1921, George Chester Duggan, published a poem, 'The Watchers on Gallipoli', dedicated to his two dead brothers. He himself, having served as assistant to the Under-Secretary for Ireland, transferred in 1922 to the Northern Ireland Civil Service, where his sympathetic attitude to the Irish Free State attracted some criticism. Following his retirement in 1949, he moved back south. He died in 1969 at Mullagh, Co Cavan.

The de Valeras in Greystones

References to Greystones in the witness statements for the post-1916/War of Independence period are dominated by two of its most significant figures, Éamon de Valera and Michael Collins. Éamon and Sinéad de Valera and their young family took up residence on Kinlen Road in Greystones not long after the Rising, in a house known by the de Valeras as Craigliath, now Edenmore. In September 1917, Eilis Uí Chonaill, a member of Cumann na mBan, was asked to deliver an important letter into de Valera's own hands. Knowing the name of the road but not that of the house, she took the train to Greystones and a cab to the end of Kinlen Road. There she alighted and, proceeding on foot, 'examined the names on all the houses, until at last I found a name in Irish.' Her instinct proved correct: 'I went in, asked for Mr de Valera, and his wife, whom I knew, came to me and said she would guarantee to deliver the letter to him.'¹²

In May 1918, Sean T. O'Kelly warned De Valera of plans to arrest a number of prominent republicans in connection with the alleged 'German Plot'. De Valera 'rather pooh-poohed the matter', and refused to take any extra precautions.¹³ On the evening of 17 May, following a Sinn Féin meeting at Harcourt Street, he took the 10.15 pm train home to Greystones. When the train stopped at Bray, a number of constables boarded, travelling in an adjoining compartment. According to O'Kelly, the driver and his assistant became aware of this, and promptly informed de Valera of the police presence, and of the probable intention to arrest him. 'They said that they would slow down the train coming into Greystones ... and they advised him to jump out ... and that he could easily get away.' However, de Valera chose not to accept this offer, and when the train arrived at Greystones, he was apprehended and arrested.¹⁴ The *Irish Independent* added a few further details: De Valera 'was taken to the waiting



Eamon de Valera, circa early 1920s. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

room under a heavy guard, and after being searched, was placed in a motor car and driven to Kingstown, where he was handed over to the military and placed on board the transport' for England.¹⁵

De Valera was imprisoned in Lincoln Gaol, but he escaped in early 1919 and spent most of the following two years either on the run or fundraising in the US. During that time, Michael Collins visited Sinéad de Valera in Greystones 'many times', and ensured that she was kept regularly supplied with funds.¹⁶ Mrs de Valera was naturally grateful for his concern, and Robert Brennan, accompanying de Valera home following his escape from Lincoln, was amused to witness an exchange between husband and wife on the subject:

*At Greystones Mrs Dev was eloquent about the kindness everybody had shown her during Dev's absence. Michael Collins, she said, had been particularly kind. He had called every week. 'I'm quite in love with him', she said. Dev, with some show of temper, said: 'That'll do. There are enough people in love with Michael Collins.'*¹⁷



Michael Collins, 1919.
Photo: Wiki Commons

Michael Collins: Confession

Michael Collins clearly developed an affection for Greystones during his many visits. It was in the Grand Hotel (later the La Touche) that he proposed to Kitty Kiernan on 8 October 1921¹⁸ and it is believed that the couple intended to live after their marriage in Brooklands, a house just a little further up on Trafalgar Road, opposite St Brigid's School.¹⁹ Later, during the Civil War, Collins used the Grand Hotel as the venue for meetings with his associates. On one occasion at least, local anti-Treatyites contemplated making an attack on him there, but republican headquarters refused to authorise the plan. Shortly after Collins's death, another attack was planned on a further gathering at the hotel of members of the Free State government and army officers, but once again the attack was forestalled by the republican leadership.²⁰

A final glimpse of Michael Collins in Greystones takes us beyond the BMH project's notional end date of 11 July 1921, to the Anglo-Irish negotiations preceding the Treaty of December 1921 and the Civil War that followed. It is contained in the witness statement of Rev Patrick J. Doyle PP, who included in his evidence the text of a 'very extraordinary' letter written by Fr Ignatius of the Congregation of the Passion to Michael Collins's sister following Collins's death:



Grand Hotel, Greystones (later the La Touche), where Michael Collins proposed to Kitty Kiernan. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland, Lawrence Collection

The facts are these: he [Collins] was staying at the Grand Hotel, Greystones, while I was giving a mission there. It was coming near the close of the Mission. Michael was very busy in Dublin, worked and worried almost beyond endurance. He got to Greystones one night very late and very tired. It was the eve of his departure to London, re the Pact. He got up the next morning as early as 5.30 am and came to the Church, and made a glorious General Confession and received Holy Communion. He said to me after Confession, ‘Say the Mass for Ireland, and God bless you, Father’. He crossed an hour or so later to London.’²¹

Local information, national significance

Diarmaid Ferriter, in his assessment of the value of the material contained in the witness statements, concludes that ‘there is much of value in the collection, whether one is interested in particular individuals, regional histories or the social history of the period.’²² Certainly, modest as the presence of Greystones is in the archive, the local information it offers is of national historical significance. The contributions quoted here give us insight into recruitment and casualties in World War I, the emergence of militant republicanism and the lack of overt support for it locally, and the conditions—the largely peaceful state of this predominantly unionist area, together with its proximity to Dublin—which made Greystones a favoured refuge for two of the leading figures in the struggle for independence.

Notes

- 1 For information on the BMH, the process of collection and the content of the statements, see Diarmaid Ferriter, "'In such deadly earnest": the Bureau of Military History opens its files', *Dublin Review*, no. 2, Autumn 2003, and Fearghal McGarry, "'Too many histories"? The Bureau of Military History and Easter 1916', *History Ireland*, no. 6, November/December 2011, vol. 19.
- 2 Ferriter, "'In such deadly earnest": the Bureau of Military History opens its files', 3.
- 3 Ferriter, 3.
- 4 Digitised collection available at Óglaigh na hÉireann, Military Archives website militaryarchives.ie See also Decade of Centenaries website decadeofcentenaries.com
- 5 Dr Patrick McCartan, BMH.WS0766.
- 6 Patrick J. Brennan, BMH.WS1773, 7, 10, and passim.
- 7 Laurence O'Brien, BMH.WS0252, 11.
- 8 Christopher M. Byrne, BMH.WS1014, 11.
- 9 George Chester Duggan, BMH.WS1071, 1-3.
- 10 See Colin Murphy, 'The Irish at Gallipoli: Jack Duggan's letters home', <http://colinmurphy.ie/?p=570> (accessed 15/02/2021)
- 11 George C Duggan, WS.1071, 3.
- 12 Eilis Uí Chonaill (née Ryan), BMH.WS0568, 24.
- 13 Sean T O'Kelly, BMH.WS1765, part 2, 110-11.
- 14 O'Kelly, BMH.WS1765, part 2, 110-11.
- 15 *Irish Independent*, 20 May 1918.
- 16 Joseph Hyland, BMH.WS0644, 13.
- 17 Robert Brennan, BMH.WS0779, 18.
- 18 <https://www.glasnevintrust.ie/visit-glasnevin/interactive-map/kitty-kiernan/> (accessed 15/02/2021)
- 19 'Famous people: Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan planned to live in Greystones', <https://thegreystones.edublogs.org/2017/02/14/michael-collins-and-kitty-kiernan-planned-to-live-in-greystones/> (accessed 15/02/2021)
- 20 Laurence Nugent, BMH.WS0907, 284.
- 21 Patrick J. Doyle PP, BMH.WS0807, 39-40, 90-91.
- 22 Ferriter, 7.

GREYSTONES – Rosemary Raughter

Greystones during the War of Independence: The railway stoppage of 26–28 June 1920

Shortly after ten o'clock on the morning of Saturday, 26 June 1920, the early train from Wexford steamed into Greystones station. As alighting passengers made their way to the exit, those now boarding the train chose their seats and settled themselves comfortably for the onward journey to Bray, Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire) or Dublin. However, the tranquillity of a seaside summer morning was broken by the sound of a motor engine approaching at speed. As that evening's paper recorded: 'As the train entered the station a military motor lorry came racing along the road, and the soldiers quickly passed the barrier and entered a compartment just as the train was about to start.' The men in question were a sergeant and six armed soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment, then stationed at nearby Kilpeddar Camp. Their arrival presented the workers on site with a dilemma and put Greystones for a short time at the forefront of a highly politicised dispute which threatened to bring the Irish railway system to a halt and seriously embarrassed a government already under siege.



Greystones Railway Station c. 1900.

Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland, Lawrence Collection

Embargo on 'warlike stores'

Although Greystones had largely been spared the worst effects of the unrest currently prevailing in the country at large, there was a constant threat of violence in the air. With the IRA effectively in control of many areas of the country, Sinn Féin making major gains in national and local elections, and the



Greystones, c. 1900. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

arrival earlier in 1920 of the Black and Tans, tensions were high, with daily newspaper reports of murder, ambush, reprisal, arson and industrial unrest. The most recent instance of the latter was the railwaymen's embargo, begun in May 1920, on the carriage of 'warlike stores', defined as 'materials designed for the destruction of life and property', as well as armed troops or police. The Irish railway workers received no help from the British trade unions and only a tepid public response to an appeal for funds, so the British administration was content to accept the assurances of the railway companies that they would have little difficulty in breaking the strike, if necessary, 'by complete replacement of the workforce', meaning that railwaymen refusing to work trains faced immediate suspension or dismissal. British military authorities chose to respond to the embargo by adopting a dog-in-the-manger attitude—that is, military and police parties refused to move from trains when challenged, leading to disruption of the schedule and the eventual stoppage of all trains on the lines affected.



British Army forced to unload its own munitions, Dublin. The National Union of Railwaymen joined the dockers of Dublin in refusing to handle 'warlike stores' arriving in Ireland. Photo: *Illustrated London News*, 29 May 1920.

Stand-off

The late arrival of the military party at Greystones station on 26 June may have been an attempt to evade the notice of the railway workers on duty, but if so, it was unsuccessful. As soon as the soldiers boarded the train, the guard, James Whelan, and the driver, Laurence Finnegan, confronted them. Ascertaining that the men were indeed armed, Whelan asked them to leave and directed the driver and the fireman, Patrick Furlong, not to proceed until they did so.

By now, the other passengers had become aware of the situation and 'general perturbation' reigned. Some expressed 'warm approval of the railwaymen's action', while others were heard protesting about the delay and inconvenience

involved. With the driver back in his cab, a rumour spread that the coach occupied by the soldiers was to be unhooked and left behind, while the engine and the other coaches proceeded on their way. At this, those in the coaches at the back flocked to the forward part of the train. On their heels came the soldiers, determined not to be left behind, but the checker, a Mr R. Hammond, blocked them from entering the first- and second-class compartments. The driver now put an end to all speculation by detaching his engine and proceeding with it to Bray, leaving all carriages standing at Greystones station. The civilian passengers—about one hundred of them—were left with no option but to return home or to find alternative transport to their various destinations; some made their way by various means to Bray, from where the line to Dublin remained open.

While the day may have been a profitable one for the drivers of taxis and horse vehicles, for which there was now an unprecedented demand, the blocking of the railway left most inhabitants of Greystones very severely incommoded. Guests at the Grand Hotel were among the fortunate few unaffected by the lack of a rail service, since they were able to call upon one of the several 'cars' maintained for their convenience. The soldiers, for their part, sat tight. During the day, food was sent over to them from Kilpeddar Camp, and at night they settled down to sleep in the compartment, asserting their intent to remain there until ordered to leave by their commanding officer.

Dismissals and disruption

The guard, driver and fireman of the train were summoned to an interview in Bray with officials of the Dublin and South-Eastern railway line. Having refused to sign a guarantee that they would work all traffic, they were summarily dismissed. They refused to accept payment of the wages which they were due on the grounds that, as the *Irish Times* reported (28 June), they 'profess to regard the incident as constituting a test case, and anticipate further developments'.

By nightfall on Saturday, the effects of the stoppage on the railway line were escalating. The train that left Wexford at ten o'clock that morning was held at Newcastle until late in the evening; it then passed through Greystones without stopping, avoiding the blockage by being switched to the down (southbound) line. The afternoon train from Wexford remained overnight at Wicklow, and

Sinn Féin

6 Marcourt St.,
D U B L I N.

6 Sraid Fearcair
Ath Cliath.
28th June, 1920.

MUNITIONS OF WAR FUND.

A chára,

The North Wall Railwaymen, Dublin, rather than assist in providing the Army of Occupation with munitions for the war against Ireland, have already sacrificed over £1,600 per week, and it is probable that all Irish Railwaymen will be affected within a short time.

This is not a Railwayman's fight alone, nor a Trade Unionist's fight - it is the NATION'S fight - it is YOUR FIGHT. It is a fight for all the people of Ireland, irrespective of Creed, Class, or Politics.

It is a fight against self-extirpation.

It is the duty of every man and woman in Ireland to support these brave men.

You are hereby directed to call a special meeting of your Cumann and make arrangements thereat to have a collection made in your Chapel area at an early date.

All monies thus collected should be forwarded to the Secretary of your Coghairle Ceantair, who will in due course transmit them by cheque to Mr. Thomas Johnson, Treasurer, Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, 52 Lower Abbey Street, Dublin.

Mise,

Padraig Ó Caoimh

Rinnaidhe.

To:-

The Secretary,
Each Cumann.

Sinn Féin letter signed by Padraig Ó Caoimh, Secretary, 28 June 1920, praising the North Wall Railwaymen, Dublin, for their financial contributions and calling on other branches to follow their lead. Image by kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

it ran empty to Dublin on Sunday, the mail and milk which it carried having been transferred to a goods train for distribution to stations further along the line. For the passengers, however, there was no such facility. While some sought other forms of transport to reach their destinations, others looked for overnight accommodation in Wicklow, or spent the night on the train.

Nationwide stoppage

The stoppage in Greystones was only one among a large number of similar incidents during the second half of 1920. The railway companies' initial optimism about an early end to the strike proved misplaced, and the workers held firm despite widespread dismissals. They were effectively supported by the IRA, which on the one hand provided relief transport by commandeering vehicles, and on the other operated a policy of intimidation against workers disinclined to observe the embargo. By August, over one thousand railwaymen were out of work, and large numbers of trains were immobilized. Some areas of the country were more severely affected than others: the level of action in the southwest, for example, was particularly high. The crisis dragged on into winter, with stoppages peaking in late November. By then, however, concern was rising, both inside and outside the labour movement, about the growing unemployment and the economic consequences of a total shutdown of the railways. One railwaymen's leader warned of a potential 15,000 dismissals, and Tom Johnson, ILP/TUC secretary, while making a strong moral case for the strike, forecast that continuing the campaign risked 'throwing back the social life of Ireland by a hundred years'.¹ Finally, on 21 December, the railwaymen capitulated, voting unanimously for an unconditional return to work.

Sudden end

The fact that the Greystones blockage occurred over the weekend probably minimised the inconvenience caused to the general public, but with the working week beginning, and an influx of summer visitors to Greystones expected, pressure to find a solution mounted. The end of the impasse seems to have come quite suddenly on Monday afternoon when the soldiers, presumably in response to orders from their commanding officer, vacated the carriage and returned to camp. The train was immediately taken away and normal service resumed, with the afternoon train from Wexford arriving on time at Greystones and continuing on schedule to Bray, Kingstown and Dublin.

Plan backfires

No official statement was ever issued about the reasons for the precipitate ending of the standoff at Greystones, the *Irish Times* (29 June) simply reporting the rumour ‘that the authorities were approached by local residents in the interest of Greystones’. A major factor in the town’s development over the previous half century, of course, had been its excellent railway service. Any prolonged closure of the line would have had a serious impact on the businessmen, professionals, the civil servants and other workers who commuted daily to Dublin, on householders deprived of deliveries of mail, milk and other necessities, and on the hoteliers, lodging-house keepers and other traders whose livelihoods depended on the summer tourist season, now fast approaching. Over the two days of the stoppage, as the *Wicklow People* gleefully reported on 3 July, ‘some hundreds of wealthy Greystones residents, warm supporters of the Union, were put to considerable inconvenience and expense by having to hire motors.’ Influential figures in ‘this centre of loyalty’, the report continued, made use of existing social links with the British administration in order to produce a settlement:

Seeing that the military ... were showing every sign of preparation for a prolonged siege and that there was a likelihood that the select, residential town would be isolated completely ... hurried visits were paid to Dublin Castle by a few of the prominent residents with appeals urging the Castle authorities to withdraw the soldiers from the train, and allow the resumption of ... service.

‘If this is the way the Castle treats us’, one outraged loyalist was heard to declare, ‘then I’m with the Sinn Féiners.’ It is uncertain whether the British military made a deliberate, strategic decision to choose Greystones—a bastion of unionism where it might have expected more support than elsewhere in Wicklow—to make its stance against the railway embargo of 1920, but it is clear that the move backfired. In the end, it was an accidental alliance of unionist influence with labour and republican resistance that forced a hasty military retreat.

An earlier version of this article appeared in *Greystones: its buildings and history*, vol. 2 (2012), 47-49.

SOURCES

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Sunday Post, 27 June 1920.

Irish Times, 28 and 29 June 1920.

Wicklow People, 3 July 1920.

Charles Townshend, 'The Irish railway strike of 1920: industrial action and civil resistance in the struggle for independence', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 22, 83 (March 1979), 265-82.

Charles Townshend, *The Republic: the fight for Irish independence* (2013), 144-48.

Notes

- 1 Quoted in Townshend, *The Republic*, 148.

WICKLOW COUNTY - John Finlay

Wicklow through the War of Independence

An insight into Wicklow town and environs as seen through the eyes of the local newspapers of the time, namely the *Wicklow People* and the *Wicklow News-Letter*, with additional information from the records of Wicklow Urban Council and Wicklow Harbour Board.

1919

The aftermath of Sinn Féin's election victory

There were three candidates for the East Wicklow constituency in the General Election of 1918: D. J. Cogan (Home Rule Party), Alexander Parker Keane (Unionist) and Seán T. Etchingham (Sinn Féin). Polling day was 14 December, and on that day the *Wicklow People* carried a large front-page advertisement for Etchingham with the slogan, 'VOTE FOR ETCHINGHAM AND FREEDOM.' When the election results were announced, after Christmas, Sinn Féin had won sweeping victories throughout the country. In the Wicklow constituencies, Seán Etchingham had been returned for Wicklow East while Robert Barton had won the seat in Wicklow West.

As 1919 dawned, the results of the General Election were on everyone's lips with the drastic changes that must ensue. The editorial in the *Wicklow News-Letter* of 4 January began: 'There are few amongst us who will be disposed to shed copious tears over the passing of the old year', and it continued with a long discourse on the Great War but made no mention whatsoever of Ireland's problems.

On the other hand, the *Wicklow People* published the same day read thus:

The result of the General Election is basically that the coalition with Mr. Lloyd George at its head, has been returned in England. In Ireland, as was expected, Sinn Féin has been victorious. The Irish Party (Home Rule) has practically disappeared, 73 Sinn Féin ... and only 6 members of the Irish Party have been returned. This means

practically the disfranchisement of Nationalist Ireland if the Sinn Féiners persist in carrying out their policy of abstention We, in common with so many others, do not think that the Sinn Féin policy could possibly be successful enough to establish an Irish Republic or complete separation.

The count was held in the Courthouse, Wicklow, and both newspapers report on the remarkable scenes of jubilation after the result had been announced. 'The Soldier's Song' and other patriotic verses were rendered and the Irish National Foresters Brass and Reed Band paraded the town accompanied by a torchlight procession. Many houses were flagged out for the occasion. C. M. Byrne gave the victory speech on behalf of Seán Etchingham and made it clear that neither Etchingham nor Robert Barton would be taking their seats in the British House of Commons. To exultant cheers, he informed all present of the great sweeping victory of Sinn Féin throughout the country.

Release of Seán Etchingham

Etchingham had been a founder member of Sinn Féin, a prominent Gaelic Leaguer and supporter of the GAA. In 1916, as a member of the Volunteers, he had taken part in the Easter Week Rising and accompanied military officers to Dublin to ascertain the truth of the surrender there. Court-martialled subsequently, he was sentenced to death, but this was commuted to penal servitude for life and, with other Volunteers, he was imprisoned in England. Released during the amnesty, he resumed his career in Co. Wexford (he was a native of Courtown), but in May 1918, he was one of the Sinn Féiners arrested in connection with the 'German Plot', and he was jailed in Lincoln Prison. He was released on 21 January 1919, being unconditionally discharged because of the delicate state of his health.

Etchingham arrived home to Ireland the following day carrying a message from Éamon de Valera to the Irish people and gave a most detailed account of his life in Lincoln Prison to the reporter of the *Wicklow News-Letter*. Under the heading 'Dáil Éireann' the *Wicklow People* of 11 January reported that the first meeting of republican MPs had taken place in the Mansion House and included Robert C. Barton representing West Wicklow. Only thirty members were present at the inaugural meeting as thirty of the newly elected MPs were still in jail and three were in America seeking support for the new Dáil. The same paper's editorial of 25 January reported ominously that:

Indications are not wanting that we are in for stormy times in

Ireland. The new political party in power means to set the heather on fire. They should act with discretion and avoid coming into collision with the armed forces.

On Monday 3 February, the new Parliament at Westminster was formally opened but, as promised, no Nationalists attended. De Valera's escape from Lincoln Prison on the same day received widespread publicity in both local newspapers, and despite a reward of £5 being offered and extensive house-to-house searches being conducted, there was no sign of him or the other escapees.

Barton arrest, Spanish flu, GAA and Wicklow strike

Editorially, the month of February brought little change. The *Wicklow People* inquired: 'What does Ireland want? A Republic or Home Rule?', while the *News-Letter's* editorial sought social reform in post-war Britain. Column inches were now occupied with stories of the rapid spread of the Spanish Flu in the aftermath of the War and many people, weakened by food-rationing for years, succumbed to the pandemic. Schools closed as the fever quickly spread and numerous deaths were reported during February, March and April. Many social events had to be cancelled in the hope of preventing escalation of the illness.

On the political front, Robert Barton, MP for West Wicklow, was arrested in Dublin on Friday 21 February, shortly after his departure from the Mansion House where he had presided at a meeting. He was imprisoned in Mountjoy Gaol awaiting court martial in connection with a speech he had delivered in Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow, some time previously. However, on 22 March, both local newspapers reported the sensational news of Barton's escape from prison. The *People* reported the details of the escape thus:

When his cell was opened on Monday morning it was found that Mr. Barton had disappeared. The pillow and bedclothes were so arranged to give the bed the appearance of being occupied. This was obviously intended to deceive the warder who on his round during the night had flashed a light into his cell. The bars on the cell window had been filed through and removed, intimating the prisoner's means of escape. A note was found addressed to the Governor of the prison, the effect of which was to intimate that owing to the discomfort of the place, Mr. Barton had felt compelled to leave. He asked the Governor to keep his bag and effects safe until he sent for them.

Barton's escape was the first made successfully from Mountjoy.

On 4 August, GAA games were held all over Ireland in defiance of the ban on public meetings. Wicklow played Ashford in a hurling challenge. The authorities let it pass, insisting that sporting events had never been targeted for prohibition. However, on 15 August, there were 1,800 prohibited meetings of Sinn Féin clubs held all over Ireland. C. M. Byrne addressed the meeting in Wicklow. St. Patrick's Day was celebrated with the customary degree of enthusiasm in Wicklow. Favoured by pleasant weather, the annual procession, organised by the Wicklow Foresters and including Sinn Féin, Cumann na mBan, the Irish Volunteers, the GAA and many other groups, was impressive. In the evening, the Gaelic League organised a successful and well-attended Céilidh in the Town Hall.

Late March saw trouble develop in Wicklow Town as the farm labourers demanded the same wages as their town counterparts. Tensions grew and a strike which cut off supplies to Dominican Convent ensued. Quarrels developed between the workers and many blows were struck in a fracas at Morton's Lane. References by the clergy to the strike during Sunday Masses at St. Patrick's did little to ease the tensions. Eventually, a compromise was reached and the strike ended. Union leader James Everett was arrested and imprisoned in Mountjoy. In a letter published in the *Wicklow News-Letter* of 19 April concerning Everett, Robert Barton, MP stated:



Countess Markievicz with a group of Cumann na mBan members from Ashford, April 1919. Photo: Courtesy of John Finlay

I have seen the arrest of your secretary. The fact that the army of occupation saw fit to arrest him, is proof of his usefulness as an Irish citizen. You will be deprived for a short while of his services and of his wisdom in council but the cause of Labour gains from victimisation, just as does the cause of Ireland ... In a free Ireland I see a brilliant future for such men as your Labour Secretary.

Prophetic words indeed, as James Everett was to serve Ireland and the people of Wicklow for many decades in a free Irish Parliament.

Censorship and raids

During April 1919, many areas in Ireland were proclaimed as lawless. Wicklow remained free from major disturbances, but trouble was seething just below the surface, as evidenced by the editorial in the *Wicklow People* of 12 April:

What did Ireland get for her peacefulness and her help to win the War in the interests of smaller nations? ... Nothing but deception, betrayal and repeated broken promises with the result that many people now believe that there is no use in being peaceable and law-abiding; that nothing will come to this country by being in that state and if Ireland wants to succeed in securing her rights there is no other course open to her but to follow the successful policy of Sir Edward Carson, the policy which the Sinn Féiners have, to some extent, been following.

Press censorship prevented the papers from printing nationalist propaganda. Despite this, both local newspapers, in their 3 May editions, published the texts of speeches by Seán Etchingham and Countess Markievicz, which had been made in Wicklow on Sunday 26 April. Etchingham, returning to full health following his Lincoln Prison experience, addressed a large crowd from the steps of the Billy Byrne Monument in the Market Square and thanked all for their support and good wishes and declared himself proud to represent the county. He thanked the people for defeating conscription in 1918 and said that those who sided with Sinn Féin would lose nothing, for a friend would treat them more decently than a foreigner. He forecast that the world would soon sanction an Irish Republic. Markievicz had arrived in Wicklow by train to be greeted by a huge crowd. She was paraded from the station. She visited Ashford prior to addressing the meeting in the Market Square, where she recalled the events of Easter Week 1916. She told the crowd that the surrender was the most terrible day she had ever lived through. She encouraged all present to learn the Irish language and in conclusion said that 'England can only settle the Irish question by giving complete independence. Other nations will see to that!'

June was a month of increasing tension as the number of house searches increased. Parnell's home at Avondale was raided and James O'Keefe, a Volunteer, arrested and charged with unlawful drilling. Police searched for arms at Glanmore, Ashford. In an early morning raid, the home of James Shannon was minutely searched while two constables stood guard with fixed bayonets. Nothing of a condemnatory nature was discovered and no arrests were made.



Countess Markievicz in the Market Square, Wicklow, April 1919. Photo: Courtesy of John Finlay

Such house searches led to increasing tension and ongoing press censorship added fuel to the fire. Even the pro-establishment *Wicklow News-Letter* complained that while press censorship had ceased in England, America, Italy, Spain and even in Egypt, it remained in Ireland.

Versailles Peace Treaty

The end of June brought joyful banner headlines about the Versailles Peace Treaty. Immediately after the signing of the treaty, President Wilson sent a message to the American people advocating a full and sincere execution of its terms. 'The peace,' he said, 'liberated people who have never been able to find a way to freedom and it recognised the rights of all nationalities.' Republicans in Ireland hoped that the president's statement was referring to the Irish situation in particular; they were wrong.

Throughout July, many editorials in the *Wicklow People* addressed the national situation. The 19 July issue was particularly scathing:

Nationalist Irishmen fought and died in huge numbers during the Great War under the impression that they were fighting for Ireland as well as other small nations. This and this alone was their object in going to the Front in such huge numbers. They believed that they were fighting for Ireland's freedom but when they returned, they found their country in the possession of an army of occupation, that the Home Rule Bill had been hung up and treated as a scrap of paper and that their country had been betrayed in a shameful way. Now a peace treaty has been signed and today, Sat. July 19th has been set aside to celebrate the event. Ireland is glad that four and a half years of hostilities are over but there is no peace for Ireland.

The *Times* in London was just as scathing in its attack on the unjust way Ireland had been treated. 'Peace Day', 19 July, passed almost un-noticed in Wicklow. It was felt that there was little to celebrate. The *News-Letter*, showing

its true colours, attacked the apathy of the people of Wicklow. In its editorial of 26 July, it regretted that very few business premises closed early and that it would have been difficult for the casual observer to distinguish any feelings of jubilation as no demonstrations or celebration parades had been organised in recognition of the day. A few town natives flew Union Jacks, but they were the exception rather than the rule. From early evening, soldiers were confined to barracks to avoid possible conflict. The *Wicklow People* of 16 August brought the widespread resentment to the fore once again.

The latest pronouncement on the Irish Question, or anything that has occurred of late, has not altered our opinion that we are not within measurable distance of self government for this country. As has been frequently stated of late the Government is still bankrupt of statesmanship and ideas regarding Ireland. It has no policy, Carson and his friends won't have Home Rule and the Irish people will not have partition; what do we have? Stalemate!

In an address to the Glenealy Sinn Féin Club, Mr. Seán Etchingham, TD, thanked all for their continuous support and informed them that 'England would never win the US as an ally till the Irish demands were satisfied and the Irish people would never be satisfied with less than the complete evacuation of British forces from their country.' The end of August brought some 'good news.' The *News-Letter* reported that the following communiqué had been issued for publication: 'The Government have decided that the time has now arrived when the press censorship in Ireland may be abolished. It will therefore cease to exist from midnight Aug. 31st., 1919.' Yet the *People* on 6 September reported that 'Sir Edward Carson continues his war against Home Rule. He stated that his party wants a solution to the problem but not a surrender!' House searches and confiscations of documents continued to add to the tensions locally. C. M. Byrne's residence at Ballykillavane, Glenealy, was regularly searched over the next few months in the hope of finding some incriminating papers. Generally, the searches yielded little or no evidence. On 12 September, the headquarters of the Wicklow Labour Organisation and the Sinn Féin Club at Main Street were searched by a small force of police led by Detective Inspector F.A. Britten and including Head Constable Plower, Sergeant Jones and six constables. They carried out a minute search of the building accompanied by about twenty soldiers. Fully armed, the soldiers were drawn up in front of the hall while the police proceeded with the search. A small parcel of papers and documents was carried away. Throughout September, police raids continued on premises, including the Glenealy Sinn

Féin Club; the residence of James Turner, President of the Agricultural Workers Union, Killiskey; and the shaving and hair-dressing salon of William O'Grady, Main Street, Wicklow, where some republican documentation was removed from display. C. M. Byrne, in an address on 14 September in support of the Dáil Éireann Loan Fund, stated that now that 'Dáil Éireann had been proscribed it has been added to the Irish Roll of Honour. Proscription had not prevented the Land League in achieving what it had set out to do and it would not prevent Dáil Éireann in achieving its goals.'

Attempts locally to dampen down the situation met with little success. Lord Powerscourt's offer, by letter, to Wicklow Urban Council, of a German field gun to the town as a memento of Wicklow's fine support in the Great War was graciously declined. Town Councillor and schoolteacher Matthew Murtagh is reported to have said: 'We have plenty of mementoes in the shape of cripples, widows and orphans.' There was almost no middle ground left. Murders of policemen throughout the country and the escape of six Sinn Féin prisoners from Strangeways Prison in Manchester, increased the tensions. Raids on houses such as Mr. Robert Wingfield's at Dunran, Newtownmountkennedy, to procure arms and ammunition, gave the impression that the republican side was arming itself for the unavoidable conflict to come. Fingers began to point at those blocking the way. The *Wicklow People* editorial of 8 November began: 'Ulster blocks the way! We are as far away as ever from National Self Government. Ulster still blocks the way. As the present solution includes partition, it is damned to failure.'

Armistice Day

Despite the continuing unrest, there was unity in the celebration of 'Armistice Day' on 11 November. The *News-Letter* reported that: 'In keeping with other parts of the British Isles, the anniversary of the signing of the armistice was observed throughout the town with many businesses closing their doors, all activity suspended and a solemn silence being observed for two minutes beginning at 11:00 a.m.' On the following Sunday, at the request of the Archbishop of Dublin, a special requiem Mass was held in St. Patrick's Church for all those who had lost their lives in the War. On the occasion, the music was supplied by the Irish Foresters Brass and Reed Band. A special Mass was also held in Ashford.

Yet, a political solution was as far away as ever. The *Wicklow People* reported

on 29 November that the RIC Barracks, Church Street, was undergoing extensive preparations in the way of sandbagging, etc., in addition to the strong iron railings recently erected on the lower storey windows for the purpose of adequately protecting the building if or when it came under attack. Both sides seemed intent on continued shows of patriotism and force. On the afternoon of Sunday 23 November, the anniversary of the Manchester Martyrs, the I.N.F. band paraded through the streets of Wicklow, followed by a large crowd. There was no interference to the procession by the constabulary. As if to respond to that, a detachment of the military, with three armoured cars, visited Wicklow on 5 December, and remained stationary opposite the premises of the Labour and Sinn Féin Clubs in Main Street for almost two-and-a-half hours. The only activity was when the officer in charge took a photograph of some graffiti concerning the ‘Sinn Féin Loan’ which was painted on a wall nearby. The *Wicklow People* protested that



The Wicklow Branch of the Irish National Foresters Band.
Photo: Courtesy of John Finlay

the political situation in Ireland is becoming really alarming. The country is being goaded into desperation in the first place by the silly but criminal conduct of the Government and in the next by the brutal and cowardly murders that have been committed from time to time by person or persons unknown. We enter our earnest protests about both.

Motoring restrictions

To add to the discontent, in early December, the Government ordered that all drivers had to apply for special motor driver permits. Many refused to do so, with the result that very few vehicles were to be seen on Wicklow’s streets with many lying idle in garages throughout the town. A fund was opened to aid those being victimised by the new directive and Arthur Fitzpatrick and Thomas Murphy of Wicklow were appointed as trustees.

The *Wicklow News-Letter*’s end-of-year review for 1919 began:

One more week and we shall witness the dawning of another year. 1919, with its period of remarkable occurrences, startling

and uncertain happenings for the Irish people, shall have passed away and its events will only remain for the historian to record. The ruffled and disturbed state of our country has been visibly reflected in the fast-moving events during the year, though the town of Wicklow had been comparatively immune.

On the other hand, the editorial in the *Wicklow People* was much more direct:

The state of affairs in Ireland is rapidly becoming intolerable, confusion and chaos increase daily. The Home Rule Bill presently proposed could not possibly satisfy all sections of the Irish public ... Orange and Green. The Christmas of 1919 will be a black one. The Government muddle and its recourse to repressive measures, instead of redeeming its promises, have made for a very unenviable state of affairs. The country from end to end is seething with unrest and discontent. Mr. Lloyd George's contribution to restore harmony turns out, as most people expected to be ... nil.

1920

As a new decade dawned, the hope for a peaceful, lasting and just solution to the 'Irish Problem' seemed as far away as ever, though life continued almost as normal for most in Wicklow. The *Wicklow People* in its edition of 3 January reported that on

New Year's Eve, the Irish National Foresters Band, followed by a big crowd, paraded the streets for about an hour in honour of the old custom of ringing out the old and ringing in the new. Discordant noises by hooters, pipes, etc., added to the din for a protracted period. The church bells were rung and a midnight service was held in the parish church.

The Motor Permits order, which had been passed in late 1919, was still proving controversial. Some local drivers applied for the required permits, while others refused and picketed in Wicklow in late January, causing long delays to motorists. Goods being delivered by motor were regarded as tainted and even a motorised wedding party had to beat a hasty retreat from town. At a meeting held in the Town Hall on 11 January, the following resolution was proposed by Mr. Arthur Fitzpatrick and seconded by Mr. J. Keogh: 'That we, the members of the Wicklow Branch of the I.A.D. and M.U., loyally stand by

our comrades throughout Ireland in the fight against the Motor Permits Order, as it is tyrannical, unjust, undemocratic and not in keeping with the age.' The motion was unanimously passed and a defence fund was set up. The editorial in the *Wicklow People* in late January warned that 'we usually reap what we sow! Now, however, a large section of Nationalist opinion will not even settle for Home Rule and feel that the country is entitled to much more.'

A county and country at war

Following the attack on Baltinglass Barracks on 24 January, in which two constables were injured, engineers erected large iron sheets to form a protective barrier at the RIC barracks in Church Street in Wicklow. Other incidents which led to increased tensions were the re-arrest of Robert Barton, TD, MP, following his escape from Mountjoy in March 1919, and the shooting dead of James (Seamus) O'Brien, a young, recently married shopkeeper of Market Square, Rathdrum. On Friday, 20 February, at about 1:30 a.m., the RIC Barracks in Church Street was damaged when an explosive device detonated on a windowsill causing minor structural damage and smashing several panes of glass.

The editorial in the *People* of 6 March pointed the finger of blame for the continuing unrest and escalating violence at Carson and the British Government

When will the Government give Ireland that chance that she is agitating for so long ... to manage her own affairs and work out her own salvation? The precious Home Rule Bill, so long promised, was presented to the Parliament on Wednesday last but it is a foregone conclusion that it will not be accepted on account of its partition clauses. The whole proceeding is a mockery and a farce!

Wicklow Urban Council could take no more of Lloyd George's empty promises and passed a resolution acknowledging Dáil Éireann. The published Home Rule Bill proposed the establishment of two parliaments. This proposal was not acceptable even to Sir Edward Carson who, to keep the Northern Ireland Parliament unionist dominated, proposed that only six of the counties of Ulster should be part of the new state. The murder of Alderman Thomas McCurtain, Lord Mayor of Cork, shot dead by military police, was the final straw for Irish nationalists, who felt that the time for talking was now past. In early April, fearing the eventual inevitable breakdown of law and order, extra police, including some of the English Military Constabulary, were drafted into Wicklow Town. Raids on residences or business premises, such as Comerford's Mill, Rathdrum, of

republican sympathisers in the vicinity increased and some arms were confiscated. In its editorial of 10 April, the *Wicklow People* derided the government for its attempt to provoke the people of Ireland into acts of desperation. Throughout the country, over 150 RIC barracks were destroyed or damaged by fire, including Laragh Barracks (on 4 April). The situation in Mountjoy Gaol was becoming very serious as the conditions for many political prisoners deteriorated and there were even fears for their lives. As a result, Dáil Éireann called for a nationwide work stoppage in protest. Wicklow fell into line with the rest of the country as trains stopped, all business ceased, and public offices closed, as did all national and secondary schools. In Wicklow, on 13 April, about a thousand people gathered in the Market Square and marched behind two Sinn Féin tricolours to St. Patrick's Church where a rosary was said. It became known as 'Down Tools Day'. That same evening, Wicklow Urban Council, at a specially convened meeting, passed a resolution condemning the 'continued inhuman and barbarous treatment of our fellow country-men in Mountjoy Gaol, whose only crime is the love of their country, Ireland, and we hereby demand their immediate release.' The following day was no different, with no business whatsoever being transacted in town and in St Patrick's Church, full to overflowing, prayers were said for the republican prisoners in Mountjoy, especially those on hunger strike. The prayers were answered when the gates of Mountjoy Gaol were thrown open. *The Freeman's Journal* under the banner headlines 'Victory over the Castle' and 'Mountjoy Prisoners Unconditionally Released' reported that the

heroic prisoners at Mountjoy have fought the good fight and won. Backed by the entire nation which showed its sympathy and support in ceasing work and as a result the gates of Mountjoy were thrown wide open and the sufferers (68 hunger strikers and 25 other political prisoners) were carried out by their friends, some unhappily at the point of death. The nation extends them its grateful thanks, its unstinted admiration and its very best wishes for a speedy recovery.

A hastily organised collection by some Wicklow women collected over £30 in aid of the political prisoners fund, while ceremonies of celebration at St. Patrick's Church were filled to overflowing and prayers for the speedy recovery of the prisoners were offered. The humiliating defeat for the Government and forces of the Crown by such peaceful protests led, ultimately, to the resignation of the Lord Lieutenant, Lord French, but it did nothing to ease the tensions and feelings of bitterness.

The Lancashire Regiment, responsible for the shooting dead of Philip Dowling in Arklow on 26 April, was hastily transferred and billeted in the Old Gaol, Wicklow, which was being made ready in case of necessity. Plans for the stationing of the Cheshire Regiment in the Old Gaol had to be deferred. Ill-feeling was at an all-time high. The completion of the transfer of the Lancashire Regiment from Arklow took place on 31 May, when the regimental band marched from the railway station to its new quarters in Wicklow Gaol. That afternoon, a recital by the regimental band took place in the Market Square in the shadow of the 1798 rebel Billy Byrne. The *People* remarked that the recital was poorly attended, while the *News-Letter* informed its readers that the band delighted the onlookers for two whole hours with a selection of popular pieces, including some Irish airs.

Roadblocks and house and automobile searches were the order of the day with many pedestrians on their way home from Ashford bazaar stopped on the road by the military and questioned. Homes in Laragh and Moneystown were raided on the night of 2 June, while in Annamoe, a Sinn Féin flag hanging outside the committee room was removed. There was much anger in Rathdrum when it became known that Avondale House, the beautiful home of the late Charles Stewart Parnell, had been occupied by the military to be used as a barracks.

In an outspoken editorial on 22 May, the *Wicklow People* compared the country's turmoil to that of Belgium during the German occupation.

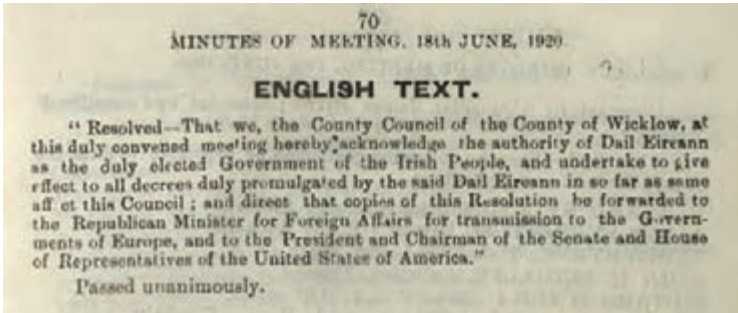
The policy of brute force will not work. We do not believe that it is possible to hold down any people, with courage and spirit, such as the Irish possess, by brute force. There is only one way by which law, order and peace can be established in Ireland and that is by giving Irishmen and women the simple right of self-determination.



Wicklow Urban District Council c. 1922 with James Everett seated to the right of the mace and C. M. Byrne in the centre (with the hat) behind the mace. Photo: Courtesy of John Finlay

The Wicklow County Council elections took place on Tuesday 1 June. No police or military were on duty at the polling stations, which were under the control of the Irish Volunteers. Boxes on their way to the count at Wicklow were left unprotected as it was felt that a guard of Irish Volunteers might have provoked an official crackdown, though Volunteers did guard the room containing the ballot boxes at Wicklow Courthouse throughout Tuesday night. All the while, in the adjoining building and at the entrance to the Gaol, some few yards away, armed British sentries stood their guard. Returned for the Wicklow Rural Area were James Everett, Labour/Sinn Féin, Christopher M. Byrne, Sinn Féin, James Turner, Labour/Sinn Féin and Bernard Kelly, Sinn Féin. A motion passed by Wicklow Urban Council, at a special meeting of 3 June, resolved that 'We, the Urban District Council of Wicklow, hereby direct our officials to refuse to supply information to the surveyor of taxes in connection with the Council's property and we hereby also refuse to pay, to the British Government, any taxes whatsoever.' At about midnight on 5 June, a drum of petrol, belonging to the Lancashire Regiment was (accidentally?) set on fire. The town fire brigade, police and civilians fought the blaze, which luckily did not spread to the ammunition store.

On Sunday 13 June, Wicklow Murrough was the site of the County Feis, which proved a record success with fine weather and crowds in excess of 3,000. The town was decorated throughout with arches of Gaelic mottoes. The Feis was officially opened by Mr. Seán T. O'Ceallaigh, TD, and President of the Gaelic League. Irish flags, which had been displayed by the residents of High Street, were ordered to be removed by the police as they were deemed offensive to the military stationed nearby at Wicklow Gaol. Pedestrians reported that they were being stopped and questioned nightly. Nearly every morning, when the lorry containing the military responsible for the house raids and questioning of the public was returning to its base in Wicklow Gaol, the soldiers set up a terrible din, shouting, singing and making loud noise by banging their feet and rifle butts on the lorry's floor to the discomfort and annoyance of the local people who had their sleep disturbed at such an early hour. In anticipation of trouble, the military undertook further strengthening of the defensive cordon around the entrance to Wicklow Gaol using barbed wire; a quick-firing gun was also mounted in a camouflaged position and pointed out over the town from the fourth storey ('the drop' as it was previously named, where hangings took place). At midday on Saturday 19 June, the destroyer *Urchin* docked at the East Pier and disembarked upwards of 80 men of the Cheshire Regiment, their officers and



Wicklow County Council Minute Book June 1920 – oath of loyalty to the new Dáil Éireann. Photo: Courtesy of Wicklow County Archives

equipment, to replace the ill-behaved Lancashire Regiment. The ship returned on Sunday with 100 more men of the same regiment who were due to take up residence at Avondale and replace the Berkshire's who had been stationed there. Great precautions were taken with each landing, with armed sentries at 50-yard intervals. The newly installed Cheshires were involved in an incident that same day when shots were fired in rapid succession close to midnight. Later enquiries would show that the sentry on guard duty at the Gaol entrance was alarmed by a 'shadowy' figure approaching down Kilmantin Hill who was challenged and refused to stop. The sentry opened fire on the figure which later proved to be a horse that had escaped from a field nearby.

The Urban Council passed two other resolutions in June, the first demanding the release of James Larkin and the second demanding the release from prison of Robert Barton, TD, who had fought in France for the freedom of small nations and for which England, so-called 'the champion of small nations,' had rewarded him with a prison cell.

July began with the opening of the County Wicklow Assizes, Chief Justice Moloney presiding. Extraordinary military and police precautions were observed for the protection of the judge. Detachments of the military, fully equipped, patrolled the streets prior to the court opening, while sentries and large numbers of constabulary guarded the precincts of the courthouse. When both judges left their lodgings in Wentworth Place, they were escorted through the streets by the military until safely placed in the relevant courts. As summer progressed, house raids and even arson attacks were becoming commonplace. The premises of Mr. L. Carroll, Main St., were raided and searched in the early



Wicklow Quays c. 1865-1914. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

hours of 2 July by a fully equipped party of the Cheshire Regiment, but nothing incriminating was discovered. A week later, another search of his house took place, but once again nothing of interest to the military was found. An unsuccessful attempt was made to burn down the recently vacated Ashford Police Barracks. As Wilson's Circus left Wicklow in the early hours of 3 July, a member of the circus party flew a Sinn Féin flag from one of the caravans. At Rathmore, near Ashford, the circus party met a patrol of the military returning to Wicklow in a motor lorry. Offended by the flag, the patrol opened fire on the caravan. About ten shots were discharged, but no-one was hit by the flying bullets. As the caravan continued its way, cheering could be heard with cries of 'Up Ireland!' and 'Up Dublin!' At the monthly meeting of Wicklow Urban Council, Mr. C. M. Byrne, on the run from the forces of law and order, made a surprise appearance, to the delight of the council members. He thanked them for their patriotic support and foretold that they would soon have the British Government on the run. He then proposed a motion, aided by councillor James Middleton, that 'a new flagstaff with sheeve, halyard complete and a tricoloured flag with a coat of arms of Wicklow, green white and gold, be purchased for the Town Hall. The motion was carried. The council again urgently sought the release of Robert Barton, who was seriously ill in an English prison.



Main Street, Wicklow c. 1865-1914. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

House searches continued throughout Wicklow Town with Mr. L. Carroll's home being searched for a third time, along with the residences of William O'Grady, President of the Sinn Féin Club on Main St., and Mr. J. Fallon's newsagency on Abbey St. With law and order breaking down and more trouble forecast, the local units of the Irish Volunteers were called in by the Urban Council to assist in the nightly patrolling of the streets. Rathdrum Volunteers served notices on the publicans in the town as to when they could open. In Wicklow, the IRA served notices on girls prohibiting them from 'social intercourse' with soldiers or other members of the armed forces. In its editorial in late July, the *Wicklow People* asked 'What is to become of our poor country? We are going from bad to worse every day and no-one knows what the morrow may bring!'

In August, Wicklow Urban Council, showing its true republican colours, invited suggestions from the public for new Irish street names. At a meeting held on 7 August, William O'Grady proposed that the following Irish names be bestowed on the streets of the town: Wentworth Place to be renamed Pádraig Pearse Place, Fitzwilliam Road to St. Brigid's Road, Leitrim Place to Plunkett Place, High Street to Parnell Street, Quarantine Hill to Connolly's Hill, New Street to Parnell Parade, Market Square to O'Byrne Square, Strand Street to McBride Street, Bath Street to St. Kevin's Street, Church Street to St. Columcille's

Street, Bachelor's Walk to Con Colbert Parade, Castle Street to Irishtown, Monkton Row to T. J. Clarke Street, Summerhill to Blessed Oliver Plunkett Hill, Colley Street to Eamonn Ceannt Street, Bayview Tce. to McDermott Tce., Church Hill to Edward Daly Hill, Brickfield Lane to McCurtain Avenue, Rocky Road to Gallows Lane, Market Street to Dwyer Parade, Ball Alley to Hanrahan Square, Dispensary Lane to Heuston Street, Convent Road to Thomas Ashe Road and Main Street/Abbey Street/Fitzwilliam Square to St Mantan's Street. Melancholy Lane and Kilmantin Hill were to remain unchanged. Wicklow was to revert to its Irish name of Cill Mhantáin.

With the whole country in a state of chaos, the editorials of both local newspapers began to plead for sanity and a just solution. Partition was a non-runner to all the nationalists of Ireland and many unionists. Little wonder then that de Valera's reply to Lloyd George's proposal was so significant: 'Ireland never has or never will unite with Britain. As long as British soldiers remain on Irish soil, we shall be British enemies and shall strike when we can. We see in her every difficulty, our opportunity.' Mail train and post office robberies were becoming a regular occurrence. The Wicklow to Dublin mail train was stopped at Newcastle on 10 August by an unknown corps who removed a number of mailbags. The flying of the tricolour from the Town Hall was infuriating the military, stationed in the Old Gaol just 100 yards away, and despite being removed on numerous occasions it was generally replaced almost immediately. House raids by the military in search of guns and ammunition were occurring daily but in several cases the Volunteers had already raided the same residences and removed the weapons for their own use. Instances of confrontation between civilians and police/military were on the increase, and the questioning of individuals was becoming more aggressive. An elderly man named Carberry, gardener to the Misses Halpin at Tinakilly House, Rathnew, was struck on the head with the butt of a rifle while being interrogated. The soldier claimed that the 'old gentleman fell against him.'

Hunger strikes

During September, the condition of the hunger striking prisoners led by Terence McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, overshadowed daily life and the public crowded the local churches to pray for their welfare, release and restoration to full health. Notices which had been posted early in September encouraging people to spy and inform on their fellow countrymen were replaced by others informing them that the only rewards for informers would be paid in lead rather than



Fitzwilliam Square c. 1897-1911. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

traitors' silver. In late September, a party of the Auxiliary Police Force, English and Scotsmen mainly, who became known as the 'Black and Tans', arrived in Wicklow. They had already gained a reputation for their terrible behaviour in other parts of the country. Their arrival created consternation and there was a great sense of relief when it became known that they were to be stationed in Baltinglass. Lucky Baltinglass! The *London Times* in an editorial in early October on the Irish situation commented that

The majority of the Irish people are disgusted with the situation as it is at present. Of course, the way to end the trouble would be to give Ireland an adequate measure of self-government, but this the prevailing Ministry will not give. Many thousands of Irishmen have gone to their graves in the hope of freedom for their country. It looks as if many thousands more will follow there ere Irish freedom shall come!

Then came the news that all of Ireland dreaded. Alderman Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, died in Brixton Prison at 5:30 p.m. on Monday 25 October on the 74th day of his hunger strike. A nation held its breath! Two days earlier, the death of young Cork hunger striker, Michael Fitzgerald, had resulted

in widespread mourning. Wicklow Town Hall expressed its abhorrence by displaying tricolours marked with black crosses. As news of the death of another Cork hunger striker, 22-year-old Joseph Murphy, reached unbelieving ears, Friday 29 October was declared a day of national mourning on instruction from Dáil Éireann and the Irish Labour Party. The instructions were obeyed throughout the town and surrounding areas when all business was suspended and all establishments closed for the day, except for a few which opened until 11:00 a.m. to supply essential foodstuffs. Throughout the week, military raids increased tenfold. At the Fair Green, Rathdrum, on 26 October, houses belonging to Mr. Dan Byrne, Mrs. Murtagh, Mary Dunne, Miss Byrne, John Byrne and P. Fox were all searched, but nothing of an incriminating nature was discovered. The *Wicklow People* carried a report of a raid by the police and the military on the home of Mr. M. Olohan, Fitzwilliam Square, on 27 October, in a search for arms. In the house were several boarders, including Mr. Arthur Fitzpatrick, chauffeur in the employment of Messrs. Haskins Bros. The raid was evidently for the purpose of effecting Mr. Fitzpatrick's arrest. Confronted by men carrying rifles with bayonets affixed, he was held while his belongings were searched. He was removed initially to Wicklow Gaol before being transferred to Mountjoy Prison. 'It is believed that he will be tried by court-martial,' reported the paper. The search had been very thorough, even the linoleum had been lifted, but no weapons had been found. On Sunday 30 October, a company of 'auxiliary policemen' (Black and Tans) arrived in Wicklow by motor lorry and, after a short period in the barracks, came up the Main Street, entered the Sinn Féin Hall, broke a number of pictures of republican leaders and snatched a flag (a tricolour embossed with a mourning cross), which they trampled in the mud. Soon afterwards, the force departed the town, much to the relief of the local inhabitants.

Following Kevin Barry's execution at Mountjoy Gaol on Monday 1 November, there was widespread indignation, anger and sorrow and at High Mass in St. Patrick's Church, Wicklow, on 2 November, prayers were said for the repose of his soul. At a meeting held that same evening, Wicklow Urban Council passed the following motion:

We, the members of Wicklow Urban District Council, beg to convey our deepest sympathy and condolence to the Lady Mayoress of Cork on the death of her heroic husband, Alderman McSwiney and also to the relatives of Michael Fitzgerald, Joseph Murphy and Kevin Barry who offered and sacrificed their lives for Ireland and as a mark of respect the Council meeting now stands adjourned.

A circular to Wicklow Urban Council from Dáil Éireann was read and considered at a meeting held on 6 November. The circular contained directives concerning non co-operation between local governing bodies and the Custom House/Local Government Board. On the same evening, the home of Mr. James Nichols, Wicklow UDC, was raided and searched for two hours, but nothing incriminating was found. On 9 November, another force of Auxiliary Police arrived in a motor lorry, to be stationed in the town. Law and order seemed to be breaking down completely. Closure of the railways was threatened on account of their refusal to transport armed troops and the closure of post offices was also threatened, an act that would have made it impossible to distribute old age pensions. On Monday 15 November, two raids were carried out in the town by the military accompanied by the police. The first at 11 p.m. when the military, obviously intending to raid the house of Mr. Jack Barlow at Woodenbridge Row, mistakenly knocked on the door of his next-door neighbour Miss Donnelly. She resided alone and suffered from deafness. Failing to get a response from their loud knocking, they proceeded to kick in the door, and it was not until they surrounded her bed that the terrified occupant discovered their presence. Red-faced, they proceed to search Mr. Barlow's home, next door, and later that of Mr. James Everett. Confiscated from Mr. Barlow's house was a pledge not to sell evil literature, namely the English Sunday papers, while in Mr. Everett's, a copy of 'The Voice of Labour' and 'Young Ireland' were discovered and removed. On Wednesday 17 November, ten lorries filled with Black and Tans, 150 in number, drove into Wicklow Town at 7 p.m. en-route to Waterford. They decided to put up for the night. An extremely worrying and restless night for the locals ensued as they went about town in parties seeking to procure refreshments and to freshen up. Not surprisingly, a great number of them could not find lodgings for the night and they roamed the streets of the town for hours. At about 11 p.m. a dozen or so of the Auxiliaries proceeded to the hair-dressing salon of William O'Grady on Main Street. Four of them entered the premises and, prior to carrying out a search, they closely questioned Mr. O'Grady as to his attitude towards Sinn Féin (not a very pleasant experience). They shredded his photographs of Thomas Ashe, Terence McSwiney and Éamon de Valera. It was with relief that the townspeople watched their departure early the following morning.

Bloody Sunday

On Sunday 21 November, all hell broke loose in Dublin. Following the assassination of fourteen British military officers by republican gunmen in well-planned raids, the Black and Tans sought their revenge in Croke Park that afternoon when

they indiscriminately shot dead thirteen people at the football match between Dublin and Tipperary, including Tipperary goalkeeper Michael Hogan; almost 100 others were wounded. Some Wicklow boys who were present at the match had a terrifying experience. According to the *News-Letter*,

they were grouped together in the grand-stand when the military appeared and opened fire. Some immediately sought shelter underneath the stand while one made for the gate. A shop assistant in Mr. Laurence Byrne's Wicklow, obeyed the command to drop to the ground. He remained in that position for some time and succeeded in reaching the gate by crawling, where he joined a huge crowd being held up. He was ordered to raise his hands and was obliged to keep them there for at least an hour before being searched and allowed to go. While the officer at the gate was searching the crowd, auxiliary police discharged shots over the people's heads and warned them not to rush. They ceased firing only when ordered to do so by the military officer present. The other Wicklow boys, one of whom had the startling experience of seeing a man shot dead at his side, succeeded in getting free after being searched on three different occasions.

Trains ceased to run and resumed only on 23 November. In the ensuing chaos, two of the Wicklow boys succeeded in reaching home on Sunday night, another on Monday, while the remainder arrived home safely on Tuesday night. An Ashford motor car, with passengers bound for the match, had the good fortune to be turned back at Cabinteely. Both local newspaper editorials attacked the senseless killings and hoped that sanity would prevail. Extensive searches of public buildings and private homes took place in Wicklow in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday. Wicklow County Council Offices in the Courthouse and Wicklow Urban Council Offices in the Town Hall, Market Square, were searched exhaustively by members of the Cheshire Regiment, who removed books and letters received from Dáil Éireann. John Graham, Clerk of the Court, was refused entry to his office as was Mr. Laurence Byrne, proprietor of the Wicklow House Hotel, Market Square. Byrne succeeded in entering his premises from the rear. He appeared at the front door of the hotel a few minutes later to the consternation of the soldiers who, some minutes before, had refused him entry and turned him away. In a mandamus against Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Urban Council for their support for Dáil Éireann, the government ordered the confiscation of all relevant books and records. How unfortunate then, that on Monday 29 November, the boardroom of the Town Hall



Wicklow Bathing Strand c. 1865-1914. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

was raided by persons unknown and some important documents were removed and made unavailable for scrutiny by His Majesty's Government. Entry had been gained by forcing a window from the outside rear balcony. Similarly, the records of Wicklow County Council were also misplaced.

In early December, Cork's Patrick Street was devastated by a fire, which had been started maliciously by government forces in reprisal for an earlier ambush on some auxiliary police. Compared with the rest of the country, Wicklow seemed peaceful, and yet on St. Stephen's Night, a bomb exploded at the canteen of the Comrades of the Great War on the Murrough. Some damage was caused to the door, but the occupants were uninjured.

In its last editorial of the year, published on 25 December, the *Wicklow People* deplored the state of the nation: 'There was not such a Black Christmas since the Christmases of the Cromwellian period. The granting of self determination is the only apparent solution, but the Government are blind ... Hence we will have no peace in Ireland this season of goodwill.' By contrast, the final editorial of 1920 in the *Wicklow News-Letter* focused on the relative calm of Wicklow:

Wicklow stands out practically spotless and untarnished, peaceful and quiet. Crime had not stained its land or besmirched its good name. The peacefulness of Wicklow has not been disturbed by the

horror of the crimes which have been committed elsewhere and the people consider themselves fortunate in escaping such terrors. How long will it last?

In a statement issued by the Irish Office, the following list of casualties in the recent nationwide disturbances was published: Policemen, 51 killed and 230 wounded; soldiers, 47 killed and 103 wounded; civilians, 41 killed and 101 wounded. It also gave the following figures: 67 courthouses destroyed, 505 vacant RIC barracks destroyed, 23 occupied barracks destroyed, 118 vacant barracks damaged, 51 occupied barracks damaged, 830 raids on mail, 45 raids on coastguard stations and 2,991 raids for arms.

1921

In its hard-hitting editorial of 1 January 1921, entitled 'Little Hope,' the *Wicklow People* pulled no punches:

... the scenes of carnage and bloodshed are unfortunately as rife as ever in Ireland though it was fondly hoped that a truce, for a month at least, would be called. But it was evident from the actions of certain Government Ministers that a truce, on honourable terms, would not be had. Nationalist and republican extremists are being driven to acts of desperation by the lack of mobility of the Government towards a fair and just solution. Even the King in his speech laments the lawless unstable situation here in Ireland ... However, we do not expect that this Government which is completely in the hands of Sir Edward Carson, will restore order and peace in Ireland. Carson and his friends will not agree to the majority being given what they have so long yearned for. In this instance we will be controlled by the minority. Carson is to blame for guiding us into the present tragic situation aided and abetted by a weak-willed nervous Government.

Incarcerations and executions

Twelve civilian prisoners were being held in Wicklow Gaol at the beginning of 1921. They included William O'Grady and J. Byrne, both members of Wicklow UDC, P. Curran and J. Morrissey from Rathdrum, and P. Jordan and R. Saunders from Ashford. Twelve military prisoners were also being held there. Wicklowman Arthur Fitzpatrick, who had been arrested in late 1920, was tried by

court-martial for possession of seditious literature and sentenced to nine months imprisonment with hard labour. In the early weeks of January, house searches and arrests continued unabated. At a district court-martial held in Kilmainham on Tuesday 4 January, William Kelly of Ballymerrigan, Glenealy, was charged with having in his possession a double-barrelled shotgun. He refused to recognise the court and as a soldier of the Irish Republican Army he denied the court the right to pass judgement on him. Following the arrests of

Arthur Griffith and Professor Eoin MacNeill, Éamon de Valera felt it was his duty to return from America and assume responsibility for directing Sinn Féin. He continued to insist on Ireland's independence as a basis for negotiations. Nothing else was acceptable. At the AGM of Wicklow Urban Council, James Everett was returned as chairman with William O'Grady as vice-chairman. Prior to the conclusion of the business that evening (31 January) a vigilance committee was formed to ascertain whether any goods were being imported into the town from Belfast in contravention of the boycott. William O'Grady, who had been arrested during Christmas week and held in Wicklow Gaol, was released from custody. During his incarceration, he had never been charged with any crime and maintained his innocence throughout steadfastly refusing to sign the declaration of loyalty during his imprisonment. The Rathdrum premises of S. Lambert at Market Square were commandeered as a police barracks in mid-February with the proprietor being given just a few hours to vacate. Police activities continued unabated throughout the county. Crown forces who visited Wicklow Town on Tuesday 15 February, took exception to a republican slogan inscribed on the wall at the back of Boone's Bakery, near the Barracks in Church Street. The window overlooking the street was smashed and the military, having commandeered a can of paint, obliterated the offensive inscription. Despite this, and while the threat of violence hung over the town and county like a dark cloud, Wicklow continued to suffer little



Group of republican prisoners outside Wicklow Gaol, 1920.
Photo: Courtesy of John Finlay

in comparison with many other parts of the country. Minor incidents reported locally included the dispersal of a group of villagers off the Rock in Rathnew after some 'hot cross talk' and a similar event involving three Rathdrum men outside Mr. Kennedy's shop in Wicklow. During the week ending 26 February, 26 people died in incidents throughout the country in a total breakdown of law and order. Many of the deaths were caused by military over-reaction and reprisals. In Wicklow, Rathdrum man Patrick Curran, who had been held in Wicklow Gaol, was charged with having seditious documents at Barndarrig, namely the *Handbook of the Irish Volunteers*, as was Ashford man Patrick Jordan (in his room at Deegan's Hotel). Both were sentenced by court-martial to nine months without hard labour. Newspaper editorials in the *People* and *News-Letter* continued to decry the deteriorating situation nationwide and the indifference of the London government.

An increase in the number of military raids, especially in the Ashford and Newcastle areas, forewarned that worse was to come. A young man with Wicklow connections, Stephen Clarke, an ex-soldier, was shot and killed in Brunswick Street, Dublin, when he apparently stumbled into an ambush on a group of Auxiliaries. Rushing to the aid of Mrs. Morgan, an elderly woman who had been seriously wounded, he was shot through the neck and died almost immediately. Clarke had been married two years earlier to a Wicklow woman, the daughter of the late Garrett Hanlon, a Corporation employee of Castle Street; she was left with an infant to mourn his loss.

At Mountjoy Gaol in Dublin on Monday morning 14 March 1921, Thomas Whelan, Patrick Moran, Frank Flood, Patrick Doyle, Bernard Ryan and Thomas Bryan, were hanged, despite a huge petition for clemency. Their remains were interred alongside their good friend Kevin Barry. The country heard the news of the executions with shock, dismay and disgust. Éamon de Valera demanded that the Black and Tans be immediately withdrawn from Ireland and an immediate meeting of all elected Sinn Féin representatives, without exceptions, be permitted. The *News-Letter* of 26 March reported a daring raid of armed men on the coastguard station at Ballinacarrig, about six miles south of Wicklow, in search for arms and ammunition. The coastguards on duty were surprised and locked in the storeroom while a search took place. No arms were found, but the raiders took away a quantity of powder and a signaling apparatus. The raid was conducted in a courteous manner and, when departing, the raiders released their captives. On Friday 25 March, the road at Rathmore, Ashford, was blocked by troops who searched pedestrians and motorists alike, but no

arrests were made. In its editorial of 2 April, the *News-Letter* forwarded the following opinion: 'Mr. Lloyd George can have peace in Ireland tomorrow by righting the wrong under which Ireland suffers on the basis of justice and right. Ireland desires no quarrel with England, but Ireland's rights must not be subservient to England's interests.' The Partition of Ireland Act was due to come into force on 19 April, and as we now know, it would throw the whole country into turmoil with the southern part of the island

ignoring the act entirely. The death toll in the 'Irish situation' had according to the *People* reached alarming proportions, during the first three months of 1921 but excluding the final week, numbered 287 civilians dead with 167 injured, while 169 members of the military and police had died with some 168 wounded. 'The situation cannot be allowed to continue' commented the paper. The *News-Letter* inquired on 16 April, 'How long is our country to remain a corpse on the dissecting table?' Military activity continued unabated throughout the county. On Wednesday night, 13 April, a patrol of the military, in single file, marched down Wicklow's Main Street. They halted and questioned many pedestrians who were making their way home. Members who were leaving the Catholic Club in Main Street were stopped and questioned. While this was happening, armed police entered the Irish Transport Labour Hall nearby and made a thorough search. Premises along the quays were also closely scrutinised, as was the home of James Nichols (Wicklow UDC) on High Street. Even the goods store of the Dublin and South Eastern Railway Co. at the Murrough, the De La Salle School building and the residences of goods clerk, Mr. P. Murphy and signaller Mr. J. O'Connor did not escape minute examination. These searches may have been a consequence of a 'republican' raid which had taken place some 24 hours earlier at the premises of Haskins Bros., Main Street, when a number of armed men gained admission to the grocery by means of a ruse. They ordered the members of staff into a back room and detained them there while some members of the gang, accompanied by Miss Haskins, searched the premises for 'Belfast Goods,' the sale of which was prohibited by republican boycott at the time.



Rathnew c. 1900. 'A street of mud cabins'.
Photo: WA Green © National Museums NI
Ulster Folk Museum Collection

During April, the conditional order of mandamus was made absolute. Every one of the 21 members of Wicklow UDC was served with a writ for failure to comply with Government instructions to submit the Urban District Council's accounts to Mr. Grubb, auditor of His Majesty's Government. Even the unionist members of the Council were served with the writ. The council members did not seem unduly worried by this turn of events and business continued as usual. In its editorial of 30 April, the *People* demanded an end to the 'present impasse, with an amnesty right across the boards. The time is ripe for peace. It is eagerly desired. The country is exhausted from the waste of life which this struggle has involved.' It reported that during 1920, a total of 1,235 people had died in violent conflict, which worked out on average as almost four deaths daily. The hoped-for meeting between James Craig and Éamon de Valera took place on Thursday 5 May. The *News-Letter* referred to the meeting as 'Hands across the Boyne' and welcomed it as a small step towards peace. However, with both sides deeply entrenched, there was little hope for success.

As General Election Polling Day approached, the peace talks between Craig, de Valera and Lord Derby continued sporadically, but people countrywide were pessimistic about an agreeable solution being reached. On Friday 13 May, when nominations for the election closed, all three nominees for the Wicklow constituency were members of Sinn Féin. As a result, Robert Barton (at that time a prisoner in Portland Prison), Erskine Childers and C. M. Byrne were all deemed to be elected unopposed. There would be no polling on Election Day. The same situation arose in Wexford, where all four Sinn Féin candidates were returned unopposed.

On the same day, a most daring incident occurred in Wicklow. At about 11 p.m., the mail car carrying mails from Wicklow Post Office was held up in the vicinity of the White Gates by six armed men. One bag of mail was removed from the car. Next morning, the post was returned to Rathnew Railway Station marked 'censored.' In the meantime, another set of raiders entered the linesman's cottage on the Murrough, took his lamp, and using this as a signal, stopped the Dublin to Wexford midnight train. The raiders then boarded the guard's van and took away two sacks of mail, which were later found at Friar's Hill, clearly marked 'censored by the I.R.A.'

Extraordinary activity by Crown forces ensued upon the raids and before night had elapsed, several houses, including those of James Nichols on High Street and Matthew Carroll on Fitzwilliam Road, were searched but no arrests were

made. Mr. Thomas Garvey, who had been conducting a Gaelic League class in Brittas Bay, was arrested by the police on the night of 17 May as he was returning to his lodgings in Abbey Street. He was brought to Wicklow Gaol under military escort.

The results of the Parliamentary Elections failed to halt the death and destruction throughout the country. Headlines such as 'Clean Sweep by Sinn Féin,' 'No Contests in the South,' or '124 Sinn Féin + 4 Dublin University (Trinity) Nominees Elected' made little difference to a country on the brink.

On 25 May at about 1 p.m., the magnificent James Gandon-built Custom House in Dublin was entered by a large force of armed men who held up the staff and set fire to the building, which was almost destroyed. Rifle and revolver fire rang out in the surrounding areas as opposite sides engaged each other. Many government departments in the building, including the Local Government Board, Customs and Excise, Inland Revenue and Old Age Pensions with their irreplaceable documents and records were reduced to ashes. Many units of the fire brigade were held up and prevented from attempting to extinguish the inferno. In a statement issued subsequently by the Dublin Brigade of the IRA, it was confirmed that

the destruction of the Custom House was an unavoidable military necessity to remove the records and documentation necessary for the British Government to run this country. We, in common with the rest of the nation, regret the destruction of such a beautiful and historic building, but the lives of four million people are a more sacred charge than any architectural masterpiece ... and was purged by fire in accordance with the decision arrived at, after due deliberation, by the Ministry of Dáil Éireann.

That same evening in Wicklow, armed forces were on the alert and were obviously under orders to prevent crowds gathering while Thomas Garvey, who had been held in Wicklow Gaol, was transferred to Dublin by mail train under heavy guard. In its editorial of 4 June, the *Wicklow People* was pessimistic: 'Everywhere the people of Ireland are yearning for peace but there seems very little prospect at this time. Coercion never settled political troubles. The exercise of common sense and a spirit of justice is usually more successful.' The paper feared that the new viceroy, Lord Edmund Talbot (FitzAlan) would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor and there would be no change in policy in seeking a solution of the Irish dilemma.

In a well-planned, military-style operation on the morning of Sunday 5 June, the roads over an extensive area of the Wicklow district were rendered impassible by felled trees and deep trenches. Among the areas affected were, Ashford, Annamoe, Tighe's Avenue, Ballyhenry, Killoughter, Glenealy Road, Barndarrig, Togher (Roundwood) and Laragh. In some of the outlying areas, telegraph wires were also cut. Military and police commandeered several men to cut up and remove the felled trees in the vicinity of Rathnew, and the local people benefitted from the distribution of the firewood. Telephones were taken from a store on South Quay, Wicklow, while the local telegraph operator had his apparatus stolen by two armed men. Over the succeeding days, numerous arrests were made in reprisal. Those arrested included a young man named Shannon from Killiskey in Ashford; Thomas Hollywood, Ashtown; Messrs. Owen Shortt and Evans, Kilpedder; and P. Coughlan, Rathmore, Ashford. All were held in Wicklow Gaol.

New Parliament of Northern Ireland

During late June, the King opened the new Parliament of Northern Ireland 'amid scenes of unsurpassed joy,' according to the *Wicklow News-Letter*. However, the reality was widespread rioting in Belfast, with much loss of life, which was loudly condemned by the editorial in the *Wicklow People* entitled 'Failure!': 'It is futile to expect peace under the present circumstances. The new partition Parliament is a total waste of time and energy.' De Valera in an interview with the United Cable Services of Australia said, 'if Mr. Lloyd George wants a parallel from American history for our fight for a republic, he will find it—not in the Civil War—but in the War of Independence following 1776.' There was an escalation of violence after the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament with many deaths reported countrywide. Moves were being made to organise a peace meeting in London and it was hoped that the release from prison of Arthur Griffith, Professor Eoin MacNeill, Alderman Staines and Eamon Duggan, after detention without charge for nearly eight months, would aid the plans.

Death in Rathdrum and Wicklow

Death came to Wicklow in early July with the murder of police constables in both Wicklow Town and Rathdrum. Crown forces were very active in Wicklow on the evening of 1 July, due to an earlier disturbance during which shots had been fired. At About 9:30 p.m., a cordon of troops was drawn around the town centre. Everyone was ordered to line up alongside the footpath in Fitzwilliam



British Army column crossing a trench cut across a road by the IRA, July 1920. © IWM Q 71705

Square. As the night had been beautifully fine and the Irish National Foresters Band had been performing on the North Pier promenade, many people were out and about. Eventually, more than 300 men and boys were ordered to line up between Abbey Street and Main Street. Practically everyone was questioned and a few men, of whom the military were suspicious, were segregated from the others for a more exacting examination. At about 10:45 p.m., the crowd was brought together, and by direction of the military, a local man read a document to them relative to the condemnation of murder, etc. This completed, the crowd were given just three minutes to disperse. Four men, John and Joseph O'Rourke, Friar's Hill; W. Kavanagh, The Mount; and T. Finlay, the Murrough, were taken into custody. Little did the military realise the repercussions of their actions. On Sunday afternoon 3 July at about 5 p.m., Constable John Fitzgerald (19 years of age from Millstreet, Co. Galway) and another young constable, went for a walk along the Murrough. A short distance north of the chemical works, they were joined by three young women from the town. Having walked some distance, they sat down to rest, talk and read the Sunday newspapers. They were engaged in conversation when a number of young men (not believed to be local) rode up on bicycles. They opened fire on the young constables. In all, eight shots were fired. Constable Fitzgerald was hit in the chest while his companion somehow escaped injury. The assailants quickly fled the scene. Many walkers rushed to the young man's assistance as he lay dying and news of the attack spread like wildfire. When word reached the barracks, an armoured car raced to the scene under

the command of Head Constable McLoughlin. Doctors Lyndon, McCormack and O'Connor rushed to assist, as did Rev. Martin Coogan C.C. The wounded constable was removed to the barracks where two nurses from the town cared for him throughout the night. He died at 5:45 a.m. the following morning. Later that day, many statements were taken from witnesses. On Tuesday morning, a military inquiry was held. At 6 p.m. the remains of the deceased constable were removed to St. Patrick's Church where they lay overnight, prior to being removed to Galway the following day. On Wednesday morning, Requiem Mass was celebrated by Rev. Coogan. The coffin was covered with the Union Jack and on the lid rested Fitzgerald's cap and accoutrements. He was accorded a military funeral with music by the band of the Cheshire Regiment. His remains were removed by motor to Broadstone Station, Dublin. The Excelsior Cinema was closed on Sunday evening as a mark of respect and on Thursday all the shops in the town closed.

Some time later, at the Fair Green, Rathdrum, a similar incident occurred when Constable Cormer, an English member of the RIC was shot dead and Constable Reilly, one of his companions was wounded, though not seriously. The constables had been out shopping when two assailants opened fire while another stood lookout. The three attackers mounted bicycles and fled. The scene of the incident was not more than 300 metres from the RIC barracks and reinforcements were quickly on the scene and gave chase, opening fire upon them, but the cyclists made good their escape by abandoning their bicycles and fleeing cross-country. An extensive search of the neighbourhood followed but no arrests were made.

On 11 July, a constabulary lorry filled with men passed through the Main Street and the streets were patrolled by unarmed constables. It had been rumoured that a garrison of marines would be stationed in Wicklow and the arrival of a destroyer from which a large quantity of materials was unloaded with which to increase the defensive capabilities of the coastguard station, seemed to add credibility to the rumour. However, a truce was called and this never came to pass.

Truce

In its editorial of 16 July entitled 'The Truce,' the *Wicklow People* reported,

The announcement of a truce on Sat. last, (July 9th) by Mr. de Valera and the Crown Authorities was received with countrywide

relief. So far so good, the truce seems to be holding but now comes the peace conference where we hope differences will be discussed and barriers removed. Let us hope for the best!

When Lloyd George met de Valera, accompanied by Art O'Brien, Austin Stack and Robert Barton (who had recently been released from an English prison) on Thursday 14 July, and again on Friday morning, and with James Craig due to arrive in London that same day, the Irish nation was in a state of suspense. Now that a truce was in operation, it was felt possible to proceed with Wicklow's Annual Regatta. On 16 July, an ominous statement issued by Éamon de Valera brought attention to the difficulties which were being encountered: 'The Press gives the impression that I have been making certain compromise demands. I have made no demand but one, the one I am entitled to make, that the self determination of the Irish nation be recognised.'

On the evening of the same day, three soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment made their escape from Wicklow Gaol, where they had been confined for disciplinary reasons, using numerous blankets to form ropes. They were recaptured on Monday evening. The Irish delegation at the Peace Conference in London returned home in late July with proposals which needed to be put to the Dáil. In preparation for this discussion all 37 members of Dáil Éireann who were then in prison were released so that a full seating of Dáil Éireann could take place.



'Visit to Ireland. Aughrim, the village nearest Mr. Redmond's home.' c. 1918. Photo: © IWM Q 33251

WICKLOW COUNTY - Brendan Flynn

The War of Independence in Wicklow: The war against the police



RIC Barracks, Avoca, c. 1900

Photo: By kind permission of National Library of Ireland.

RIC authority

Many discussions about the War of Independence overlook the fact that the British Army was technically never fully engaged. At the time, the army in Ireland was legally restricted from taking offensive military action against the IRA because King George V had, in October 1914, officially sanctioned Ireland becoming an independent Commonwealth country. This situation could only be changed by the introduction of martial law. Between 1919 and 1922, the role of the army in Ireland (outside of counties where martial law had been introduced) was to act as aid to the civil power, meaning that when the police were carrying out actions that placed them in danger of armed attack, the army accompanied them to give them military protection. On these occasions,

the senior policeman present was effectively in charge of the entire party; if he wanted the military to act, he had to officially request it of the accompanying army officer.

The RIC: Three stages of conflict

The struggle for independence can effectively be divided into three stages. The first of these was the Rising in Dublin in 1916, which the government believed it had successfully suppressed: it had brutally stamped out the rebellion, executed its leaders and scattered and/or imprisoned most of its rank-and-file. However, as we now know, it failed to anticipate the reaction of the Irish people to such brutality. Instead of stamping out support for the movement, it succeeded in swaying the sympathies of the Irish people towards a more radical nationalism. The second stage began in 1919 when the republican movement re-focused its actions to a new campaign against the RIC. The goal was to break British rule by undermining the rule of law and order throughout Ireland, particularly in rural areas, where the police knew everything that was happening in their locality. The depth of police intelligence was evident in the RIC's monthly reports for each district, which were submitted by RIC County Inspectors to Headquarters. Between 1914 and 1918, the monthly reports submitted by the County Inspector for County Wicklow listed the activities of every known republican in the county by name, with details of all their movements.

The monthly report for August 1915, for example, gives full details of an Irish Volunteer training camp that moved around the county during the month. Between 4 and 14 August, this camp was based initially in Glenree, before moving on to Roundwood, then on to Newcastle and finally, to Enniskerry. The report noted that most of the men were Dubliners, and that they were led by a man named O'Duffy who was assisted by a training sergeant named J. J. O'Connell. It further noted that Desmond Fitzgerald of Enniskerry had attended the camp. The report of May 1916 stated that there were 68 Irish Volunteers in County Wicklow in two branches, one of which was in Bray and the other in Baltinglass. Nationally, the Irish Volunteers had 1,612 members in twenty-five branches. However, following the Rising, this pattern began to change, and by June 1916 the report noted that a great number of young men were wearing Sinn Féin badges or buttons. The inspector added that this did not necessarily imply anything more than natural sympathy, saying that it was probably mere bravado! Later, the forced closure of rural RIC Barracks greatly



Baltinglass c. 1904. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland, Eason Collection

helped the operations of the IRA in the county, as it reduced the quantity and quality of police intelligence.

The third stage, the Black and Tan War, began in 1920. The previous year, the IRA began issuing death threats to policemen across Ireland. This was followed by a long campaign of attacks on police barracks and patrols, and the murder of individual policemen. The government responded by closing isolated rural police barracks that were difficult to defend. The IRA burned the abandoned buildings, often under the cover of darkness, to prevent their reuse. When the government closed Newtownmountkennedy police barracks in 1919, it was the tenth rural police station in County Wicklow to be closed. Fifteen policemen were killed in Ireland during 1919. The following year, the number of policemen killed rose to 178. In 1921, 241 were killed, and in 1922, 59 were killed. The effect on ordinary Irish policemen was profound. Most rank-and-file RIC members were from the community—Catholic Irish, and the sons of small-farmers. Large numbers of policemen began to resign, while recruitment fell dramatically.

In January 1920, the government decided to reinforce the RIC with recruits from Britain. This policy was intended to be a short-term solution to the

manpower problem in Ireland. It also addressed the problem of finding employment for veterans of the Great War who were among the millions affected by the post-war slump in the British economy. To distinguish between existing RIC policemen who were permanent, pensionable employees, and the new temporary force, who were not, an Auxiliary Division of the RIC was formed. Two different types of ex-soldier were recruited: 2,200 ex-officers at a wage of one pound per day; and many thousands of ex-enlisted men at a half that wage. Initially, not enough RIC uniforms could be supplied to everyone, so the first of the new recruits were allowed to wear their old army uniforms, with just the black cap and belt of the RIC to show they were policemen. Later recruits were issued with full RIC uniforms. The earlier recruits were nicknamed Black-and-Tans because of the mixed uniforms. The nickname stuck and went on to become synonymous with the entire Auxiliary Division.

The Auxiliaries were not popular with either the native Irish policemen, or the public. This was evident even in County Wicklow, which the government regarded as a very peaceful county. The reality was that many of these men lacked any connection with rural Irish people who they chose to attempt to bully into submission rather than to protect.

In December 1921, a Dunlavin Justice of the Peace (JP) named R. G. Dixon was shot dead in his home during an attempted robbery by two Auxiliaries named William Mitchell and Arthur Hardie. Both men were detained in the local police station, where Hardie wrote a confession admitting his guilt before shooting himself dead. In his confession, he claimed that Mitchell was innocent of the murder. This did not save Mitchell, who was later hanged in Mountjoy Jail for his part in the crime. (See pp. 115-22)

On 8 July 1921, three Auxiliaries were shopping at Fair Green, Rathdrum, when they were ambushed by three armed men. All three were wounded and were later taken to Rathdrum RIC Barracks, where Constable 75845, Frederick Cormer, died from his wounds. He was a native of Middlesex and was just twenty years of age. Constable 76402, Thomas F. Iken, was another Auxiliary to die in Wicklow. He was born in Essex and committed suicide in August 1921.

Three other Auxiliaries were shot during an attack on Baltinglass Police Barracks on 24 January 1920. Constables McGlynn and McPartlin were both wounded but survived. Constable 67903, James Malynn, originally from Cork, died from his wounds in Mercer's Hospital in Dublin. He had previously been a policeman in Hull in England and was afterwards buried in Sheffield.

The British Army in County Wicklow 1915–22

During the Great War, the British War Office declared all munition works to be vital installations that had to be permanently protected by the military. At Kynoch's Munition Works in Arklow, that protection was provided throughout the war by a garrison battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. However, from 1919 onwards, the government began replacing these Irish regiments with British ones, and small detachments of the Lancashire Regiment were stationed there 1919–20. This regiment also had small groups of soldiers stationed in Wicklow Gaol and at Avondale in Rathdrum in May 1920. These were later replaced by the Welch Regiment, one of whom, Private James A. Barnes, was killed by an accidental discharge of a comrade's weapon while on sentry duty in Arklow in February 1920. When martial law was introduced into County Wicklow, a new occupation scheme was introduced into Ireland by which each county was to be occupied by one regiment. County Wicklow was allocated the Cheshire Regiment.

The Cheshires seemed to be poorly led and to lack discipline. Within a week of their arrival, a clash occurred between soldiers and residents of Newtownmountkennedy. It allegedly began with an argument between some of the troops and some ex-soldiers from Newtown (probably about the war). The following Friday, a Cheshire patrol drove through the town, firing about 30 shots in the air. Later that same week, a caravan of Wilson's Circus left Wicklow Town flying a Sinn Féin flag. It met the military in a motor at Rathmore near Ashford, where some of the soldiers became offended by the flag and fired a number of shots at it, apparently without success. A week later, Private Perry of the same regiment was accidentally shot in the hand by a comrade with a pistol in Wicklow Goal. Another soldier, Private Pike, lost a finger in an accidental discharge. Lance



RIC Officer. Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

Corporal Williams committed suicide by shooting himself at Avondale House in April 1921, and, in January 1922, Private J. Smith was crushed to death in an accident in Arklow. Just a week later, the regiment was recalled to England.

Civil unrest in County Wicklow during the War of Independence

Compared to other counties, County Wicklow got off rather lightly during the War of Independence. This might be partly explained by the enduring popularity in the county of the moderate form of nationalism favoured by leader John Redmond, his brother Willie and his son William, particularly among older people. Apart from the well-documented engagements between the IRA and the military, among the many crimes committed were an arson attack on Glendalough House in May 1920, the theft of £200 from Synnott's shop in Newtownmountkennedy in December 1919, and a raid for arms at the home of Robert Wingfield, in which a rook rifle, shotgun, pistol and 200 rounds of ammunition were taken. Reginald Royse, who was an ex-District Inspector of police was attacked when he answered a knock on the door of his uncle's house in Wicklow. A bullet was fired at him which went through his jacket. Elsewhere, the Dublin-Wicklow train was robbed and half-a-ton of gelignite and several motor cars were stolen from Kynoch's Works in Arklow. The Church of Ireland church in Greystones was desecrated and the Presbyterian church in Wicklow Town was destroyed. These acts of desecration did not win local approval. Reverend Matthews, Rector in Wicklow, was popular and well-respected and had already suffered great loss: his only daughter died of illness immediately before the Great War, and his two sons perished in it. The nationalist leaders of the town all decried the church attacks, but the perpetrators were never identified.

Wicklow RIC and civilian casualties during the War of Independence

Policemen who were natives of County Wicklow killed or injured outside the county boundary

- » Brady, John Edward, 55744 RIC Sergeant, aged 50. He was wounded while defending Rush RIC Barracks, County Dublin on 5 May 1920 and died of his wounds the same day. He was born in Bray, County Wicklow, and was buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin.
- » Dowling, Michael James, 67499, RIC Constable, aged 30. Killed in an ambush at Blackwood, County Roscommon, on 11 April 1921. A second constable was also killed in the attack, and their sergeant wounded. Dowling was a 30-year-old single man from Arklow. His brother, who was also an ex-policeman, had been shot dead in Arklow the previous year.
- » Doyle, Garret, 66768, RIC Constable, aged 34. Wounded at Rathkeale, County Limerick, on 10 March 1920. He was born in County Wicklow.
- » Gunn, John, 52404, RIC ex-Sergeant, was shot dead at his home in Ennis, County Clare, on 23 April 1922. Prior to retiring, he had served with the RIC in Ennis for 33 years. He was aged 52, and was a native of Arklow.
- » Holmes, RIC Sergeant, Rathdrum. His son, Constable Holmes RIC, Rathdrum was wounded at Kilmallock, County Limerick. A second son was also a policeman based in Rathdrum.
- » Miller, John, 71096, RIC Constable, aged 22. He was part of a RIC patrol ambushed at Inches Cross, County Tipperary, on 13 November 1920. Four of the constables were killed, including Miller, who died of his wounds the following day. He was a native of County Wicklow.
- » Redmond, Robert, 78135, RIC Constable, aged 43. He was shot and wounded in Killarney Street, Dublin, on 14 May 1921. He died while being taken to hospital and was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. He was a native of County Wicklow.
- » Roberts, Joshua, RIC Constable, a native of Rathdrum, was wounded in an attack on Ballylanders RIC Barracks, County Limerick, in May 1920. He had served in the war and had been wounded twice. His brother and father were also serving in the RIC. All lived in Rathdrum.

- » Shea, Ambrose, 57356, RIC Sergeant, aged 46. Killed in an attack on Rosscarbery RIC Barracks, County Cork, on 31 March 1921. One other constable was killed in the attack, with a further nine constables wounded. He was a native of County Wicklow.
- » Smyth, Anthony (Frederick Gordon), 63998, RIC Constable, born in County Carlow. He lived in Rathdrum with his parents Edward H. and Mrs. Smyth, of Grove Hall, Rathdrum, County Wicklow. Killed in a traffic accident while on duty at Gormanstown Camp on 9 January 1921, aged 22.
- » Wymes, John, 49792, RIC Constable. Killed in an ambush at Loughlynn, County Roscommon, on 7 April 1921. He was a native of County Wicklow.

Policemen killed or wounded in County Wicklow

At this time, policemen were not allowed to serve in their native counties. Thus, all the policemen who were killed or injured in County Wicklow hailed from other counties.

- » Doherty, Daniel, RIC Constable, wounded at Rathdrum on 13 February 1920.
- » Fitzgerald, John, 76431, RIC Constable, murdered on the Murrough, Wicklow Town, on 31 July 1921. He was sitting, off duty, talking to some girls when he was approached by some gunmen and shot dead. He reportedly told his killers he was unarmed just before he was shot. He was a native of Millstreet, County Galway, and was just 18 years-old when he was murdered.
- » Malynn, RIC Constable, wounded in an attack on Baltinglass RIC Barracks in January 1920. He was shot in the arm and later died of his wounds.
- » McFarland, RIC Constable, wounded in an attack of Baltinglass RIC Barracks in January 1920. He was shot in the hand.
- » Mulligan, RIC Constable, wounded at Rathdrum, 13 February 1920.
- » Murphy, RIC Constable, Baltinglass Police Station. He enlisted in the army, was wounded in 1915, and was discharged back to the police station in Baltinglass.
- » McDowell, Robert, Royal Ulster Constabulary Special Constable was assassinated by gunmen outside the home of a relative at Windgates, Greystones. He was recovering from a serious illness in his cousin's house, when gunmen called, took him out into the lane, and shot him dead on 25 May 1922.



Cyclists of the Royal Irish Constabulary and 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment, preparing for a joint patrol, 1920. © IWM Q 71699

Civilians from Wicklow killed or wounded

- » Laurence Brien, a gardener, was shot entering his home at School Lane beside the Town Hall by Black and Tans, 13 May 1921. He died at 2 am the following morning.
- » Stephen Clarke, who was an ex-soldier, was one of three civilians shot dead in the crossfire, during an IRA ambush of Auxiliaries on Great Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street), Dublin, on 14 March 1921; two other civilians were also killed, with several more wounded. Clarke apparently went to the aid of an elderly woman named Mrs. Morgan, who had just been shot. He was himself shot in the neck and died shortly afterwards. He had married a girl named Hanlon from Castle Street, Wicklow, several years before and had one infant child. Two Auxiliaries and two IRA men died in the attack.
- » R. G. Dixon, Dunlavin Justice of the Peace, shot dead in his home in December 1921 during an attempted robbery by two Auxiliaries named William Mitchell and Arthur Hardie. Hardie committed suicide in custody and Mitchell was later executed.



Major Arthur Ernest Percival, the CO of the 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment with a senior officer of the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1920. © IWM Q 71730

WICKLOW COUNTY - Brendan Flynn

The War of Independence in Wicklow: Two killings revisited

The century that has elapsed since the War of independence now affords us an opportunity to review the events of the time with some dispassion. However, an historical analysis of just two killings that occurred in County Wicklow during the conflict reveals how alternative narratives of past events persist. For the historian, this points to the need for an objective establishment of the facts, where possible; it also indicates that there are new stories of known events yet to be told.



Rathdrum c. 1905. Stereoscope: Library of Congress

The killing of Seamus O'Brien, Rathdrum

Seamus O'Brien was wounded in Rathdrum by pistol-fire and died shortly afterwards on 12 February 1920, becoming the first man to be killed in County Wicklow during the War of Independence. A century later, his death was commemorated in a ceremony in Rathdrum and a photograph of the celebrants was published in the *Wicklow People* of 19 February 2020, together with a short article describing both the event and O'Brien's death. That death was described

in the article as 'murder'. The photograph was also reproduced in the *Wicklow Times* of 25 February 2020, together with a covering article entitled 'The 100th Anniversary of Seamus O'Brien's murder'.

O'Brien was a native of Morriscastle, Kilmuckridge, County Wexford, who had moved to Rathdrum and opened a small shop. Following his death, his remains were removed by train to Gorey and were interred at Ballyvaldon burial ground, Blackwater, County Wexford. The cemetery lies about sixteen miles from Gorey.

The events surrounding his death have been extensively covered in print. The first book that attempted to identify those who died during the conflict was Padraic O'Farrell's *Who's Who in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921*. O'Farrell records that Seamus O'Brien took part in the 1916 Rising at Enniscorthy, County Wexford, and that he was later imprisoned with Michael Collins. He also notes that O'Brien was in charge of the Wicklow Brigade, IRA, which comprised the Fourth Battalion led by Jack Smith, and the Fifth Battalion led by Matt Kavanagh. He informs us that O'Brien was killed during an attack on a RIC patrol at Rathdrum on 12 February 1920. O'Farrell is unambiguous: O'Brien was *killed in action*. O'Farrell later published an expanded version of his book entitled *Who's Who in the Irish War of Independence and Civil War 1916-1923*, in which O'Brien's death is described in exactly the same way.

In *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (1997), Jim Herlihy gives a much more detailed account of the incident in Rathdrum. Chapter eight of this book gives a case history of RIC Constable Patrick Joseph Larkin, who was stationed in Rathdrum at the time of O'Brien's death. 'P. J.', as Larkin was known to his friends, was a native of County Galway who had worked in Kynoch's explosives factory in Arklow in 1917. He joined the RIC in March 1920, and after completing his training in August 1920, he was sent to Rathdrum on his first appointment. According to Larkin's account of the incident, a patrol consisting of Constables Mulligan and Doherty was on duty at Fair Green on the night in question, when they saw some men acting suspiciously. Fearing an ambush, the two men made a detour. On Main Street, they noticed three men standing in a doorway and said 'good night boys' as they passed. After they had walked about three paces, a shot rang out and Constable Mulligan staggered and said, 'I'm shot, Dan'. Doherty returned fire with his pistol, hitting O'Brien, one of the assailants. At the inquest into O'Brien's death, a witness named Arthur Leeson from Rathdrum testified that he had seen the incident, and he described how the wounded man staggered against him and exclaimed 'I'm Jim O'Brien, save me, save me'. He brought him into the hall of a nearby house, where O'Brien died. The deceased's widow, Ellen, identified the body at the inquest. In a

follow-up search of the dead man's house, three revolvers and a Volunteer tunic were found. According to witnesses, a total of nine shots were fired during the incident. Larkin later dated Ellen for a short time before marrying Norah Rooney, a schoolteacher at Trooperstown National School. Ellen O'Brien later married a different RIC constable stationed in Rathdrum and moved with him to England.¹

All the evidence to date indicates that James O'Brien was not murdered but killed by a policeman acting in self-defence. If the story as told reflects the facts, O'Brien's comrades in the IRA would also agree that he was killed in action. Describing his death as murder only serves to cloud our understanding of the actual events and to cast doubt on the accuracy of other stories of the conflict.

The killing of Philip Dowling, Arklow

On 4 May 1920, just two months after the death of Seamus O'Brien, Philip Dowling was fatally wounded in Arklow by a gunshot seemingly fired by an unknown British soldier. He died of his wounds shortly afterwards. His death is recorded by O'Farrell (1980 and 1997) and listed under 'Persons executed, killed in action or otherwise deceased together with some non-combatant fatalities closely connected with significant incidents of the war'. Dowling was an ex-policeman and recently discharged soldier.

His death resulted from a series of events in Arklow that day. The first of these was a regimental celebration involving alcohol held by the enlisted soldiers stationed at the Kynoch factory. No commissioned officers were present, as they lodged in the town. The second was the arrival at Arklow Railway Station of republican hunger-striker Andrew Holt, who had just been released from prison and for whom an enormous welcoming party of two or three thousand people had gathered. At about the same time, Philip Dowling left his home and went to meet his girlfriend to go for a walk.

Shots fired

When Holt alighted at the station, the crowd began its triumphant march up the street towards the centre of the town. The noise of the celebrations reached the soldiers of the garrison in Kynoch's. Thinking the crowd intended to attack, the soldiers grabbed their rifles and rushed towards the bridge. Dowling and his girlfriend reached the back of the crowd and stopped to see what was going on. At this point, shots were fired into the crowd.

The military version of events is that a single shot was fired from the crowd,

and that the soldiers responded with three volleys of warning shots into the air. This evidence is contradicted by the fact that there were two casualties, so at least some of the shots were directed at the crowd. Philip Dowling was seriously wounded. He was taken to the Kynoch hospital, where he later died. An inquest into the event was held in town and returned a verdict of wilful murder by unknown soldiers of the Lancashire Regiment. This was immediately denied by the military, and Dowling's killing was swept under the carpet.

Who fired the shot that killed Dowling? It seems likely that it was one of the soldiers, although it is also possible that the alleged first single shot was a pistol-shot aimed at Dowling from someone in the crowd. Most of the locals present would have known that Dowling was a former policeman, and there were almost certainly gunmen in the crowd that day.

Did the soldiers really fire into the crowd, or did they all fire into the air as ordered? We can safely conclude that most of the shots were fired into the air, because if all were fired into a crowd of that size there would have been far more casualties. We can also fairly conclude that at least one or two inebriated soldiers did fire into the crowd. However, it is unlikely that we will ever know the truth.

The other man shot that day was John Kavanagh. An Arklow man of that name had been arrested by the police in Arklow on 30 May 1918 and charged with wearing a Volunteer uniform. He was tried by court martial at Ship Street Barracks on 28 June 1918, although his punishment is not recorded.² Was this the same man, and if so, does this shine any further light on Dowling's death?³

The tragedy of Dowling's death is compounded by the fact that his brother, Constable Michael James Dowling, RIC, was shot dead on 22 March 1921 by republican forces in Blackwood, County Roscommon.⁴ Could it be true that two Arklow policemen-brothers were killed by the opposing sides in the Irish War of Independence?

Notes

- 1 Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: A Short History and Genealogical Guide*, (Dublin, 1997), 145-46.
- 2 National Archives, Dublin, *Reports of County Inspectors of Police*, Wicklow Crime Special, No. 329, June 1918.
- 3 He must have been hospitalised or treated on the day of the shooting. No record of this has yet been found.
- 4 Herlihy, 173; and Abbott, Richard, *Police Casualties in Ireland 1919-1922* (Cork, 2000), 212-13.

WICKLOW COUNTY - John Goodman

The Cheshire Regiment in Wicklow during the War of Independence

In 1920, when the intensity and frequency of attacks by the IRA became too much for the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), the British Government mobilised regular army units to help support the beleaguered police force. The 1st battalion of the Cheshire Regiment arrived in Ireland in June 1920 with responsibility for garrisoning Co. Wicklow and to relieve the Lancashire and Berkshire regiments.



HMS *Undine*, sister ship to HMS *Urchin*. Photo by Royal Navy - Photo Ship, PD-US.

The first contingent arrived at Dublin's North Wall aboard the *Slieve Bawn* on 16 June, but due to the strike by dockers and railway workers, they had to unload the ship themselves. The next two contingents, each of 100 men, sailed directly to Wicklow aboard HMS *Urchin* on 17 and 18 June.

The regiment was headquartered in Avondale House and had detachments spread around the county: the military camp at Kilbride, the Royal Hotel in Bray, Holywell House in Kilpedder, Wicklow Gaol, Arklow, Enniskerry and Shillelagh.

Operational Activity

The regiment's primary mission was to support the RIC in carrying out searches and rounding up IRA suspects. In November 1920, the offices of Wicklow County and Urban Councils, located in Wicklow Court House and Town Hall, respectively, were 'searched exhaustively' by the Cheshires armed with fixed



The Cheshire Regimental crest hand-drawn in a cell in Wicklow Gaol.
Photo: John Goodman

bayonets. They cordoned off both buildings, before extending the search area to L. Byrne's Hotel. No person was allowed to pass the cordon. They removed 45 documents after a three-hour search, including minute books, ledgers and a large bundle of paid cheques. The search provided entertainment for the crowd of assembled onlookers

During June 1921, the Cheshire Regiment was carrying out searches almost daily around the county. These searches were undertaken in response to orders received by telegram from HQ, or based on intelligence from the RIC, which was often gathered from informers.

Casualties

The Cheshires had only one fatality during their deployment in Wicklow. L.Cpl. Jack Williams took his own life on 16 April 1921 in Avondale House. He was buried with full military honours in St. Saviours (CoI), Rathdrum. He was one of 42 suicides in the British Army in Ireland during the period 1919-22.

They suffered two more casualties in Wicklow Gaol. Both were as a result of accidental shootings. Private Thomas Pike had the top of his finger blown off by the accidental discharge of his rifle in June 1920, and the following August, Private Perry was seriously wounded in the barrack room when cleaning

revolvers after returning from patrol. He was shot through the lung and removed to hospital in Dublin.

The regiment's only casualties to IRA activity occurred in April 1921 when two homing pigeons consigned to the regiment were seized by the IRA at a hold-up of the Wexford train at Salthill station, Dublin.

Social Activity

The regimental journal *The Oak Tree* provides a good picture of the social life of the regiment while in Wicklow. It was particularly active in Rathdrum, performing many concerts. At one such event on 17 February 1921, on the anniversary of the Battle of Meenanee (1843), an important event in the regiment's history, several local ladies took a turn. Later in the year, concerts by the regimental band were given every two weeks in the square.

The Cheshires paraded in Rathdrum on Remembrance Sunday 1921 at St. Saviour's, when the memorial to the men of the parish that died in the 'Great War' was dedicated in the church. Many of the men were veterans of that conflict. Much of the rest of their time was taken up in sporting events: football matches between the various detachments, musketry competitions in Kilbride and even a hockey game on the 'Morragh' in Wicklow. A football match was held in Coollattin between some locals and the Shillelagh detachment, with the soldiers reporting that the locals had 'never heard of football'. The solar eclipse of 8 April 1921 was observed by the detachments across the county. One newsletter provides a very detailed description of a journey



Grave of L.Cpl. Jack Williams, St. Saviour's, Rathdrum.
Photo: John Goodman



The Great War memorial in St. Saviour's, Rathdrum. Photo: John Goodman



British troops, Kilbride, Co. Wicklow, c. 1900-1920.

Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

from Dublin to Rathdrum, which reads more like a tourist guide than a military report.

Despite these activities and the ongoing conflict, the main complaint during this period was boredom. This was particularly true in Wicklow Town where there was no gas light due to a strike, making barracks life in the Gaol even more dismal.

The Cheshires had a very uneventful and relatively safe time in Co. Wicklow compared to their British Army comrades in Munster. Before they left, one soldier commented on Wicklow Town that there was 'nothing to report in the way of operations, the people of the county town being at the present quite docile'.

In 1982, a former soldier looked back on his time in Ireland for *The Oak Tree*. He felt that the Rising in 1916 was 'a stab in the back' and stirred feelings of 'resentment' against the rebels, given the struggle against the Germans.

The last of the Cheshires departed Wicklow Gaol on 11 February 1922, handing over control to Commdt. M. Carroll, bringing an end to the presence of the British Army in Wicklow.

Appendix

The table below lists some of the searches carried out by the Cheshire Regiment in Wicklow between 8 June and 3 July 1921.

(Source: Transcribed from military ledger, UK National Archives: 'Easter Rising and Ireland under martial law 1916-21').

ADDRESS	PERSONS PRESENT	REASON
Kilpeddar	Robert Evans 25 Farmer Peter Short 18 Pawnbroker	2 men accosted a girl for 'Walking out' with a soldier and that they told her that "had a place for girls like her". After 2 hours she was released at Kilquade at her employers residence. Her employer gave descriptions of the 2 men. Short was also a member of the I.R.A. Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol Robert Evans Peter Short
Killoughter	James O'Loughlin Farmer Thomas O'Loughlin (nephew) Farmer John Moriarty Labourer b. Killarney, Kerry	Reason: JO'L's farm was searched because news had been received that a gun was hidden in a haystack there. This could not be found. T. O'L. admitted that he was a member of the IRA and was arrested on suspicion. John Moriarty stated that he left Co. Limerick for Dublin last autumn and had been working there till last week, when he moved into Wicklow to get other work. He is being detained pending further enquiries. Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol Thomas O'Loughlin John Moriarty
'Knockenree nr. Ovoca'	Patrick Traynor Katherine Traynor James Traynor Threshing machine Driver	Reason: To arrest John Traynor . Found: Found 1 round ammunition in sitting room to left of entrance used as a bedroom by John Traynor. Type written letter headed Sinn Fein 6 Harcourt St. Dublin. Pamphlet Sinn Fein scheme of organisation rules etc. House-to-house collection card Defence of Ireland fund dated 26/7/1914. Morse code alphabet. 3 receipts; 11, 1/5/1920, 3 22/4/1920, 2 ? 13 1918. Photo said to be of John Traynor. Manuscript Notebook. IRA Cap in Mrs. Traynors room off kitchen opposite entrance to house. I did not arrest either P. Traynor or J Traynor as I am morally certain that the articles found are the property of John Traynor who was absent from home.

ADDRESS	PERSONS PRESENT	REASON
Public House Coolgreaney	Kate Somers Publican John Somers Ms. Annie Somers Ms. Statia Somers Bookkeeper John Molloy Farmer	Search made on information that arms or ammunition might be hidden in house. Nothing found no damage.
Killiskey	Patrick McDonald Mrs. P McDonald Paddy McDonald	Object of raid, to arrest Bartholomew McDonald son of Patrick a known member of the IRA. He was not at home and appears to be on the run
Newtown Park House	Mrs. Mary O'Dwyer Bernard O'Dwyer Barrister Lewis Casimir O'Dwyer Barrister Farmer Maura Galway Servant	The home where Mrs O'Dwyer lives was searched by Lt. Levings on 09.06.1921. Mr. O'Dwyer then said that he was in the district 8 months. Later in the day the police made inquiries in the neighbourhood and learned that he had really only been seen in the last week. It was therefore decided to arrest him on suspicion. The police today have made enquiries from people O'Dwyer said could testify to his character and as a result of these enquiries he was released today on the authority of the DI Wicklow. Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol Lewis Casimir O'Dwyer
Ballingale Carnew	Tom O'Hara Bridget O'Hara Annie O'Hara Patrick O'Hara Thomas O'Hara Peter O'Hara Lawrence O'Hara James O'Hara Sarah O'Hara John O'Hara Joseph O'Hara	Acting on information given that numerous meetings were held at this house, large numbers of men congregated there One letter found by Lt. Trent in Kitchen.

ADDRESS	PERSONS PRESENT	REASON
Wooden- bridge Station	John Joseph Brown Stationmaster Joe Byrne Signalman D&SE Railway Mrs. Brown nee Lynch	<p>1 lock forced. Raid carried out on information placing JJ Brown under suspicion of complicity in robbery of mails at Croneban siding between Woodenbridge and Rathdrum on 02/06/1921</p> <p>JJ Browns brother-in-law R.Lynch was arrested at Croke Park and is interned at Ballykinlar</p> <p>The damaged lock valued at 17/- has been removed for repairs by pioneers 1st Cheshire</p> <p>Raiding party out 2300 13/06/21 to 0345 in 13 ton lorry</p> <p>Since Woodenbridge Station and JJ Brown's house were both thoroughly searched by day 19.5.1921 it was decided to conduct this search by night while only 2 night goods trains (Wex - Dub Dub-Wex) passed through Woodenbridge on the chance of finding rebel arms or documents taken out of safe hiding for transmission by train.</p>
Rathmore House Ashford	Lawrence Cullen JP born Cronkery Farmer Mrs. Julia Cullen born Kilmacanogue William Cullen Rathmore Farmer Augustus Cullen Rathmore Solicitor Ms. Julia Cullen Rathmore Kate Coffey born Newcastle Servant Patrick Coughlan born Enniscorthy Farm Labourer	<p>The police in Wicklow are in possession of reliable information that Patrick Coughlan is a member of the IRA and took part in the felling of trees on June 5th. On questioned he was unable to give a satisfactory account of himself and on the authority of the police he is being detained.</p> <p>Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol Patrick Coughlan</p>

ADDRESS	PERSONS PRESENT	REASON
Deerpark, Shillelagh	<p>Tom Hickey. Born Carnew Carpenter</p> <p>Annie Hickey Born Tombreac wife</p> <p>Mick Hickey. Born Carnew carpenter</p> <p>John Hickey ""</p> <p>Tom Hickey ""</p> <p>Jim Hickey ""</p> <p>Paddy Hickey Drummond School</p> <p>Kitty Hickey Carnew ""</p> <p>Mary Ellen ""</p> <p>John Hallman Clonehall Farmer</p>	<p>The house of Tom Hickey Deerpark Shillelagh was searched as frequent meetings of men have been reported as being held there.</p> <p>Nothing was found</p>
Shillelagh	<p>Michael O'Brien Nicholas O'Brien born Ballymultra Gardiner</p> <p>Kate O'Brien "" wife</p> <p>Lewis O'Brien born Shillelagh Fireman on Railway</p> <p>Lewis Cassidy "" Berkley Road Dublin Clerk to Gillard(?) of Abbey St, Carriers</p>	<p>Books of old Irish seditious speeches and plays found in kitchen by Capt. Treitt</p> <p>Reason for search "Strangers seen entering place meeting presumed to have been held</p>
Carnew	<p>Michael O'Toole Born Carnew Farmer</p> <p>Margaret O'Toole "" Wife</p> <p>Margaret O'Toole "" Daughter</p>	<p>The son of Michael O'Toole is known to be collecting money for the IRA so the police went out to find him. Nothing incriminating was found in the house & the son was absent.</p>

ADDRESS	PERSONS PRESENT	REASON
Shortts farm Killoughter	Mrs. Jane Shortt Bob Shortt Eugene Shortt Jack Shortt Miss Jane Shortt	Arrested. Age 25 Farmer. Wicklow Gaol. Information recd. From police and other sources the Eugene Shortt is Captain of the Ashford Coy. Of the IRA. He has therefore been arrested on the authority of the DI RIC Wicklow Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol Eugene Shortt
Derrybawn Cottage Laragh	Mrs. Catherine Byrne No occupation Mr Phelan Byrne Chauffeur Miss Mary Byrne No Occ.	To search for arms and to arrest Patrick Byrne if any were found. Patrick Byrne is said not to have been at home since the last raid carried out by "C" coy 1bn Cheshire regt. On 28.11.20, but was thought to be in Co. Carlow.
The Barracks Tomacork (11/4 miles N. of Carnew)	Mary Anne Kinsella Patrick Kavanagh James Carthy Thomas Wilkinson Anne Mullaly Josephine Byrne	a: It had been put in a state of defence b:It was used as a meeting place for IRA c: The occupier was an active Sinn Feiner There was no sign of the building having been put in a state of defence or of any trenches being dug. It may easily have been used as a meeting place or rendez-vous for the I.R.A. as the outbuildings are very roomy and well built. In one shed blankets folded up were found as if some one had slept there a day or two before. Mr Kavanagh admitted that he was an ex-soldier and had served in the HLI. This raid was synchronised with other raids on O'Toole, Brennan and Balfe all of Carnew. Thomas Wilkinson admitted that he had collected money for the IRA and signed a statement a copy of which is given below to that effect to Const. H. Conway RIC. "I am Thomas Wilkinson. I am a labourer and I work with Mrs. Kinsella, The Barrack Tomacork. I remember Wednesday 22nd June 1921. I left off work about 10am and in company with several others I went to different houses and demanded and collected money on behalf of the I.R.A. I refuse to give any further account of myself except that this money is collected to support the I.R.A." Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol Thomas Wilkinson

ADDRESS	PERSONS PRESENT	REASON
Main St, Wicklow Town		<p>The raid was carried out at 22:00 & about 300 male civilians were searched and questioned & the four men named were detained for the following reasons; John Rourke admitted that he belonged to the I.R.A. and is believed to be a "Spotter". He lives at 1 Friars Hill, Wicklow</p> <p>Joseph Rourke was found to be in possession of an improvised field dressing. The reason he gives for carrying it is not satisfactory and he is also unable to give a satisfactory account of his movements on the evening of 30.06.1921 when Lt. W. C. Levings MC was attacked. He lives at 1 Friars Hill Wicklow.</p> <p>James Finlay admitted that he belonged to the I.R.A., and is believed to be a "Spotter". He lives on the Upper Morrough Wicklow</p> <p>William Kavanagh was in possession of a note book containing a copy of the morse code. His explanation for having this is not very satisfactory. He lives at The Mount, Ballyguile, Wicklow.</p> <p>Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol John Rourke Joseph Rourke James Finlay William Kavanagh</p>
A hut in the sawmills at Alma Towers Kilpedder	<p>James Carroll, 30, born Ballinderry, Borrisokane, Co. Tipp, Sawyer</p> <p>Michael Duegnan, 191/2 born Rustin Friars, Mullingar</p>	<p>The RIC Wicklow have suspicions that these men may have been concerned in the murder of RIC Const. Fitzgerald RIC at Wicklow on the evening of 3.7.1921. The DI RIC Wicklow has asked to detain them in custody.</p> <p>Found: 2 stretchers are of the Late army pattern but no government mark can be found on these</p> <p>Persons Detained in Wicklow Gaol James Carroll Michael Duegnan</p>

The Cheshire regiment was also provided with a list (based on RIC and military intelligence) of suspected Sinn Féin members in Arklow, which was broken into three categories;

Grade A “Of worst type, may have arms”.

Michael Greene	9 Abbey Street
Myles Cullen	Ballyrowan Arklow
Patrick Cullen	“”
Mrs. Annie Kavanagh	4 Griggs Hill
S. Doyle	Jack White’s crossroads N. of Arklow
Quigley	Assistant at Keogh’s grocers JW Crossroads
Denis Keogh	No address sleeps in fields and in town alternately
Pat Byrne	Derrybawn Cottage, Laragh
Miss Curran	Chairman U.D.C., Cooker Shop, Bridge St.
Mrs. English*	9 Harbour Road
Katie O’Leary*	Kings Hill
Henrietta Greene*	9 Abbey Street

*Woman actually active with arms, not using them, but transporting and storing them

Grade ‘B’ “Active and of bad type but not with arms”

Felix Rafferty	Publican, Lr. Main St.
Mrs. Mary Hoyne	Hoyne’s Commercial Hotel Main St.
James Fitzgerald	Clerk to F. Rafferty

Grade 'C'

Three Misses Brown	4 Ferrybank
O'Rourke	Hillahurler, Johnstown
Mrs Kate Canterbury	16 Abbey Street
Joe Conroy	9 Yellow Lane
Latty White	9 Yellow Lane
O'Brien	Harbour Road next to Kavanaghs garage

Sources

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Commonwealth War Graves Commission

WICKLOW COUNTY - Chris Lawlor

Robert Barton: Wicklow revolutionary and statesman

This article was first published in *The Little Book of Wicklow* (The History Press, Cheltenham, 2014)



Robert Barton (1881-1975).
Photo: Courtesy of
dail100.ie

Robert Barton was the son of Protestant and Unionist parents, born in 1881 to Charles and Agnes Barton of Glendalough House, Annamoe, County Wicklow. The family owned a large estate of over one thousand five hundred acres in Wicklow and their wealth was further enhanced by their interest in the famous French wineries of Barton and Guestier. Barton received a classic English public-school education at Rugby school before graduating from Oxford and, later, the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, England.¹ He introduced many agricultural improvements on his estate in Wicklow, and his tenants benefited from the new agricultural methods he employed. He also worked for the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society and was deeply involved in the co-operative movement. In 1908, while on a tour of co-operatives in the west of Ireland, the Unionist Barton became convinced that Home Rule was the way forward for Ireland. However, in October 1915 during World War One, Barton joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers as a commissioned officer.² Although two of his brothers were killed in the First World War, Barton resigned his commission in the wake of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin.³

Robert Barton was in Dublin that week and was deeply impressed by the attitude of the captured rebels in the aftermath of the rising.⁴ His own understanding and charitable attitude to the rebels and their families caught the attention

of Michael Collins, who advanced Barton's name within the Nationalist cause. In the general election of December 1918 Barton was elected as MP for west Wicklow⁵ and his first mission was to accompany Michael Collins, George Gavan Duffy and Sean T. O'Ceallaigh to Paris in an effort to meet with US president Woodrow Wilson during the Paris Peace Conference, which was to end in the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Barton's international diplomatic credentials were further underlined at the first meeting of the breakaway Sinn Féin Irish parliament in Dublin, the Dáil, when he read out their 'Message to the Free Nations of the World'.⁶ His academic and practical farming background made him the obvious choice as the Dáil's first Minister of Agriculture. He began the huge task of land redistribution in Ireland by setting up the National Land Bank.⁷

Prison Break

In February 1919 Barton was arrested and imprisoned by the British authorities. He found himself in Dublin's infamous Mountjoy Jail on charges of making a seditious speech and uttering threats at Carnew and Shillelagh, in the south of County Wicklow. On 16 March Barton was involved in one of the most daring and audacious prison breaks ever carried out in Ireland. Fellow Republican Richard Mulcahy had managed to smuggle a file into the prison, and Barton was sprung from the jail when a rope ladder was thrown over the twenty-foot high outer wall. Barton coolly left an effigy of himself in his bed and a note for the prison governor, stating that he felt that he had to leave due to the discomfort of his present surroundings! He remained on the run for nearly a year, but was recaptured in January 1920 and tried by court martial. He was incarcerated in Portland prison, where he suffered much at the hands of the warders. His support at home did not wane however, and he was elected chairman of Wicklow County Council in his absence!⁸ The convict chairman was released in July 1921 and was immediately involved in negotiating the truce on the vessel of General J. C. Smuts in Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) Harbour to end the War of Independence, which he co-signed with General Nevil Macready on 11 July at Dublin's Mansion House. Barton's popularity increased and he was elected as MP for Kildare-Wicklow in the second Dáil of 1921-3, becoming the Minister for Economic Affairs.⁹ In that role it was always likely that he would be involved in the treaty negotiations with Britain, though even he could not have foreseen how much of a key player he would turn out to be in that long, bitter and tangled saga. He accompanied Eamon de Valera and

“ Resolved—Whereas R. C. Barton, T.D., was savagely sentenced to a term of penal servitude in an English prison by a Court-martial of the English Army of Occupation in Ireland, and, whereas the offence with which he was charged was an alleged speech of which certain units of the English force gave evidence, by stating that they took a “ mental note ” of the words alleged to be uttered,

“ We, the members of the Wicklow County Council, at this our initial meeting, as a protest against this inhuman treatment, and as proof that the Irish patriot in an English prison is ever dear to his people, hereby confer on R. C. Barton the highest honour it is our gift to bestow, that of Chairman of this Council.

“ Further, we ask the justice-loving people of every land to note that R. C. Barton fought in France for the freedom of small Nationalities, and that England, the ‘ Champion of Small Nations,’ rewards him with a convict cell for seeking to free the oldest of the small Nations—Ireland.”

Carried unanimously.

Extract from Wicklow County Council minute book, 18 June, 1920. Courtesy of Wicklow County Archives

Eamonn Duggan to London for preliminary talks in the summer of 1921 but de Valera and British prime minister David Lloyd George had a personality clash right from the beginning and these talks came to nought. They did, however, increase the perception that Barton was very closely aligned with de Valera within the internal machinations of Sinn Féin.

Signing the Treaty

When the full Irish delegation left Dublin for London later that year, Barton was one of three cabinet ministers on the boat.¹⁰ Michael Collins endorsed his inclusion, and ostensibly Barton was picked for his economic expertise.¹¹ However, the British government perceived him as a De Valera puppet and they tried to marginalize him from many aspects of the negotiations. A rift developed between Barton and the head of the delegation, Griffith, who was suspicious of ardent Republican Barton’s insistence on ‘external association’ between Britain and Ireland - an idea propounded by de Valera as a means of avoiding membership of the British Commonwealth for any new Irish state that might emerge. Barton’s attitude enraged Lloyd George, who referred to him scathingly as a ‘pipsqueak’, but he also annoyed Griffith, who felt that he ‘created the wrong atmosphere’ in talks on Anglo-Irish trade.¹² Despite many



Treaty negotiation team, December 1921, including George Gavan Duffy, Erskine Childers, Robert Barton and Arthur Griffith. Photo: National Library of Ireland Flickr on The Commons

setbacks, a treaty was eventually hammered out and Lloyd George gave the Irish delegation a blunt message – sign or go back to Dublin and back to war!

Lloyd George's ultimatum came with a time limit; the treaty had to be signed that night or not at all.¹³ So began one of the most dramatic and significant nights in Irish history, one in which Barton was to be a pivotal figure with a central role. Collins knew that the IRA were very low on volunteers, supplies and ammunition and so in no position to renew the War of Independence, let alone to win it. Hence, he favoured signing the treaty. Arthur Griffith and Eamonn Duggan supported him in this position. Erskine Childers, the secretary of the Irish delegation, was against signing it. George Gavan Duffy wavered, letting it be known that he would allow himself to be guided by Robert Barton's decision. Thus it transpired that, in effect, Barton had the casting vote among the Irish delegates, for they all had to sign the document in order for it to be

accepted. Lloyd George had warned of 'immediate and terrible' war should the treaty be rejected. As Barton agonised over his Republican principles, Duggan warned him that he might be hanged from a lamppost in Dublin if his intransigence led to the resumption of war. Enough young men had sacrificed their lives according to Duggan, and any gains made in the negotiations were in danger of being lost if the war-weary and weakened people of Ireland were plunged into a new conflict. Three times that night Barton stopped the other members of the delegation from going to Downing Street to sign the document. Three times he relented and eventually emotional stress and peer pressure told, with Barton reluctantly agreeing to accept the treaty document as a means of averting more bloodshed. Encouraged by Childers (who, as secretary did not have to sign the treaty document), he had been the last man to hold out, and it was past 2 a.m. when he finally caved in to the enormous pressure. Barton's decision to sign made the Irish Free State a reality, paved the way for an Irish republic and shaped the twenty-six county Ireland that we know today.

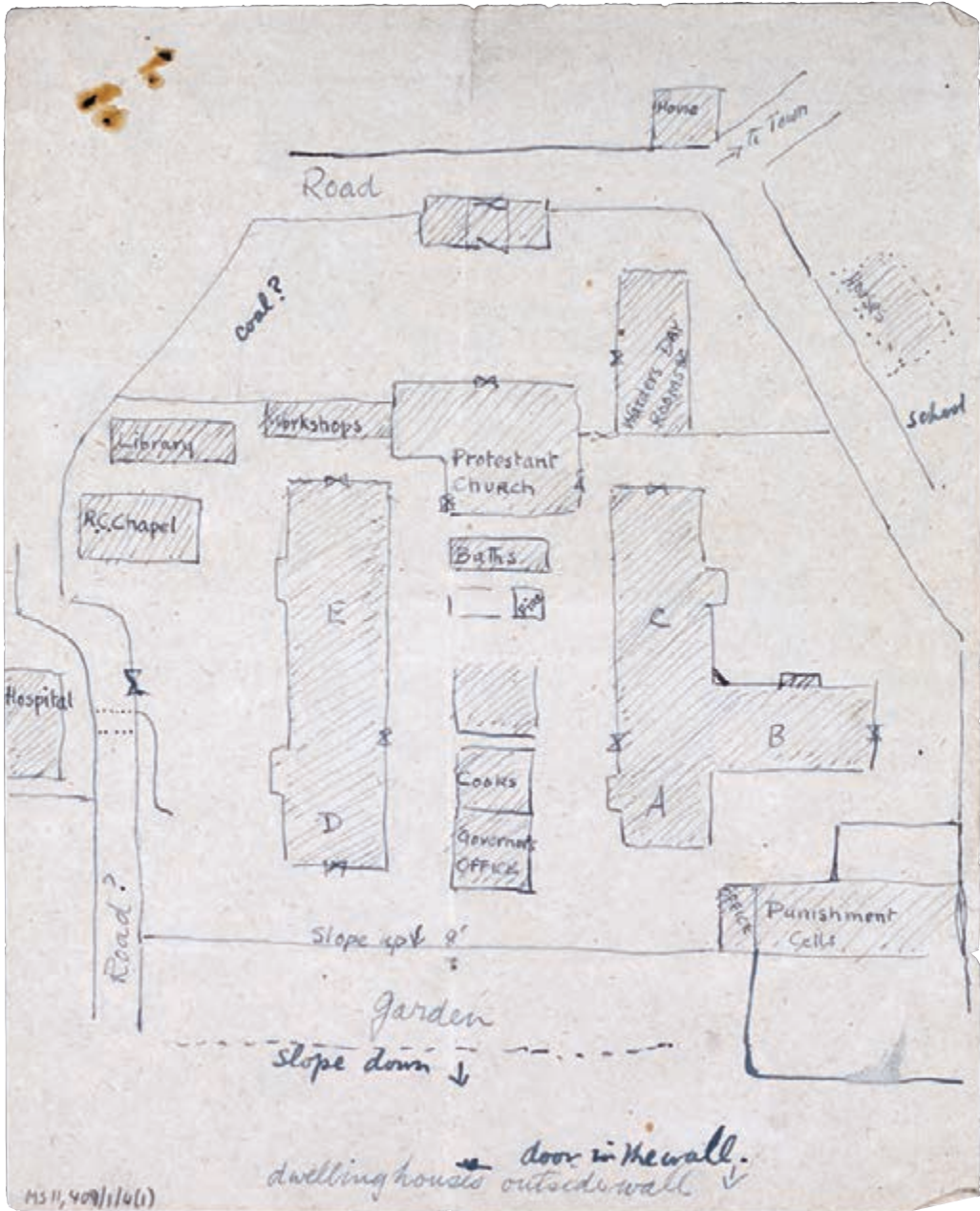
However, it was also instrumental in bringing about the Irish Civil War of 1922-3. The treaty was passed in the Dáil, but a minority of its members, led by de Valera, refused to accept it and rejected the democratic vote of the Dáil. They went further, rejecting democracy itself,¹⁴ and engaging in a Civil War with the newly elected government led by Griffith and Collins. On his return from London, Barton had pilloried de Valera for his absence from the treaty negotiations, claiming that the divisive situation that now existed was de Valera's own fault. Barton voted for acceptance of the treaty in the crucial Dáil vote, but intriguingly, in a move demonstrative of the deep soul searching going on within him, he then joined the anti-treaty side in the Civil War that followed. He took part in the fighting in Dublin and was among the group of anti-treaty 'irregulars' who occupied the Hammam Hotel in O'Connell Street, the principal thoroughfare of Ireland's capital city.¹⁵ Having escaped from Dublin following the defeat of the anti-treatyites there, Barton was chosen as Minister for Economic Affairs in de Valera's council of state, a shadow body set up in opposition to the elected pro-treaty government. In November 1922 the Barton family home was raided and Barton's cousin Erskine Childers was arrested and later executed.¹⁶ Barton survived the Civil War but lost his Dáil seat in the general election of August 1923. It was the last election he would ever contest. He retired from active politics, brooding over his role in the signing of the treaty and in the disastrous Civil War that followed. So consumed was he by his momentous decision to sign the document that he later wrote that he

often wished that he had died in Portland prison rather than lived to take part in 'these cursed negotiations' that had cost so many lives.

Despite his retirement from the political arena, Robert Barton returned to public life when de Valera's Fianna Fáil party came to power in 1932. He had always been a close friend of de Valera, and the new taoiseach made him a director of the Irish Press, the Fianna Fáil-oriented newspaper that was seen as the voice of de Valera in the Irish Free State. Sean MacEntee also appointed Barton to the board of the Agricultural Credit Corporation, a state-sponsored body established to give cheap loans to Irish farmers. He became chairman of the board of the ACC in 1933, a position he retained until 1959. Barton did not put himself forward as a candidate, but ardently campaigned on behalf of Fianna Fáil during the 1933 general election, claiming that the signatories of the Anglo-Irish treaty had been misguided and tricked into signing by promises that nationalists in the North of Ireland would have a say in the redrawing of the border between the North and the Free State. In 1934 Barton also became the chairman of the Turf Board, and remained in this post after the board had been altered and renamed Bórd na Móna in 1946. Coal shortages during World War Two did much to encourage the development of the bogs during the war years, and it was decided to harness and utilise the Irish bogs in the aftermath of the Emergency, as the war was known in neutral Ireland. As chairman of Bórd na Móna, Barton did much to develop the resource, especially in the Irish midlands, until his retirement in 1960. Now in his twilight years, Barton lived to a ripe old age, before dying on 10 August 1975.¹⁷ To the end of his life, he was haunted by his decision the sign the treaty.

Notes

- 1 *Dictionary of Irish biography*, online version at <https://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a0485&searchClicked=clicked&quickadvsearch=yes> (visited 28 April 2021).
- 2 Irish Military Archives [I.M.A.], Bureau of Military History [B.M.H.], witness statement of Robert Barton, Glendalough House, Annamoe, Co. Wicklow, WS979, 9. All other information in this essay is taken from this witness statement unless otherwise stated.
- 3 R. F. Foster, 'Parnell and his neighbours' in, *Wicklow: History and Society* (Dublin, 1994), 908.
- 4 Dorothy Macardle *The Irish Republic* (London, reprint, 1968), 16
- 5 Catherine Wright, 'Robert Childers Barton and the first Dail', http://www.countywicklowheritage.org/page/robert_barton_and_the_first_dail (visited 4 Apr 2019).
- 6 *Dictionary of Irish biography*, online version, see note 1.
- 7 Macardle, *Republic*, 263 and 280.
- 8 Brian Donnelly, *For the betterment of the people: A history of Wicklow County Council* (Wicklow, 1999), 40-3, 53, 163, 167. See also *Wicklow News-Letter*, 19 Jun 1920.
- 9 N.A.I., Department of the Taoiseach papers, Ministerial Appointments, TSCH/3/S10013
- 10 Macardle, *Republic*, 482
- 11 I.M.A., B.M.H., witness statement of Mrs Austin Stack, Seabank, Strand Road, Merrion, Dublin, WS418, 42.
- 12 *Dictionary of Irish biography*, online version, see note 1.
- 13 Frank Pakenham (Earl of Longford), *Peace by ordeal: an account, from first-hand sources, of the negotiation and signature of the Anglo-Irish treaty, 1921* (London, 1935), 330. The rest of the information on the treaty in this essay is taken from this source (pp 330 et seq.). Strangely, Barton was uncommonly reticent regarding the treaty in his witness statement. He merely stated 'Regarding the signing of the treaty, I have very little to add to the information in Lord Pakenham's book'. I.M.A., B.M.H., witness statement of Robert Barton, Glendalough House, Annamoe, Co. Wicklow, WS979, pp 33-34. He then suited the action to the word, adding nothing whatsoever about the tense night in London. Hence, *Peace by Ordeal* remains Barton's best and only detailed account of the treaty deliberations.
- 14 Robert Kee, *The Green Flag* (London, 1972), 733.
- 15 Interestingly, this is the last action mentioned in Barton's witness statement. I.M.A., B.M.H., witness statement of Robert Barton, Glendalough House, Annamoe, Co. Wicklow, WS979, pp 46-47. He merely follows this up with a brief mention of his capture and incarceration. There is no mention of the fate of his cousin, Erskine Childers, or of the later course of the Civil War.
- 16 Macardle, *Republic*, 742.
- 17 *Dictionary of Irish biography*, online version, see note 1.



IRA map of Portland Prison drawn as plan to free Robert Barton, 1920. Count Plunkett Papers. By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

WICKLOW COUNTY - Rosemary Raughter

This ‘dread illness’:¹ The 1918–19 influenza epidemic in Co. Wicklow

In the churchyard adjoining the ruined church at Castletimon near Brittas Bay are a number of unmarked grave mounds, said to be those of fifty local residents who died of Spanish influenza. These anonymous victims are just some of the thousands infected and hundreds dead in Co. Wicklow alone in the great flu pandemic, which arrived in Ireland in a relatively mild form in June 1918. The illness faded in July, only to revive with greater intensity in October. From December 1918, there was another lull, before it revived once more in February 1919 and then waned finally in April 1919. It has been estimated that 800,000 people in Ireland suffered from the disease, with a conservative estimated death toll of 20,000. Wicklow, together with four other Leinster counties—Kildare, Dublin, Wexford and Carlow—was one of the counties most severely affected, with a death rate of 3–4 per 1,000 living population. The death toll for Leinster was just over 6,000.

Ida Milne’s 2018 study, *Stacking the coffins*, is the definitive work on the incidence and impact of that particular pandemic in Ireland. Among the sources employed by Milne are contemporary accounts in national and regional newspapers. Further insight into the impact of the disease in Wicklow can be found in its local weekly newspapers, the *Wicklow People* and *Wicklow News-Letter*. Together with information gleaned from the online General Register Office death records, they provide a reasonably comprehensive overview of the epidemic’s terrible progress.

‘The summer scourge’

The first sign of the epidemic came to Belfast on 10 June 1918, when an influenza-like illness was reported in the *Belfast Newsletter*, along with an assurance that there was ‘no cause for alarm.’ By 25 June, the mysterious scourge had reached Dublin and north Wicklow, with the manager of Glencree Industrial School at Enniskerry inserting a notice in the *Irish Independent* banning visitors until further notice. It took a little longer for the provincial press to

react: the earliest reference in the Wicklow papers to the 'new influenza' was in the *Wicklow People* of 6 July 1918, which reported that the epidemic was 'raging' in Britain, while in Ireland 'few places are now free [of] the summer scourge.' The report claimed that there were 700 cases in Dublin, that in Cork people were falling 'prostrate in the street' from the malady, and that in Derry there had been 'numbers of deaths.' No mention was yet made of the incidence of disease in Wicklow. However, the following week, the *Wicklow News-Letter* reported a few cases in Arklow, noting that the town in general 'sails along quite unconcernedly and very little affected by the sickness', while, Rathdrum had suffered 'a good deal', and 'places like Bray that boast of their advanced sanitation' had been 'stricken'.

Arklow's nonchalance was soon shown to be misplaced. Its first victim, P. J. O'Donnell, was an employee of Kynoch's munitions factory, and the funeral was a large one with many workers taking part in the procession. At the same time, a number of 'mostly ... mild' cases were reported in Wicklow, and on 5 July an outbreak at Kilquade led to the closure of schools there. The epidemic was reported to be 'extremely severe' in Bray, and in mid-July to be 'raging' in Hacketstown district, while 'half the population of Tullow' was infected, including the doctor and chemist, 'so that those who are ill may look after themselves.'² Blessington was also badly hit, with almost all of its GAA players ill, and two of the most prominent, Edward FitzSimons and Bertie Hanlon, dead.

These deaths are a reminder of the disproportionate impact of this particular epidemic on young adults. Other young Wicklow people reported to have died of flu during these months included May Dooly (18) of Blessington, and from Bray, labourer Patrick Usher (25), and Catherine Bermingham (27), wife of a railway employee. News reports also reveal the burden on health personnel: Dr Eccles of Delgany was laid up from early July until mid-August, while Miss Bolger, an infirmary nurse, sought sick leave from the Shillelagh Guardians in early August, because 'she had been rather seriously knocked up with influenza'. Her request was approved, albeit somewhat ungraciously, with one member of the board grumbling that he supposed 'we can't get over granting it.'³

By late July, in Wicklow, as in the country at large, the epidemic appeared to be on the wane. In Hacketstown, for instance, it was reported that most sufferers were 'on the convalescent list, and no new cases have been reported during the past week.'⁴ Life, as reflected in the pages of the local press, returned to

normal—or as near normal as could be expected with the war grinding to its conclusion and separatist nationalism on the rise. But the ‘summer scourge’ was set to return, and in a far more malign form than its predecessor, with Wicklow once more very much in the front line.

‘Black November’

On 12 October, the *Wicklow News-Letter* announced the return to Bray of the ‘dreaded’ influenza. Within a week, the Union hospital at Loughlinstown was reported full, and there had already been several deaths in the area. Among the first victims were Bridget Howell (19) and Mary Cecilia Darcy (20), buried within three days of one another in Little Bray cemetery. Bridget’s father was assistant stationmaster at Greystones, while Mary Cecilia’s was a railway policeman. One influenza death of several in Bray that week was of Mary Ellen Turner (38), wife of an engine driver. The fact that a number of these early casualties had connections with the railway is interesting. Milne queries the part played by train travel in disseminating the disease in Ireland, but this cluster of cases suggests that in Bray it may indeed have been a factor.

Whatever its origin, the epidemic in Bray raged throughout October. Patient numbers continued in the hundreds, and on just one day, Sunday 20 October, there were ten funerals in the town. At its height, Rathdown Board of Guardians was engaging six doctors to carry out the duties of the usual one (who was himself ill) and the master of the workhouse reported that there had been 133 influenza admissions to the hospital during the previous fortnight. Little Bray was particularly badly affected, and with nursing assistance at a premium, the Sisters of Mercy fitted up their school at Ravenswell as a hospital for over 30 patients. Many wives and children were left destitute with the death of the sole breadwinner, and there were particularly tragic cases of multiple deaths in one family. They included brothers Patrick and Henry Barry, both carpenters, who died within a few days of each other, and, saddest of all, the four children of Alexander Brien of Little Bray, all dead of double pneumonia in a single week.

Every death had its story. Mary Archer, wife of John Archer, an employee of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, was already ill on 10 October when word came of the sinking of the *Leinster* just outside Dublin Bay. Fearing that her husband was among the victims, she left her sick bed and hurried to Kingstown, where she learned to her relief that he was not one of the crew

on that particular voyage. But the effort brought on a relapse, and she died on 5 November, leaving six children. Sister Mary Theresa Leonard of the Sisters of Charity at Ravenswell, an experienced nursing sister, had assisted in the organisation of the hospital there, where she nursed, among others, her own Reverend Mother, who recovered. However, she herself subsequently contracted pneumonia and died on 10 November at St Vincent's Hospital.

A report in the *Wicklow News-Letter* on 16 November claimed that Greystones had 'not escaped the ravages of the epidemic any more than its neighbours in other parts of the county', but the district does appear to have been relatively unscathed if the absence of accounts of flu deaths in the local newspapers is to be believed. On the other hand, it must be remembered that most flu deaths never found their way into the newspapers, and the area did undoubtedly witness its own share of fatalities. They included, in October 1918, Susan Jane Evans of Greystones, Bridget Gorman of Blacklion and six-month-old Mary Doran of Redford. A further trawl of the civil records would undoubtedly uncover more such examples.

On 16 November the *Wicklow News-Letter* also announced 'with much regret' the death of Private R. Johnston of the Royal Flying Corps. However, Private Johnston, who had worked for thirteen years as chauffeur to Dr Jameson of Greystones, did not die in Ireland. Having signed up with the Royal Flying Corps just five weeks previously, he had contracted pneumonia while training in England. His body was returned to Greystones, and he received a military funeral in Delgany on the following day.

By late October, the epidemic had made its way to other parts of the county. In Newtownmountkennedy, the victims included Patrick Conroy, district postmaster, whose 'coffin was borne by six rural postmen from the hearse to the graveside.' 'A very large proportion of the people'⁵ in Rathnew had been laid up, and the several deaths included two young men who epitomised opposing sides in the emerging political debate. Private George Newsome died in barracks in England, but it was assumed that he had contracted influenza while home on leave just a week before, while Alexander Byrne was an active Sinn Féiner and a keen supporter of the GAA, whose funeral was attended by representatives of both bodies and members of Cumann na mBan. However, Rathnew was at least fortunate in having 'the devoted and untiring' services of Nurse Mary Hayden, who was universally praised for her work. 'A few more like her in each district', the *Wicklow News-Letter* of 16 November declared, 'would

have made the task of the medical men less difficult ... and saved, very probably, numerous lives.' In due course, evidence of Nurse Hayden's 'splendid work' during the epidemic would be laid before the Rathdrum Board of Guardians. 'She had been offered a salary to work elsewhere', the Board heard, 'but she refused it', remaining in Rathnew and thereby preventing 'a lot more deaths in the district', and it was decided to acknowledge her exceptional services by granting her a bonus of £10.

In Wicklow, meanwhile, there were reported to be about 1,000 cases, with two or more deaths occurring each day. Here, as elsewhere, the doctors found themselves overwhelmed with work, and although the County Infirmary, Fever and VAD hospitals were all in use, hospital accommodation was still insufficient to meet the need. All sectors of the population were represented among the victims, who included De La Salle Brothers John Kearney and Paulinus Shiels, soldiers Privates Peacock and Ellis, butcher William Dunne and Wicklow Urban Council employee James De Courcey. Also dead were Mrs Keddy, labourer's wife and mother of seven children, the baby daughter of Laurence Byrne of the Wicklow Hotel, retired postman William Olohan, whose daughter, Mrs Flood, also lost her husband and a child to influenza, and RIC Constable Laurence Corcoran, whose wife died of influenza a week later in Mayo.

By the middle of November, the epidemic in Wicklow seemed to be abating, but was observed to have spread to rural areas such as Roundwood and Barndarrig, presenting the doctors with further difficulties in terms of travel and the scarcity of nursing care. At the same time, seventy-nine cases of influenza were admitted to Rathdrum Union Hospital, where some of the nurses and attendants and a number of the existing patients also contracted it. Eight patients had died, and the hospital was reported to have been greatly overcrowded.

On 9 November, the *Wicklow News-Letter* reported a feeling in Arklow, fuelled perhaps more by hope than expectation, that the town would escape the worst effects of the malady 'by reason of the sulphur fumes from the [Kynoch's] factory, which would cleanse the air of the microbes that cause the sickness.' More realistically, the local authorities, in co-operation with Kynoch's, embarked on a systematic campaign of cleansing and disinfecting drainage, lanes and ashpits. Nevertheless, by the beginning of November, the disease had taken hold. Three weeks after its appearance at least half a dozen deaths were reported, with whole families laid low. 'In one family', the *News-*

Letter of 9 November recorded, 'the parents and ten children were ill, and two infants succumbed to the disease within the week.' Again, the medical services had to be extended to deal with the emergency: the Fever Hospital was opened for admissions, while the Masonic Hall was given over for use as an auxiliary hospital. Avoca was also reported to have suffered badly, with 'entire families, both in the village and the district ... laid aside' and a 'particularly severe' death toll, which included, as elsewhere, a disproportionate number of young people.



Christopher (Christy) Timmins, Baltinglass businessman and footballer, died of flu 10 November 1918, aged 29. Photo: Courtesy of Billy Timmins

In the west and south of the county, the epidemic was reported to be raging in Carnew. Practically the whole population of the wider Carnew/Shillelagh area was affected, with the schools expected to be closed there until after Christmas. The flu reached Tinahely quite early in October with an outbreak of 'extraordinary severity' reported in the *Wicklow People* on 23 November. Once more, rail workers were among the early victims, with the whole station staff laid low, and the stationmaster, William McGuire, among the fatalities. Also ill were all the police and many of the postmen, shopkeepers and their clerks. Very few in the district, including the local curate, escaped infection. There were also deaths in Kiltegan and Baltinglass, including several in the workhouse there during November 1919. Other Baltinglass victims included grocer's wife Sara Kitson, nine-year old Bridget Duffy and three young men in their twenties: Thomas Phelan, carpenter; James Jackson, blacksmith; and Christopher Timmins, shopkeeper. In Christopher's case, as in that of many other young male fatalities, the report focussed on his sporting prowess: 'a familiar figure on Gaelic football grounds', a former player with Carnew Emmets and Baltinglass Shamrocks; 'a more sterling player never did duty for Wicklow.'

A particularly graphic account of the epidemic's effects comes from Hacketstown: 'schools closed, mails undelivered, doctors ill, death a frequent visitor, more than half the entire population of the town prostrate, business practically suspended.' Twenty deaths occurred in this one small town during the first two weeks of November 1918, of which ten were of children

First Championship 1912/13



This photograph was taken 71 years ago when Baltinglass Shamrocks made history by winning a Wicklow junior football title at Croke Park. The players in the picture are, back row (from left): J. Coogan, Dan O'Neill, Christy Timmins, Tom Loakman, Henry Gaskins, Peter Conway, Joe O'Toole and Garrett Byrne, Centre: Pat Harto, S. Reilly and Johnny Rowe. Front: Tommy Lawler, M. Mulhall, Tom Kehoe, Mick Ryder, J. Lawler and Jim Ryder. Also included in the group is Paddy Lawler.

Victorious Baltinglass Shamrocks football team 1912/13, showing Christy Timmins as member. Image: Courtesy of Billy Timmins

under five, eight between seventeen and thirty and the remaining two over seventy. Although few households escaped suffering, a few stories stand out as especially tragic:

A child, its mother and grandmother died in one house, a father and son in another, a young man and his grandmother in a third, while four children in one family, three in a second, and two in a third, died within a few days of each other ... In no other family did the Grim Reaper pay so many visits as to that of Constable O'Halloran, who lost four of his five children inside a week, and to add to the tragic series of events, his sister-in-law, who came from her home in Tipperary to help her sister in nursing the children, contracted pneumonia and died in a few days.⁶

By the second half of November, the epidemic had shown signs of abating. While fresh cases were still occurring in Bray in mid-month, the *News-Letter* had 'every hope that in a short time all traces of the disease will be eradicated.' Similar reports came from Arklow and Rathdrum as well as Wicklow, and even in hard-hit Hacketstown the disease was said to be 'well in hand.' By the end of November, Rathdrum Board of Guardians heard that 'cases were not coming in with anything like previous frequency, which would suggest that in most

districts in the Union the epidemic was on the decline.' Deaths did continue into December: among the young lives cut short were those of Gretta Cullen (14), Ballyedmond, Hacketstown, and Michael and Andrew Byrne, the fifteen- and eleven-year-old sons of Michael Byrne of Ballycreen Park, Aughrim, who died on 8 and 9 December, respectively. Increasingly, however, reports of disease and death gave way first to celebration of the Armistice which brought to an end four years of war, and then to preparations for the forthcoming general election. Schools began to re-open across the county, and social events, many of which had been postponed or cancelled, resumed. 'Black November'⁷ was over, a new era was emerging from the ruins of the past, but the epidemic still had a final card to play.

'Flu here again': February–April 1919

Items headlined in the *Wicklow News-Letter* of 15 February 1919 included the new Provisional Government's deputation to the League of Nations, labour unrest among railway and postal workers, and the proposal to erect a memorial in Bray to the local dead of the recent war. Alongside these events of national and local significance, a few lines heralded an unwelcome return of the disease: 'The Influenza Again' reported that there were now fifty cases in Bray. Similar reports came from 'severely hit' Greystones and Delgany district, where schools had been closed, and from Wicklow, where nearly a dozen patients were under treatment. Eighteen cases had been admitted to the Union hospital in Rathdrum, over fifty were currently being treated in Dunganstown, and 'a rather serious outbreak' had occurred in the workhouse in Shillelagh.

By mid-February several deaths had been reported in the north Wicklow area. They included Dr Neale of Enniskerry, former Unionist parliamentary candidate Hon. Hugh Howard of Delgany, and Bray Town Clerk Denis Mulally. The Downs claimed one of its first victims on 22 February, with the death of twenty-year old Michael Dobson, a member of the Delgany Erin Band and of the Irish Transport Workers' Union, both of which were represented at his funeral in Kilquade. In Bray, where on one day there were seven deaths, some of the early fatalities included six-year-old Alfred Bailey, a plumber's son, and Catherine, 'the darling child', aged one year and nine months, of policeman James and Minnie Hennessy. Others included Jane Carr and her five-year old nephew, William Carroll, both of whom died on 28 February, as did Bartholomew Naylor, proprietor of the Bray Head Baths and a well-known local personality. Victims of the very bad outbreak in Enniskerry included five

young inmates of Glencree Reformatory, who died between 25 February and 6 March, and the wider Glencree area was very badly hit, with over 200 cases and no doctor immediately available.

Meanwhile, influenza had reached Wicklow and its hinterland, with about eighty cases in the Wicklow dispensary district, and over fifty in Bardarrig. Many entire households were laid low, shops and schools were closed, and several cases at the Assizes had to be adjourned because of the absence of litigants or witnesses. Milk was ‘excessively scarce’ for several weeks, while whiskey, described by Milne as ‘perhaps the most widely available and effective treatment for the symptoms of influenza’, was in high demand: consequently, as the *Wicklow News-Letter* of 15 March noted, ‘it was almost impossible to get “a half-one” any day.’ Among those reported sick were some of the County Council clerical staff, RIC Constables Lewis and McMahon and two of the Christian Brothers, while the dead included Thomas Kavanagh, labourer; Samuel Stringer, gardener; Mrs Dora Stevens, wife of a cycle and motor agent; and the ten-month-old son of Major and Mrs Truell of Clongannon. Mrs Truell herself was ill when her baby died, and two weeks later, she suffered the additional loss of her four-year-old daughter.

On 25 February, Bray Urban District Council passed a resolution categorizing influenza as a notifiable disease. Schools were advised to close, the general public was encouraged by the *Wicklow News-Letter* (8 March) to avoid crowded places, the public library was closed in order ‘to avoid the danger of infection being transmitted through books’, and ‘the co-operation of everyone in the district is invited to prevent the spread of disease.’ There were, however, continuing difficulties in ensuring the availability of medical attention and hospital accommodation. Doctors struggled to meet the ever-growing levels of need, and the Rathdown Board of Guardians found it extremely difficult to procure assistants or substitutes when doctors themselves fell sick. When Dr Raverty reported ill on 4 March, for example, all three of the practitioners approached were too busy with their own patients to treat him. A week later, Dr Craig, appointed to cover Little Bray, fell ill, leaving the area unattended for a weekend.

Among the Bray deaths recorded for these weeks were those of William Temple and Thomas Dodd, both of Little Bray, Mrs Edith Brown, sister of Dr Hanson, at Prince of Wales Terrace, and at Glencormack Margaret Toole and her one-year-old son Andrew. Two of the local RIC constables were ill, as well as one at Enniskerry and three at Greystones, where there had been a number of deaths.



Headstone of Florence Murray (5), one of the child victims of influenza, Old Redford Graveyard, Greystones. Photo: Courtesy of Rosemary Raughter

They included several children: Winifred Collins (2) of Rossinver, Greystones, Florence Murray (5) and Patrick Pierce Redmond (1 year 9 months), John Gorman (3) of Windgates, and his mother, Elizabeth.

By the beginning of March, the epidemic was cutting a swathe through the rural parts of the county: on 2 March, a former soldier, William Morris of Kilcommon, Tinahely, died of pneumonia. After four-and-a-half years' war service, Morris was under treatment for 'exhaustion psychosis', and had only been home a week when he died. Cases and some deaths were also reported in Shillelagh, Hacketstown and Moyne. And, while it was on the wane in Wicklow Town itself, the *Wicklow News-Letter* reported on 15 March that in outlying localities such as Mullinaveigue, Moneystown and Roundwood, as well as Newtown and Kilpedder, the epidemic had escalated alarmingly, with 'almost every household ... laid down with the dread illness.' Togher Agricultural Day, an annual event involving a ploughing match and other rural sports and activities, noted a reduction in the number of competitors owing to the prevailing epidemic, which 'has made its appearance in strength in the locality', with some ploughmen ill, others recovered but fearing a relapse, and a few mourning family bereavements due to the influenza.

A particularly poignant notice from this part of the county recorded the loss of one Martin Farrell, a thirty-six-year-old illiterate labourer. 'An extraordinary character', according to the *Wicklow People* (19 April), his local popularity was due to his talent as a 'whistler' or 'warbler', a skill much valued 'in days gone by when the flute and the fiddle were less in evidence in the district than at present.' Martin, aged thirty-six, died

at his home at Castlekevin on 30 March following a week's illness.

Reports from Arklow throughout the first weeks of March tended to minimise the local impact of the epidemic. By mid-month, however, the *Wicklow News-Letter* was reporting that 'the virulence of the influenza ... has grown in intensity daily, and several deaths have occurred.' These included yet more double tragedies: Arthur Kelly, a former Kynoch's employee, died on 31 March and his sister, Mary Kelly, on the following day, while Sarah Anne Murray of Rockbig died on 18 March and her father, Laurence Murray, a week later. 'On the one day last week', the *Wicklow News-Letter* reported on 5 April, 'there were three funerals from different parts of the town, all being victims of influenza.'

On 5 April, the *Wicklow People* reported that in Bray Urban District Council 'the influenza epidemic had died down ... the schools are re-opened', and the Medical Officer was going on a fortnight's leave. This turned out to be somewhat premature: a couple of weeks later the *People* reported that there had been a recurrence of the disease in Bray, 'and four or five deaths ... already.' These included RIC Constable Joseph McGoldrick, who died on 11 April, and Agnes Lynch, who died on the following day. Constable McGoldrick was recently married, and his wife was reported also to be seriously ill at the time of her husband's death. Agnes Lynch, reported the *News-Letter* on 19 April, had been in charge of Brennan's Parade post office, and was consequently 'brought closely into contact with the public.' Bray Sinn Féin Club, of which her brother was Vice-President, was represented at her funeral, and Bray Cumann na mBan passed a vote of sympathy on her death. These were only two of several deaths during this final phase of the epidemic in Bray: at least eleven others from influenza or pneumonia are recorded for the area during the first two weeks of April.

There was also a resurgence of the disease in Wicklow in late March/early April. Local doctors Lyndon and McCormack, as well as several prominent townspeople were among the sufferers. At Ballycurry, gardener James Hamilton was reported dead of influenza, in the prime of life; Sergeant O'Grady of the Machine Gun Corps, a veteran of the Boer War as well as of the more recent conflict, died on 7 April in the Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospital, having arrived home on leave just a week before; and Richard Codd of Roscath, a popular sportsman and farmer, died on 19 April. Shillelagh, too, saw a serious reappearance of the flu in late April, delaying the re-opening of local schools, and as late as June, a patient suffering from influenza was transferred from the workhouse there to the Fever Hospital. By that time, however, the topic of the epidemic had all but disappeared

from both Wicklow newspapers, as attention turned to the escalating violence of the War of Independence.

Local newspapers have their limitations as historical sources because they focus on the prominent, the sensational and the exceptional; however, they do convey something of the scale of the catastrophe of the Spanish flu as it affected the people of Co. Wicklow. As a topic of historical research, the epidemic has been a sidebar to the Great War and the War of Independence. One century on, few could have foreseen how our own experience would mirror that of our ancestors during that previous pandemic, the 'summer scourge', with its monstrous legacy in terms of illness, death and disruption.

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Notes

- 1 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 18 January 1919
- 2 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 13 July 1918
- 3 *Wicklow People*, 3 August 1918
- 4 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 20 July 1918
- 5 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 23 November 1918
- 6 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 23 November 1918
- 7 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 23 November 1918

WICKLOW COUNTY - James Scannell

Restricting motoring in Ireland 1918–21



Morris Cars on sale in the 1920s Photo: By kind permission of the National Library of Ireland

Permits required

In October 1918, as political unrest swept the country, the Dublin Castle authorities introduced 'Defence of the Realm Regulation 9AA', under which owners of motorcycles in Ireland, other than serving members of H.M. Forces or the Royal Irish Constabulary or the Dublin Metropolitan Police, were required to hold a permit from the competent naval or military authority, or from the chief police officer of the district in which the motorcyclist resided, and had to produce this when stopped. In November 1919, this permit requirement was extended to owners of motor cars. Wicklow Council strongly opposed the new restrictions, and in January 1920, protest pickets resulted in long delays on the roads.

Military courts and further restrictions

In August 1920, following the collapse of law and order in Ireland, the British government enacted the 'Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, 1920', which



British Army search vehicle, Dublin, Feb 1920.
Alamy Stock Photo

extended the scope of military courts-martial to try citizens and replaced coroner inquests with military courts of inquiry that were frequently held behind closed doors with relatives of the deceased, the public and press excluded. The regulations introduced under this legislation continued the prohibitions and restrictions of having, keeping, or using a motor-cycle or motor car without a permit.

In December 1920, further restrictions were introduced on where a vehicle (motorcycle or motor car) could be kept, the time of the day that the vehicle could be used, and the distance that could be travelled: Vehicles could only be used between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. and could not travel more than 20 miles from where the permit holder resided.

Exemptions

Special permits exempting holders from the curfew were granted to religious ministers of all denominations, medical practitioners, veterinary surgeons, and nurses. In February 1921, even the riding of a bicycle was prohibited; however, in July 1921, in the wake of the Truce, the restrictions limiting the hours and distance that a person owning a motor vehicle could travel were suspended.

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WICKLOW TOWN - Stan O'Reilly

William O'Grady: Wicklow revolutionary republican

Sinn Féin's growth in Wicklow, 1917-18

From May 1917, Sinn Féin flags were flying from sailing vessels in the harbour and openly displayed in Wicklow and district. The local police were quick to remove them, but they were just as quickly replaced. Nationalist sentiment was growing across the country. William O'Grady was at the heart of the Sinn Féin and revolutionary movement in Wicklow. In August 1917, the Wicklow Sinn Féin Club came into existence at a meeting in the Town Hall. Local officers were chosen, and O'Grady was elected Chairman. He and his fellow club members were placed under surveillance by the authorities, subjected to raids and searches of their homes and businesses, and frequently imprisoned. O'Grady, who fathered over 20 children, never faltered in his conviction. The price he and his family paid was considerable.

Well-known republicans from Wicklow and district attended meetings in the O'Grady home, including William Kennedy of New Street, and his brother-in-law Arthur Fitzpatrick. While plotting revolution, O'Grady and his republican colleagues were also kept busy organising dances in their clubroom on Sunday nights. Mr. L. Daly and Arthur Fitzpatrick, later a prominent figure in the War of Independence, were among the organisers. Fundraising, collecting donations and maintaining subscriptions kept the movement solvent. The Wicklow club was named Major McBride Sinn Féin Club. At its AGM in January 1918, the Chair was 'taken by the President Mr. Wm. O'Grady and there were close on a hundred members present. William was re-elected President. Other local officers elected were James Brennan, L. Byrne, W. J. Cardin, J. Kilcoyne, John Byrne and J. Smullen.' Sinn Féin held a public meeting in Greenane in February and set up a club there. William O'Grady spoke at a Sinn Féin rally in Barndarrig, and the party was generally active around the county. In September 1918, a public meeting was held in Ashford, at which the main speaker was Arthur Griffith. By November, Wicklow Sinn Féin had also established a Cumann na mBan. In December, a Sinn Féin dance was

organised at the Town Hall, and a large house (the old Wicklow Travel building) was rented on Main Street as club rooms.

Arrest of Tom Cullen

Conflict with the authorities was inevitable. On 7 April 1918, the arrest of Thomas Cullen of Abbey Street, Wicklow, on a charge of illegal drilling led to a major disturbance in the town. Tom was the organiser of the Volunteers for the county, as well as Commandant of the Wicklow Company of the IRA. He was arrested by the RIC having left Mass. He was then taken to a special court for trial, found guilty and sentenced to six months. A large crowd of supporters and sympathisers had invaded the court. Cullen declared, 'I do not recognise the court, it is only a farce ... I haven't a dog's respect for it.' The resident magistrate, W. M. Sullivan, replied 'We will see you again Tom, when the six months are up.' Cullen riposted: 'The Germans will be here before then.' The police had a tough job removing Cullen and getting free of the crowd, which attacked the constables as they led Cullen away. In support of Cullen, Sinn Féin flags were flown in the town, including one at O'Grady's house and one at the head of the crowd which followed the arresting party to the RIC barracks at Church Street.



Tom Cullen one of Michael Collins' Apostles Squad during the Troubles and the Civil War period. Became a Commandant in the army and drowned in an accident in Lough Dan in 1926. Photo: Courtesy of John Finlay.

Riot

A mob of 400 had gathered by noon as the police were removing Tom Cullen to the train station. Things turned ugly. Stones and sticks were used and there was a baton charge. William O'Grady was in the middle of the fray. The crowd followed the police and Cullen to the train station at Wicklow, where they invaded the platform and threatened the train driver and fireman. Windows were broken and the air brakes cut. The Volunteers present tried to restore order and a standoff ensued. Cullen was briefly rescued by the mob but was retaken at Brickfield Lane. Constables were assaulted again, and the prisoner

was then taken back to the Barracks, which came under attack. A special train packed with soldiers arrived in Wicklow as reinforcement. The jeering crowd did not disperse, but now with military backup, the police got Tom Cullen on the 9:15 train to Dublin.

Although he was now wanted by the police, O'Grady attended anti-conscription meetings over the next month, including one in Wicklow at Market Square, and one in Rathnew. O'Grady and four of his comrades were eventually arrested by armed police in a dawn raid in May 1918. They were all lodged in Wicklow Gaol under a heavy guard.

Trials

The prisoners were charged with unlawful assembly and unlawful disturbance of the public peace, assault of the police and causing 'terror and alarm [to] His Majesty's quiet and peaceable subjects'. At the Courthouse, there was a huge cheer from the locals assembled as the prisoners went to the dock. The chairman adjourned proceedings so the court could be cleared. The record shows that Henrietta O'Grady, 'wife of one of the prisoners, refused to go and was forcibly ejected by a couple of police.' When order was restored the events of the arrest of Tom Cullen and the aftermath were outlined to the court, and William O'Grady's role in the event was argued. One witness declared: 'I saw him at one time telling the crowd to conduct themselves.' Constable McGuinness claimed, on the other hand, that he 'saw O'Grady striking Constable Griffin on the hand with the wooden portion of a golf stick—excepting O'Grady, I did not see any of the other prisoners use violence.' In his testimony, Griffin stated that some of the crowd

endeavoured to break through the police, amongst the number being William O'Grady. In trying to keep the crowd back with drawn batons, O'Grady struck me a violent blow on the left hand with a golf stick. The stick was coming on my head and I put up my hand to save myself.



Group outside Wicklow Gaol with republican prisoner William O'Grady back row left with the fine moustache. Image: Courtesy of John Finlay



Former RIC Barracks, Church Street, Wicklow Town.

Photo: buildingsofireland.ie

Sergeant Jones, under questioning by Mr. McCarroll for the defence, testified that he did not see O'Grady do anything. He was then asked: 'Is it a fact that O'Grady in the main kept the crowd back?' Jones replied: 'At the Brickfield Lane he did.' Constable McCormack also testified that he did not see O'Grady do anything. Mr. McCarroll stated: 'No overt acts were really proved against anybody in the case except Mr. O'Grady, and there was evidence that at Church Hill he was active in keeping the crowd back which was to his credit.' The magistrates returned a verdict that even though

four of the five prisoners had no overt act proven against them, they were nonetheless all guilty of unlawful assembly. William O'Grady had taken part in a violent affray but had helped at one point in the restoration of order. All five went to Mountjoy prison for two months.

In the aftermath of the riot, house raids and arrests continued in pursuit of the participants. On 18 May, caretaker of the Sinn Féin Club, James Smullen on the Murrugh was arrested, remanded in custody and charged with unlawful assembly. He received a sentence of two months in prison. At the Wicklow Quarter Sessions in June of 1918, damages were awarded for the broken windows in the police Barracks on Church Street: '£12 compensation was awarded to be levied off the Urban District of Wicklow.' Arrested in July 1918 for unlawful Assembly the previous April were William Goodman of Castle Street, John Byrne of The Mall and Thomas Dunne of High Street. All three appeared in court in August. John Byrne was sent to jail for four months with hard labour, William Goodman went to the cells for three months and Dunne went down for two months. The next to be arrested in August was sailor William Hanlon, who 'by going to sea evaded arrest in the meantime.' Within a week, William's brother Michael was arrested in Greenock: The brothers were brought to Bray under a heavy armed escort and placed in remand to Mountjoy, joining William O'Grady and other comrades. The Hanlons were members of GAA clubs in Wicklow and William was perhaps the best handball player in the county. They

were both tried at Bray and found guilty. They were sentenced to two months of hard labour.

In December 1918, Sinn Féin won the general election by a landslide. The Wicklow Major McBride Sinn Féin Club held its AGM in January of 1919. William O'Grady was present and was re-elected President. Also present were L. Byrne and P. Brennan, Treasurers; John Byrne, Secretary; T. O'Connor and N. Quinn, Trustees. William O'Grady outlined the details of a successful year, especially Sinn Féin's opposition to conscription. He also commended the members for their work. Towards the end of February, O'Grady proposed that money collected for anti-conscription funds, a total of £180, be used to fund a public hall in Wicklow. In March, Sinn Féin club, Cumann na mBan and Volunteers all turned out for the big St. Patrick's Day parade in Wicklow Town. In September 1919, as violence escalated nationwide, a large police raid of the club took place. Armed military stood guard outside as many documents and papers were seized. Other properties were also raided in the district, including the business premises of William O'Grady.

Local elections 1920

The local government elections on 15 January 1920 in Wicklow's Kilmantin Ward saw William O'Grady and colleague John Byrne take two of the nine seats, while in the Abbey Ward, their colleagues C. M. Byrne, James Middleton and Peter Byrne were elected. In April, William was among a thousand people who marched to the Market Square behind two Sinn Féin flags and a banner reading 'The Workers of Wicklow.' This event became known as the 'Down Tools Day.' Further election success followed for Sinn Féin in the County Council elections in June 1920. At the first meeting, the County Council pledged its allegiance to Dáil Éireann. At the next meeting, there was some excitement as 'on the run' C. M. Byrne of Glenealy, was warmly greeted as he put in an appearance. All the while, raids and house searches of Sinn Féin members continued and the home of William O'Grady was once again targeted. In August, William put forward a list of Irish street names which he proposed should replace the English street names throughout the town. The motion was passed, and a committee formed to progress and cost the project.

Spy shot

In October 1920, the Black and Tans, who had arrived in town the previous month, raided the Sinn Féin hall and caused a considerable amount of damage. Fearful locals could only look on. In December, William O'Grady was under arrest once again and lodged in Wicklow Gaol. P. J. Noonan, IRA intelligence officer, was lodged in Wicklow Gaol that same month. On his way to jail, O'Grady had been accompanied by a man wearing a fáinne, who later turned out to be a British spy. O'Grady would later claim: 'I became suspicious of this man, and we held no communication.' When Noonan was being removed from his cell on transfer to Mountjoy Jail, he spotted the fáinne-wearing agent 'walking with an officer.' The body of this spy was later found in a field.

Truce

In January 1921, William O'Grady was in some discomfort in his cell in Wicklow Gaol. Conditions were not good in the old, condemned building. He was one of twelve prisoners confined there. In his absence, he was elected Chairman of Wicklow Urban District Council (UDC). He was released in February. Five Sinn Féin candidates were elected to the Dáil on 24 May. Following the Truce in July, O'Grady and other Volunteers ensured that order was maintained in town. He also acted as a justice at the first sitting of the Republican Court in the Town Hall.

However, life was about to get difficult for him again. In January 1922, the Treaty was signed. The Sinn Féin split followed, and the IRA in Wicklow moved armed units in to take over the Barracks and Old Gaol in March. O'Grady was elected as Vice Chair of Wicklow UDC at the 1922 AGM. Violence broke out in the town during March as pro- and anti-Treaty factions clashed. In September 1922, O'Grady was arrested again and once more thrown in Wicklow, now a Civil War prisoner. He remained opposed to any English rule in Ireland.

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Under the Stairs, by Sheelah O'Grady.

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Thank you to the Co. Librarian, County Library and Staff, Boghall Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow and to the director of the National Library, Dublin.



Fitzwilliam Square, Wicklow c. 1900.

Photo: WA Green

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WICKLOW TOWN - Stan O'Reilly

'Under the stairs': Extracts from the diary of Sheelah O'Grady

Sheelah O'Grady was the daughter of Wicklow revolutionary William O'Grady. The following extracts are from the typescript of her unpublished diary.

William and Henrietta O'Grady

[My parents] lived and brought up their vast family in Wicklow Town on the east coast, twenty six miles south of Dublin. A pleasant seaport of grey stone nestling around the mouth of the River Vartry and dominated by imposing churches of the Catholic and Protestant faiths perched high on opposing hills. Father had been born and brought up in Waterford further to the south, and went across the water to London to serve an apprenticeship in a hairdressing salon somewhere in the Pentonville Road. The only reason I know this is that once when we went to London, he pointed out the salon. He hardly ever mentioned his family and did little or nothing to keep in touch with them except when news arrived of the death by drowning, and his bowler hat was taken down from the top of the wardrobe to be given a good dusting before his departure for the funeral. Quiet as he was at home, he found time not only to be a leading figure in Sinn Féin but also to be a well-respected Town Councillor. Unfortunately, the hair dressing salon never made the money hoped for and became more and more of a burden to well beyond his dying day. Mother was the radiant, sustaining one—though none of us children had any real inkling



Wicklow Gaol pre 1950.
Photo: Courtesy of Edward Kane

of the real difficulties she had in coping with father's increasing ill health, the mortgage, the bills, keeping us fed and well dressed for outside eyes. Worn out by it all and twenty one pregnancies, she died at sixty three. I was the child of the nineteenth pregnancy.

Snatched at birth: a Black and Tan raid

On the 17th of November 1920 my mother, Henrietta was in labour when the Black and Tans burst their way into our house on Main Street, Wicklow, in search of arms and my father who was a local leader of Sinn Féin. To force her to reveal his hiding place they snatched away my little wet body almost as soon as it was delivered and, as far as she knew, my life was over before it had even begun. The terror and wailing must have been awful. The details have been lost in the mists of time and, perhaps a vanishing of legend. It was not something my parents cared to discuss, nor did I ask all the questions I should have. William, my father, who suffered so much in the cause of Irish freedom, remained almost entirely silent about his underground and political activities. The tangible memento I have is his medal. As it was, I was found alive and presumably well under the stairs by the front door while father was frogmarched up the street to Wicklow Gaol with a pistol at his head and steel tipped boots hacking at his ankles. The Black and Tans were not the most gentle of mercenaries.¹ He remained in prison in Wicklow and Mountjoy until I was old enough to remember the day of his release—a day when my mother took me and my two small sisters to Glendalough where, with her arms clasped to the wall of the round tower, she prayed for his homecoming. He was in the house when we returned. Too young to take in and understand her great joy I can, at least, remember the occasion. I was far too young to know what went on at meetings held in our house, but many years later, Aunt Fanny, a Barlow from mother's side of the family, told me the Black and Tans also raided the Barlow fish shop and house, only a few yards away, where they failed to find a cache of arms hidden around the bend behind the cistern.

Ugly ducking

However, I can recall a night when mother was out and one of the men attending a meeting in our front parlour called up the stairs to pay for the use of the room. I think a couple of shillings was due. They must have been mightily polite plotters. I was in bed with my sisters Patricia, hereafter called Pat, and Mary in the bathroom which had been converted to house the junior members of our ever bulging family. A place of pipes whose gurgling and plonking kept us huddled together in a cocoon of giggling fear. Though I was the junior child or, more accurately, because the other two were able to boss me, I was sent downstairs to make the collection. Even then I knew every penny counted. I got my reward when mother praised me with the words 'Well done my child: handsome is as handsome does.' Words that stuck. I was very much the ugly duckling of the family.

... From all this you might well imagine an outgoing all-Irish nationalist household. Far from it. Even though father addressed meetings and the local 'action' committee met in our front parlour, from which they were eventually rejected by mother on the grounds that they were wearing out the linoleum, pictures of the King and Queen and all the Royal Family hung on our walls. Indeed, later on during the Second World War, it was father who encouraged me, two of my brothers and two of my sisters to join the British Forces. It was not England he was against, it was her occupation of his beloved Ireland ... A kinder, more gentle, man could not have been found. He was far removed from the stereotype image of a freedom fighter.

Sheelah O'Grady inserted an end section to the story of her life and titled this 'Notes by the family'. The following extracts record her family's recollections of the revolutionary period in Wicklow.

Brother, Terence (Teddy), living in New York

In the meantime, the Black and Tans arrived. They were all ex-Army officers, each his own boss and able to do what he liked or wanted... To answer your question about father and the Sinn Féin, let me say he was a true and dedicated Irishman. I remember that the Tans came to our house and took him out of bed in his pyjamas. They took him out on the sidewalk, made him kneel down and sing 'God Save the King.' If it had not been for his wife and family, I believe he would have said 'shoot me.' Then they made him stand up and walk; and whilst he was walking, the Tans were kicking him on the heels until they were bloody, scraped and blistered. I do not remember how long he was in jail.

... I used to go fishing every night. Three times on my way home I had to dump my catch of pollock on the sidewalk at the Tan's orders. I always had a little bait box with worms. I had to open that little 3x2x1-inch box to show there were no 'torpedoes' in it.

Brother, Paul, living in London

I remember our house being raided by the Black and Tans many times. Father was a prime target. They tarred the shop window. I remember that clearly. I often wonder how it escaped being broken by them. A plate glass window of that size would have cost a lot to repair in that age when a haircut cost 8 old pennies and a shave 4 pence. I visited the old gaol many times on my way home from the Convent School. It was a terrible place, flagstone floor, cold, draughty, without heating. The beds were very crude. They looked like old doors. There was no room to swing a cat.

... I do not know what happened to the photographs of father with some other prisoners but I do know he looked awful.

... When our house was raided they did not give him time to dress. They marched him up the street in his nightshirt to the Market Square. They tried to make him sing 'God Save the King.' I do not know how long he spent in Wicklow Gaol, but he was sent from there to Mountjoy Prison in Dublin. He used to speak of a place called 'Beggars Bush'² which, I think, was another prison camp.

This left Paddy alone to run the shop. I often wondered how mother coped. I never knew her annoyed or depressed. She used to say she did not care what we got up to provided we did not bring the police to our door.

... I remember Sheamus working in a bicycle shop; Dermot working in Sheane's engineering place opposite our shop and Teddy working in Shaw's on the Mall Hill.

Sister, Patricia, living in Weston-super-Mare

Of the Barlow's, Aunt Ciss lived in a little house by the quay which was always being flooded out. Jack Barlow, a cousin, and my mother's brother Johnny I recall — Johnny came to Wicklow to die in our house.

... I often heard mother tell father he was very fond of jail because he spent so much time there. I remember his release from prison on the day when, as a seven-year-old, I had been to Glendalough where we prayed at St. Kevin's Tower that one day he would come back to us. He was at home when we returned.

... I do not know how long he was in jail, but I know that I visited him for nine months at least. I visited him daily. I remember being lifted up by a soldier in order to let me pull the rope of the bell that brought the warder to let me in.

... When the Black and Tans came they covered our windows with tar. They also pulled father out of bed and pushed him, pricking his heels with their bayonets, to the Market Square where they tried to make him say where members of the IRA were hiding. He did not let on. He loved Ireland and was devoted to De Valera. I still have the ornate gold and green decorated sash and medal he so proudly wore in later processions, both religious and political.

... Of the rest, Kathleen was the first of the girls to leave home. She became a companion to a wealthy family in Brighton. It was she who got us all over there. Paddy stayed at home to run the business ... Dermot was a naval officer who was lost at sea during the war ... Brian still lives in Wicklow ... Kevin joined the Irish Army and became a hairdresser when he left.

NOTE: *Brother Paul has since pointed out that Patricia's memory of Dermot is not correct. In fact, he was in the merchant navy and later transferred to the Irish Lights and Lighthouse Service. He died of tuberculosis ashore.*

Cousin, Greta Shirley (née Barlow), of Roehampton

Your grandmother was a north of Ireland woman. All I know about your grandfather's history is that he was a seafaring man and a strict protestant ...

... Grandmother Barlow was a remarkable woman: street angel, house devil. She borrowed money from the National Bank (with no income) to buy the house in Main Street and by sheer business ability bought two more cottages across the river. Aunt Fanny said the bank manager never refused her a loan and she always repaid in cash.

... I have a clear memory of the night when, as a small child, the Black and Tans raided our house—this because your father was a known republican supporter. Mother was out at the time and I was in bed. I got up and stood crying on the stairs, in my shift. She came in then. The soldiers found nothing but, afterwards, there was great relief because they had not discovered the two guns hidden in a boat in our lower yard ...

... Your father came from a nice family in Waterford with a good hairdressing business. Your father probably met your mother when he came to Wicklow to open his own saloon. He was a quiet man of some education. He spoke in the Square by Billy Burn's [sic] Monument and so was put in jail. How your mother fed you all during this time I do not know. A real feat of survival. The children who went to church in a basket would be your long dead uncles and aunts.

Montserrat

Sheelah Julia O'Grady joined the Colonial Nursing Service and served in Palestine, Nigeria and Kenya. In 1963, she married a British colonial administrator, Willoughby Harry (Tommy) Thompson, who was to become the

Governor of the Caribbean colony of Montserrat in 1971. In her diary, she wrote of her new home:

Irish sugar planters and slaves had gone there in the early years of the 17th century. So Irish was the island that Hibernia and her harp graced the island's crest, a large green shamrock stood atop Government House and great play was made in all tourist publicity about this other 'Emerald Isle.'

Both Princess Anne and Prince Charles visited the island during her time there, and with her husband, Sheelah was received by the Queen. She and her husband also featured on a Montserrat issue stamp with members of the royal family. Her diary is a fascinating record of the conflicting loyalties of the revolutionary period. It reveals that although her father, William O'Grady, was a confirmed separatist who had sought to remove English authority in Ireland, and a man who had as a consequence spent time confined to a cold, damp cell in Wicklow Gaol, he would have been hugely proud of his daughter, her status in life and her interaction with the English Royals.



Sheelah and Tommy Thompson.
Photo: Courtesy of
falklandsbiographies.org

Notes

- 1 Local lore is that he was beaten with barbed wire on the way to jail after one of the raids on his home. The diary does not confirm this, but it is unlikely that he was well treated by his captors.
- 2 Barracks in Dublin and place of execution in 1922 of revolutionary leader Erskine Childers, who grew up at Glendalough House, Annamoe.



Old stone bridge, Wicklow, c.1920, with the Presbyterian Church in the background. Photo: Courtesy of John Finlay

POSTSCRIPT - Catherine Wright

Researching Wicklow County Archives: The Barton Collection

County archives tell the story of the development of communities and the administrations who served them. They hold the records of county councils and their predecessors - the Grand Juries, Poor Law Guardians, Corporation Boroughs and Town Commissioners. County archives also hold the private papers and often business archives of families administering, living and working in the county. One such collection of private papers, held by the Wicklow County Archives, is the Barton Collection. The public and the private records complement each other; providing us with a more rounded understanding of historical events.

The highest honour

Barton was arrested by the British in February 1919, at the very the beginning of the War of Independence, for making seditious speeches at Carnew and Shillelagh. He made a famously daring escape from Mountjoy prison but was recaptured within a year, subsequently suffering very harsh treatment in Portland Prison, before being finally released in 1921. While Barton was in prison, Wicklow County Council honoured him by making him chairman of the council at a meeting on 18 June 1920:

“Resolved - Whereas R.C. Barton, T.D. was savagely sentenced to a term of penal servitude in an English prison by a Court-martial of the English Army of Occupation in Ireland ... We the members of Wicklow County Council ... as a protest against this inhuman treatment, and as proof that the Irish patriot in an English prison is ever dear to his people, hereby confer on R.C. Barton the highest honour it is our gift to bestow, that of Chairman of this Council. Further we ask the justice-loving people of every land to note that R.C. Barton fought in France for the freedom of small nationalities, and that of England, the ‘Champion of Small Nations’, rewards him with a convict cell for seeking to free the oldest of small nations - Ireland. Carried unanimously.”
(Wicklow County Archives, WLAA/WCC/M/10)

Private struggle

Among the documents contained in the Barton Collection is a letter dated 8 June 1924 to Robert Childers Barton from the Sinn Féin West Wicklow Comhairle Ceantair expressing regret at his announcement to leave public life. This vividly acknowledges the pressure and turmoil Robert Barton experienced as a delegate and signatory of the Treaty in 1921, and his subsequent decision to side with the anti-treaty forces during the ensuing Civil War:

"Wicklow people will remember that it was only after pressure was brought to bear on you that you, with much reluctance accepted the responsibility entailed ... how heavy those responsibilities proved to be, none of us could then foretell, but as time went on, and the conflict became more severe, we knew that we had chosen rightly when we appointed you as the standard-bearer of our liberties. As regards the Irish delegation of 1921 no republican has any delusions as to the part you then took in these deliberations and the subsequent signing of the treaty. We are not in a position to judge the motives which prompted the signatories ... We honour and appreciate the steps you took to rectify the decision which was forced upon you then ... if your example had been followed by the other delegates the country would have been spared the agony and bitterness of the past two years..."
(Barton Collection, Wicklow County Archives, WLAA/PP1/BE/12)

A descriptive list of the Barton Collection Papers at Wicklow County Archives can be viewed at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/The-Barton-Family>

Comhairle Ceannairde West Wicklow.

28/12/1.

8 June 1924

Dear Mr. Barton

It was with feelings of the deepest regret we read your letter announcing your intention of retiring from public life. While we understand and sympathise with the considerations which moved you to take this decision, we are not without hopes that we may be able to dissuade you from such a step.

It is true that there are not many on the Comhairle Ceannairde today who were present when you were chosen as representative and afterwards as Dail candidate but the Wicklow people will remember that it was only after pressure was brought to bear on you that you, with much reluctance, accepted the responsibility entailed. How heavy those responsibilities proved to be, none of us could then foretell, but as time went on and the conflict became more severe, we knew that we had chosen rightly when we appointed you as the standard-bearer of our liberties.

As regards the Irish Delegation of 1921, no Republican has any delusions as to the part you then took in those deliberations, and the subsequent signing of the Treaty. We are not in a position to judge the motives which prompted the signatories to the Treaty, but we are well aware that in the

Letter dated 8 June 1924 to Robert Childers Barton from the Sinn Féin West Wicklow Comhairle Ceantair expressing regret at his announcement to leave public life. Courtesy of Wicklow County Archives



Rocky Valley, Wicklow, c. 1910-20
WA Green
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Ulster Folk Museum Collection

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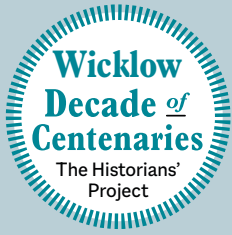
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Wicklow AND THE War of Independence

Wicklow and the War of Independence is an initiative of the Wicklow Decade of Centenaries Historians' Project. It brings together a collection of essays by local historians who have researched the revolutionary era in their respective localities from a variety of perspectives. The result is a series of interwoven studies that bring the complex tapestry of this significant part of Wicklow history into new and sharper focus.



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Supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023 initiative and Wicklow County Archives, Wicklow County Council

