



Patrick Loughnane  
Shanaglish  
1871 - 1920



Harry Loughnane  
Shanaglish  
1899 - 1920



Michael Kelly  
Killeen  
11/1800 - 20/1922  
Resting where no shadows fall



Seán O'Halloran  
Crusheen, Co. Clare  
1891 - 1922

Photos from memorial cards of the Loughnane brothers and local Volunteers Michael Kelly and Seán Ó Halloran which hang in the restored Loughnane Forge, Shanaglish.

# BODIES LOCATED

Searches were organised across the south of the County following the men's disappearance but for nine days no trace of them could be found. Mrs Katie Loughnane and her daughter Nora, made extensive enquiries with the police and Auxiliaries at Gort Barracks, Eglinton Street Barracks in Galway, at Galway Gaol and at the barracks of the 17th Lancers at Earls Island, Galway, but could get no news. On 4 December, the commanding officer of the Auxiliaries at Earl's Island told Nora Loughnane that the brothers had been arrested with a group of other prisoners but that 'eight escaped that night; one was re-arrested and no trace had been found of the others who were supposed to be running south.' Henry O'Mara recalled Nora's persistence: 'She went from the military to the police. From neither did she get help nor sympathy. Back then she went to the people again. They could not continue to resist the appeal of such a pathetic figure; discretion and fear were cast aside; the silence was broken and bit by bit this story was unfolded.'

Late on the 4th December, the bodies of the two men were located by a cousin of the family, Michael Loughnane, in a pool of water at Umbriste, near the village of Kinvara. Michael Loughnane had been severally affected by his cousins disappearance and later stated that he saw the location of the bodies in a vision after praying to the Sacred Heart. Upon discovering the

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remains, Loughnane and Michael and Willie Hynes of Kinvara proceeded to Kinvara where they contacted the local IRA who rushed to the scene and removed the bodies to the village. Michael Hynes later recalled his scepticism about Michael Loughnane's vision 'I thought Tully [Loughnane's nickname] was daft but I told him to go and have a look in the pond and then come back to us. He was back in quick time, with a frightened look in his eyes, to tell us that some things like burned bodies were there under the water which was covered with filthy oil.' Volunteer Joseph Stanford recalled the news of the finding of the bodies:

When word was brought to Gort that the bodies had been found, Dan Ryan, Pat Glynn, John Coen, Jack Flaherty and myself went to the parish priest of Shanaglish and asked him for leave to mark out a republican plot in the new cemetery there. The request was readily granted. So we prepared and made their grave, waiting in a nearby wood to receive their remains. In spite of the reign of terror at the time, the funeral was one of the largest possible and showed that their deaths had only stiffened the people into greater resistance. (Joe Stanford, BMH/WS; 1,334).

The *Connacht Tribune* provided a lengthy account of the state of the brothers' remains:

When the bodies were lifted from the pool they were hardly recognisable and the spectacle that presented itself to the searchers was gruesome in the extreme. The remains are said to have been charred and blackened. Portions of the skull were missing. Nothing was found but a piece of Harry's boots. The remainder of his clothes were missing. Immediately Harry's remains were lifted out of the water blood began to ooze from the side, and the corpse it is stated, continued to bleed all the way to Kinvara, when the bodies were taken on Sunday. (*Connacht Tribune*, 11 Dec. 1920)

The bodies were wrapped in linen cloths in Hyne's Barn at Kinvara while coffins were procured, before being brought to Kinvara Church and then on to Shanaglish. Their republican comrade Robert Glynn remembered 'It was a sight that I'll never forget the longest day that I live.' Pádraig Ó Fathaigh recalled that throughout the ordeal Nora Loughnane, who had led the search for answers to her brothers' fate 'bore the trying ordeal with spartan heroism' The discovery of the remains created a sensation and Ó Fathaigh recalled crowds flocked to pray at the remains and 'hundreds dipped their handkerchiefs in the martyr's blood which they treasured highly.'

In order that the terrible injuries inflicted on the brothers be accurately recorded, a local school teacher, Tomás O h-Eighin took the now infamous photos of the bothers remains in their coffins so that there could be no doubting or denying the horrors inflicted on them. Lady Gregory of Cool Park recorded the events in her diary, noting on 7 December that one who had seen the bodies remarked 'It will never be known the way they died. There is no one dare ask a question. But the work that is being done will never be forgotten in Ireland.'

At Shanaglish, Church the coffins were draped in the national colours and Fr John Nagle, Shanaglish and Fr John Garvin, Tubber, conducted prayers in advance of the men's funeral, which drew immense crowds to the quiet village. Before the ceremony commenced several Auxiliary officers arrived into the grief stricken Church and demanded to view the bodies, which, due to the horrific nature of their injuries, were sealed in closed caskets. The *Connacht Tribune* reported:

The coffins lay side by side in the little church, covered with floral wreaths, and guarded by a party of young men. As it is understood that the Crown Forces had directed that an inspection be made of the bodies, two or three young men unscrewed the coffin lids. "I have been through the African War," declared Father Nagle, "I have been everywhere that a soul required my services, and a worse



The infamous images of the brothers' bodies were taken to document the extent of the brutality inflicted by the Crown Forces.



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thing than this I never saw. Could you believe that such a thing could happen in the civilised world in the twentieth century.” One of the police stated “we are not responsible, and nobody regrets it more than the police.” Fr Nagle requested the military officer and police view the remains several times, and asked them “could you believe it?”

As the corpses were being carried out of the church on the shoulders of eight men, several women began to wail aloud. Even young men were seen to sob. In the vast multitudes that followed the coffins, scarcely an eye was dry. The funeral, about 200 yards long, consisting of vehicles of all descriptions, wended its way along the narrow road leading from the Church to the family burial ground at Shanaglish, a distance of about 200 yards. The coffins were then taken from the shoulders of the pall bearers and laid side by side in one grave by young men from surrounding parishes. The sides of the graves were covered with laurels.

On the grave being filled up and the green sods laid upon it, the vast concourse knelt down and offered up a prayer for the souls of the two dead men. When the prayers were finished three volleys were fired over the grave. (*Connacht Tribune*, 11 Dec. 1920)

# MILITARY INQUIRY

A military court of inquiry was held at Gort Barracks on 8 December by order of Brigadier J.G. Chaplin, commanding officer of the Galway Brigade, ostensibly to establish the events surrounding the killings. The court was presided over by Captain H.B. Turner of the 17th Lancers and comprised two other members, Captain D.E. Hearn, RAMC and Lieutenant R.B. McCreery, 17th Lancers. The inquiry was a sham, however, and took a matter of minutes to deal with seven witnesses who provided brief statements, with their testimony amounting to less than four pages of evidence. Rather being an effort to establish the truth about the killings, the inquiry sought merely to confirm the identity of the bodies and refused to investigate the role of the crown forces or challenge the fanciful version of events provided by the Auxiliaries. Fr John Nagle was prevented from giving evidence to the inquiry and Michael Loughnane only did so under duress.

Sergeant Michael Mooney of Gort was the first witness called and gave the court a brief statement to say that he was dispatched to Shanaglish on 7 December by Head Constable Somers to locate Michael Loughnane for the purpose of confirming that the bodies of the dead men had been found. He told the court 'I did everything possible to find him and asked the assistance of the inhabitants, but they were unwilling to assist me or

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give me any information as to his whereabouts.’

Dr Thomas J. Connolly, Gort, then testified that he was called upon by Nora Loughnane to examine the remains of her brothers on 5 December. Dr Connolly stated he did not know the men and could not confirm their identities but Nora assured him of their identity. He told the court that he found the bodies ‘lying in a barn about 200 yards from Kinvara. Both bodies were charred – one was completely unrecognisable, whilst in the case of the other, in my opinion it might just be possible to recognise the deceased. Both skulls were extensively fractured with laceration of the brain. There were no signs of gunshot wounds; and I was unable to determine by what means the injuries had been inflicted. In my opinion the deceased had been dead at least a week.’

Dr Sandys of Galway was then called to testify and stated he was called upon on 7 December by the Officer Commanding of the military at Gort to go to Shanaglish and view the bodies ‘with a view to a court on inquiry to be held on the next day.’ Lieutenant McCreery of the 17th Lancers accompanied Dr Sandys and they found the bodies lying out in the Shanaglish Church: ‘The Church was crowded and the prayers appeared to be going on. I told the priest, Father Nagle, that I had orders to view the bodies before interment and he caused the Church to be cleared.’ ‘The first body, said to be Patrick Loughnane, was unrecognisable. The skull was extensively fractured; and part was missing. The second body, said to be Harry Loughnane, might possibly be recognisable to relatives. The skull was extensively fractured but not so badly as in the case of the other skull – a portion of the face was left.’

Nora Loughnane was the next to testify and confirmed that the brothers were arrested by the Auxiliaries on 26 November and taken to Gort Barracks: ‘My mother enquired at the Gort Barracks and was told they had been taken away again. I enquired at the Eglington Barracks, at the Gaol, at Earls Island, Galway but could get no news of them. On December 4th, I went to Lenaboy, and interviewed the commanding officer of the Auxiliary Division. He told me that they had been arrested with twelve

others; Eight escaped that night; one was re-arrested and no trace had been found of the others who were supposed to be running south. He took my name and address and said he would enquire about them and let me know. I heard nothing more.'

Nora stated that she learned of the discovery of the bodies on 5 December and went to identify them in the barn at Kinvara to where they had been transported: 'I recognised both the bodies. They were badly charred, and the face of one was missing. The face of the other, Harry, remained from the mouth upwards. Both faces were black and burned. The skull of my eldest brother Patrick was missing. The back part of the skull of Harry was gone.'

Cadet C.W. Owen was one of three Auxiliaries to testify and stated that he was in charge of a party of Auxiliaries on 26 November 'rounding up some suspects or wanted persons' when they came upon the Loughnane brothers threshing corn in their yard. He arrested them and took them to Gort Barracks where they were briefly detained before being brought to Drumharsna Castle: 'Both Loughnanes were placed in detention in a room in the tower under an armed sentry. There were no other prisoners in the room. About 11 p.m. the same evening the sentry on duty reported to me that both prisoners had escaped. I immediately turned out all my men and searched the vicinity of the castle but could find no trace of them.' Owen stated that he reported the matter to his commanding officer in Galway the next day and was ordered to continue the search. He further stated that it was the intention to have the prisoners brought to Galway on the following day.

Cadet Laurenson of D Company Auxiliaries was the next to take the stand and testified that he was the armed sentry watching over the men when they 'fled' and gave what he claimed was an account of the men's 'escape': 'About 11 p.m. one of them requested to be allowed to go out for the purposes of nature. I took him out about 10 yards into the grounds just outside the door and as we reached the threshold I imagined I heard voices in the barn close by. The barn is twenty yards away and I left the prisoners and went over to investigate. I thought they might be some of his

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comrades come to rescue them. I found nothing and on my return found both prisoners had escaped. I was only away a minute. I didn't hear them escape. I immediately reported the matter to section leader Owen who organised a search party. I have not acted as sentry over prisoners before. I did not secure the door when I went out with one of the prisoners for the purposes of nature – nor when I went to investigate the noise in the barn.'

Next to appear before the court was Lieutenant-Colonel F.H.W. Guard, Commander of D Company based at Lenaboy Barracks, Galway, who gave the briefest of statements that added no information or took any responsibility for the actions of his men: 'It was reported to me that these two brothers had subsequently escaped from arrest and I issued orders to the detachment to return to the district and try and re-capture them.'

Michael Loughnane was the final witness to appear and he reluctantly issued a statement under duress having being initially unwilling to attend the inquiry. Captain Turner, who was presiding over the inquiry noted he was 'not forthcoming when the proceedings opened, put in an appearance subsequently and his depositions were taken.' Loughnane stated that he found the bodies 'on 4th December in a field about three miles the north side of Ardrahan. The bodies were visible from the field. I went and reported to Nora Loughnane.'

# JUSTICE DENIED

**T**he court of inquiry duly delivered its verdict without cross examining any of the witnesses or seeking any clarification of their testimonies and its verdict was inevitable: 'The court having carefully considered the evidence is of the opinion that the two bodies are those of Patrick and Harry Loughnane and that their death was due to extensive fractures of the skull with laceration of the brain caused by some means and persons unknown.' The judges did not refer at any point to the burning of the bodies, to allegations widely circulated that the letters IV (Irish Volunteers) had been carved into their flesh or how they received so many broken bones. The verdict prompted even the unionist *Irish Independent* to note that 'no light was thrown on the deaths by the evidence at the military inquiry'. (*Irish Independent*, 9 Dec. 1920)



1916-1923

ó

2016-2023



*Ag comóradh na daoine  
a fuair bás ar son  
na hÉireann ó 1916 - 1923*

*In memory of the people  
who died for Ireland  
from 1916 - 1923*

*Pat Loughnane  
Harry Loughnane  
Shanaglish*

*Michael Kelly  
Killeen*

*Seán O'Halloran  
Crusheen*

*Erected by  
Beagh I.R.D*

Martina Neilan Blackwell and Tony Diviney of Beagh RDA, at the monument to the patriot dead of the Beagh district erected for the Decade of Centenaries 2013-2023.

# DEATH CERTIFICATES

**T**here were further anomalies in the Loughnanes death certificates later registered by Dr Sandys. The certificates list Patrick's age as 38 and Harry's as 36, however, Patrick was 29 and Harry 22. There has often been confusion surrounding the men's ages, however, their birth certificates confirm their dates of birth as 24 January 1891 (Patrick) and 1 January 1898 (Harry). The cause of death is given as having been rendered by 'extensive fracture of the skull with laceration of the brain caused by means and persons unknown'; no mention of the extensive burns or other extensive injuries to the bodies is made. Finally, the death certificates were not registered until 17 June 1921, a full seven months after the killings.



LA BUIOIBE RO-NAOMHA IUA  
 DEAG TROCAIRE AR ADAMHACA  
 PADRAIG 7 DANRAOI UI LAE EADAIN  
 SEAN-BAOLAIS, GO NA TALLTAE  
 LAOCHA A FUAR BAS AR SON-DEIRE  
 26 DE IUI NA SAMHA, 1922  
 AGUS AR ANAM  
 MICHAEL UI CEALLAIS  
 LEAS-CEANN-CEATHNA  
 A FUAR BAS 2 DE MARCA, 1922.

R. I. P.

AG RI NA-AI SEATHI COMHA NIA-NEOVALAIS  
 NA MAR TA ACA SUO E FUI A-MEIRCEOAN NA A-NAISEABALIS

IN MEMORY OF  
 MICHAEL KELLY  
 KILLEEN, GORT.  
 01-01-1900 - 02-03-1922  
 BELOVED SON AND BROTHER  
 RESTING WHERE NO SHADOWS FALL  
 R. I. P.

The final resting place of the Loughnane brothers, Shanaglish.

# AFTERMATH: THE CROWN FORCES

**T**he three Auxiliary officers who gave evidence to the military inquiry into the killing of the Loughnanes faced no sanction by their superior officers and all were subsequently promoted before the Auxiliaries were disbanded in January 1922. Cadet Caradog Wyn Owen, who was in charge of the party of Auxiliaries who arrested the Loughnanes was from Caernarvon in North Wales. As well as being involved in the Loughnane tragedy, he was involved in the killing of another leading republican in Galway, Louis D'Arcy, who was killed in custody at Oranmore on 24 March 1921. In April 1921, Owen was promoted to platoon commander and later became an intelligence officer. He was discharged from the Auxiliaries upon their disbandment in January 1922 and died in Caernarvonshire in 1932.

Cadet V.P. Laurensen, who claimed to have been responsible for letting the Loughnanes 'escape', was a native of Natal in South Africa, his father, a Wicklow native, having emigrated to find work. He served with the Auxiliaries until he was discharged upon the disbandment of the force in January 1922 where upon he returned to his native South Africa and he died in Durban in 1927.

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Lieutenant-Colonel F.H.W. Guard, who gave evidence at the Military inquiry and was Officer Commanding D Company of the Auxiliaries based in Lenaboy Barracks, Galway was a native of Hampshire. He had worked in various jobs in Canada, London and Africa before joining the Hampshire Regiment in 1915, with whom he served on the Western Front. In April 1918, after receiving several promotions, he was posted to Russia where he remained until 1919. He only joined the Auxiliaries in October 1920, the month before the Loughnane killings, having been appointed vice-commander of D Company, however, he was almost immediately appointed to replace Major A.P. Nichol as commander of the Company, when the latter was dismissed for 'excess drinking'. Based in Lenaboy House, west of Galway City, Guard's tenure in charge of D Company saw many senior republicans killed in custody. He was personally guarding Michael Moran, the leader of the North Galway Brigade IRA, when he was shot at close range at Earls Island, Galway on 24 November, just two days before the disappearance of the Loughnanes. Why the most senior officer in the Company would be assigned guard duty over a prisoner is highly questionable and the military inquiry into Moran's death confirms Lieutenant-Colonel Guard as one of three officers responsible for Moran's death. Guard was subsequently transferred to the Auxiliaries Depot in Dublin in February 1921 with a glowing reference for his conduct in command in Galway. He transferred to the RAF upon demobilisation of the force in January 1922 and served in Iraq until 1925, and died of pneumonia in 1927.

Lieutenant R.B. McCreery, 17th Lancers, who was one of the three officers to preside over the court of inquiry into the killings of the Loughnanes and had inspected the bodies of the Loughnanes in Shanaglish Church. He was later killed by the South Galway Flying Column of the IRA at Ballyturn near Gort on 15 May 1921. The Ballyturn ambush was led by Daniel Ryan and took place at the residence of Captain Arthur Cecil Blake, the newly appointed District Inspector of RIC. The IRA column killed three Crown Forces in the attack, Captain Blake, along with Captain F.W. Cornwallis and Lieutenant McCreery of the Auxiliaries. Eliza Blake, the wife of the District Inspector, who was seated in the car next to the other victims was also killed in the hail of bullets.

## EPILOGUE

**F**or the people of Shanaglish, the horrors of what was done in their community left an indelible mark. Fr John Nagle died from a fall off his horse in which he sustained a compression of the skull just four months after the killing of the Loughnanes on St Patrick's Day, 1921, aged just 46. Of the three young men who found the bodies of the Loughnanes, both Michael Loughnane and Michael Hynes subsequently emigrated to the United States. Nora Loughnane, who had faced down the Auxiliaries in a bid to get to the truth about her brothers, later left the teaching profession and joined the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles Order. She served in England, France and Africa before returning to Ireland. Mrs Katie Loughnane, the mother of Patrick and Harry, lived on into old age at the family home and passed away on 7 November 1936 with her family by her bedside.



Above: The restored Loughnane family forge.  
Below: The grave of the Loughnane brothers, Shanaglish.





# THE LIFE & DEATH OF THE LOUGHNANE BROTHERS BEAGH, COUNTY GALWAY

CONOR McNAMARA

This book examines the killing of brothers Patrick and Harry Loughnane from the village of Shanaglish in the parish of Beagh, located on the Galway border with County Clare. The brothers were members of the local Volunteer Company and were killed on 26 November 1920 by the Auxiliaries following their arrest by the RIC. The brutality of the killings caused shock waves around Ireland at a time when communities were becoming accustomed to the wanton violence of the crown forces.



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,  
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Department of Tourism, Culture,  
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



2013-2023  
Deich mbliana Coimhneachán Chontae na Gaillimhe  
The County of Galway Decade of Commemorations

ISBN 9781913449070



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