



DEFYING TERROR

Jeremiah Mee, Glenamaddy
and the Listowel Mutiny, 1920

CONOR McNAMARA



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Cover background image: R.I.C. military and armoured cars leaving Limerick on a scouting expedition ca.1920 from the Hogan-Wilson Collection

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(Irish Academic Press, 2019).

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(Irish Academic Press, 2018).

Conor McNamara, Pádraig Yeates (eds),
Dublin Lockout 1913: New Perspectives on Class War and its Legacy
(Irish Academic Press, 2017).

‘The War of Independence in Connacht’ in John Crowley,
Michael Murphy, Donal Ó Drisceoil (eds),
Atlas of the Irish Revolution (Cork University Press, 2017).

‘In the Shadow of Altnaveigh: Political Upheaval and Sectarian Violence in
Co. Louth, 1920–22’, in Martin Maguire, Donal Hall (eds),
County Louth and the Irish Revolution
(Irish Academic Press, 2017).

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(Collins Press, 2015).

Carla King, Conor McNamara (eds),
The West of Ireland, New Perspectives on the Nineteenth Century
(The History Press, 2011).

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This book has been produced to mark the centenary of the Listowel Mutiny, led by Galway native Jeremiah Mee and his comrades in Listowel RIC barracks, who resigned from the police rather than hand their barracks over to the Crown forces in June 1920.

This publication has been produced by Galway County Council as part of their commemorative strategy for the decade of commemorations, 2013-23. The decade between 1913 and 1923 was a period of unprecedented change in Irish society and saw extraordinary change at both a local and national level. Galway County Council recognises the importance of playing a positive and proactive role in leading commemorative celebrations and activities in the course of the decade that reflect and explore events concerning County Galway.

This publication would not have been possible without the support and co-operation of the Mee family and the help of Teresa, Ciarán and Luke, in particular, who supplied family documents, photographs and information. Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer for Galway County Council, provided the lead on the project and Grainne Smyth and Caroline Hannon provided invaluable corrections on the final text. Martina Creaven, Galway County Council, provided important administrative support. We are also grateful to Neil Carron, Commemorations Unit, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for his assistance.

FOREWORD

Ar scáth a chéile a mbaireann na daoine is a well-known Irish motto that appealed to my late Grandfather, Jeremiah Mee. For him it was a reminder of the essential connection that ought to exist amongst all peoples confronted by adversity.

To an outside observer, Grandpa Jerry must seem a mass of contradictions. On the one hand, a dedicated police officer; and on the other, the spokesman for a famously successful local police mutiny. A man who valued his privacy, but who was thrust repeatedly into the public eye. A stern household disciplinarian of 1920s to 1940s Ireland yet, like his wife Annie, abhorrent of corporal punishment or, indeed, any form of what might today be termed domestic abuse. Intensely masculine by temperament and outlook, he, nonetheless, both served and worked alongside some of his country's earliest Republican feminists. Even, in later life, he was determined to ensure, along with Granny, that their daughters should enjoy the same freedoms of the world as their sons. His was a strict nature in so many respects, but, conversely, an enormously sentimental, loving and forgiving one.

To Grandpa's family and those who knew him well, all these aspects of his life and personality played out in perfect, logical harmony. His notorious conduct in Listowel in 1920 astounded many of his contemporaries. Yet, for those who were familiar with Grandpa Jerry, his behaviour in Kerry at that time was entirely consistent with his character. Regardless of what era, what country or what uniform Grandpa might have found himself in, it was simply instinctive for him to refuse to obey orders he found unconscionable, and to confront those who might issue them – no matter how numerous or powerful they might be.

Of course, none of this offers the modern scholar an adequate explanation for what happened to my Grandfather and why. And this is where Dr Conor McNamara's wonderful history of Grandpa's childhood

locale and the events that shaped it begins to answer so many questions. Conor's presentation of what mattered most to Grandpa Jerry – his family, his native village and county, the bitter struggles of poverty-stricken and subjugated people in Galway and Ireland generally – provides fresh insights into this very ordinary Irishman's motives and subsequent actions. Generously commissioned by Galway County Council, this is a study which no serious student of Irish policing, the Listowel Mutiny or the lower level mechanics of revolutionary Irish government should ignore.

It is with immense pleasure, therefore, that the Mee family recommends this booklet to you. It is also a delight to see and know that, in this centenary year of the Listowel Mutiny, the great people of Glenamaddy and Galway continue to remember Grandpa as he always saw himself – one of their very own.

Ciarán Mee

June 2020

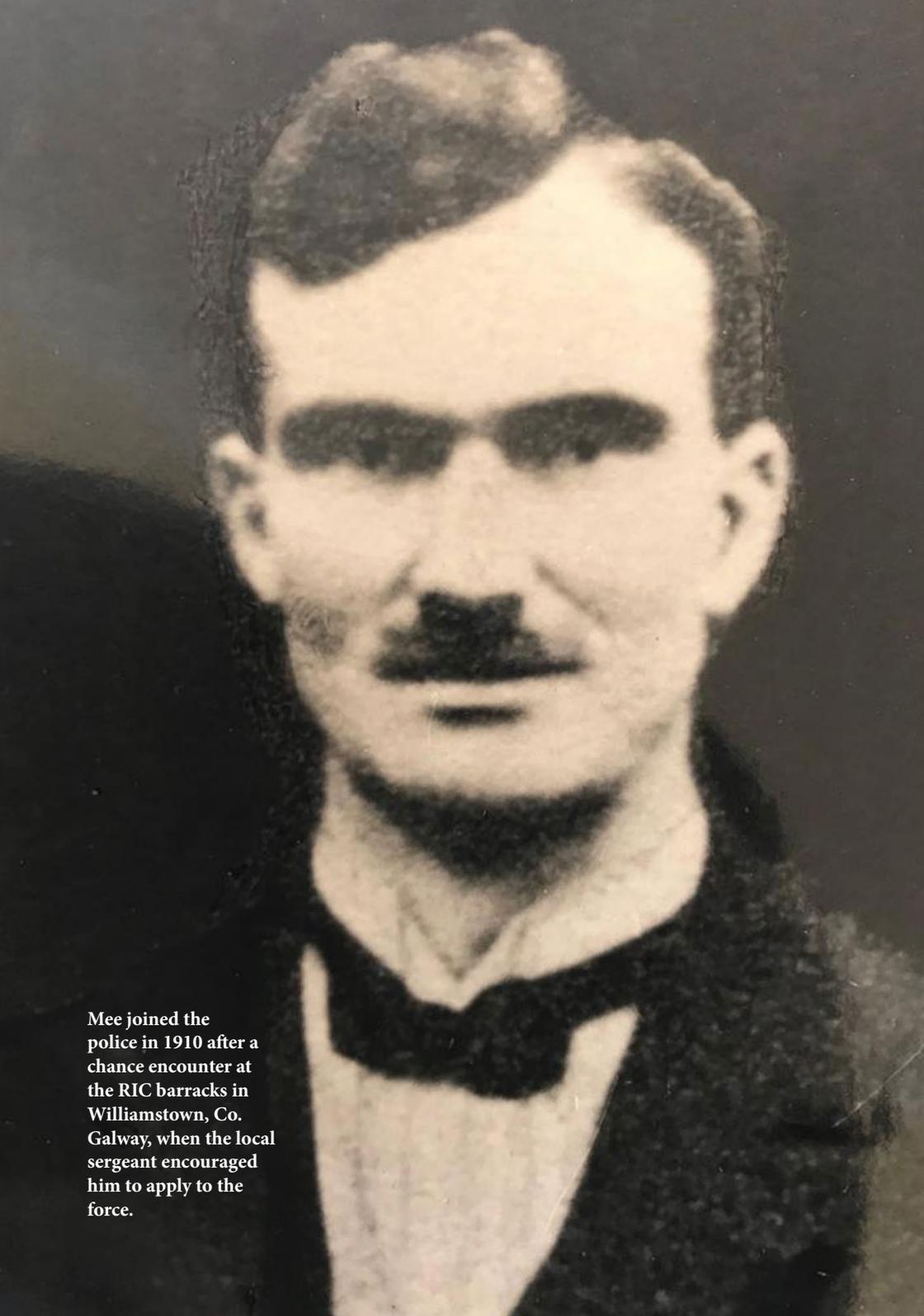
PREFACE

Exploring the Rich Heritage of County Galway

Jeremiah Mee from Glenamaddy, Co. Galway, was a constable in the Royal Irish Constabulary stationed in Listowel, Co. Kerry, when in June 1920, he and thirteen colleagues resigned from the force rather than hand their barracks over to the military. The Listowel RIC Mutiny was an important event in the history of the Irish Independence struggle because it exposed the brutal nature of the British campaign in Ireland. The mutiny resulted in a bitter debate in the House of Commons over British policy in Ireland and exposed the terror being covered up at the highest levels of the British administration.

The Mee family came from Knockauns East, Glenamaddy, and this book explores Jeremiah's contribution to the independence struggle, and the history of Glenamaddy and North-East Galway during the opening decades of the twentieth century. The revolutionary generation in Ireland was the product of a rural society that underwent great social and political change over the previous fifty years, with the collapse of the power of the landed gentry, relentless population decline in the aftermath of the Great Famine, and the emergence of a new vision of Ireland's future. This short book explores the role of the ordinary men and women of the independence movement and the experience of a small rural community in a time of unprecedented change.

This book should serve as a starting point for further research into this turbulent period in Irish history, as well as the history of the independence struggle in County Galway. To encourage and assist heritage groups and researchers to further explore the issues discussed, we have included references to primary sources throughout the text. All of the resources quoted are freely available to researchers and an additional discussion of archives and further reading is provided in the final section of the book. In this manner, it is hoped that this short publication will encourage further interest and research into the heritage and history of County Galway.



Mee joined the police in 1910 after a chance encounter at the RIC barracks in Williamstown, Co. Galway, when the local sergeant encouraged him to apply to the force.

1

GLENAMADDY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

No words of mine could do justice to their kindness and generosity.
Food and shelter were ours at all times of the day and night.

Patrick Treacy, North Galway Flying Column,
on the people of his native Glenamaddy

The Mee Family, Knockauns, Glenamaddy

Jeremiah Mee, or Jerry, as he was known to friends and family, had a typical rural Irish childhood as the son of a small farmer. He was born on 29 March 1889 on a twenty acre farm to John and Ellen Mee at Knockauns East, located between the villages of Williamstown and Glenamaddy in North-East Galway. Large families were common in Ireland at the time and the nine Mee children, five boys and four girls, attended the local Stonetown National School, a mile or so north of Glenamaddy.

The experience of the Glenamaddy district at the turn of the century mirrored that of other western communities in Ireland with emigration devastating the district. The history of the townland of Knockauns East, reflected the devastation experienced in Galway during and after the Great Famine of 1845–51. The townland was home to 140 people from 22 families on the eve of An Gorta Mór in 1841, however, by 1911 there were just 27 inhabitants from 7 families.

Jeremiah was the middle of nine children and three of his brothers – John, Dan and Michael – left Glenamaddy as young men to find work in the United States, never to return. The youngest son Luke, would go on to join the RIC like his older brother. The four Mee girls – Margaret, Kate, Ellen and Nora – never forgot the trauma of losing their brothers and like so many other rural families, had to find work in Dublin and elsewhere, with little employment to be found locally.

The Mee family values of hard work and education reflected the best aspects of an emerging Irish generation that would make their mark across the United States and beyond. John O’Keefe was the headmaster of Stonetown National School at the turn of the twentieth century and imbued in his students, as Mee would later recall, the value of education and the importance of Irish history. The school stood opposite Stonetown House and was established in 1846 and endowed by landowner George Gore. Gore, a member of the south Dublin gentry, inherited 2,592 acres in the district in the early part of the nineteenth century. In the 1850s he held at least fifteen townlands in the Glenamaddy/Boyouagh, Dunmore and Ballymoe districts.

The Decline of Landlordism

Glenamaddy Rural District formed one of twelve electoral divisions in Galway at the turn of the century and in 1911 had a population of 15,263. In 1911, Galway had a population of 182,224, less than half the number of people – 440,198 – recorded on the eve of the Great Famine in 1841. Population decline continued unabated in the intervening years with a drop of over ten thousand in the county in the first decade of 1900 alone. Emigration to the United States saw an average of between two and four thousand people leave the county every year for a better life, most never to return.

The Land Acts of the late nineteenth century saw the great landed estates broken up across Ireland and the grip of landlords broken forever. Hundreds of thousands of tenant farmers became owners of their farms

for the first time, as the Government Acts of 1885, 1887, 1891 and 1903 transformed rural Ireland. A large number of Galway landowners still owned vast tracts of land before the operation of the Land Acts. In 1876, the notorious Lord Ashtown of the Trench Family of Woodlawn House, held 8,310 acres; Walter Blake of Ballyglunin House held 10,336 acres; Thomas Burke, Marblehill, Ballynakill, held 25,000 acres and John Daly, Raford, Killimordaly, held 11,709 acres. The most reviled land owner in Ireland was undoubtedly the Marquis Clanricarde, who owned 53,000 acres across South-East Galway, in the Sliabh Aughty and Woodford/Derrybrien districts. He inherited his estate from his father and never actually set foot in Ireland; and evicted more than three hundred tenants during the Land War in 1886. The state finally purchased his land in 1915, sparking mass celebrations in the district. Richard Berridge, a London brewer who owned 152,000 acres in South-West Connemara, was the largest land owner in Galway, but his vast estates were only purchased in 1872.

The Glenamaddy landowners who were to have their estates broken up under the land acts at the turn of the century included James Browne, Drum House, Mount Kelly (who owned 3,352 acres in 1867); Miss Cornwell, Clondoyle House (325 acres); Cornelius Kelly, Cloonlara (472 acres) and Bernard Kelly, Cloondoyle (754 acres). The largest landowner in the district was Michael Reilly, who owned a house in Glenamaddy village and had an estate of 3,631 acres.

Dire poverty persisted across Galway in the early twentieth century and in 1911 the Glenamaddy Workhouse, which would be burned down by the Volunteers in 1920, had 82 inmates. 2,614 people were designated as paupers in the county, with 1,311 residing in ten workhouses. The Irish language was dealt a severe blow by the Great Famine and while the language remained strong in Connemara, just 47 people did not speak any English in the Glenamaddy Rural District area in 1911. Thanks to the National Education system, however, knowledge of the Irish language remained widespread in the younger generation.

Large Land Owners, North-East Galway, 1876

Landlord	Address	Acreage
John Armstrong	Clooncunny, Creggs	1,520
Christopher Bagot	Aghrane Castle, Ballygar	12,396
Henry G. Bellew	Mountbellew	10,516
Robert Bodkin	Annagh	6,481
Michael J. Cheevers	Ballinamore, Killyan	6,116
Hyacinth Darcy	New Forest, Kilkerrin	4,434
William J. Digby	Moate, Moylough	4,930
Harry Jameson	Windfield, Moylough	3,123
Mrs McDermott	Springfield, Ballymoe	2,571
William Mahon	Castlegar House, Ahascragh	8,619
David Rutledge	Barbersfort, Barnaderg	2,059

The Independence Struggle

The War of Independence in North-East Galway saw the emergence of a young generation who defied the Crown Forces and in North-East Galway, the Glenamaddy Battalion, commanded by Seamus Moloney, was among the most active in Galway. The battalion comprised the following ten companies: Dunmore, Kiltевна, Williamstown, Kilcroan, Glynsk, Kilbegnet, Kilkerrin, Clonberne, Glenamaddy and Polredmond. (See Appendix 2) Initially part of the North Galway Brigade, the Glenamaddy Company comprised forty-five Volunteers in July 1921. Pat Treacy, Kiltullagh, captained the company, with Frank Mahon, Clooncon East, and Jack Jeffers, Shannagh, serving as his Lieutenants. (See Appendix 1).

While Cumann na mBan was not formally organised in the Glenamaddy district, women played an important role in the independence struggle in terms of intelligence gathering and the maintenance of fighters on the run from the Crown Forces, and in particular, in support of the North Galway Column during 1921. Women were particularly vulnerable to the violence of the Black and Tans as they could not flee their homes as easily

as their male counterparts and were often subject to violent reprisals.

The Crown Forces would be responsible for a series of atrocities in North Galway, including the burning of Tuam on the night of 19 July 1920. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, innocent civilians were killed across the district and the homes of dozens of IRA officers burned. The Commanding Officer of the North Galway Brigade, Michael Moran, Carramoreen, was killed on 24 November 1920 and one of the emerging leaders, Louis Darcy, Donaghpatrick, Headford, was killed on 24 March 1921.

Patrick Treacy, the first Captain of the Glenamaddy Company formed in 1918, later fought in the North Galway Flying Column in 1921. He was from Kiltullagh and was educated at Kilkerrin Monastery. One of the most dramatic events to occur in the district was the burning of the Glenamaddy Workhouse in June 1920 by the Volunteers to prevent it from being used as a garrison by the Crown Forces. Volunteer Michael Ryan, Kilsallagh, recalled:

It was a big job for which I drew on about 40 Volunteers from the Glenamaddy, Kilkerrin, Kilcroan, Glinsk and Kilbegnet Companies. There were about eight men from each company selected by the Company Captain in each case. The Workhouse buildings covered a big area and all were burned with the exception of the hospital and the fever hospital. Paupers, some of them cripples, had to be moved into the hospital where re-arrangements were necessary to find accommodation for them. Fortunately, for us, we had the help and support of the Bon Secours Sisters under whose charge the hospital was and of Father Fergus, now Most Rev. Dr. Fergus, Bishop of Achonry. The Master of the Workhouse also assisted. We had to cut the roof of the Workhouse to save the chapel from the flames. (BMH/WS, 1,417; Ryan)

Patrick Treacy gave an account of events in Glenamaddy to the Bureau of Military History in 1956 and his recollections give a unique insight into a period of unprecedented turmoil:

Before I took command of the company in October 1920, as far as I

can recollect, all arms in the company area had been collected. As far as I remember, they amounted to about forty shotguns, two .22 rifles and one blunderbuss, all mechanically good. Parades and drilling of the Glenamaddy Company took place at night after work and there was target practice with the 22 rifles on Sundays. At this time all parades, drilling and target practise were held in secret.

I had to go “on the run” about January or February, 1921, as my home commenced to be raided in search of me. It was raided on numerous occasions by RIC and Black and Tans. About this time there was a collection of money from the general public for Volunteers “on the run”. It was a house to house collection and was made by the Volunteers themselves. The response was very generous and the money was handed over to the Battalion Quartermaster. Out of this collection all Brigade and Battalion Staff Officers and Company Captains were provided with uniforms, which were made by Messrs. Kenny and Co., Tuam. Men “on the run” received tobacco, cigarettes, leggings and other articles of clothing where necessary. The uniforms were not worn on active service and the first opportunity of wearing them came at the time of the truce.

There was a very big round-up in the Glenamaddy Battalion area in the month of April 1921, as far as I can remember. It remains in my memory that the area surrounded was approximately fourteen miles by seven. British military from Castlerea, Claremorris and Galway City took part. There were scores of lorries and one aeroplane. The RIC were also there in force to identify the captured men. Some few members of the Flying Column were inside the encircled area but managed to conceal themselves and to avoid capture. In fact no Volunteers were captured in the round-up. (BMH/WS, 1,425; Treacy)

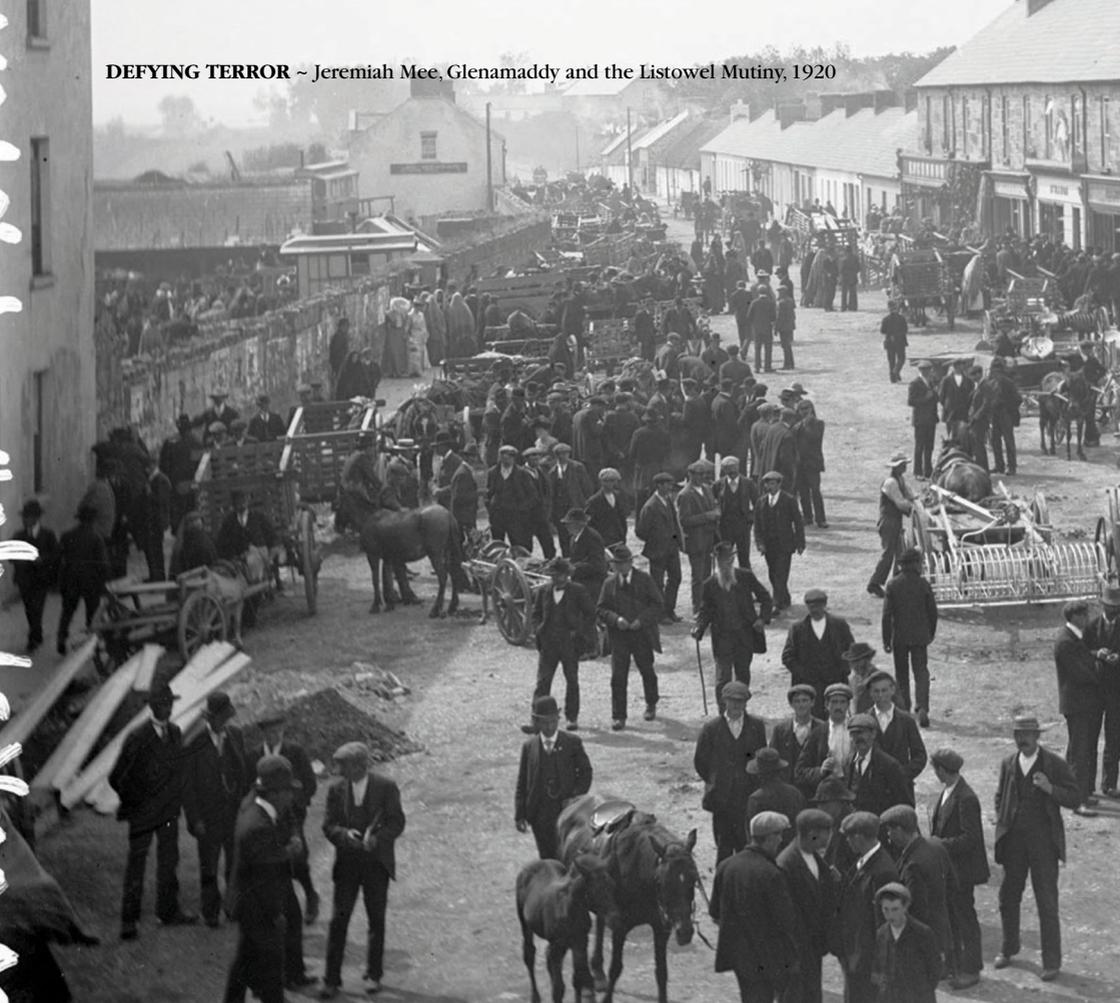
North Galway Flying Column

The North Galway Flying Column was formed in early 1921 and was involved in two significant ambushes that resulted in the deaths of RIC men. The column was composed of around twenty Volunteers from

the Milltown, Barnaderg, Glenamaddy, Belclare and Sylane districts. Glenamaddy Volunteers Martin Ryan (Kilcroan), Patrick Treacy (Kiltullagh) and Jack Knight (Templetogher) became full time members of the column. (See Appendix 3).

From early 1921, the column was constantly on the move, taking up ambush positions and waiting for the appearance of the Crown Forces. Patrick Treacy recalled the hardship the men endured ‘we were at least seven days without undressing and had only snatches of sleep during that time. To add to our hardships most of us suffered at that time from a severe attack of what was then known as Sinn Féin or republican itch, which was aggravated by very warm weather.’ (BMH/WS, 1,425; Treacy)

The column’s first attack was the ambush of a lorry of Auxiliaries near the village of Moylough on 6 June 1921, resulting in multiple casualties. Their most deadly operation was carried out in the village of Milltown on 27 June 1921, when two RIC men, Sergeant James Murren and Constable Edgar Daly, were killed. The column remained at large until the Truce in July 1921, forced to sleep in outhouses and dug outs. Volunteer Thomas Mannion recalled ‘the local people supported us in every way possible. They always gave us food and shelter and always responded extremely well in the matter of collections.’ (BMH/WS, 1,408; Mannion) According to Patrick Treacy, ‘No words of mine could do justice to their kindness and generosity. Food and shelter were ours at all times of the day and night. We were no doubt a burden on them but they regarded it as a great privilege to help us.’ (BMH/WS, 1,425; Treacy)



**Mee was posted to Listowel, North Kerry, in 1919, a thriving market town that was to be the location of the police mutiny the following year.
(National Library of Ireland)**



(MARKET DAY.) LISTOWEL, CO. KERRY. 8528. W.L.

2

THE RIC MUTINY, 1920

If a police barracks is burned, or if the barracks already occupied is not suitable, then the best house in the locality is to be commandeered, the occupants thrown in the gutter. Let him die there, the more the merrier.

Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald Smyth,
RIC Divisional Commissioner for Munster, Listowel, 18 June 1920

Terror in Ireland: The Black and Tans

Jeremiah Mee joined the RIC in 1910 at the age of 21, following a chance encounter in his local barracks in Williamstown, and spent nine years serving in various parts of Sligo, before being stationed in Listowel, Co. Kerry, in the autumn of 1919. Before the eruption of the War of Independence, it was a peaceful district with little active hostility as Mee recalled: ‘We did the usual routine police work and carried arms only at night. There was no interference with the people who went about their business and did not show any animosity towards the police. There were no military in the town and no need for them.’ (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

The emerging republican campaign, however, was to rapidly change the nature of policing in Ireland with the Volunteers authorising attacks on police barracks in January 1920. As the British government insisted the Volunteers were not legitimate soldiers and that a state of war did not exist in Ireland, the police – supported by the military – were to be held responsible for defeating what the British termed ‘lawlessness, murder, crime and outrage’.

From early 1920 until the truce with the Crown forces on 11 July 1921, almost 14,000 men were recruited from across Ireland and the United Kingdom to bolster the 10,000-strong Royal Irish Constabulary. While the majority of the recruits came from London, Glasgow and Liverpool, as many as 20 per cent may have been Irish. The Black and Tans, so-called due to their mixed khaki uniforms, were recruited in early 1920 and sworn in as police constables. The vast majority of recruits were veterans of World War One, who were out of work and willing to join the new temporary militia due to unemployment. Recruits received cursory training at the police depot in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, before being dispatched around Ireland.

The upsurge in the republican campaign led to a second wave of police recruitment in July 1920 that saw the creation of an Auxiliary Division that operated independently of the police. While the Auxiliaries were a distinct force – and viewed themselves as superior to the Black and Tans

– both groups gained a justified reputation for drunkenness, lawlessness, random violence and murder.

The Listowel RIC Mutiny

The Listowel Police Mutiny occurred on 19 June 1920 when fourteen serving policemen in the Listowel Barracks, with Jeremiah Mee as their spokesperson, resigned from the RIC rather than hand over their barracks to be used by the military. The mutiny made international headlines when the RIC men involved released details of an incendiary speech given to them by Colonel Smyth, Divisional RIC Commander for Munster, in which he advocated the shooting of civilians. Smyth's speech generated headlines around the world and caused outrage among supporters of Irish independence and prompted angry questions from Irish MPs in the House of Commons. The publication of the speech in the *Freeman's Journal* was significant because it exposed the methods the British administration was covering up at the highest levels and foretold of events that were to occur in Galway and across Ireland.

Mee recalled the shock and anger in his barracks when his garrison learned they were to be transferred and replaced by the military on 16 June 1920:

I pointed out that a war had been declared on the Irish people and that, looking at the case from a purely selfish point of view, we had to consider our own point of position. We were asked evidently, to take part with the military in beating our own people. I might find myself shooting the mother of one of my comrades, while he would be shooting my mother in Galway.

‘When we had defeated our own people, the British military would return to their own country and we would remain with our own people whom we had, with the assistance of the British government, crushed and defeated. That would be the best side of our case. If we lost the war, the position would be still worse. (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

Mee subsequently phoned the County Inspector of RIC for Kerry, Power O'Shea, to inform him of the decision of his garrison but was given short shrift and ordered that all ranks were to parade the following day. Following a stern dressing down from the Inspector, Mee stepped forward to address his commanding officer on behalf of the assembled men:

When I spoke up on behalf of the men, the County Inspector cut me short by saying, "Do you refuse to obey an order of the Divisional Commissioner, an order that applies to all Munster, and bring discredit on the police force?" I replied that I refused. "Then", he said, "you had better resign." I then stepped forward and said "Accept my resignation now." The County Inspector, after some hesitation, said "Anybody else prepared to resign?". The fourteen constables then stepped forward, each saying, "I resign", "I resign" – until the whole fourteen had tendered their resignations. (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

The fourteen police who resigned awaited their fate in their barracks and were informed that Colonel Smyth, Divisional Commissioner for Munster, would be arriving to quell the revolt the following day; Mee recalled 'To say that I myself was anxious would be to put it very mildly.'

Colonel Smyth and Orders to Kill

Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald Bryce Ferguson Smyth (1885–1920) was a pillar of the British establishment in Ireland and an exemplar of the English upper class officer class. He was awarded a Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his service in the French Expeditionary Force in World War One and given command of his own battalion of King's Own Scottish Borderers in 1916. In May 1920, he came to Ireland when he was appointed RIC Divisional Commissioner for Munster, giving him control over the Crown Forces in the most rebellious region of the country.

Smyth's speech to the garrison would be transcribed by Mee and his comrades and distributed to the national papers, causing a sensation when published in the *Freeman's Journal* the following day. The violent language used was reported around the world over the following days,

raising fundamental questions concerning British policy in Ireland. Smyth told the assembled garrison:

Now men, Sinn Fein has had all the sport up to this; we are going to have the sport now. The police have done splendid work considering the odds against them. They are not sufficiently strong to do anything but hold their barracks. This is not good enough, for as long as we remain on the defensive so long Sinn Fein have the whip hand. We must take the offensive and beat Sinn Fein with their own tactics. Martial law, applying to all of Ireland, is coming into operation shortly, and our scheme of amalgamation must be complete by 21st June. I am promised as many troops as I require from England; thousands are coming daily. I am getting 7,000 police from England.

Now men, what I wish to explain to you is that you are to strengthen your comrades in the out-stations. The military are to take possession of the large centres where they will have control of the railways and lines of communication, and be able to move rapidly from place to place. Unlike police who can act as individuals on their own initiative, military must act in large numbers under a good officer; he must be a good officer or I will have him removed.

If a police barracks is burned, or if the barracks already occupied is not suitable, then the best house in the locality is to be commandeered, the occupants thrown in the gutter. Let him die there, the more the merrier. You must go out six nights a week at least and get out of the barracks by the back door or skylight so that you will not be seen. Police patrols in uniform will go out the front door as a decoy. Police and military will patrol the country roads at least five nights a week. They are not to confine themselves to the main roads but take cross country, lie in ambush, take cover behind fences, near the roads, and, when civilians are approaching shout "hands up". Should the order be not immediately obeyed, shoot and shoot with effect. If the persons approaching carry their hands in their pockets or are in any ways suspicious looking, shoot them down.

You may make mistakes occasionally and innocent persons may be shot, but this cannot be helped and you are bound to get the right persons sometimes. The more you shoot, the better I will like you, and I assure you that no policeman will get into any trouble for giving evidence at coroner's inquests. As a matter of fact, inquests are to be made illegal so that in future no policeman will be asked to give evidence at inquests.

Hunger strikers will be allowed to die in jail, the more the merrier. Some of them have died already, and a damn bad job they were not all allowed to die. As a matter of fact, some of them have been dealt with in a manner that their friends will never hear about. A ship will be leaving Dublin Port with lots of Sinn Feiners on board; I assure you men; it will never land.

That now is nearly all I have to say to you. We want your assistance in carrying out this scheme and wiping out Sinn Fein. Any man who is not prepared to do so is an hindrance rather than a help and he had better leave the job at once. (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

Mee's colleague, Constable Michael Kelly, described the scene immediately following Colonel Smyth's tirade to his astonished comrades:

Constable Mee stepped from the line and addressed Colonel Smyth: "Sir, by your accent I take it that you are an Englishman who in your ignorance forgets that you are addressing Irishmen." Constable Mee took off his cap, belt and bayonet and laid them on the table. "These, too, are English," he said, "and you can have them. And to hell with you. You are a murderer."

At a signal from Colonel Smyth, Constable Mee was immediately seized and placed under arrest, and the entire twenty-five of us rushed to his assistance and released him. We informed Colonel Smyth that if another hand were laid upon our spokesman either then or in the future that the room would run red with blood. (Testimony to the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, 1920)

Questions in the House of Commons

The Irish newspapers extensively covered the revelations in Smyth's speech, with the *Freeman's Journal*, in particular, questioning the extent to which the views expressed represented those of the British administration in Ireland. While the unionist *Irish Times* was quick to dismiss the speech, Colonel Smyth was forced to admit parts of the account were accurate, while denying the most damning remarks. He claimed 'there was no suggestion then that I was endeavouring to incite them to a policy of reprisals. This has been invented since by disaffected men to cover their disobedience of orders and conduct which they know will be condemned by the Royal Irish Constabulary generally.' (*Freeman's Journal*, 26 July 1920)

Irish MPs at Westminster called for an inquiry into the speech, forcing the Chief Secretary for Ireland, the Canadian Imperialist, Hamar Greenwood, to intercede, with the speaker of the House of Commons refusing requests for an inquiry. Greenwood told the House on 14 July 1920: 'I am satisfied that the newspaper report referred to gives a distorted and wholly misleading account of what took place.' Jeremiah McVeigh, MP for South Down, responded to Greenwood's denials from the floor of the house: 'Is the House of Commons not to ascertain whether a man occupying a responsible position in the administration of the country and at the very head of the Police Force is entitled to incite to murder and assassination?' T.P. O'Connor, Irish MP for Liverpool, demanded a public inquiry to be held to ascertain if Smyth's policy was also that of the British administration: 'I would put it to you strongly that in making this proposal, I am doing so to avert what I consider an impending disaster in Ireland.'

Dublin Metropolitan Police

The transcript of Smyth's speech was not published in the *Freeman's Journal* until 10 July 1920, whereupon Mee and several comrades were summoned to Dáil Éireann to give an account of events in Listowel to Michael Collins and other republican leaders. The police serving in Munster were subsequently awarded a fourteen shilling a week pay rise in an

obvious attempt to maintain morale and loyalty. In early October, Mee, was summoned by Michael Collins, who informed him that a deputation of Dublin Metropolitan Police was dissatisfied with the role they were being asked to perform under the British administration and he wanted Mee to speak to the group.

Collins wanted Mee to convince the DMP rank and file not to co-operate with the Crown Forces in return for assurances about their safety from the IRA. Mee recalled 'Providing they stood together as an organised united body and refused to do military work, I argued there was nothing the authorities could do about it, and the IRA would treat them strictly as policemen and the shootings of Dublin DMP would cease.' (Gaughan, p. 141) Two days after Mee's meeting, the DMP passed a unanimous vote refusing to carry arms or do military work.

Constable Michael Fitzgerald

Mee was not the only Galway man central to the events in Listowel barracks. Of the fourteen police who refused to obey their superior officers, Constable Michael Fitzgerald was also from Galway. Fitzgerald, aged 21 when the mutiny occurred, was a native of Castlegar, Ahascragh, Ballinasloe. Along with Constables Thomas Hughes and John Donovan, he signed Mee's transcript of Colonel Smyth's incendiary speech to verify its accuracy and left the barracks before their official dismissal with Mee. In fact, Fitzgerald had proven his steel in an earlier incident when he was suspended from duty along with another constable for refusing to replace Mee at Newtownsandess police hut on 4 June during an incident that foreshadowed the events at Listowel later in the month. Mee had objected to being stationed in a dilapidated hut alongside two Black and Tans and Fitzgerald refused to take his place.

One of seven children, Fitzgerald's father, who died leaving seven children in 1905, had served in the British Army and Michael followed in his footsteps serving in the Connaught Rangers from 1915 until the end of World War One. Fitzgerald's grandfather had worked on the Clonbrock



Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald Bryce Ferguson Smyth (right) who delivered the infamous speech to Mee and his comrades at Listowel, and his brother, Major George Osbert Stirling Smyth (left), who was also killed in 1920.

estate as a herd. The estate was broken up at the turn of the twentieth century; Clonbrock was the county's leading unionist and chairman of the Galway Unionist Association. Fitzgerald joined the police in 1919 and was stationed in Listowel barracks. He joined the Irish Volunteers following the mutiny and served in South Roscommon. During the Civil War, he served with the National Army as a Captain. He later joined An Garda Síochána and died aged just 47 in 1945.

Assassination of Colonel Smyth

Colonel Smyth's speech singled him out as a marked man for the Irish Volunteers, who were determined he would not be allowed to put his plans into action. On 17 July 1920, almost one month to the day he delivered his infamous speech, he was assassinated in the Cork & County Social

Club by an IRA unit led by Dan ‘Shandow’ O’Donovan. He was buried at Banbridge, Co. Down, and the Orange Order subsequently named local Lodge 501 in his honour. Three months after Smyth’s death, his brother, Major George O.S. Smyth, a British intelligence officer, was killed in a gun battle with republicans, including Sean Treacy and Dan Hogan, in Dublin on 11 October 1920. An era of unprecedented terror, grimly forewarned in Smyth’s speech, had become a reality. Mee remained in Dublin and recalled ‘In so far as I personally was concerned I fully realised that the British authorities would hold me morally responsible for the death of Colonel Smyth.’ (BMH/WS, 379; Mee).

The Belfast Pogroms

The assassination of Colonel Smyth by the IRA in response to his speech in Listowel was to be used as a pretext for widespread violence against Catholics in the new Northern state that was to have devastating consequences. The state of Northern Ireland was established in 1920 and in that year alone, 650 private houses and businesses were destroyed in the City of Belfast, the vast majority by arson and an estimated 8,000 people were forced from their homes. Catholics at this time made up less than a quarter of the city’s population but constituted two-thirds of the dead and 80 per cent of the victims were Catholic men. The violence commenced with the expulsion from the Belfast shipyards of thousands of Catholic workers in July 1922 and over 450 people were killed over the next two years.

The IRA’s assassination of Colonel Smyth in Cork in July 1920 in the aftermath of the Listowel affair coincided with the return of Protestant workers to the Belfast shipyards following the traditional Orange celebrations in July. Violence began with the expulsion of Catholic workers from the Harland & Wolfe Shipyards, before spreading to other shipyards, mills and engineering firms. The expulsions were followed by attacks on Catholic homes by loyalist mobs in Lisburn, Banbridge and Belfast with thousands of Catholics burned out of their homes.

The American Commission on Conditions in Ireland

The brutality of the British campaign in Ireland, forewarned in Smyth's speech and subsequently denied in the House of Commons, provoked outrage in the Irish-American community and a so-called 'Committee of One Hundred', representing concerned US citizens formed the 'American Committee on Conditions in Ireland' in late 1920.

The five person committee contained two powerful US senators, Republican senator for Nebraska, George W. Norris and Democratic senator and former Governor of Massachusetts, David I. Walsh. The Committee called witnesses from across Ireland to testify in public hearings held before the press in Washington DC and elsewhere between November 1920 and January 1921, and subsequently published their testimony and findings. Among the witnesses who travelled to share their experiences were Mary and Muriel MacSwiney, the widow and sister respectively of the late Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, who died on hunger strike in Brixton Prison on 25 October 1920. Two former members of the RIC who took part in the police mutiny at Listowel, Michael Kelly and John McNamara, travelled to the United States to give evidence in front of the Committee. The committee subsequently concluded:

In spite of these difficulties and with the Imperial British Government ceaselessly attempting to terrorise the people and to paralyse the social and economic life of the country the Irish Republican Government appears, in the light of voluminous and consistent testimony, to be definitely holding its own and establishing its right to be considered the only working government in Ireland outside the region around Belfast.

3

REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND, 1920~1922

Day after day, nay hour after hour, the sad tale of murder, lawlessness, disorder and outrage keeps mounting up.

Tuam Herald, 24 July 1920

Working for the Republican Government

In the summer of 1920, as the War of Independence escalated and the violence of the Black and Tans spiraled out of control, Jeremiah Mee, resigned from the police and publicly associated with the RIC mutiny, found himself out of a job. With his name prominently reported in the national media, he travelled to Dublin to be interviewed for a position in the Labour Department of Dáil Éireann – then illegal – under the direction of Countess Markievicz, where he would be employed from July 1920 until April 1922. He shared an office with the countess and his initial role involved countering British propaganda while assisting policemen leave the force. In 1937 he recalled his first experience of the revolutionary government:

At that interview I offered my services to the Old Dáil in any capacity I might be of most use, and I was appointed for propaganda work in the Department of Labour of which Madam Markievicz was then Minister. At that time the resignations of members of the old RIC was considered of paramount importance since without their assistance the British forces would be more or less non-affective [sic]. To encourage resignations on a large scale from the Police Force a special Labour Bureau was set up over which I was placed in charge. This was a counter move to British

propaganda at that time which had tried to prevent resignations by (a) anti-Sinn Féin propaganda (b) rapid promotions (c) increase of 14 shillings per week in the pay of each member of the Police Force. They were told that men who resigned were allowed to starve and could get no work, etc, etc.

I sent out circulars to almost every police barracks in Ireland countering this propaganda and appealing to the men to throw in their lot with the National Movement. Our Bureau was instrumental in finding work for a large number of resigned men and the fact that in the face of all the British propaganda, with their increase in salary and offers of rapid promotion, over 1,200 men left the force. This was in no small measure due to my activities while in charge of that department. (MSP34REF48927)

Mee enjoyed a warm relationship with the Countess, however, his relationship with Michael Collins was less close, as he later recalled:

It was three years later, at a meeting in Sligo, that the Countess told me of how I came to be employed in her office. She said that after our first meeting at the Labour Party's offices, Collins and herself had an argument on the question as to whether I could be trusted. She said that Collins looked upon me as a dangerous man while she held that I was alright and that she trusted me. To prove her point, she decided to take me into her own office and that, if I proved to be a "wrong one", she herself would do the shooting. (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

Mee's new role initially involved placing dissatisfied police in contact with IRA intelligence so the Volunteers could make the best use of RIC who wanted to support the independence struggle. He explained the process in 1950:

As soon as I had made suitable contacts with men from the country who were anticipating resigning, I would supply the names to Michael Collins. Next time the IRA officers from that man's district would call at Republican headquarters, Collins would introduce me to the IRA officer to whom I would give a note of introduction to the RIC man concerned.

In this way, direct contact was made between the local IRA and officer and the friendly RIC man and dangerous correspondence was avoided. (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

Dispatched to England, November - December 1920

Despite Collins' initial doubts, he soon learned to trust Mee and dispatched him to London with instructions for his agents in the Irish community between November and December 1920. The first convention of the Irish National Self-Determination League of Great Britain was to take place on 23 November 1920 and Collins had urgent instructions for Sean McGrath and other republican organisers in England. This convention was held in Salford, Manchester. The League was founded by Irish emigrants in the United Kingdom in 1919 to generate support for the independence struggle and was important in promoting Ireland's claim for independence internationally. Mee was dispatched to the conference to highlight the role of the RIC in the British government's campaign in Ireland and generate support for policemen willing to resign. Mee later wrote 'In the light of my experience as an Irish policeman the whole thing seemed very unreal.' (Mee, p. 163)

The conference lasted four days and gave Mee the opportunity to put his case to trade unionists, international sympathisers and British supporters of the Irish cause. Over the course of the next few weeks, he was dispatched to cities across Britain, including Liverpool, Cardiff, Middlesbrough, Leeds, Birmingham, Chester, Newcastle and Swansea, making contacts among the Irish community. A key aspect of his campaign involved seeking alternative positions for ex-policemen in the UK for those who were willing to resign from the RIC. The League's founders, Sean McGrath and Art O'Brien, were subsequently imprisoned and the movement was suppressed.

The Black and Tans in North Galway

While Mee was relocated to Dublin, the campaign of violence described by Colonel Smyth at Listowel was fast becoming a reality across Ireland. The

Crown Forces campaign in Galway commenced with the burning of Tuam on 19 July 1920, following an IRA attack at Gallagher Hill led by Michael Moran of the North Galway Brigade, in which two RIC were killed. Pubs and shops were looted on the night of the ambush and houses and business attacked in the Square, Shop Street, High Street and the Dublin Road, with the Town Hall and the Temperance Library among the buildings burned. The *Tuam Herald* noted 'Never before in the chequered history of this ever distracted country did things look so bad, was the prospect so gloomy and was the outlook as disheartening, as it is at this moment. Day after day, nay hour after hour, the sad tale of murder, lawlessness, disorder and outrage keeps mounting up.'

A campaign of assassination of republican officers across Galway commenced in late 1920. In the north of the county, Volunteer John O'Hanlon, Turloughmore, was killed by Crown Forces at his home on 2 October 1920. Michael Moran, Carramoneen, Tuam, was shot dead in police custody at Earl's Island in Galway City on 24 November 1920. He led the north Galway Volunteers since their inception and organised attacks on the RIC at Castlehacket on 10 January, Castlegrove on 26 March and Gallagher Hill on 19 July 1920.

The opening months of 1921 saw a series of shootings by the Black and Tans in North Galway, with the victims killed for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The year commenced with the death of Michael Mullens, Moylough, while in the custody of the Crown Forces in the Town Hall, Galway, on New Year's Day 1920. He played senior football for Galway and had been picked up by police on his family farm the previous month.

The Black and Tans regularly targeted the civilian population in North Galway in reprisal for ambushes carried out by the Volunteers on the police. On 19 January 1921, the Volunteers ambushed a convoy of Auxiliaries at Kilroe, four miles from Headford, and over the following days, Crown Forces killed four young men in the district. At Keelkill, Headford, Black and Tans shot dead Thomas Collins, aged 21. At Clydagh, Headford, William Walsh, aged 30, was taken from his kitchen and shot dead. An hour

later, Michael Hoade, Cahernaheeny, Headford, was taken from his house, beaten and shot. James Kirwan, Ballinastack, was shot dead after Crown Forces chased him through the fields.

The Archbishop of Tuam, Dr Gilmartin, was highly critical of both the Volunteers and the Crown Forces but made his opinion of the violence of the Black and Tans clear in a New Year's homily, "I protest as Archbishop against the barbarous treatment of my people, and pray that God may protect them from any recurrence of such a terrible ordeal." (*Tuam Herald*, 29 Jan. 1921).

The violence of the Black and Tans in north Galway continued unabated and on 3 March 1921, Thomas Mullen, aged 29, of Killavoher, Clonberne, was arrested, beaten and shot dead. The Glenamaddy Parish Hall was burned by Crown Forces in March and the *Connacht Tribune* reported that the 'Crown Forces searched extensively throughout Dunmore, Glenamaddy, Clonberne, Williamstown and Kilkerrin have been visited by Auxiliaries who searched and interrogated every man they came across. On Sunday the people leaving the Chapels in some of these places were surrounded and terrified.' (*Connacht Tribune*, 5 March 1921) On 24 March, Louis Darcy, a republican officer from Clydagh, Headford, was taken from the train at Oranmore and killed in police custody. On 30 April, Patrick Molloy, was seized by Crown Forces at Kilroe and shot dead. On 20 May, a chemist, Patrick McKeever, was taken from his lodgings in the town of Dunmore and shot dead.

The Belfast Boycott

While the campaign of the Crown Forces was intensifying in Galway, events in Belfast escalated drastically in the summer of 1920. The expulsion of Catholics from the Belfast shipyards that commenced in July 1920 was followed by the burning of Catholic districts of the city and the deaths of over two hundred people, most of whom were Catholics, provoking outrage across Ireland. The collusion of the Ulster Special Constabulary, particularly the B Specials, in attacks on the Catholic community contributed to calls for

an economic boycott of the new Northern state that was to become known as the Belfast Boycott.

Jeremiah Mee was transferred to the Dáil Éireann department responsible for the Belfast Boycott, which involved applying pressure, and frequently intimidation, on traders not to handle produce from Belfast. Mee's work took him to counties across the Mid-West including Fermanagh, Meath, Tyrone, Derry, Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim, organising public meetings, distributing information and highlighting the violence being inflicted upon the Catholic community. He recalled Derry City during the July marching season 'And sometimes, with the wind blowing from the Bogside towards the walls, clouds of smoke and soot darkened the heavens and made the city an inferno of roaring drums and choking smoke.' (Mee, p. 186)

As many retailers were unwilling to comply without the intervention of the local Volunteer Company, the Volunteers frequently seized goods from merchants and from trains, burning them in public view. Mee travelled throughout the Northern state during this period of unprecedented upheaval, posing as a commercial traveller under the alias William Walsh:

My work consisted in (a) forming branches of the Belfast Boycott in the various districts (b) arranging for the hold up of trains and the destruction of Belfast goods in the course of transit (c) raiding the houses of offenders who refused to comply with Belfast Boycott instructions (d) boycotting Ulster and Northern Banks (e) imposing and collecting fines on offenders for breaches of the Belfast Boycott. (MSP34REF48927)

Along with organising the boycott, Mee's role involved the gathering of intelligence for Volunteer GHQ and in this respect his contacts in the RIC were important for gaining information. In his Bureau of Military Witness Statement he recalled:

As I had already made many contacts with the RIC men while in the Country, I was now given an opportunity to continue this work in the country. I found, however, that this was not nearly so easy as I had anticipated. In the first place, the police and people in the towns and

country districts were not on friendly terms with each other, and as the RIC generally moved about in groups of five or six, it was not an easy matter to contact a friendly individual. (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

Enforcing the boycott often involved imposing the Volunteers' judgment on recalcitrant traders but Mee also needed to ensure that theft and looting did not take place under the guise of the campaign. While based in Derry City he recalled: 'As our organisation became perfected, heavy fines were imposed for non observance ... many traders had to pay these fines or lose their trade, as nobody dared go into a shop which was under IRA ban.' 'The holding up of trains and the burning of Belfast goods in transit could have given rise to looting on the part of the raiders. It speaks well for those who were involved in such operations that in the eight counties which I organised there was only one charge of looting, and on investigation, that was proved to be without foundation.' (Mee, p. 189)

Mee Home Burned in Glenamaddy

The Belfast boycott came to an end during the slide into Civil War in the early months of 1922 as the Dáil Éireann Department of Labour became fractured by political division. Mee's activities had brought him unprecedented interest from the police, however, already eager for an excuse to exact retribution for events in Listowel and his subsequent activities, retribution was visited upon his family home as Mee recalled:

In the early Spring of 1921, while I was going about openly as an organiser of the Belfast Boycott and helping to "spread sedition among his Majesty's forces", my father's home was burned by the military and police. At two o'clock one morning lorry loads of military and police called at my father's house, and without knocking, burst open the door and dragged my father and mother and my two sisters, seventeen and nineteen years of age respectively, out of their beds. They were put up against the wall outside the house in their night attire while the house, out houses, hay, oats and stock were put to the flames. My father was threatened with instant death unless he disclosed my address. This, of

course, was an outrageous demand, since he could not give my address at that particular period.

When my father's home was put to the flames, he had committed the horrible crime of refusing to hand over his son to the murder gang, Colonel Smyth's instructions to the police in Listowel were: "Throw them in the gutter and let them die there." Now the instructions came home to me in real earnest. As the British troops on that chilly morning turned away from the ruins and saw the half-naked old couple and their two young daughters weeping over the ashes of their home, they must have experienced a thrill of pride in the power of the great British Empire. (BMH/WS, 379; Mee)

4

JEREMIAH MEE

LATER LIFE & FAMILY

At heart, Dad was a private man who was always reluctant to speak or write publicly either about immediate family or his relationships with close friends of whom there were many.

Teresa Mee, on her father Jeremiah, 2020

The Irish White Cross

With the Dáil Éireann department in charge of organising the Belfast Boycott wound up, Mee was appointed to a position in the Irish White Cross in February 1922. The White Cross was a charitable organisation that raised and distributed financial support to the families of prisoners and those killed during the independence struggle. The organisation raised millions of dollars in the United States and distributed it to needy families, widows, children and dependants of prisoners, as well of those whose homes and properties were destroyed. In terms of financial aid, £12,410 was distributed in relief in Galway alone up to 31 August 1922 and a further £18,345 was distributed for reconstruction in Galway during this short period. (White Cross, Annual Report 1922) Many millions more would be dispersed by the White Cross throughout Ireland during and after the Civil War for the support of widows, the education for the children whose fathers were killed, and the rebuilding of homes and property. Mee remained neutral during the conflict, despite strong republican sympathies, but perhaps because of his association with the White Cross he was interned by the new state between July and August 1922.



Jeremiah and Annie Mee with five of their six children at their home in Strandhill, Sligo, in the early 1930s: Eileen, b. 1922; Kathleen, b. 1924; John, b. 1925; Margaret b. 1928; Teresa, b. 1930.

Later Life & Family

Remarkably, Jeremiah Mee married almost two months to the day after the beginning of the Listowel Mutiny, on 16 August 1920. His wife, Annie O'Rourke, whom he had met while stationed at Ballintogher, Co. Sligo, was from Dromahair, Co. Leitrim. Their daughter Teresa recalled 'Following the pain of the Civil War, and a period of unsatisfying work as an oil depot supervisor in Sligo, Dad – with Mum's support – obtained an appointment in 1932 as an employment insurance inspector for Counties Westmeath and Longford at the Department of Local Government and Public Health.'

Jeremiah and Annie went on to have six children: Eileen, Kathleen, John, Peggy, Teresa and Joe. Teresa Mee recalled 'Both Mum and Dad were determined that we all should have a chance at gaining a solid academic education if possible. They saw education as the best way to help their children – especially the girls – broaden their choices and opportunities in life. In this they succeeded. Each of us attained third level or training qualifications and all were, thanks to our parents, able to pursue professional careers and vocations of our choosing.'

Eileen (1922–2010) became a teacher and lived in Dublin after graduating from Trinity College. Kathleen (1924–2010) worked for a time in the forties in the GPO on O'Connell St, before securing a position in the Department of Education. A UCD graduate, she spent several years teaching in Zambia before returning to Ireland in the late 1970s. John (1925–2007) became a dentist, worked for a time in England before establishing a practice in Belfast in the late 1950s. He was active in the Civil Rights movement in the six counties. He was heavily involved in 'Ballymurphy Enterprises' in the early 70s – an attempt to establish a local co-operative in a heavily deprived area in military occupied West Belfast. Peggy (1928–1974) did secretarial work in London for a period in the 1950s before marrying Mike Cook and settling down in London from 1960.

Teresa (b. 1930) left Ireland in 1951 to join the Society of Holy Child Jesus in England. A graduate of UCD, she taught in Ireland and England

before going on mission to Nigeria for over 20 years. She subsequently spent ten years working in shanty towns in Brazil before returning to Ireland. She has published extensively on her experiences, her belief in Church renewal and liberation theology. She was also active in Ireland in campaigns against clerical abuse of children. Teresa is now retired and has been living in a convent care home in England since 2018.

Jeremiah Joseph 'Joe' (1930–2016) had a varied career and was briefly a farmer, accountant, steeplejack, decorator and road worker before finally settling on dentistry, having trained at the Royal College of Surgeons. He moved to live in London in 1966, eventually establishing several successful practices in England. In the 1980s he was instrumental in the launch of the Sick Dentists Scheme which sought to provide help and counselling to dentists struggling with addiction, stress or other personal problems.

Mee's wife, Annie, died unexpectedly in 1948 at the age of just 52, shortly after the family moved to Dublin. Teresa recalled 'Dad was devastated by her loss and never fully recovered from it, coming as it did in the same decade as the death of his father, mother and beloved sister, Norah, who was only 34. He continued, though, to work as an employment insurance inspector. It was around this time that he began writing his memoirs and started lobbying various Irish governments to provide many former RIC colleagues with proper pensions.' Following a short illness, Jeremiah Mee died in Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital in Dublin on 8 May 1953 and Annie and Jeremiah are buried together in Glasnevin Cemetery.



Jeremiah and Anne Mee:
Anne was originally from
Dromahair, Co. Leitrim
and the couple met when
Jeremiah was stationed
in Sligo and married two
months after the police
mutiny in August 1920.



Jeremiah Mee with his daughter Kathleen and his youngest daughter, Teresa (wearing habit) who joined the Society of Holy Child Jesus in England and worked among the poor in Nigeria and Brazil for many decades.

5

CONCLUSION: DEFYING TERROR

Jeremiah Mee and his police colleagues preformed a singular act of personal courage and patriotism in June 1920 by refusing to serve alongside the British military. By publicly exposing the violent intentions of the British administration in Ireland and distributing the notorious speech made by Colonel Smyth, the contempt of the Crown forces for the aspirations of ordinary Irish people and the sanctioning of murder by Dublin Castle was exposed.

The actions of Mee and the Listowel garrison showed there were many ways to serve one's country and the Crown Forces lost significant intelligence and support. The violence inflicted across Galway by the Crown Forces could not prevent a generation of young men and women from defying terror and serving their community in the most trying of circumstances. Such commitment to their neighbours and families exemplified the most positive aspects of a generation that endured an intense burden in defence of their country. Mee's obituary in the Irish Press noted:

Mr Mee was a man of many parts, played so equally well, that one could not share half enough of his brilliant conversation, his sharp wit, and his perpetual smile, which melted into rich laughter at the slightest provocation. As an author, he wrote much, in a natural style, of his many exploits during service with the RIC, particularly of his mutiny at Listowel, which helped, as he had wished, to educate the younger generation on many points on Irish History. (Irish Press, 12 May 1953).

FURTHER READING

Resources for Galway Heritage

The heritage and history of diverse communities across County Galway are explored in detail on the Galway Community Heritage website produced by Galway County Council and can be found at **Galwaycommunityheritage.org**. Galway Community Heritage is an online archive for communities in County Galway. Volunteers from across Galway have developed the site to showcase the history and heritage of their local area and people, both past and present. The site is continually updated and community groups and individuals are encouraged to contact the site and offer to contribute with material from their own locality. The history and heritage of the Glenamaddy district have been extensively chronicled on the website **www.glenamaddyheritage.com** which contains insightful articles and images on a range of historical topics.

Published Sources

Jeremiah Mee wrote his personal reminiscences in later life and these were subsequently published by Fr J. Anthony Gaughan in 1975. *The Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee RIC*, was re-published in paperback by Mercier Press in 2012. The book is based on Mee's memoir that was subsequently deposited with the Garda Museum in Dublin Castle. The book includes a lengthy appendix giving details of important events connected to Mee's life.

Cork historian Jim Herlihy has published several books on the history of the RIC including, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: A Short History and Genealogical Guide with a Select List of Medal Awards and Casualties* (Dublin, 1997) and *Royal Irish Constabulary Officers, a Biographical Dictionary and Genealogical Guide, 1816–1922* (Dublin, 2005). The history of landlordism in North Galway is discussed in detail by Patrick Melvin in *Estates and Landed Society in Galway*. (Dublin, 2012).

Events during the independence struggle in Galway are discussed in detail in the following publications:

Jarlath Deignan, *Troubled Times: War and Rebellion in North Galway, 1913–23* (Galway, 2019).

William Henry, *Blood for Blood, The Black and Tan War in Galway* (Mercier Press, 2001).

Tomás Kenny, *Galway, Politics and Society, 1910–23* (Four Courts Press, 2011).

Conor McNamara, *War & Revolution in the West of Ireland: Galway 1913–22* (Irish Academic Press, 2018).

Cormac Ó Comhraí, *Sa Bhearna Bhaoil Gaillimh 1913–1923* (Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2016).

Cormac O'Malley & Cormac Ó Comhraí (eds), *The Men Will Talk to Me: Galway Interviews by Ernie O'Malley* (Mercier Press, 2013).

Manuscript and Archival Sources

In 1935 Jeremiah Mee applied for a Military Service Pension and his application is available to download online on the website of the Military Archives (File MSP34REF48927). These files contain personal details of his activities during the period and has been quoted extensively in this publication.

The National Library of Ireland holds several manuscripts pertaining to the events described in this publication including:

Copies of a statement by Jeremiah Mee to an unnamed priest about the incident at Listowel RIC Barracks where the Divisional Commissioner, Gerald Smyth, gave permission to the police to shoot suspects, 18 June 1920. (NLI, MS 48,066/6)

Typescript of statements by John P. McNamara and Michael Kelly concerning the Listowel RIC mutiny in June-July 1920. (NLI, N.6312, P.7153)

Newspaper cuttings from Reynolds News of 'Mutiny in Listowel' by Jeremiah Mee, 1951 Dec. 2 - 1952 Jan. 6. (NLI, MS 31,470)

The Irish Volunteers, North-East Galway

Mee made a statement concerning his activities to the Bureau of Military History in 1950 and his account (BMH/WS, 379) is available to download from their website. This site contains the testimonies of a number of Volunteers from the Glenamaddy district, some of whom have been quoted in this publication, including those of Patrick Treacy (BMH/WS, 1,425) and Martin Ryan (BMH/WS, 1,417). Other statements that refer to events in Glenamaddy in detail include those of John McCormack, Kilconly (BMH/WS, 1,400); Thomas Mannion, Dunmore (BMH/WS, 1,408); Roger Rabbitte, Dunmore (BMH/WS, 1,490); Thomas Nohilly, Tuam (BMH/WS, 1,437) and Patrick Dunleavy, Barnaderg (BMH/WS, 1,489)

Details of the membership of the Volunteers in the Glenamaddy Battalion and the North Galway Flying Column, reproduced in the Appendix of this publication, are available on the website of the Military Archives. These lists were compiled in 1935 by the Military Service Pension Department for the purpose of verifying membership of every Volunteer Company of Ireland. These lists can be downloaded from the Brigade Activity Reports section. (File MA/MSPC/RO/240)

APPENDIX

1

The Volunteers of the Glenamaddy Company, July 1921

This list was compiled in 1935 by the Military Service Pension Department for the purpose of verifying membership of every Volunteer Company of Ireland. The original list can be downloaded online from the website of the Military Archives (File MA/MSPC/RO/240)

Pat Treacy, Kiltullagh, captained the Company, with Frank Mahon, Clooncon East, and Jack Jeffers, Shannagh, serving as Lieutenants.

William Collins (Later US)	Michael Collins, Ballinapeaka	John Collins, Stonepark
Martin Concagh, Kilsallagh	John Concannon, Glenamaddy	Paddy Coyne, Ballinastack
Michael Donlon, Stonetown	John Donlon, Glenamaddy	Jim Dolon, Esker
Tom Egan, Middletown	Michael Fahy, Clooncon	Tom Fahy, Classaghroe
Paddy Featherstone (later USA)	John Finneran, Cloonlara	John Gannon, Castle
Michael Geraghty, Glenamaddy	Jim Geraghty (later USA)	David Geraghty, Clooncon
Frank Geraghty, Glenamaddy	Martin Gilligan, Esker	Paddy Glynn, Glenamaddy
Tom Glynn, Glenamaddy	Ned Higgins, Cloonlara	Jack Jeffers, Shannagh
Pat Jeffers, Glenamaddy	John Keane, Stonetown	Michael Keaveny, Stonetown
Michael Keaveny, Clooncon	Tom Keaveny, Clooncon	John Keaveny, Cloonminda

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Malachai Keaveny, Cloonminda	Tom Kenny, Ardeevin	Tom Kirrane, Cloonminda
William Mee, Loughpark	Frank Mahon (later USA)	John Mahon, Clooncon
Peter Moore, Classaghroe	Ned Moore, Esker	Martin Murphy, Stonetown
Pat O'Keefe, Shannagh	John Raftery, Ballyhard	Jack Rattigan, Shannagh Beg
Pat Timothy, Cloonlara North	Pat Treacy, Kiltullagh	John Walsh, Glenamaddy

APPENDIX

2

Officers of the Glenamaddy Battalion, Irish Volunteers, July 1921

This list was compiled in 1935 by the Military Service Pension Department for the purpose of verifying membership of every Volunteer Company of Ireland. The original list can be downloaded online from the website of the Military Archives. (File MA/MSPC/RO240)

Officers of the Glenamaddy Battalion, Irish Republican Army, July 1921

Officer Commanding: Seamus Moloney, Glenamaddy; Vice-Officer Commanding: Martin Ryan, Kilcroan, Ballymoe; Adjutant: Martin Mannion, Brackloon, Dunmore; Quartermaster: John Knight, Glenamaddy; Intelligence Officer: Martin Walsh, Dunmore.

A Company Dunmore: Captain Thomas Mannion, Kilavoher, Dunmore; 1st Lieutenant Joseph Tracey, Castlefarm, Dunmore; 2nd Lieutenant Martin Gannon, Ballintice, Dunmore. (62 Volunteers)

B Company Kiltvna: Captain Roger Rabbitte, Lissyconor; 1st Lieutenant Michael Mannion, Attyflynn, Dunmore; 2nd Lieutenant John Costello. (16 Volunteers)

C Company Williamstown: Captain Patrick Noonan; 1st Lieutenant James Tarmey, Moneen, Williamstown. (19 Volunteers)

D Company Kilcroan: Captain John Hanley, Trainboy, Ballymoe; 1st Lieutenant John Burke, Kilsallagh, Williamstown; 2nd Lieutenant Michael O'Brien, Kilsallagh, Williamstown. (42 Volunteers)

E Company Glinsk: Captain Thomas Burke, Ussey Ballymoe; 1st Lieutenant John Lally, Cloonminda, Williamstown; 2nd Lieutenant John McDonnell, Glinsk. (63 Volunteers)

F Company Kilbegnet: Captain John McDonagh, Kilbegnet, Glinsk; 1st Lieutenant Thomas Lohan, Kilbegnet; 2nd Lieutenant James Keane, Kilbegnet. (37 Volunteers)

G Company Kilkerrin: Captain Bryan Cunniffe, Timacat, Kilkerrin; 1st Lieutenant Peter Collins, Ballaghduff, Kilkerrin; 2nd Lieutenant, Michael Naughton, Milltown. (48 Volunteers)

H Company Clonberne: John Mahon, Timoduane, Clonberne; 1st Lieutenant John Geraghty, Cloongownagh, Lavally; 2nd Lieutenant Larry Lowrey, Mahanagh, Clonberne. (20 Volunteers)

I Company Glenamaddy: Captain Pat Treacy, Kiltullagh, Glenamaddy; 1st Lieutenant Frank Mahon, Englishtown; 2nd Lieutenant John Jeffers, Shannagh Mor, Glenamaddy. (48 Volunteers)

J Company Polredmond: Captain John Glennon, Kilkerrin; 1st Lieutenant Michael Quinn, Kildaree, Williamstown; 2nd Lieutenant David Geraghty, Kildaree, Williamstown.

APPENDIX

3

The North Galway Flying Column, Irish Volunteers, July 1921

This list was compiled in 1935 by the Military Service Pension Department for the purpose of verifying membership of every Volunteer Company of Ireland. The original list can be downloaded online from the website of the Military Archives (File RO 240A)

North Galway Flying Column, 1921

The North Galway Flying Column was formed in early 1921 in north-east Galway and was composed of young men on the run from their homes in Milltown, Glenamaddy, Barnaderg, Dunmore, Kilkerrin and neighbouring districts. Commanded by Patrick Dunleavy from Barnaderg, the column was involved in several lethal engagements with Crown Forces, including at Moylough on 5 June and Milltown on 27 June 1921.

Members of the North Galway Flying Column: Commanded by Patrick Dunleavy (Barnaderg); James Moloney (Glenamaddy); Tim and Thomas Dunleavy (Barnaderg); Martin Ryan (Glenamaddy); Thomas Tarmay; Paddy Conway (Caherlistrane); Thomas and Martin Mannion (Dunmore); Thomas Feerick (Milltown); Brian Cunniffe (Kilkerrin); Patrick Treacy (Glenamaddy); Thomas Nohilly (Corofin); Thomas Ryan (Tuam); Jack Knight (Glenamaddy); Peter Brennan (Milltown); Patrick Noonan (Williamstown); Patrick McHugh (Sylane).

CONOR MCNAMARA

Dr Conor McNamara has written extensively about the history of the West of Ireland and the Irish revolution. He has won numerous national awards for his work, including the National Library of Ireland, History Fellowship (2011) and was appointed the NUI Galway, 1916 Rebellion, Historian-in-Residence in 2015. He is the author of a number of studies of post-Famine Ireland, including *War and Revolution in the West of Ireland, Galway 1913~22* (Irish Academic Press, 2018) and *Liam Mellows, Soldier of the Irish Republic, Collected Writings, 1913~22* (Irish Academic Press, 2019). He contributed several chapters to the award winning, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* published by Cork University Press in 2017. In 2015 his photographic history of the 1916 Rebellion, *Easter Rebellion 1916, A New Illustrated History*, published by Collins Press was a best seller. He has taught history at NUI Galway and the University of Minnesota, Dublin Centre, and was senior researcher at the University of Notre Dame, Keogh-Naughton Centre for Irish Studies. He is originally from Athenry, Co. Galway and lives in New York.



DEFYING TERROR

Jeremiah Mee, Glenamaddy
and the Listowel Mutiny, 1920

CONOR McNAMARA

“If a police barracks is burned, or if the barracks already occupied is not suitable, then the best house in the locality is to be commandeered, the occupants thrown in the gutter. Let him die there, the more the merrier.”

Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald Smyth,
RIC Divisional Commissioner for Munster, Listowel, 18 June 1920



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



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



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