

Kinvara Company 1916 - 2016

Eilish Kavanagh

To hallow or accurse the scenes of glory and honour, or of shame and sorrow; to give to the imagination the arms, and homes, and senates, and battles, of other days; to rouse, and soften, and strengthen, and enlarge us with the passions of great periods: to lead us into love of self-denial, of justice, of beauty, of valour, of generous life and proud death; and to set up in our souls the memory of great men, who shall then be as models and judges of our actions: these are the highest duties of history...¹

Thomas Davis

Introduction

It is far from straightforward to identify the individuals who were involved in the Kinvara Company and to ascertain what actually happened at the time of the 1916 Rising. This chapter presents a list of names obtained from witness statements, the Roll of Honour, pension applications and those mentioned in the *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*. Using all these resources, it then chronicles the events of Easter Week 1916 in Kinvara. Some people, like Thomas McNerney, enlisted in other companies but remained living in the area and played a significant role in their Rising. Others, like Fr John O'Meehan, the local priest and recruiter who played a pivotal role in the overall Galway Rising, subsequently died without leaving any account of their involvement, except by being mentioned in statements provided by others.

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1. Burke, (Jack) John, Cahermore.	11. Hanbury, Pat, Dungaiaire.	20. Kilkelly, Michael, Doorus.	28. Picker, (Jim) James, Cahernamaddra and Kinvara West.
2. Burke, Paddy, the Square.	12. Hanbury, John, Dungaiaire.	21. Kilkelly, (Mickela) Michael, Tawnagh and Doorus Demesne.	29. Quinn, Patrick, Tawnagh.
3. Burke, (Coisín) Patrick, Loughcurra.	13. Hanlon, David, Loughcurra.	22. Kilkelly, Pdraig, Tawnagh and Doorus Demesne.	30. Quinn, William, Caherawoneen.
4. Burke, Peter, Cahermore.	14. Hanlon, Michael, Crushua.	23. Kilkelly, Joseph, Tawnagh and Doorus Demesne.	31. Reidy, John J, Tawnagh and Doorus Demesne.
5. Callinan, John, Loughcurra.	15. Higgins, Mary, Ardrahan.	24. Kilkelly, (Mhicíl) Tommie, Crushua.	32. Reidy, (Tommie) Thomas, Tawnagh and Doorus Demesne.
6. Connolly, John, Gortaboy.	16. Hynes, (Martín) Martin, the Glebe, Kinvara.	25. Leech, Stephen, Loughcurra.	33. Staunton, (Mick) Michael, Cloonasee.

7. Davenport, (Séamus) James; Kinvara town, near Quay.	17. Hynes, (Mikie) Michael, Dunguaire.	26. McCormack, Edward, Kinvara.	34. Whelan, (Jim) James, Mountscribe and later Tawnagh.
8. Fahy, John, Caherawoneen.	18. Keane, Michael, Ballyclera.	27. McNerney, (Tom) Thomas, Cahermore.	35. Whelan, (Sean/ Jack) John, Doorus
9. Fahy, PJ, Kinvara.	19. Kilkelly, (Sean Wally) John, Crushoa.		
10. Glynn, John, Neptune Vale, Doorus.			

Figure 9.1 The above names were compiled from the Military Archives, Roll of Honour and Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook. Although the number in some statements was quoted as forty, confirmation of more than thirty-five names was not possible. Fr John William O'Meehan is not on this list. There is only one Cumann na mBan name listed: Mary Higgins, Ardrahan.

Background

In the years prior to the 1916 Rising, Kinvara, not unlike other parishes in the west of Ireland, was concerned with several anti-establishment systems and practices, such as agrarian agitation, revival of Irish traditions, language and literature, and the development and promotion of new societies such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). Perhaps this was of little wonder when considering that people like Edward Martyn (co-founder of Sein Féin), Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats frequented the area regularly; Michael Cusack, the man accorded with the establishment of the GAA, was born within 18km from Kinvara; Irish was the spoken language; there was boycotting and there were frequent cattle drives, which often ended in arrests and court appearances. Indeed, some of these cattle drives even merited a special court session which, in turn, attracted several spectators to the occasion. One such case reported in the *Freeman's Journal* in 1910 gives an indication of the extent of such occurrences:

At a special Court in Kinvara today, before Mr Kilbride, RM, fourteen men were charged by District-Inspector Cruise with taking part in a cattle drive on the previous Thursday... Mr Kilbride [remanding them on bail] said that he would except a reduced bail... Twelve of the defendants refused... and were sent to jail for a month each...²

The article continues by stating 'they were loudly cheered by the crowd' and concludes with 'Several cattle drives have taken place in the district recently, and over 50 persons are at present bound over to the peace for taking part in them'. Furthermore, Kinvara Hurling Club held a meeting on 1 April 1911 to collect in aid of the club and 'also to defray the expense of the Moy cattle drivers.'³ The list of GAA activists within the club includes many of the same surnames those who would later become known as Kinvara Company during 1916. Perhaps, it



Figure 9.2 Photograph courtesy of Thomas Quinn. This photograph was taken during the War of Independence; it shows men who served in Kinvara Coy 1916. Sitting on the left: Bertie Quinn, Padraig Fahy. Sitting at the table: Seamus Davenport, Joe Kilkelly. Standing Tommie Reidy, Tommy Quinn, Michael Mikie Hynes.

is not surprising in such circumstances that a new local curate, Fr John William O'Meehan, managed to fuel this growing sense of nationalism.

Born in 1881 in the parish of Clarinbridge, Co. Galway, John O'Meehan was ordained a priest in 1906. He spent two years studying in Maynooth for his BD degree and it was from here, according to his sister Mary Leech, that 'during those two years he frequently visited Dublin and spent much of his time in the company of Padraig Pearse and Arthur Griffith and others who later became leaders in the Independence Movement'.⁴ In July 1915, he was appointed senior Catholic Curate in Kinvara, and from then on he appears to have become an important contributor to the Rising in Galway. Notably, his sister concludes her witness statement in 1954 with, 'I heard my brother, Father John, say that it was he who advised the leaders in Dublin to organise the West and that was the reason Liam Mellows was sent'.⁵ In the summer of 1915, Fr John O'Meehan actively recruited many of the young men in the area, 'the strength was about 40'⁶ and considered by many to be a 'strong company'.⁷

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Almost all of the young men recruited by Fr O'Meehan had a father or grandfather active in the Land League and/or the United Irish League. They valued and educated themselves in both the Irish language and Irish history.⁸ So, unsurprisingly, the census of 1911 lists most residents in the townlands of Kinvara as having both the English and Irish language, even though this had sometimes caused conflict with

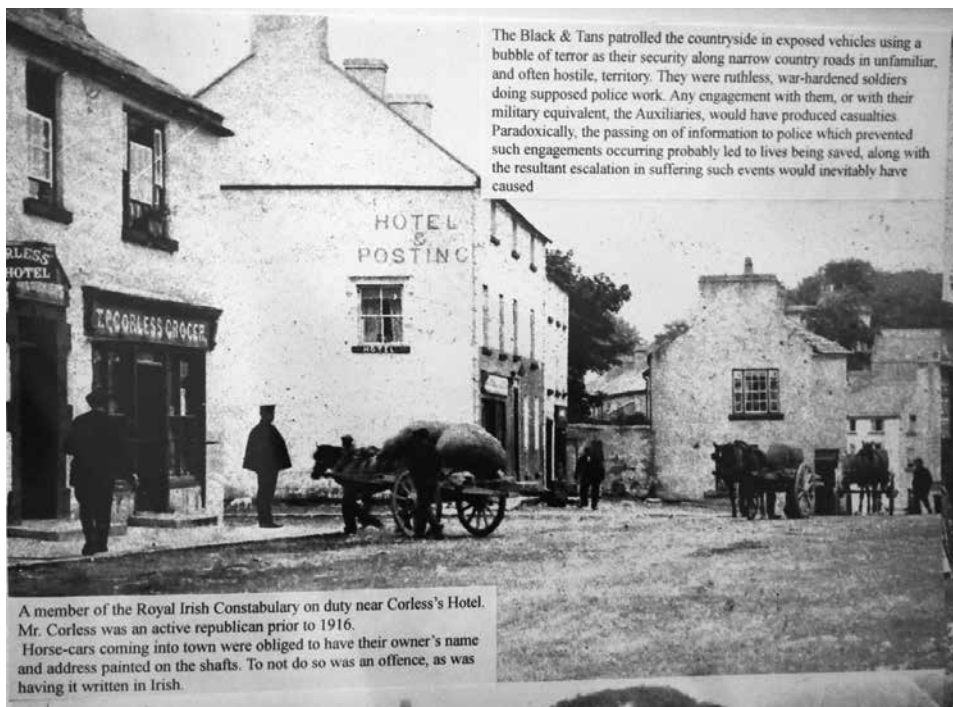


Figure 9.3 This picture shows an RIC constable standing at the corner watching the events of the day. Photograph from exhibition courtesy of Thomas Quinn.

Figure 9.4 Thomas McInerney from Cahermore, Kinvara, taken during War of Independence. Photograph courtesy of Micko McInerney, Thomas's son.



local Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC).⁹ A good example of this was Volunteer Michael Hynes's grandfather, who was 'prosecuted and fined for having his name in Irish on a common cart' and although 'the fine was one penny ... it was never paid'.¹⁰ Naturally, a popular ballad written about the incident to the tune of 'the Auld Plaid Shawl' soon followed.¹¹ It would seem that these patriotic leanings filtered down to many of the young men of Kinvara and they were reading literature such as *Scissors and Paste* and *Nationality* provided by Fr O'Meehan. This ensured enough

sentiment and excitement for any young man to consider becoming active in a paramilitary organisation.

One such man was Thomas McInerney, born in Cahermore, Kinvara, Co. Galway in 1883. He became the ‘seventh generation of blacksmith ... and shod the Galway Blazers for eight years’.¹² He worked for Tom Kenny, a prominent Sinn Féin activist and reviver of an old agrarian secret society. Kenny not only taught him his trade but also swore him into ‘the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in the year 1906’.¹³ He soon became operational and took part in what he describes as ‘incidents’. McInerney may have regretted this earlier activity for he would not speak about it later in life. Something changed and he ceased to work for Kenny sometime around Christmas 1914 and returned home to Cahermore. Once home he began to organise the IRB in his own locality and before long had a cluster in many of the surrounding parishes. Also around this time, he joined the Ardrahan Company of the Irish Volunteers and soon came to prominence. Early in 1916, McInerney was appointed Brigade Scout by Liam Mellows, a man he admired. Matthew Kelly deliberates in his review of Fergus Campbell’s book *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland, 1891-1921* that:

*Kennyite traditions combined with Mellows’ training ensured the East Galway Volunteers were amongst the most active during the Easter Rising.*¹⁴

McInerney himself certainly was. While awaiting orders on the impending Rising in Dublin, he and sixteen of his company from Ardrahan mobilised at Early’s Wood near Peterswell on Easter Sunday - only to be stood down that evening. Late Monday or early Tuesday morning they were once again alerted to mobilise and McInerney proceeded to implement his part in the plan of action. He was to move around



Figure 9.5 Foy’s (Seapark House) abandoned house. Here many of Kinvara Company awaited orders. The house was once used as a fever hospital during the famine, established by Dr Denis Hynes. Photograph courtesy of Eilish Kavanagh.

the various companies once the Rising began and remained in touch with them throughout the week, giving and receiving any reports or orders. He was also to report on any and all activity by both the RIC and the British army. He was well known by the RIC in some areas, such as Clarinbridge, so he had to use another local man to scout for him. It was just such information from one

of these scouts that led McNerney back to Kinvara; his involvement in the Rising was in full swing.

Meanwhile in Kinvara, Fr O'Meehan was unaware of MacNeill's countermand; he was preparing the company for what lay ahead. He ordered them into full uniform, which were only the hats he had provided for them, and to attend the sacraments of Easter. The hats mentioned in almost all witness statements or pension applications appear to have unified the company and validated their cause, and thereby primed them for the Rising. Thomas Reidy, in a statement on the movements of Kinvara Company at that time, recalled:

Father O'Meehan got the company to go to Holy Communion on Sunday. He was a leading member. He was in touch with the leaders at the time, very prominently in touch with them, and he got all the Kinvara Company to go to Confession on Saturday and parade at church on Easter Sunday morning, which they did. On Monday morning they mobilised; the captain, John Burke, directed them where to go, and to seize what arms they could get from the labouring people – they had a list beforehand of the arms...¹⁵



Figure 9.6 Drawing by Thomas Quinn depicting the RIC waiting in a small grove outside Fr O'Meehan's house. This picture was used in schools to portray events of Easter Tuesday 1916.

The men gathered at Foy's house on the outskirts of Kinvara, ready for orders. Meanwhile, Captain John Burke and a small company marched to Earley's Wood to learn the objectives and receive orders. It was here they learned of the countermand by MacNeill. Despite this, it would seem from reading the witness statements, there was some confusion over the countermand. O'Meehan, whom the men trusted, was in touch with Mellows directly and was giving them orders on mobilising; he did not trust the countermand and was reluctant to have the men stand down.¹⁶ He was to secure further instructions from Clarinbridge over the next few hours.

However, after the period of what appears to be commands,

countermands, cancellations and postponements, the order for mobilisation finally came. At 1 o'clock, on the Tuesday morning, Liam Mellows sent Padraig Fahy, Tom O'Dea and Martin (Sonny) Morrissey to inform Fr O'Meehan that the Rising had begun in Dublin. Therefore, he should re-mobilise the Kinvara Company and return with Fahy to serve as Quarter Master.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the RIC in Kinvara having been alerted to something happening and were patrolling the area. Knowing he was being watched for some time, Fr O'Meehan was not at home. When the men arrived at Delamain Lodge, residence of the priest, his housekeeper told them of this but had no idea where he was hiding. Out of a small grove to the side of the lodge, the RIC stepped forward. O'Dea, trying to disguise their true intent, gave a false name, told the constables that he was there for a sick call, and needed a priest. The constables were not deceived and a struggle began. Shots were exchanged and Fahy, unlike his comrades who managed to get away under gunfire, was restrained and arrested. After a brief custody in Kinvara, he was taken to Gort barracks, then to Limerick Jail and on to Richmond barracks.¹⁸ Sergeant Thomas Reilly, the man who arrested Fahy and gave evidence against him, would later get one of only 'four medals awarded to the RIC for gallantry during the Easter Rising of 1916'.¹⁹ It appears that this incident has the notability of being the first shots in Co. Galway of Easter Week.²⁰ Reilly and his colleagues abandoned the RIC barracks in Kinvara that same night in an effort to thwart the rebels who they believed were now attacking other barracks in the area.

Following this, it was not until at least 4 pm Tuesday evening that Fr O'Meehan received a dispatch telling him to mobilise the Kinvara Company. Yet,

*It was not until Wednesday morning that I heard of the Rising in Dublin. It was Volunteer Padraig Kilkelly who brought me word and at the same time told me to go at once to Clonasee where our company was mobilising. When I got the Clonasee, most of the company had already assembled there.*²¹

Figure 9.7 Medal received by Sgt Thomas Reilly, for his part in arresting Padraig Fahy outside Delamain Lodge. He was also awarded £5 in War Stock at the RIC Depot on 17 May 1917. Photograph courtesy of website: irishconstabulary.com



Significantly, at this point O'Meehan did not hold back. According to Michael Hynes,

*Father O'Meehan addressed the company, saying that the Rising was on in Dublin and that our company would very soon be engaged in the fight and that very likely some of us would be going to our deaths. He then said that if any Volunteer wished to leave he could do so and that nobody would think bad of him for doing so. ... Nobody stepped out of the ranks.*²²

Their orders, as before, were to collect as many of the guns in the area as they could get before setting off for Moyode. They marched into Kinvara and collected all the shotguns and ammunition available. Some residents objected to this and actively wrestled with the Volunteers, whereas Mr Johnson, a hardware merchant, gave all the guns and ammunition he had in the shop.²³ The company marched uninterrupted through the town, collecting at least thirty to forty arms.

In search of better quality rifles, they then decided to move towards the townland of Northampton, home of a former British army officer, Mr Brady-Murray. Before they reached his lodge some RIC men, cycling toward Kinvara, surprised them. Both sides ran for the ditch to take cover and then Kinvara Company were given the order to open fire. The equally surprised constables, realising they were outnumbered, jumped back onto their bicycles and headed toward Gort as fast as they could. This encounter was later to become a contentious point in many pension applications and needed the statement of Florence McCarthy, one of the RIC men on the day, to corroborate the Company members' claims.²⁴

Kinvara Company returned to Foy's to cook a meal before the journey that evening. After they had eaten a substantial meal, the men were ordered to 'fall in' and march to Moyode to join with other Volunteers under Mellows.²⁵ When the men reached Ballinderreen they met Thomas McInerney on his way to intercept them with some information he had gathered. As mentioned earlier, McInerney's involvement in the Rising was in full swing. Ironically, he was to cease the role played by the Volunteers from his own parish by trying to protect them.

Information on the extent of the forces in Kilcolgan barracks coupled with the supposed imminent departure of Mellows from Moyode thrust McInerney into a difficult position. He knew that companies such as Kinvara had intentions of passing through these areas unaware of what awaited them. Even though he had not been instructed to do so, he deliberately gave orders for Kinvara Company to stand down, return to Foy's and await further orders.²⁶



Figure 9.8 Drawing by Thomas Quinn depicting the incident with the RIC on the way to Northampton.

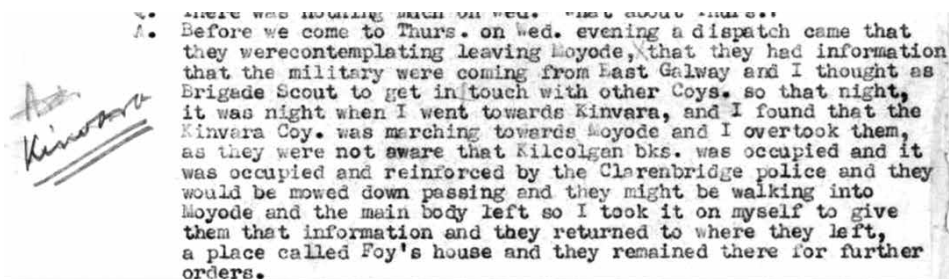


Figure 9.9 Thomas McNerney was born in Kinvara and although he was a member of another company (Ardrahan) he ensured his neighbours and friends were protected. The investigators continue to question McNerney and he finally admits to have ordered the Company to retreat. This small section is part of a long statement that contributed to a court case for a pension for John Burke. John Burke Military Pension Ref MSP34REF9331. John Burke's service pension application with regard to case of John Burke v The Minister for Defence, typed summary and verbatim transcript of sworn evidence given by Thomas McNerney on 5 April 1945.



Figure 9.10 Medals awarded to Michael Hynes. Kindly displayed by his family during exhibition 2015. Photograph by Thomas Quinn.

Kinvara Company remained mostly intact at Foy's until Saturday 29 April, even though they were advised by Fr O'Meehan to disband after arriving back. By Saturday evening, news was filtering through that the Galway Volunteers were disbanding, with some, including Mellows, going on the run. The Volunteers in Kinvara proceeded to dump their guns and seek areas in the surrounding communities to evade capture. Some went home, unsure of where to go. However, their part in the Rising did not go unnoticed by the authorities:

The following Wednesday, 3rd May, a party of between 30 and 40 RIC men under a District Inspector came to Kinvara and surrounding villages and raided for the Volunteers. About 20 Volunteers who had moved out to take part in the Rising were arrested.²⁷

It would seem that most of the members of Kinvara Company were arrested during this roundup or very shortly after. Thomas Reidy and his brother evaded capture until the end of June 1916; Thomas was arrested and released after one day, he believed that the 'RIC thought that things had calmed down and some of the local Volunteers who were captured in the round up had already been released'.²⁸ Michael Hynes and James Picker were brought to Dublin but released after a week because they were under 18 years of age.²⁹ Others listed in the *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook* were brought from Richmond Barracks to prisons such as Stanford, Wandsworth and Frongoch. It would be December 1916 before all the members of Kinvara Company were released. Fr Feeney, a good friend of Fr O'Meehan, was thought to be hiding out, with Liam Mellows, in the local Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, Kinvara. The convent was searched by the RIC with vigour, so much so that the parish priest rose from his sick bed and condemned the men from



Figure 9.11 Display case kindly donated by Gort Men's Shed for exhibition 2015. Two Irish Volunteers from 1916 originally owned the gun and bayonet displayed in cabinet. Artefacts collected by Eddie Forde. Photograph courtesy of Eilish Kavanagh.



Figure 9.12 Exhibition held in Kinvara during Heritage Week 2015.

the altar. He even wrote a letter to General Maxwell complaining about his officers and the insult to the nuns.³⁰ As in other parts of the country, this week of rebellion and the subsequent internments only served to reinforce the now entrenched ideals that Fr O'Meehan and others like him once spoke about to these young men.

It is worth noting that the men who applied for pensions (not all of them did) encountered several problems in proving their entitlement. It was not until a test case was taken by Captain John Burke and a reopening of their cases that some succeeded in getting recognition of the part played by Kinvara Company, not only in 1916 but also during the subsequent War of Independence.

Many died within a year or two of eventually receiving the pension, some in what was referred to as dire circumstances. In the case of John Burke, once the pension was awarded he refused to take it because he 'was deprived of the rank of captain, I was the only captain in the Kinvara Company. Therefore, if I don't get a captain's rank and pay, I will not accept a military pension'.³¹ Captain John (Jack) Burke died on 1 February 1959, having never accepted his pension.

Conclusion

This brief chronicle is the result of a community attempt to identify and remember those from Kinvara who were involved in the Rising of Easter Week 1916. The names were compiled from several lists; some names may be absent, yet to be discovered. The timeline of their movements draws attention to the difficulties in communication and hierarchy in the Rising as a whole, the effects of which were also felt in Kinvara. It has become clear that, apart from one surprise encounter

with the RIC when shots were fired, Kinvara Company awaited and obeyed orders throughout the Rising. The determination and resolve of the company members were borne out when, warned of the potential consequences by Fr O'Meehan, not one of them stood down. Once arrested, some were held in custody until the general amnesty at Christmas 1916. Later, some went on to participate in the fight for independence.

Note: The research for this chapter stemmed from a very successful exhibition held in Kinvara during Heritage Week 2015 in order to create an awareness of the Rising and instigate discussion on how best to commemorate the centenary in the community of Kinvara.

Endnotes

1. Thomas Davis, 'A Ballad History of Ireland' in Hugo L. Doak (Ed.), *The Treasure House, A Book of Prose and Poetry For Boys and Girls* (The Educational Company), p. 123.
2. Freeman's Journal, 9 May 1910.
3. Toddie Byrne, *Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Cinn Mhara A History of Kinvara GAA* (Kinvara GAA, Galway, 2006), p. 12.
4. Bureau of Military History (hereafter BMH) Witness Statement (hereafter WS) No. 1,034, Mary Leech, 7 November 1954.
5. Ibid.
6. BMH WS No. 1,173, Michael Hynes, 26 May 1955.
7. C. Desmond Greaves, *Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution* (The Camelot Press Ltd, London, 1971), p. 88.
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12. Ibid.
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17. Timothy G. McMahon (Ed.), *Pádraig Ó Fathaigh's War of Independence, Recollections of a Galway Gaelic Leaguer* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2000), p. 35.
18. McMahon, Pádraig Ó Fathaigh's War of Independence, pp 35-37.
19. <http://irishconstabulary.com/topic/786/The-Kings-Police-Medal?page=#.Vid-6H6rTIU> (accessed on 21 August 2015).
20. *Connacht Tribune*, 27 December 1968.
21. BMH WS No. 1,173, Michael Hynes, 26 May 1955.
22. Ibid.
23. BMH WS No. 1,555, Thomas Reidy, date unknown.
24. MSP34REF9331, John Burke, letter from Florence McCarthy, 17 August 1939.
25. BMH WS No. 1,555, Thomas Reidy, date unknown.
26. MSP34REF9331, John Burke, statement by Thomas McInerney, 7 January 1940.
27. BMH WS No. 1,555, Thomas Reidy, date unknown.
28. Ibid.
29. BMH WS No. 1,173, Michael Hynes, 26 May 1955.
30. BMH WS No. 1,555, Thomas Reidy, date unknown.
31. MSP34REF9331, John Burke, 23 May 1952.

The ‘humdrum little town’? - Tuam at Easter 1916

Martin O'Donoghue

In the week after the Easter Rising, the *Tuam Herald* reported ‘no disturbance’ in the Tuam area and that ‘were it not for the inconvenience caused, the dislocation of railway and post office traffic and a little mild excitement created by the numerous rumours floating around, Thackeray’s caustic description of nigh a hundred years ago – “the humdrum little town of Tuam” would still apply’.¹ Such a remark appears a neat little description of a town unaffected by a Rising for which the *Herald* at any rate had little sympathy. However, this quote from William Makepeace Thackeray was not strictly accurate.² Similarly, just as the *Herald*’s invocation of Thackeray bore further examination, this chapter intends to ask how true it was to say that Tuam was a humdrum little town, away from the shifting currents of nationalism and even rebellion elsewhere. Tuam did not rise in 1916, yet there was a small minority who would have liked to, while this apparently quite moderate town in 1916 transferred support to Sinn Féin more or less seamlessly in line with the rest of the country by 1918. While the majority in the town, who were politically engaged in 1916, remained loyal to the efforts of John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) to secure home rule, it was from the smaller groupings of ‘advanced nationalism’ that any appetite for rebellion in Tuam arose.³ This chapter surveys the small though committed advanced nationalist movements in Tuam from the turn of the century, arguing that, if Tuam was ‘humdrum’, it could only be described as such insofar as it mirrored many towns and areas across Ireland before and after the Rising. Finally, this chapter concludes with discussion why Tuam may, however, have appeared out of step with nearby towns and villages in Galway which were more radical.

Advanced nationalists in Tuam before the Rising

Although, as James McConnel and Michael Wheatley have shown, some supporters of the home rule movement were also members of cultural bodies such as the Gaelic League and the GAA, it has by now been established that such organisations tended to be havens for nationalists of more advanced tendencies.⁴ Tuam had a vibrant GAA scene around the turn of the century. Tuam Stars club played their first match on St. Patrick’s Day 1889 against Cortoon Shamrocks while another noteworthy team in the period was the Tuam Krugers Gaelic football team, founded in 1900 as the Boer War between Britain and South Africa raged; it was named after Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal.⁵ The two clubs merged in

1904 and, as will be discussed later, Gaelic games were popular among advanced nationalist groups in the Tuam area, especially the Fianna. Indeed, Mountbellew IRB member James Haverty served as chairman of the North Galway GAA Board.⁶

As elsewhere, there seems to have been co-operation between the GAA and the Gaelic League. Almost the entire county was at least a breac-Gaeltacht (partial Gaeltacht) and in Tuam, the Gaelic League was promoted heavily by two prominent townspeople, the dispensary doctor and antiquarian Dr Thomas Bodkin Costello and his wife Eileen Costello (born Edith Drury) who had moved to Tuam in 1903. Dr Costello was vice-president of the Gaelic League branch in the town and in 1903 helped organise a feis at which Patrick Pearse attended as an adjudicator.⁷ The League continued to remain active and Eileen Costello was invited to and attended the first meeting of Sinn Féin in the Rotunda.⁸

Sinn Féin itself had had some brief success in local elections in the town. Although Tuam Town Commissioners were constantly struggling to strike a rate and housing conditions in the town were often poor, there was no labour movement until 1906, when a branch of the Irish Land and Labour Association was established. In October of that same year, James Daly, clerk of the Board of Guardians, started a branch of Sinn Féin which was a movement of labourers and shop assistants in Tuam.⁹ In the early 1900s, Sinn Féin really only had a significant presence in local government in Dublin and advocated withdrawal from Westminster and a dual-monarchy form of association with England. However, the Tuam combination of Sinn Féin and the Labour movement achieved a breakthrough in 1907 when Daly, Thomas McHugh and John M. Burke won a seat on the town council. Nevertheless, the small coterie of advanced nationalists was hardly the majority voice in the town and probably reflected the disaffected minorities which existed in many areas in the period before the outbreak of the World War and the Rising.¹⁰ The majority of councillors remained home rulers and only one of Sinn Féin's five candidates were successful in the next election to the Town Commission a year later in 1908. By 1911, Sinn Féin lost ground and did not even contest the election (though Burke and Daly would later serve on the commission again).¹¹

Perhaps the most significant advanced nationalist movement in Tuam was Fianna Éireann. This body, organised by Constance Markievicz and Bulmer Hobson, had inspiration in Baden-Powell's Boy Scout movement in Britain. The Fianna was dedicated to Gaelic culture, Irish nationalism and a martial ethos.¹² In Tuam, the Fianna was led by Liam T. Langley and the Slua (branch) began to organise from 1911. As shown by Eimear Cremen, Langley was a key figure in Tuam in 1916. Born on 23 January 1888 in Sydney, Australia, Langley came to Ireland when he was just four years old. Langley's father Michael was originally from Caltra but had emigrated to Australia in 1867, while his uncle had been hanged as a Ribbonman.

Upon their return to Ireland, Liam Langley and his family lived in a thatched cottage on the Cloonthue Road, Tuam.¹³ In Tuam, the Fianna played Gaelic football but also engaged in military style drilling with a .22 rifle.¹⁴ Membership of the Fianna never seems to have risen far above twenty or thirty members and appears to have comprised mostly of apprentices and shop assistants in the town. Langley himself worked in McTigue's at this time.¹⁵ However, Thomas Nohilly remembered them winning the county junior football championship in 1914, while one of their sports days had a top prize of a revolver.¹⁶ All this seems to have been in spite of RIC surveillance.

Langley organised various fundraising activities and ensured the Slua was in touch with rising nationalists around the country. Langley regularly attended the Fianna's Ard-Fheis and, in 1913, brought his Tuam slua to Dublin for the Ard-Fheis in the Mansion House where they met the likes of Markievicz, Con Colbert and Sean Heuston and attended a Fianna concert.¹⁷ Another prominent nationalist, Liam Mellows, often stayed at the homes of Langley and James Roche on his visits to Tuam.¹⁸ Mellows' organisational skills from his arrival in Galway in early 1915 were legendary and although he operated more in other parts of the county, he still left his mark in Tuam. Volunteer Sean O'Neill later remembered him picturesquely as 'this kilted lad, with his saffron-flowing shawl over his shoulders, Tara brooch, green kilts, long stockings and shoes, arrived, and brought with him a ray of sunshine into our somewhat dull and drab town of that period'.¹⁹ It was Mellows himself who would swear O'Neill into the IRB in 1913.

There was also a circle of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in Tuam and membership seems to have overlapped to a degree with the Fianna. Langley usually presided at the meetings at the Forge, Galway Road, owned by the Connolly brothers. Other members included John D. Costello (Centre for Belclare, Cummer and Kilbannon circle), Patrick O'Daly, Joseph Cummins, Sean Forde, Patrick Dunleavy and Thomas Nohilly who seem to have been sworn in shortly before the Rising, and Thomas Kilgarriff and Con Kennedy from Dunmore.²⁰ However, by September 1913 when Patrick O'Daly arrived from Dublin, he remembered the Tuam IRB circle as virtually broken up. Patrick Dunleavy who joined in 1912 (sworn in by John P. Connolly) also reported the circle as being very small.

The Irish Volunteers were founded on 25 November 1913 at the Rotunda, Dublin, ostensibly in response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteers by Unionists opposed to the passing of home rule into law for Ireland. In Tuam, the Volunteers were launched at an initial meeting on 8 February 1914.²¹ The first meeting was held in the Gaelic League Hall on Bishop Street, belonging to Tom Sloyan, a prominent home rule supporter and town tenants agitator in Tuam. Dr T.B. Costello presided while Sloyan donated his yard for the new Volunteers to drill on Sundays and

three instructors were appointed to drill the locals. The instructors were Michael Kennedy, Dan Flanagan and Stephen Shaughnessy, a British army reservist. Shaughnessy had the benefit of military training and his work was complimented by a number of local men in their BMH witness statements.²² At the first election of officers, Dr Costello was made president of the branch with James Daly treasurer and Langley secretary. Accordingly, as elsewhere, the smaller elements of advanced nationalism were absorbed into a volunteer force alongside supporters of constitutional nationalism. As membership grew, the Volunteers needed a bigger area to drill and the local race company provided access to their grounds at Parkmore. The company organised parades and route marches for Sundays, usually to areas within a four or five mile radius. The company had only wooden guns for drilling, though they had a .22 rifle for target practice.²³ On 29 June 1914, the Tuam Volunteers attended a big gathering of 2,000 volunteers in Athenry where they received inspection by Volunteers Commander-in-chief Maurice Moore for a second time.²⁴ Shaughnessy was captain of the company which then comprised about 100 men. Although Tuam witnessed the 'exciting scenes' of the campaign for women's suffrage in this period, as Helen Fraser addressed an open-air meeting in the town, *Cumann na mBan* (founded in 1914) did not reach Tuam and only had a presence in the county's east riding.²⁵

Meanwhile, the politics of home rule were becoming increasingly troubled. Last-ditch efforts to break the impasse over the implementation of the Home Rule Bill collapsed at Buckingham Palace in July. The Irish Party leadership of John Redmond and John Dillon would not accede to the permanent partition of the six Ulster counties sought by Edward Carson and the Unionists. These difficulties were interrupted by events further afield as Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August. At Westminster, Redmond's first response to this was to offer that nationalists and unionist volunteers would defend the shores of Ireland against foreign invasion in a conciliatory statement which won general approval in the Commons. For the Tuam Volunteers, the effects of war were felt fairly rapidly as their commander Stephen Shaughnessy was immediately called to war. According to the *Tuam Herald*, Shaughnessy was cheered and received a 'most affecting' send-off from his fellow Volunteers before leaving for the front.²⁶

However, John Redmond's subsequent speech at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow on 20 September, calling on Irish Volunteers to enlist in the British Army, caused consternation among some Volunteers nationally. While many home rule supporters remained faithful to Redmond and supported his new policy, those Volunteers who were not affiliated with the Irish Party would not countenance the strategy upon which Redmond was embarking. The movement thus split, with the overwhelming majority siding with Redmond and styling themselves the National Volunteers. The minority, under the leadership of Eoin MacNeill, continued as the Irish Volunteers.

In Tuam, no immediate split was effected. However, an impending visit to the town by Redmond forced the company to a decision and at a meeting on 15 November, the Tuam Volunteers opted to support MacNeill's group by 75 votes to 11.²⁷ There seems to have been little ill-feeling surrounding this and many expressed sincere thanks for the work of outgoing President Dr Costello who regretted he could not continue in his role after the vote. The Volunteers who marched behind Redmond in Tuam on his visit were therefore from other local areas rather than from the town. The Town Commissioners remained loyal to Redmond though and held a banquet for him. Nationally, the National Volunteers tended to decline within a couple of months of war and with such a small group voting in favour of Redmond in Tuam, the company seems to have quietly diminished. The development of the split in Tuam was certainly interesting (mirroring a tendency in Galway for the Irish Volunteers to retain more support than was the case nationally). Nonetheless, it could hardly be said that the town became separatist overnight. The war gave



Figure 10.1 Patrick Dunleavy
Source: The Dunleavy Family



Figure 10.2 Liam Langley (on left with straw hat) and Tuam Fianna Gaelic football team.
Source: The Old Tuam Society archive.

advanced nationalists the chance to organise but groupings remained small and drilled in secret under Langley and Seamus Moloney.²⁸

The Irish Volunteers thus faced a difficult time in the town in these years; yet, they could occasionally still attract significant attention. On 22 November 1914 after an Irish Volunteer and Fianna march to and from Dunmore, a lecture commemorating the Manchester martyrs was given by Boer War veteran Major John MacBride in the Town Hall.²⁹ The *Tuam Herald* was most impressed with the torchlight procession which preceded the talk, along with a performance in song of *Sinn Féin Amháin* by local youngster Dickie O'Connor. MacBride was introduced by William Stockwell, a veteran of 1867, and John Burke gave thanks. The next day, John D. Costello and MacBride attended a county IRB meeting in Athenry, with two detectives observing MacBride.³⁰

Although Langley remained in touch with many significant figures nationally, both he and Patrick Dunleavy remembered this as a troubled time for advanced nationalists in Tuam with the Volunteers struggling under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA); Langley recounted that Tuam was at risk of becoming a 'pro-British

garrison town', forcing them to use the IRB to carry out activities.³¹ Nevertheless, the Irish Party's local United Irish League organisation was also declining during the war and after a recruiting meeting was held on 8 May, the Irish Volunteers wished to deliver a response.³² Mellows and Sean MacDiarmada were in town, en route to Athenry, and it was decided to hold an 'impromptu' meeting on 16 May in the Square after last mass.³³ MacDiarmada and Mellows joined Langley, Jim Moloney and John D. Costello on the platform while Stockwell, Sam Browne and local boys from the Fianna helped to distribute literature.³⁴ In his address, MacDiarmada emphasised the primacy of Irish freedom, urged people to join the Fianna and the Volunteers and not to enlist in the British army.

There is some confusion over what prompted MacDiarmada's arrest; Langley claimed the heckling of one individual who he believed to be a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians gave a pretext for the RIC to come to the platform and arrest MacDiarmada, while Costello recalled that MacDiarmada uttering the words "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity" was the trigger for his arrest.³⁵ In any case, the local RIC District-Inspector Francis Comerford was in attendance and moved to arrest MacDiarmada under DORA.³⁶ However, the organisers hardly seemed to be too perturbed by the commotion; MacDiarmada managed to slip his revolver and other documents to Mellows and others before leaving with the RIC. The meeting continued without him as Mellows spoke and Langley presided. MacDiarmada was tried for making a seditious speech. Although he was defended by Tim Healy MP, he was still sentenced to six months in Mountjoy, serving three. After the subsequent Athenry meeting, Langley was given control of five districts surrounding Tuam until Easter 1916.³⁷ Langley's involvement in opposing recruitment continued and he received anti-recruiting literature from Limerick in October 1915 while police reports reveal that the so-called 'mosquito press' of advanced nationalists was also in circulation in Tuam.³⁸

The Rising and Tuam

On 15 April 1916, under the heading 'Sinn Féin Tactics', the *Tuam Herald's* editor Richard Kelly asked the young people of Ireland if they were ready for their 'conflict with authority' and, while not at all specific to Tuam, the article further warned that Irish Volunteers were the tools of German autocrats and the threat to national security was 'imminent'. The *Herald* had been founded by Kelly's grandfather (also Richard) in 1837 and the Kellys were long-time supporters of the home rule movement from the era of Parnell.³⁹ In his piece, Kelly opined that the Sinn Féin movement could do no good to the country at this time.⁴⁰ However, this call seems to have little effect at the time, even among some of the radical nationalists, operating beneath the surface of Tuam politics.

According to Patrick Dunleavy, only the members of the Tuam IRB circle knew anything of a possible rebellion in the town at Easter 1916.⁴¹ Michael J. Ryan, who was a Volunteer but not a member of the IRB, later recalled that he was not mobilised for Easter Week.⁴² John D. Costello remembered that the organisation locally knew something would happen in the run up to the Rising but said they were not sure of the date and that the men from Athenry were to send a despatch to Langley or Costello a few days in advance.⁴³ This message never came and Langley first told Costello of the Rising after spending the day in Galway on Easter Monday.



Figure 10.3 Liam Langley
Source: Eimear Cremen

Prior to this, there appears to have been a general mobilisation of the North Galway IRB circle on Easter Sunday at Connolly's Forge on the Galway Road but they dispersed after the counter-manding order issued by Eoin MacNeill.⁴⁴ On Easter Monday, Langley received word that a Rising would take place and he passed the word to George Nicholls and Micheál Ó Droighneáin in Galway.⁴⁵ In Tuam, another mobilisation was planned for midnight on Easter Tuesday night for the Fair Green in the town. While some accounts make reference to an original plan to attempt to capture the local RIC barracks, it seems the plan was for all men to be transported via train from the railway station to Athenry to link with Mellows' forces. Tuam Volunteer Sam Browne, an engineer with Great Southern and Western Railway, was to arrange for this while the Volunteers went to confession to a sympathetic local priest, Fr John Heneghan, that night.⁴⁶

Although Thomas Nohilly reckoned there would have been up to thirty men if areas such as Dunmore, Sylane and Kilbannon mobilised, he only remembered nine or ten at the meeting in Connolly's Forge when he returned from confession on the Tuesday night.⁴⁷ The town appeared to be full of RIC from the town and neighbouring districts. Nohilly recalled that up to this point he did not know of a rising and that the only arms they had were 'three or four out-of-date rifles, a few shotguns and revolvers'.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, John D. Costello mobilised his men at a wood near Tuam and sent a man with a despatch to Langley to know if all was in readiness. The man came back and told Costello that Tuam was occupied by armed RIC and it was impossible to do anything. No more orders came on the Tuesday and Costello

dismissed his men for the night.⁴⁹ Back in the town, Langley had detailed Dunleavy and Joseph Cummins to go to the Ballymote Road to meet a contingent from Mountbellew. According to Dunleavy, the Mountbellew men failed to show by 1am.⁵⁰ Sean O'Neill later recalled in his witness statement that the Mountbellew men were unsure of developments and, without word from Tuam, disbanded sadly on the Tuesday night.⁵¹ As Cummins and Dunleavy returned to Tuam, they ran into the RIC ambush at Bishop Street. Both men were arrested and brought to Tuam barracks. Three Dunmore men (Tom Kilgarriff, Willie McGill and Michael Ronayne) and two Claremorris men (John Conway and James Ryan) had been captured earlier on the same road. The RIC presence in Tuam had been strongly reinforced. District Inspector Comerford's son recalled in his memoir that his father had little instruction at the time so fearing that he was vulnerable, Comerford closed all his out-stations and barracks, stationed himself in the Square and set up armed patrols on the various roads. All vehicles entering the town were stopped. On Easter Tuesday, as rumours swirled around the town, Comerford had gathered his twenty-five strong force and set them up for ambush on different parts of the Dunmore Road.⁵²

All the men arrested were brought via Eglington barracks, Galway, on board the *Laburnum* in Galway Bay where they were interned alongside others, including George Nicholls, Frank Hardiman, Padraic Ó Máille, John Faller, Tom Flanagan and Professor Valentine Steinberger of UCG. When Dunleavy, Cummins, the Dunmore and the Mountbellew men all failed to turn up, the remaining men in Tuam waited until about dawn on Wednesday 26 April before they dispersed.⁵³ Any chance of a Tuam rebellion was now finished. Costello travelled from Dunmore to Tuam on Wednesday morning and narrowly avoided arrest. Langley, however, cycled to Athenry on Wednesday and met with Mellows and his forces at Moyode Castle. Langley then remained with Mellows' men as they retreated back to Limepark country house and eventually disbanded on Saturday 29 April.⁵⁴ Langley was subsequently arrested on his return to Tuam, serving time in Galway Jail, Richmond Barracks Dublin, Wakefield, Frongoch and Reading. Released on 24 December 1916 under a general amnesty, Langley relocated to Dublin where he remained active in the Fianna, IRB and Volunteers, later working in the finance department of the Sinn Féin government.⁵⁵

Reactions in Tuam

While Tuam remained quiet for the rest of Easter Week, the *Tuam Herald*, like many other papers, was left to report the hearsay and rumour swirling from Dublin in its Easter week edition. Communications and transport networks from

Dublin were cut off and only one article covered the rebellion in the capital under the heading 'Grave disorder in Dublin'. The *Herald* reported that Tuam was quiet and added that the only incidents of note was the number of police in the town from neighbouring districts and the passage of motor cars through the town on Thursday, conveying prisoners to Galway. Referring to the arrests made in the town, the paper named three of the prisoners, Dunleavy, Cummins and Kilgarrieff, along with their addresses. The *Herald* did not know the charges but prayed that Tuam would be spared the 'horrors and tumults now going on in other parts of the country'. Events in other parts of Galway were reported by reprinting the accounts from the *Connacht Tribune*.⁵⁶

The *Tuam Herald* changed its view little in the intervening months. A couple of weeks later, the *Herald* was content to conclude that the Rising had been the action of a 'small but desperate section of the Irish people'.⁵⁷ It was, the paper claimed, merely part of the German 'low game of treachery, trickery and intrigue'.⁵⁸ The *Herald* turned its ire on Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell and the complacency and incompetence of a Dublin Castle administration that had allowed the Rising to occur.⁵⁹ It could be said that the *Herald* was speaking from a position of strength having alluded to its prior warning.

Galway County Council was vigorous in its condemnation of the Rising, blaming it on 'irresponsible persons' who cajoled 'uneducated peasants' into rebellion.⁶⁰ However, the Town Commissioners in Tuam did not pass comment on the events of Easter Week. Perhaps, as Gabriel O'Connor has remarked, the Commissioners were merely 'very selective in the political actions they supported'.⁶¹ The majority of commissioners had been Redmondites for some time; the poverty in the town also meant the commissioners had other concerns to fill their proceedings. Indeed, the financial consequences of the Rising would be very great for Tuam as the town's services relied on county council grants. As people switched allegiance to Sinn Féin, the collection of rates fell to a trickle.⁶²

As in almost all parts of the country after the Rising, politics in Tuam underwent a process of change. By February 1917, the Redmondite *Tuam Herald* editor Richard Kelly was calling for full and immediate home rule. His editorial of 24 February lamented that the suspension of home rule for the duration of the war had been used as a triumph for unionists to try to bolster their 'discredited ascendancy' rather than as an expedient.⁶³ Sinn Féin's victory in the South Longford by-election in May 1917 was celebrated in Tuam by supporters lighting tar barrels and parading to the tune of Irish airs.⁶⁴ The *Herald* was further discouraged by de Valera's stunning success in Clare in July 1917; it complained about the 'fatal poison of procrastination' as it again attacked British government policy.⁶⁵ Although, by August, another Redmondite, F.B. McDonogh, had been re-elected chairman of

the Town Commission, the Commission passed a resolution proposed by the Tuam MacHale Sinn Féin club, disagreeing with Galway County Council's condemnation of the rebels of Easter Week.⁶⁶ This was passed with only two dissenters (including the chairman) while another resolution, condemning the executions of the rebels, was unanimously passed.⁶⁷ The change in mood was also reflected in the town commissioners being happy to grant permission to the local Sinn Féin club to hold a concert and lecture on 23 September, and the Tuam Board of Guardians passing resolutions supporting the convictions of those associated with the Portobello murders. Sinn Féin clubs were organised in neighbouring parishes at this time while John D. Costello took charge of the North Galway Volunteers. Nonetheless, it remained a small grouping; Thomas Nohilly related in his witness statement that Volunteers numbered around thirty-five in late 1917.⁶⁸

As the conscription crisis broke, the *Herald* seemed to accept that conscription was justified by the situation in Europe but recognised that it was against the wishes of the Irish people and called for a native Irish government to be established first.⁶⁹ However, both the IPP and Sinn Féin supporters were virulently opposed and displayed their opposition at a meeting in the Square in Tuam on 14 April 1918. Fr Owen Hannon, administrator, presided while 1,800 Volunteers marched along with the Tuam Brass Band. Fr Hannon addressed the crowd and told them they were 'slaves' but that they had the right to be free. The Redmondite chair of the town commissioner, F.B. McDonogh, voiced his opposition to conscription and Fr Eaton, President of St Jarlath's College, also spoke. In fact, Fr Eaton was one of four priests who spoke in addition to Fr Hannon as chair. The united front against the Military Service Act was clearly demonstrated in Tuam.⁷⁰

1918 election

McDonogh remained chairman of the Town Commissioners in 1918.⁷¹ However, this should not mask the scale of the problems facing the Irish Party by the time of the 1918 election, even if the party appears to have retained more support in North Galway than in the other constituencies in the county.⁷² The outgoing MP for Galway North, Richard Hazleton, was one of the few younger men who Redmond and the party leadership had been able to bring into the IPP. However, Hazleton opted to switch constituencies to Louth where the Irish Party had a better chancing of winning (Hazleton would come within 255 votes of defeating the Sinn Féin candidate).⁷³ In Hazleton's stead, the IPP was represented in North Galway by Thomas Sloyan who opposed Sinn Féin's Dr Brian Cusack. Sloyan, a commercial traveller, was well known for his work in the land struggle, his advocacy on behalf of town tenants, and his involvement with the Volunteers in Tuam in its early

stages. However, he was no match for Cusack. A former member of the IRB in London and graduate of UCG, Cusack defeated Sloyan by 8,896 votes to 3,999 from his prison cell.⁷⁴ According to some accounts, the Volunteers remained on duty throughout the election in Tuam and its hinterland, accompanying ballot boxes along with the RIC.⁷⁵ Unlike in certain other parts of the country, there seems to have been little violence or dramatic incidents in north Galway.

Conclusion

Reflecting on Sinn Féin's victory in 1918, the *Tuam Herald* noted a 'sad turn of the tide'.⁷⁶ Such sentiments reflected a moderate nationalist base in the Tuam area, even after the Rising. Yet this base was overcome by Sinn Féin, so the question remains of how to reconcile this with the fact there was no rising in 1916 and little support for one. Perhaps one approach is to examine whether or not the IPP and Sinn Féin always represented clear distinctions between nationalists. Dr T.B. Costello, for example, was prominent in the Gaelic League but took Redmond's side when the Volunteers split in 1914.⁷⁷ Support for the IPP did not always equate to staunch belief in home rule and nothing more, much less loyalty to Empire. In fact, support for the IPP could often be cast as part of the longer tradition of nationalism.⁷⁸ In his BMH witness statement, Tuam Volunteer Thomas Wilson explained his nationalist background by referencing the Fenian tradition he learned from his uncle, while in the same breath he mentioned his father's membership of the Land League and later the Redmondite United Irish League. It is worth noting his father's United Irish League membership card bore the image of Wolfe Tone.⁷⁹

On the other hand, younger activists in the town, shop assistants such as Langley and others in the Fianna had little sympathy with the home rule movement. The prominence of individuals like John Burke and others in Sinn Féin from an early stage would also seem to chime with Fergus Campbell's evidence from other parts of county Galway that Sinn Féin officers came from advanced nationalist rather than home rule backgrounds.⁸⁰ However, it may be appropriate to reflect on the variety and divergence of opinions among voters locally and nationally. Anger at the failures of the British government to grant self-government and horror at the same administration's reaction to the Rising left many shades of nationalist opinion disgruntled. It was this discontent which Sinn Féin was able to mobilise behind it in 1918, even among those who might not have contemplated rebellion before 1916. Although Sinn Féin members such as Eileen Costello and Samuel Browne were elected to the new Tuam Town Commission after the 1920 local elections, five of the thirteen commissioners retained their seats.⁸¹

The failure of 1916 in Tuam concerns the reasons why the grouping in the town that had clearly committed to radical nationalism and were contemplating a rebellion was so small. This situation was broadly typical of many areas around the country while perhaps untypical compared to other parts of county Galway. A UIL meeting in Tuam in March 1915 had featured the catch-cry ‘graziers and grabbers stand aside ... so long as you are willing to associate with the grabbers they are justified in holding the land’.⁸² Police reports often referred to trouble in sub-districts of Tuam with Turloughmore and Cummer described as ‘notorious’.⁸³ In spite of this, the same reports emphasised that areas such as Craughwell, Athenry and Loughrea in the county’s east riding were the worst affected by land agitation and such activity has been linked to broader unrest as a factor in causing rebellion in Galway in 1916.⁸⁴ Land troubles in Tuam appear to have been comparatively less significant. Apart from Wilson’s remarks referred to above and Sean O’Neill’s witness statement, Volunteers in the area make scant reference to agrarian agitation.

Tuam did not have as broad a base of radical activists to build on as existed in Athenry and elsewhere. O’Neill and others expressed great admiration for Mellows, but the famous organiser spent more time in other parts of the county and, in spite of the best efforts of Langley and others in Tuam, the number of activists remained small. Such a situation was replicated in another county which rose in 1916. In Wexford, the centre of the rebellion, Enniscorthy, was different from the other towns; its IRB membership profile was higher, advanced nationalist groups were more vibrant and its newspaper, *The Echo*, counted IRB member Laurence de Lacy among its staff. Accordingly, in 1916, Enniscorthy became the focal point for rebellion and the comparatively small number of Volunteers from Gorey, for example, headed for Enniscorthy.⁸⁵ In towns like Athenry and Enniscorthy, where radical nationalists had a large enough following to achieve a ‘critical mass’, mobilisation was easier; more Volunteers and leaders created a more dynamic movement and perhaps helped to mobilise less committed rebels. This did not apply in Tuam.

Even in the best case scenario for the rebels nationally (e.g. if Roger Casement’s landing had been a success and nationwide Rising had been successfully implemented), it is difficult to see how any effective rebellion could have taken place in Tuam without collaboration with rebels in other areas. Plans for the Rising were muddled as elsewhere and information was seemingly confined to the small IRB circle. The idea of raiding the well-manned local RIC barracks seems to have been doomed to failure in the circumstances. The plan to get the train to Athenry to assist the far greater forces operating there was clearly the best chance for Liam Langley and his comrades to contribute to the Easter Rising in Galway. That this plan failed was for the same reasons as 1916 plans of differing sizes floundered elsewhere: poor communications (not helped by the publication of MacNeill’s

counter-manding order), lack of men and arms and a strong RIC presence. Thus, Tuam would have to wait for the outbreak of the War of Independence to move from a position of rumour but relative quiet to truly feeling the effects of militant nationalist struggle.

Endnotes

1. *Tuam Herald*, 29 April 1916.
2. In his 1843 *Irish sketch book*, he actually described Tuam as 'a very mouldy, dirty town,' W. Makepeace Thackeray, *The Irish sketch book* (London, Collins Press, 1843), p. 274.
3. Fergus Campbell has also highlighted a far greater tendency for Sinn Féin officials in Galway after the Rising to have come from pre-1916 advanced nationalist movements rather than home rule organisations. F. Campbell, *Land and revolution: Nationalist politics in the west of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 223.
4. J. McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the third Home Rule crisis* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2013), pp 141-7; M. Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party: provincial Ireland 1910-1916* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp 66-8, 256. The IRB had a sometimes close and often complex relationship with the GAA from its foundation; see W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish nationalist politics, 1884-1924* (London, Gill and Macmillan, 1987).
5. M. O'Brien, 'Johnny Ridge: The last of the Tuam Krugers' *JOTS (Journal of the Old Tuam Society)*, 12 (2015), pp. 63-73. There was a Tuam football club founded in December 1887 but the name 'Tuam Stars' only appears in the pages of the *Tuam Herald* from 1889, *Tuam Herald* 9, 16, 23 March 1889.
6. Bureau of Military History, Military Archives (hereafter BMH MA), Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin, Contemporary documents No. 72, J. Haverty, 'Memoirs of an ordinary republican', p. 24. I am grateful to Cormac Ó Comhraí for pointing me towards this source.
7. M. O'Donoghue, 'Eibhlín Bean Mhic Chosidealbha (1870-1962)' in J. A. Claffey (Ed.), *Glimpses of Tuam since the Famine* (Tuam, Old Tuam Society, 1997), p. 229.
8. Bureau of Military History, Witness Statements (hereafter BMH WS) No. 1184, Eileen Costello, 9 June 1955.
9. G. O'Connor, 'A comparative study of Local Government in Tuam and Armagh 1840-1940' (unpublished PhD thesis, Maynooth University 2004), p. 171; J. Cunningham, *Labour in the west of Ireland: working life and struggle 1890-1914* (Belfast, Athol Press, 1995), pp 140-2.
10. Sinn Féin raised a brief challenge to the IPP in 1907 when MP Charles Dolan resigned his seat and contested it as a Sinn Féin candidate. M. Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp 25-30.
11. O'Connor, 'A comparative study of Local Government in Tuam and Armagh 1840-1940', p. 171.
12. For a full account of na Fianna, see M. Hay, 'The foundation and development of the Fianna, 1909-16', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 141 (May 2008), pp 53-71.
13. Much valuable information on Langley may be garnered from a blog curated and written by his granddaughter Eimear Cremen. This site provides a lot of information (based largely on BMH witness statements) on Langley's activities and advanced nationalism in Tuam in general. The website is referenced as appropriate throughout this chapter. <http://liamlangley.blogspot.ie/p/family.html> (accessed on 4 November 2015).
14. BMH WS No. 1437, Thomas Nohilly, 18 June 1956. For other references to the football team, see BMH WS No. 1219, Sean O'Neill, 27 July 1955. This is perhaps reflective of the connection between GAA and Irish Volunteer leadership in county Galway identified by Úna Newell in Ú. Newell, 'The Rising of the Moon: Galway in 1916', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 58 (2006), p. 121.
15. BMH WS No. 1437, Thomas Nohilly; National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI) Colonial Office (hereafter CO) 904/99, County Inspector (hereafter CI), Galway (West Rising), February 1916.
16. BMH WS No. 1437, Thomas Nohilly.
17. *Connacht Tribune*, 9 April 1966. This article, featuring recollections from a 'North Galway Volunteer Officer', contains the names of members of Tuam Fianna in these years. See also http://liamlangley.blogspot.ie/p/na-fianna_30.html (accessed on 18 January 2016).
18. BMH WS No. 1489, Patrick Dunleavy, 5 September 1956.
19. BMH WS No. 1219, Sean O'Neill, 27 July 1955.
20. BMH WS No. 220, Patrick O'Daly, 6 April 1949; BMH WS No. 1437, Thomas Nohilly; BMH WS No. 1489, Patrick Dunleavy; BMH WS No. 1330, John D. Costello, 21 December 1955. John D. Costello's BMH witness statement complained of political corruption and he attempted to get

- Maurice Moore to stand for North Galway at the next election. He showed the letter to Langley, who afterwards asked him to join the IRB, which he did in 1913.
21. *Tuam Herald*, 7 and 14 February 1914.
 22. BMH WS No. 1320, Michael J. Ryan, 19 December 1955; BMH WS No. 1183, Thomas Wilson, 8 June 1955.
 23. BMH WS No. 1320, Michael J. Ryan.
 24. NLI, Maurice Moore Papers Ms. 8489 (5), p. 231: the Tuam Company made up part of the second Battalion no. 2371 in Moore's organisation of the Galway Volunteers; J.J. Waldron, 'Tuam and the Irish Volunteers, 1914-15' in Claffey (ed.), *Glimpses of Tuam since the Famine*, p. 195. Waldron's account first appeared in the *Tuam Herald*.
 25. M. Clancy, 'Women of the West: campaigning for the vote in early twentieth century Galway, c. 1911- c. 1915' in L. Ryan and M. Ward (eds), *Irish Women and the Vote: becoming citizens* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2007), p. 49; NLI CO 904/99, CI Galway (East Riding), February 1916.
 26. *Tuam Herald*, 8 August 1914.
 27. *Tuam Herald*, 21 November 1914.
 28. BMH WS No. 1320, Michael J. Ryan.
 29. *Tuam Herald*, 28 November 1914.
 30. BMH WS No. 1330, John D. Costello.
 31. BMH WS No. 1489, Patrick Dunleavy; BMH WS No. 816, Liam Langley, 19 March 1953.
 32. Waldron, 'Tuam and the Irish Volunteers, 1914-15', p. 201.
 33. J. Deignan, 'The arrest of Seán MacDiarmada in Tuam', *JOTS (Journal of the Old Tuam Society)*, 7 (2010), pp 76-8; BMH WS No. 816, Liam Langley.
 34. BMH WS No. 816, Liam Langley.
 35. Ibid. and BMH WS No. 1330, John D. Costello.
 36. Deignan, 'The arrest of Seán MacDiarmada in Tuam', p. 77.
 37. BMH WS No. 816, Liam Langley; http://liamlangley.blogspot.ie/p/na-fianna_30.html (accessed on 18 January 2016).
 38. NLI CO 904/98 and 904/99, CI Galway (West Riding), October 1915 and February 1916.
 39. A. Beirne, 'The Kellys of the *Tuam Herald*', *JOTS (Journal of the Old Tuam Society)*, 9 (2012), pp 91- 97.
 40. *Tuam Herald*, 15 April 1916.
 41. BMH WS No. 1489, Patrick Dunleavy.
 42. BMH WS No. 1320, Michael J. Ryan.
 43. BMH WS No. 1330, John D. Costello.
 44. BMH WS No. 1489, Patrick Dunleavy.
 45. BMH WS No. 373, John Hosty, 8 April 1950; BMH WS No. 374, Mícheál Ó Droighneáin, 9 April 1950. 'Liam T. Langley – Easter Week 1916' <http://liamlangley.blogspot.ie/p/1916.html> (accessed on 4 November 2015).
 46. BMH WS No. 1437, Thomas Nohilly.
 47. Ibid; 'Liam T. Langley – Easter Week 1916' <http://liamlangley.blogspot.ie/p/1916.html> (accessed on 4 November 2015).
 48. Ibid.
 49. BMH WS No. 1330, John D. Costello.
 50. BMH WS No. 1489, Patrick Dunleavy. In his memoir, James Haverty had a different version of events, recalling that they waited for the Tuam men in Mountbellew and abandoned thoughts of linking up with the Tuam contingent when a messenger told them the Tuam Volunteers had already been arrested, Haverty, 'Memoirs of an ordinary republican', pp 61-4.
 51. BMH WS No. 1219, Sean O'Neill.
 52. Comerford, 'Recollections of Tuam 1912-16', in Claffey (ed.) *Glimpses of Tuam since the Famine*, pp 188-9.
 53. BMH WS 1437, Thomas Nohilly.
 54. 'Liam T. Langley – 'Easter week 1916' <http://liamlangley.blogspot.ie/p/1916.html> (accessed on 9 November 2015); Newell, 'The Rising of the Moon', pp 127-8.
 55. *Tuam Herald*, 6 July 1968; Obituary <http://liamlangley.blogspot.ie/p/obituary.html> (accessed on 4 November 2015).
 56. *Tuam Herald*, 29 April 1916.
 57. *Tuam Herald*, 13 May 1916.
 58. *Tuam Herald*, 20 May 1916.
 59. *Tuam Herald*, 13 May 1916.
 60. GC1-02(f) , Minutes Galway County Council, 5 May 1916 [http://gccapps.galwaycoco.ie/ArchivedDocuments/Galway%20County%20Council,%20Minutes,%20GC-1/GC1-02,%202029-1-1908%20-%202014-06-1917/GC1-02\(f\)%202029-01-1908%20-%202014-06-1917%20pp683-834.pdf](http://gccapps.galwaycoco.ie/ArchivedDocuments/Galway%20County%20Council,%20Minutes,%20GC-1/GC1-02,%202029-1-1908%20-%202014-06-1917/GC1-02(f)%202029-01-1908%20-%202014-06-1917%20pp683-834.pdf) (accessed on 14 October 2015). This resolution was rescinded on 19 June 1920.
 61. G. O'Connor, 'The development of Local Government in the town of Tuam from earliest times to the Government of Ireland Act of 1920' (unpublished MA thesis, Maynooth University 1994), p. 234; O'Connor, 'A comparative study of Local Government in Tuam and Armagh 1840-1940', p. 172.
 62. O'Connor, 'A comparative study of Local Government in Tuam and Armagh 1840-1940', pp 168-9.
 63. *Tuam Herald*, 24 February 1917.
 64. *Tuam Herald*, 12 May 1917.
 65. *Tuam Herald*, 14 July 1917.
 66. O'Connor, 'A Comparative Study of Local Government in Tuam and Armagh 1840-1940', p. 173.
 67. Ibid. and TTC 1-05 (a), Monthly meeting of Tuam Town Commissioners, 2 May 1916 [http://gccapps.galwaycoco.ie/ArchivedDocuments/Tuam%20Town%20Commissioners%20-%20Minutes,%201843-1968,%20TTC-1/TTC-1-05,%201914-07-15%20to%201926-01-06/TTC-1-5%20\(a\),%201914-07-05%20to%201920-08-17.pdf](http://gccapps.galwaycoco.ie/ArchivedDocuments/Tuam%20Town%20Commissioners%20-%20Minutes,%201843-1968,%20TTC-1/TTC-1-05,%201914-07-15%20to%201926-01-06/TTC-1-5%20(a),%201914-07-05%20to%201920-08-17.pdf) (accessed on 11 October 2015).
 68. BMH WS No. 1437, Thomas Nohilly.
 69. *Tuam Herald*, 13 April 1918.
 70. *Tuam Herald*, 20 April 1918.

71. O'Connor, 'A comparative study of Local Government in Tuam and Armagh 1840-1940', p. 167.
72. Una Newell suggested that towns with men serving in the British Army were slower to abandon the IPP, Newell, 'The Rising of the Moon', p. 132; Brian M. Walker, (Ed), *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 1978), p. 390.
73. B. Hourican, 'Hazleton, Richard' in J. McGuire and J. Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009) <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3887> (accessed on 7 October 2015).
74. BMH WS No. 736, Brian Cusack, 9 October 1952.
75. BMH WS No. 1489, Patrick Dunleavy.
76. *Tuam Herald*, 4 January 1919. Opposition to Sinn Féin remained among many IPP supporters in towns where antipathy has been described as 'profound', C. McNamara, 'The most *Shoneen* town in Ireland: Galway in 1916', *History Ireland*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2011), pp 34-7.
77. By contrast, James Haverty recounted members of the pro-Home Rule fraternal body, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, conspiring against advanced nationalists in the GAA in north and east Galway, Haverty, 'Memoirs of an ordinary republican', pp 45-7.
78. McConnel has shown that a significant number of Irish Party MPs had some form of Fenian heritage up to the early twentieth century, J. McConnel, 'Fenians at Westminster: The Edwardian Irish Parliamentary Party and the legacy of the New Departure', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 133 (May 2004), pp 42-64.
79. BMH WS No. 1183, Thomas Wilson. Sean O'Neill also referenced the importance of the Land League along with the Fenian tradition, BMH WS No. 1219, Sean O'Neill.
80. Campbell, *Land and revolution*, pp. 187, 231 and 308-310.
81. TTC 1-05 (a), Monthly meeting of Tuam Town Commissioners, 2 May 1916 [http://gccapps.galwaycoco.ie/ArchivedDocuments/Tuam%20Town%20Commissioners%20-%20Minutes,%201843-1968,%20TTC-1/TTC-1-05,%201914-07-15%20to%201926-01-06/TTC-1-5%20\(a\),%201914-07-05%20to%201920-08-17.pdf](http://gccapps.galwaycoco.ie/ArchivedDocuments/Tuam%20Town%20Commissioners%20-%20Minutes,%201843-1968,%20TTC-1/TTC-1-05,%201914-07-15%20to%201926-01-06/TTC-1-5%20(a),%201914-07-05%20to%201920-08-17.pdf) (accessed on 12 November 2015).
82. *Tuam Herald*, 6 and 27 March 1915 cited in D. Ferriter, *A Nation and not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (London, Profile Books, 2015), p. 144.
83. NLI CO 904/97, CI Galway (West Riding), January 1915.
84. For more on the links between rural unrest and rebellion in Galway, see Newell, 'The Rising of the Moon', pp 114-116, 132. Land purchase ground to almost a standstill with the onset of the war which reduced agrarian trouble in the period prior to the Rising.
85. Newspapers published in Wexford town and Gorey were resolutely Redmondite and the *Enniscorthy Guardian* was too; however, *The Echo* took a more advanced line with the legend "Complete National Independence, purity and progress in administration, and a fair opportunity for every individual and every class" above all its editorials; BMH WS No. 81, Bulmer Hobson, 17 December 1947.

Whistling past the colonial graveyard: why the 1916 Rising failed to resonate in Ballinasloe

Declan Kelly



Figure 11.1 Image taken at top of St Michael's Square, Ballinasloe for 1966 commemorations. Left to Right: Fr Peter Dunne, Monsignor Timothy Glennon, Rev Cyril Champ, Tadhg Mac Lochlainn, Paddy Carroll.

Ballinasloe and Easter 1916

One of the principal events of the 50th anniversary commemorations in Ballinasloe was the unveiling of a large glass case containing the Proclamation, at the upper end of Market (St Michael's) Square by Mr Paddy Carroll, retired court clerk, which he then read to the crowd in attendance. It was reported that Carroll was "50 years ago ... arrested and imprisoned for doing the same thing".¹ In reality, Paddy Carroll did not read the Proclamation until 15th August 1918, at a camogie match in the Fair Green.² Rev Dr Patrick Kevin Egan, in his history of the parish of Ballinasloe, only mentions the Rising in

general, stating that it occurred “to the bewilderment of the people as a whole”³ In the days following the Rising, there was little if any notice from either Ballinasloe’s more prominent citizens or public bodies. The editor of the *East Galway Democrat* was more concerned with the prospect of the town being plunged into temporary darkness as the first item of local news in the edition of 6th May 1916 noted the fact that the “Gas Holder at the Gas Works is in a very bad condition and may collapse at any moment”. However, the Insurrection was well known about and the *Democrat*’s correspondent noted in the same edition that

One driver with whom we were speaking told us that he left his car a few miles outside the town when he was coming in, fearing that it would be taken by the Sinn Féiners. He was agreeably surprised to find that everything was quiet and left Ballinasloe with the ... good tidings that Ballinasloe still remains on the map.

Yet again, the same edition notes that Ballinasloe Urban District Council were unimpressed with “those misguided Irishmen connected with the recent disturbances” but nonetheless called for John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party to use their influence to have them “treated with leniency and mercy”. The Ballinasloe Board of Guardians were similarly nonplussed expressing their “thorough condemnation of those who brought such misery on our Country by their insane attempt at rebellion”, announcing that it was “instigated as we believe by Germany ...”. There is brief comment on the arrests of Mr John O’Reilly, Manual Instructor at Ballinasloe Technical School and Mr Gaffney, a professor of the Pines Diocesan College. Jack O’Reilly was taken to Richmond Barracks, Dublin, and later to Wandsworth Prison, South London, before being interned in Frongoch Camp, North Wales, from which he was released in July 1916. He died aged 35 the following September,⁴ the implication being that his constitution was broken by the rigours of prison life. He was buried in his native Tralee. Joseph Gaffney, who was also interned at Frongoch, can only have been at the Pines Diocesan College for a short time as he is not listed in the 1911 Census. A native of Kilmallock, Co Limerick, the college prospectus of 1913 lists him as responsible for teaching science and states that he trained for two years at the Royal College of Science in London.⁵ Gaffney is believed to have taken up a teaching post later in Co Sligo and he remained active in nationalist activities. No evidence was found that either of these men were even mentioned when the Insurrection’s 50th anniversary was marked locally in 1966.

The only events related to 1916 that might be said to have occurred in Ballinasloe were recounted briefly in an article written in 1959 for the Clonfert diocesan college’s *Gearrbhaile* magazine by Rev Prof Tom Fahy:

The dark clouds of the Great War were casting shadows over our lives at the time. In the autumn of 1914, I think, the first camp of the Volunteers outside Dublin was set up. This camp was in a field adjoining the college. Terence MacSwiney, Pierse McCann and Liam Mellows were frequent visitors and spent many an hour in the college. When Liam Mellows was on his way to prepare for the Rising in Galway in 1915, I believe, he called to the college. I asked him if they were serious about fighting, or if they were a political movement similar to what Carson had set up in Ulster to block Home Rule. Liam's answer left me in no doubt about what thing they had in mind.

Curiously, Fahy made no mention of Joseph Gaffney despite the fact that they were contemporaries on the college staff and that, in the same article, he reminisced on all the other lay staff in the college during his own tenure there.

Significantly, Barra ÓMaolalaidh, a native of Ballinasloe, recalls being present at a meeting in the assembly room of St Grellan's Boys School preparatory to the 50th anniversary celebrations. On that occasion he heard Mr Paddy Carroll state that prior to the Rising, most people in Ballinasloe were proud to be part of the British Empire and that it was only after the events succeeding the Rising that the tide of opinion began to change.⁶

The Trench Family and the evolution of Ballinasloe town

The reason why Ballinasloe failed to answer to the call to arms in 1916 may be attributed largely to the influence exerted on the local mindset by the Trench family, who were the main catalysts in the growth of the annual October Fair. The rapid expansion in houses and businesses was due to the granting of generous leases on condition that structures of quality were erected.⁷ A synthesis of the architectural and documentary evidence for the rapid growth of Ballinasloe between 1716 and 1819, may help to appreciate more readily that the very existence of the town owes much to the efforts of the Trench family. There is a brief, though interesting, comment on local topography in the early eighteenth century from the pen of eminent physician and antiquarian Sir Thomas Molyneux. Passing through the place in 1709 he noted 'a very pretty scituated (*sic*) village on ye river Suck', which seems to confirm the local belief that the town developed from the area now called the Hill of Back, which skirts along by the Suck. What is even more notable is Molyneux's remarking on '... a Danesmount, with a large trench round it ... so flat one might almost (*sic*) take it for a fort: this, with one more, were the only mounts I saw on all ye road between Killeglin and Gallway (*sic*), tho' their forts were all along the way mighty frequent'.⁸ The incorrectly named 'Danesmount' he viewed may have been the remains of the old stronghold of Dún Leodha at which

point Molyneux and his entourage would have been obliged to ford the river.⁹ As he was en route to Kilconnell, however, and would have passed the far more prominent feature of Knockadoon (derived from *the hill of the fortress* and upon which St John's Church of Ireland now stands), it is more likely that he was referring to Knockadoon. From the configuration of Knockadoon, we may now surmise that what Molyneux saw were the remains of a motte and bailey, and the fact that the trench at Knockadoon's basal area would have approximately encompassed large sections of what are now the main thoroughfares suggests strongly that this section of the town was almost completely devoid of dwellings. On 26th February 1716 William Spenser, grandson of the poet Edmund Spenser, had sold his lands with rights to all fairs and markets to Frederick Trench of Garbally and shortly thereafter we see in the various phases of local building what Henry Inglis would in 1834 call a "fostering hand".¹⁰

The earliest known inn to serve visitors to Ballinasloe is believed to have been called *The Sign of the Cock and the Hen* and must have been established before 1723¹¹ when Jonathan Swift stayed there en route to visit Bishop Theophilus Bolton in Clonfert. This tavern reputedly stood where Mockler's Hotel was later built on River Street and must have been the same building advertised in 1780 as 'The Great Inn in Ballinasloe'.¹² A decade after 1723, the use of external memorials in the southern zone of Creagh cemetery became apparent, with two modestly sized but ornate headstones dating from 1733 and 1734. These are known to have been erected by Catholic families, despite the fact that this zone of the cemetery contains predominantly Protestant burials; from 1760 onwards Catholic burials moved out from an initially small, discrete area and radiated into other sections of the same zone, signifying the growing economic importance of certain families. Rev Dr Egan has suggested that this mix of burials is related to the site having been formerly appropriated by a medieval church and it may be that older local families continued to use the place for burial, even after the Reformation. Egan has also noted that, while many eighteenth-century landlords advertised plots of land for lease by Protestants only, the Trench notices contained no such stipulations.¹³ Frederick Trench was beginning to put the area on a firm business footing when he published a notice in *Pue's Occurrences* in 1747 letting

*for three lives from the first day of May next, several plots in the town of Ballinasloe in the county of Galway, with a sufficient number of acres near said town ... very convenient to persons inclined to carry on the linen or woollen manufacture in said town...*¹⁴

In 1757, he received patents to hold fairs on 15th May and 13th July. The fair now held in October was established before the Trench family had bought the lands from Spenser.¹⁵

By 1735 Ballinasloe's fame was sufficiently established for Francis Nichols to describe it as being "finely placed on the river Suck"¹⁶ and in 1737 a Charter School was built. The bridge, which traditionally marked the boundary between the counties of Galway and Roscommon, was completed by William Brennan in 1754, replacing a narrower structure of the Elizabethan era. The last quarter of the eighteenth century saw an energetic phase of civic building and road-laying in and about Ballinasloe which is mostly attributable to the vision of William Power Keating Trench (1741-1805) who was ennobled as Baron Kilconnell in 1797 and created first Earl of Clancarty in 1803. There is a now vague tradition that Tea-lane was the first street in Ballinasloe. Taylor and Skinner's Road Map of 1777 seems to depict Tea-lane above a spur which may be the current Market (St Michael's) Square in an incomplete form, but it also shows that Main Street was by that time well under construction. A lease, also dated to 1777, described Tea-lane as 'Back-street'¹⁷ which suggests that it was by then understood to be subordinate to the principal thoroughfare. At least one lease is known for Main Street from 1767, but there is little in the way of documentation, which may be a consequence of the burning of Garbally House and its contents in 1818. Taylor and Skinner's map does not show either Dunlo or Society Street but seems to display what is now Main Street running in a straight line to Garbally House, with just one road branching away to Galway. The lack of building along these arteries was confirmed by the biographer of Archbishop Power le Poer Trench who stated that by 1790/1791, the future Society Street was "chiefly occupied by the poor ... in none but the meanest cabins". The same source also noted that "Brakernagh (*sic*) was only building" at the same time.¹⁸ Thus, it appears that Tea-lane predated both Dunlo and Society Street and also Brackernagh. While Taylor and Skinner's map shows that neither Dunlo nor Society Street were even laid by 1777, a lease for the building on the corner of these streets (formerly O'Rourke's bakery) exists for 1791¹⁹ and the keystone of the archway at what was formerly Duane's pharmacy at the top of Main Street bears the date '1783'. Thus, the concept for two further arteries radiating from Main Street must have been devised between 1783 and 1791. William Power Keating Trench was not unmindful of denominations other than that of the Established Church in his burgeoning town and in 1792 he permitted the Methodists to erect a chapel at the entrance to Tea-lane and the Roman Catholic chapel that preceded St Michael's Church was built below this in 1793. St John's Church of Ireland was erected on Knockadoon at about the same time and replaced the old church in Creagh which continued to be used for Clancarty burials until the 1870s. Larkin's map of 1819 shows the town in approximately its present form. The only major change to Main Street's topography in the late nineteenth century was the demolition in 1862 of Craig's Hotel and the building in its stead of the Masonic Lodge. While Power Keating Trench was progressive, he also inherited some of the ruthlessness more associated with his grandfather David Power of Coorheen, Loughrea. When, in 1784, young Dominic Bellew was stabbed to death for a purse

of sixty guineas in River Street and his body dumped by his killers in the river Suck, local forces of law and order responded quickly. After the posting of reward notices for the successful capture of the perpetrators and a subsequent trial, five men were executed and their remains displayed on a gibbet on the outskirts of the town for months afterwards as a warning to would-be troublemakers.²⁰

The current location of the Fair Green has for a long time been regarded as the main arena for the October Fair; yet, this area has only been used as such since about 1844. The year before, a newspaper correspondent noted that

*We are happy to ensure [sic] the farmers of this province that the necessary arrangements are being made for securing a suitable green for the accommodation of the increasing supply of stock being brought to the fair of this town.*²¹

Prior to that time, the Fair took place near the canal and in a pasture which was known in the 1980s as Burke's Field.²² A relief road connecting River Street to Harbour Road was completed through this area (with a spur road leading to Market Square) in 1985. There are few traceable references to this former location of the Green, though a newspaper report notes that the proposed canal navigation for Ballinasloe would "terminate in a spacious Harbour, about 200 yards south of the fair green in Ballinasloe".²³ This may be the source of the tradition that Tea-lane, now Jubilee Street, was the oldest street in Ballinasloe, being the most convenient to the Fair Green of the time. The location of the original fair and its move to a new area is significant as it reflects the growing importance of the Fair to the economy of the town and also highlights the increased wealth of the Trench family. The Trench family had for some time thrown open their demesne to the sheep fair in July, though we can hardly suppose that this activity was permitted in the landscaped confines of Garbally Park. The sheep fair would have covered the area now used wholly as the Fair Green and also the area now occupied by the largely residential Ard Mhuire and Brackernagh. The area of Brackernagh on which Portiuncula Hospital and Ard Mhuire stand was heavily planted well before 1786.²⁴ Thus, the cattle fair was held in Burke's Field and the sheep fair in the demesne itself. The moving of the Green to its current location was a practical measure by the third Earl, William Thomas le Poer Trench (1803-1872), as he was keen to secure the exhibition of the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society for 1845 and to this end he erected the Royal Agricultural Hall, now the Town Hall, in 1845.²⁵ It was also hugely symbolic and the annual *tableau vivant* that was the October Fair now played out around Knockadoon, which served as a platform for the local Established Church. One might argue that the ground plan laid by William Power Keating Trench reached its apotheosis in the designs of the third Earl.

Military Presence

One strong proof of Ballinasloe's generally tranquil status during the nineteenth century is the chequered history attached to the military barracks in the area known as Waterloo-place which stood almost opposite the Town Hall on what is now Society Street. On the 1842 6" OS map the street is called 'Soldier's Row'. Erected and opened by November 1788, Waterloo-place presents on the 1842 6" map as a pincer-shaped set of buildings that occupied about two roods and thirty-six perches.²⁶ The former Convent of Mercy primary school now occupies the spot where the entrance to the barracks once stood and the buildings have been down since at least 1873, when the school was built. No description has survived of the barracks buildings, though it may be surmised that they were largely functional with a few architectural pretensions thrown in for the officer quarters. When the correspondent for *The Parliamentary Gazetteer* of 1844-1845 reviewed the facilities in Ballinasloe, he described the barrack as "a small and unattractive mass of masonry". As access to the garrison would have been forbidden for most civilians, except perhaps local suppliers, it is unsurprising that no lore about the garrison has passed down the generations. It was believed that it derived its name, Waterloo-place, from the number of veterans of the Napoleonic Wars who lived there, but on foot of recent research it is suggested that it was renamed in honour of Wellington's victory after its renovation in 1820.²⁷ One of the few people to have sojourned there with direct links to Wellington was Major-General Eberhardt Otto George von Bock who briefly had command of the Iron Duke's cavalry.²⁸ The garrison was largely abandoned by about 1813 but in November of 1820 it was announced that

*The barracks, stabling and c. (sic.) at Ballinasloe, having undergone a complete repair ... is to be established as the headquarters of a regiment. The King's Dragoon Guards are to be removed there from Gort next week.*²⁹

Writing about Ballinasloe in 1824, Hely Dutton mentions "two extensive barracks for infantry, and one for cavalry ... for some time unoccupied until in 1820 they were filled with troops called in to quell the ribbonmen". The trouble at that time was undoubtedly that which led to the trial and subsequent execution at Birchgrove, on the Athlone road, of Ribbonman Captain Matt Mannion in March of 1820.³⁰ In 1818, Garbally House had been burned to the ground and although no reason is given for the fire in the few reports available, it may have been caused by agrarian agency. By December 1820, the numbers at the barrack had jumped to more than 1,600, comprising the 1st Light Dragoon Guards and the 49th Regiment of Foot.³¹ Little is known of the barrack but there is no doubt that it was incapable of holding such a large force and the considerable overflow must have been billeted on what is now the Fair Green. In 1931, when an tAthair Eric MacFhinnn was interviewing an

elderly local lady, she asked if it was not true that “the Battle of Waterloo was fought over there near the Convent?”³² While a group of listening schoolboys guffawed at the elderly lady’s naivety, it might not be entirely discounted as it may have been a remnant of memory of army activity on the Green, most likely a large-scale billeting or at least drilling outside of Fair season. The *United Service Magazine* of 1831 lists the barracks among the list of ‘Occupied Temporary Barracks’ and it would seem from this that it was simply a stopping-off point or place of quasi-domicile for convenient regiment units. Newspaper reports bear out this theory as the comings and goings of regiment and cavalry detachments featured frequently. But, while a small group of hussars might take their horses for a canter around Ballinasloe more from a desire to exercise their mounts than because they were on the prowl for would-be miscreants, they were certainly ready for action. When Jozef Borulawski stayed in Ballinasloe in July of 1796 he discovered to his relief just how ready the local troops were.³³ He recounted his experiences with wry humour, though at the time he probably felt threatened. The Polish-born Borulawski, who was a nobleman by adoption, was only 39 inches in full stature. One Sunday morning, he joined a group who were listening to a Methodist preacher, just when the group were beginning a hymn. Borulawski’s appearance caused such excitement that the group deserted the preacher and created a commotion that brought citizens rushing in from all directions to see what was happening. The pitch of excitement was so high that “the garrison flew to arms, thinking that the enemy was approaching ... In consequence of which, the Colonel ordered all the streets to be well ordered by the troops”.³⁴ The hapless Methodist preacher who had earlier implored his “Dear brethren” not to follow “the little red devil” (Borulawski had been wearing a red coat) had begun to sing a hymn to the beat of Handel’s March when a captain of the Dragoons trotted up to him on his mount and told him to shut up as he mistook the hymn for a ballad. Fortunately for Borulawski, he had already met and impressed a number of the locally quartered officers and the same captain that accosted the preacher “came with his dragoons and escorted me home”, leaving the preacher’s face suffused with rage.

Recalcitrant troublemakers in Ballinasloe could not have been many as in 1841 McCulloch noted “a small bridewell, so defective in its interior arrangements, that the male and female convicts are confined in the same sleeping room”.³⁵ From newspaper reports of the time, such persons were more often than not from the local slums and were generally arrested for minor breaches of the peace such as public inebriation or physical altercations with neighbours. The weapons wielded on the latter occasions amounted to nothing more dangerous than a badly aimed bottle or convenient domestic item and thus we may conclude that after the problem of Ribbonism had been neutered the barrack was simply an insurance against non-existential threats. We are aware of only one event which could fall under the heading of a series disturbance which occurred in March

1847 and was briefly noted by the Inspecting Officer, Major Ainslie. A number of men, agitating against the local Relief Committee, marched through the streets with a loaf atop a pole and created a good deal of noise and excitement. There were probably some minor acts of the kind of wanton vandalism that these occasions inevitably inspired as the report states that *“no further outrage has been attempted”*; in any event, troops were soon on the scene with carbines at the ready and the ringleader was conveyed to the local bridewell.³⁶ Despite the relatively small force of local soldiery in the mid-1840s, few would have been doughty enough to have risked being chopped down by a unit of well trained light cavalry. Even when the town was filled with huge crowds and the possibilities for nationalist mischief boundless, there was little trouble and a correspondent writing on the Fair of 1843, noted *“There was a company of the 61st, and a strong police force in attendance. We are at a loss to conjecture what brought them here – for so little necessity did Mr Kearns RM, apprehend for their presence, that, we understand, he did not send a requisition for them”*.³⁷ Waterloo-place seems to have been long vacated by the military in 1866 when it was being used by Junius Horne, a prominent local businessman, as a lodging place for the Fair Week. No date has been traced for its closure as a military station though one local source ascribes it to c. 1870.³⁸ The real date for abandonment by the military probably came just before that as references in newspapers begin to get scarce after 1849 when we learn that *“A company of the 59th Regiment arrived at Ballinasloe this day, from Birr, to relieve one of the 31st, which marched to Athlone”*.³⁹ The felling stroke was probably delivered by the Crimean War and with the loss of over 21,000 men in that conflict, it is likely the British Army felt that ‘outposts’ like Ballinasloe were a luxury that could not be afforded. In the last known reference to it in newspapers, it is noted as the ‘horse repository’⁴⁰ which seems to signal that it finished its days as convenient stabling for the October Fair. It is believed that the forces located there were transferred to Athlone and its short and rather undramatic history would seem to indicate that whatever else Ballinasloe required, it was not a heavily armed force. Townspeople would have daily rubbed shoulders with soldiers on the streets and in its shops in the same manner as they would the members of any other profession and would for the most part have taken their presence for granted. Ballinasloe was tranquil enough for a number of military men to make their homes there, but while they understandably retained the titles associated with their ranks, they took up positions normally linked with civilian status. Major Henry Gascoyne became estate manager for the earls of Clancarty (no doubt aided in his career by his marriage to the daughter of Archbishop Power le Poer Trench), Major Alexander Freer became the main agent for the Canal Company and Captain James Bell became first Manager of the Bank of Ireland. There is no evidence, of which this author is aware, that any of these men were ever troubled by individuals who resented their former military careers.

Sectarianism

Active sectarianism in nineteenth-century Ballinasloe was more the result of individual zeal than general policy. Most of the trouble was caused by the proselytising of Archdeacon Charles le Poer Trench (1772-1839) who was, in any light, an unusual individual. Fifth son of the first Earl, he was Captain and Adjutant of the Galway Militia from 1797 to 1799, during which time his reputation as a martinet earned him the nickname '*Skin 'im alive*'.⁴¹ Despite the fact that his own brother refused him admission to Holy Orders on the basis of his unsuitability, he was ordained and rose to the position of Archdeacon. He was certainly not squeamish and when Matt Mannion was moments from being hanged in 1820, Trench rode dramatically through a crowd estimated in the thousands to enjoin Mannion's relatives to bid their farewells. While initially on friendly terms with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Clonfert Dr Thomas Costello and Archdeacon Garrett Lorcan PP Ballinasloe, by 1818 Trench had come into open conflict with Lorcan on the subject of the estate schools and attempts to use a Protestant catechism for the instruction of Catholic children. This led to a long standing and acrimonious dispute which culminated in court proceedings that cast a dim light on Archdeacon Trench and his private life. Daniel O'Connell would later declare him to have 'thirteen mistresses ... and ... twelve illegitimate children ...' and to have attempted to create a smokescreen for his activities by hurriedly ordaining men on condition that they marry some of his offspring.⁴² After Archdeacon Lorcan had died in 1825, his successor Laurence Dillon continued to resist any attempt at proselytism. When visiting a dying parishioner in 1834, Dillon noticed an Irish language bible on the kitchen dresser. It was alleged that he took the bible, lifted the lid of the fire-grate with a pair of tongs and dropped it in the flames. He then departed without a word, leaving the ailing parishioner's son to wail: "Oh daddy, daddy, Fr Dillon has threw my bible into the fire, come and take it out if you can!"⁴³ These unsavoury matters notwithstanding, one of the finest pieces of architecture in Ballinasloe today is the monument erected in 1840 to Archdeacon Trench's memory. Poor relations between the local Catholic Church and the Clancarty family would continue until into the 1860s when the third Earl unsuccessfully attempted to oppose the introduction of the Sisters of Mercy into Ballinasloe's workhouse.⁴⁴ In what is a curious piece of architectural/cultural contradistinction, the former Convent of Mercy is located directly opposite and below the Trench monument as though the spirit of the Archdeacon was glowering down upon it. While the Convent was being built, relations between the third Earl and the local pillars of Catholicism were almost incendiary. It thus seems wryly ironic that in 1958 a fire station was built between both structures. Today, the cenotaph erected to the memory of Archdeacon Trench peers majestically down on the Fair Green from its perch on Dunlo Hill. While it is a splendid monument, it is illustrative of the reinvention of history that a substantial number of local people believe that

it was erected by the third Earl to mark the burial place of his greyhounds. In 1907 the fifth Earl of Clancarty was declared bankrupt in England and in 1909 in Ireland. Despite speculation in May 1922 that he might shortly return to the family seat,⁴⁵ by November of the same year the contents of Garbally House were auctioned off⁴⁶ and the following year it became a boarding school as part of the diocesan college. Even given the unpleasantness which ran from 1818 until into the 1830s and residually until the 1870s, the Clancarty family had a strong and predominantly positive influence over every arena of activity in the district. By 1931, when an tAthair Eric Mac Fhinn was gathering folklore about Clonfert diocese, any recollections about these periods of sectarian strife were more in the realm of folklore than historical fact. A good example is that of Fr Patrick Costello (1842-1901) who was Administrator of the parish of Ballinasloe from 1882-1889. Costello was reputed to have had an altercation with the Church of Ireland rector Rev Mr John Cotton-Walker during which Cotton-Walker stuck out his tongue at him and was left unable to retract it for the remainder of his days. In a second instance, Costello had overseen the building of the spire of St Michael's Church in 1887 and the dowager Clancarty had complained that the ringing of the new bell was irritating. Costello was reputed to have placed a 'curse' on her and the day after the complaint she was rendered completely deaf.⁴⁷ The first story is probably a folk memory of a mannerism of Cotton Walker's and the dowager Clancarty would have required unparalleled hearing to be annoyed by the clangour of St Michael's bell as she had been resident from 1872 at Coorheen House, Loughrea.⁴⁸ What is significant, however, is that the details surrounding any bad relations between the Clancarty family and their tenantry had within fifty years become not only vague but risible. One is always in danger of reading too much into folklore but it is hardly insignificant that the stories about hauntings at Garbally House and Park begin to circulate at the same time as the British Army occupied it in 1920. These stories are legion and include a panicked officer trying to shoot down a spectre that proceeds to dematerialise through a wall of the House and a group of terrified Black and Tans firing several volleys of bullets through the ghost of Archdeacon Trench on the Broad Walk.⁴⁹ As amusing as these stories may be, the period 1920-1922 brought turmoil to Ballinasloe that had not been seen since the days of the Ribbonmen. There were numerous attacks on Protestant citizens, perhaps the most notorious on Mr Robert Orr and his family in June 1922. A law-abiding Presbyterian, 64 year-old Orr had come to Ballinasloe from Co Monaghan in 1883 as house carpenter to the Clancarty family. His home in Brackernagh was raided by armed men who terrorised his family, beat him savagely and smashed every window-pane and item of furniture in the place.⁵⁰ When he finally moved and offered his home for sale, it was burned to the ground.⁵¹ Similarly, the home of John Wood, a prominent businessman who resided at Cleaghmore, was torched⁵² despite the fact that he had a large number of Catholic employees who were treated fairly. Wood was also Presbyterian. While some prominent local figures failed to

condemn these actions, such events were generally held in abhorrence by locals and perhaps the stories of ghostly goings-on at Garbally were a folkloric hearkening to what people imagined were the disapproving spirits of their dead overlords.

Remembering Nationalists

Even in 1946, when the Clancarty family were long gone and the local Gaelic League took the bold move of renaming thirteen of Ballinasloe's streets and avenues after nationalist figures, they opted for conventional appellations rather than names associated with 1916. These included William McNevin, Patrick Sarsfield, Robert Emmet and Michael Davitt. Of the leaders of the Rising, Eamon Ceannt's name was the only one mooted, but was ultimately not chosen and it would be 1966 before it attached to the railway and bus terminal in Galway city. As an aside, the names chosen had little discernible impact on the local populace and to this day older residents will refer not to Davitt-place but to Reeves-lane, the latter being the older name. This is despite the fact that Reeves-lane⁵³ was completely deserted by 1950 when the last residents abandoned their old homes for new housing.⁵⁴ Furthermore, when this writer questioned a sample of ten locals on the location of 'Hymany Street', another of the names chosen in 1946, only one of those interviewed was aware of its existence. The only local nationalist figure to have his name appended to a civic artery was Matt Harris who had died in 1890. Harris Road runs past the Fair Green from lower Brackernagh to Sarsfield Road. To most in Ballinasloe, however, it is known as 'The Burma Road', a name bestowed by local whimsy at the time of its laying. When the 50th anniversary of the Insurrection came to be celebrated in Ballinasloe in 1966, events began on Friday 22nd April with local children attending a Mass celebrated in St Michael's before being paraded to the schools, where a pupil unveiled the Proclamation and a lecture was delivered. On the Sunday there was a special commemoration concert in the Town Hall and another Mass before Paddy Carroll read the Proclamation again, on this occasion from a platform at the upper end of St Michael's Square.⁵⁵ Most of the large number of veterans attending the ceremony in Market Square were old IRA men from the time of the Battle of Independence and diligent inquiry has failed to uncover the names of anyone present who was an actual witness to the Rising or involved in its preparations with the exception of Monsignor Tom Fahy of University College Galway.

One could argue that the influence of the Clancarty family and the relative prosperity that resulted from the Fair turned Ballinasloe into a predominantly loyalist town and from the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century there were numerous proofs of this loyalism and an adherence to a conservative outlook. On Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887, Church Lane was renamed Victoria Street. When King

Edward VII died in May 1910, the Ballinasloe No 1 Rural District Council tendered sympathy to Queen Alexandra and the Royal Family.⁵⁶ When a public memorial was erected to the late Dr William Rutherford in 1913, the fifth Earl was invited back to perform the unveiling and was ‘very warmly received’.⁵⁷ At least 106 men with Ballinasloe links died in the Great War.⁵⁸ Many of these individuals are recorded as having come from the poorer parts of the local community.⁵⁹ When the British Legion Hut which stood on a margin of the Fair Green was demolished in October 1968, it was not on account of nationalist objections to its existence but because most of the local veterans of the Great War had by that time died and the building itself was in poor condition. There was also an annual Mass offered in St Michael’s Church on Armistice Day until the 1970s. In 1992, a past pupil of Garbally College was recalling how a clerical professor of English there in the 1940s had

*deprecated everything that was Irish and especially everything that related to the fight for Irish freedom. If the British had cut the buttons off the pants of Pearse and his comrades instead of making martyrs of them, Ireland would still be part of the United Kingdom.*⁶⁰

It should be noted, of course, that Ballinasloe was not unique among urban areas in Co Galway in its lack of enthusiasm for the Rising and that it simply conformed to a general pattern with the notable exception of Athenry.⁶¹ Loughrea was certainly no different with one former IRA Volunteer describing Loughrea as ‘one hundred per cent anti-National’ at the time of the Rising.⁶² Ulick de Burgh (1802-1874), first Marquess Clanrickarde, who was the major landed interest in Loughrea for most of the nineteenth century, was absentee, but his affairs were overseen by his seneschal Edmond Silk. Silk was continuing to hold manorial-style court sessions in the district until at least 1838 though one observer considered the proceedings so archaic as to be absurd.⁶³ As with Ballinasloe, there was also an army garrison at Loughrea and this was functioning up until 1920 and had been in operation from at least 1784 when the 14th Light Dragoons were stationed there.⁶⁴ Interestingly, the naming of ‘Liam Mellows Terrace’ in 1950 had little to do with commemoration of the Insurrection and was proposed by Mr Conlan TC⁶⁵ who said: “Although Loughrea was never a Nationalist stronghold, Liam Mellows had many associations here and visited it often during the troubled times”. In the end, the name was passed by a vote of five votes to three defeating proposals to name the new residences either ‘Holy Year Row’ or ‘Maria Assumpta Terrace’.⁶⁶ ‘Donnellan Drive’, named after Loughrea native Brendan Donnellan who died in the Rising, was only so named in about 1980.

Conclusion

Ballinasloe's annual fairs combined with progressive building programmes and generous leases granted by successive earls of Clancarty led to its rapid growth and one may argue that it also contributed to making it a predominantly conservative and loyalist district. Though modestly structured in 1709, by 1819 it had taken on approximately the same configuration it has today. Sectarian strife was mostly the result of individual zeal rather than concerted effort and there is evidence is that the Trench family encouraged rather than obstructed the economic efforts of local Catholic merchants from the early eighteenth century. The fluctuating numbers of soldiers at the army garrison in Waterloo-place with its decline and closure by the late 1850s is evidence of the town's relatively peaceful status during the nineteenth century. The Easter Rising had no discernible impact in the town and neither Jack O'Reilly nor Joseph Gaffney, both of whom held prominent teaching positions in Ballinasloe, have been commemorated in any way locally for their roles in the Insurrection. Paddy Carroll, who first read the Proclamation locally, is recalled as having stated that, at the time of the Rising, Ballinasloe was effectively a town of convinced unionists. The question is not so much why Ballinasloe failed to answer the call to arms in 1916 as much as why anyone, taking into account its strongly loyalist leanings at the time of the Rising, should be surprised that it did not.

Endnotes

1. *Irish Press*, 25 April 1966.
2. *Connacht Tribune*, 24 August 1918.
3. P.K. Egan, *The Parish of Ballinasloe* (Kenny Bookshops & Art Galleries, Galway, 1994), p. 291.
4. *Kerryman*, 2 September 1916.
5. Clonfert Diocesan Archives.
6. Barra Ó Maolalaidh, pers comm
7. P.K. Egan, *Ballinasloe: A historical sketch* (Ballinasloe Tostal Council, 1953), p. 21.
8. T. Molyneux, 'Journey to Connaught', in *The Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*, Vol 1 (Irish Archaeological Society, Dublin, 1846), p. 166.
9. P.K. Egan, *The Parish of Ballinasloe*, p. 20.
10. *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland* 1846, p. 137.
11. The date of Dean Swift's visit is incorrectly recorded on a plaque on the building as 1735.
12. *Dublin Evening Post*, 27 January 1780.
13. P.K. Egan, *The Parish of Ballinasloe*, p. 135.
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15. P.K. Egan, *Ballinasloe: A historical sketch*, p. 23.
16. F. Nichols, *The Irish Compendium, Or Rudiments of Honour* (Pater-noster-Row, London, 1735), p. 21.
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18. J. D'Arcy Sirr, *A Memoir of the Honorable and Most Rev Power le Poer Trench*, Last Archbishop of Tuam (Dublin, 1845), p. 9.
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21. *Tuam Herald*, 21 October 1843.
22. T. Mac Lochlainn, *Ballinasloe: Inniu agus Inné* (Ballinasloe, 1971), p. 43.
23. *Freeman's Journal*, 3 December 1822.
24. W. Wilson, *The Post-Chaise Companion Or Traveller's Directory Through Ireland* (Dublin, 1786), p. 419.
25. D. Kelly, 'Ballinasloe Town Hall – 170 Years Old', *Ballinasloe Life*, Vol 5, Issue 4 (2015), p. 53.
26. *Connacht Tribune*, 18 September 2015.
27. This theory was originally advanced by Rev Dr Kevin Egan who was a curate in the parish from 1938-1960 and interviewed a number of elderly residents when compiling his seminal history of the town. However, research by this author, showed no evidence that any Waterloo veteran ever resided there.

28. N. Ludlow Beamish, *History of the King's German Legion* (Cork, 1837), p. 409.
29. *Freeman's Journal*, 9 November 1820.
30. D. Kelly, *A Moment's Memory: A Personal and Historical Reflection on Creagh, Ballinasloe* (KonnectMedia, 2014), p. 12.
31. *The Annual Register Or a View of the History, Politics and Literature of the Year 1820* (London, 1820).
32. P.E. Mac Fhinn, 'Local History', *An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol 20, No 78 (June 1931), p. 265.
33. J. Borowlaski, *Memoirs of Count Borowlaski* (Durham, 1820), pp 259-61.
34. Ibid.
35. J. Ramsay McCulloch, *Descriptive and Statistical Account of the British Empire* (London, 1847), p. 266.
36. *Sessional Papers of the House of Lords*, Vol. X (1847), p. 229.
37. *Tuam Herald*, 21 October 1843.
38. Mac Lochlainn, *Ballinasloe*, p. 85.
39. *Connacht Telegraph*, 1 January 1849.
40. *Tuam Herald*, 27 September 1873.
41. P.K. Egan, *The Parish of Ballinasloe*, p. 207.
42. D. O'Connell, *A Collection of Speeches Spoken by Daniel O'Connell Esq and Richard Shiel Esq* (Dublin and London, 1828), p. 437.
43. *Leinster Express*, 28 June 1834.
44. P.K. Egan, *The Parish of Ballinasloe*, pp 255-60.
45. *Connacht Tribune*, 13 May 1922.
46. *Irish Independent*, 11 November 1922.
47. Clonfert Diocesan Archives.
48. Coorheen House was originally built by Richard Somerset le Poer Trench (1834-1891) 4th Earl of Clancarty when Viscount Dunlo and just prior to his marriage to Lady Adeliza Hervey. His son William Frederick le Poer Trench, last Earl of Clancarty to reside at Garbally was born at Coorheen in 1868.
49. D. Kelly, *A Moment's Memory*, p.15.
50. *Connacht Tribune*, 30 September 1922.
51. *Freeman's Journal*, 10 March 1922.
52. *Irish Independent*, 1 June 1922.
53. Though it is called Reeves Street in some sources, I have opted for the more frequently used name that appears in newspapers and the censi of 1901 and 1911.
54. The last remnants of housing in Reeves lane were gone by 1965 when a new Post Office was built.
55. *Connacht Tribune*, 9 April 1966.
56. *Connacht Tribune*, 21 May 1910.
57. *Connacht Tribune*, 23 August 1913.
58. www.ballinasloe.org/articles/article.php?ID=54
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Connemara and the Easter Rising¹

Cormac Ó Comhraí

In one way, Connemara's role in the events of Easter Week 1916 was a minor one. The same can be said of much of the country. That does not mean that a study of Connemara at that time is not a worthwhile exercise. In order to gain a proper understanding of the place and of contemporary politics, it is necessary to study those who did not participate in the Rising as much as those who did. Connemara is also significant in another way. Many of those who took part in the Rising viewed the area as a well of Gaelic culture and many of the Rising's leaders had visited the area in the years before 1916. Many nationalists viewed themselves as part of a Catholic, Gaelic nation, although the role of Protestants in nationalist organisations was also recognised. There had been uprisings at various times over the previous hundred years but by the close of the nineteenth century, nationalists were focused more on Westminster than on efforts at rebellion. Supporters of the Home Rule/ Irish Parliamentary Party, which was the most prominent nationalist organisation, felt that Irish people would have to be satisfied with a parliament with limited powers in Dublin, that the Irish would have a role in the British Empire and that the King would be Head of State.

Although the standard of living in the west of Ireland had improved, both as a result of government policies and for other reasons, it was felt that the Westminster government could never serve the public as well as Irish people themselves. Many considered that the most effective way of improving the quality of life for the average person in rural areas was to divide land amongst the poor and to invest in alternative industry in places where the land quality was poor. Ultimately, most nationalists felt that unity was essential leading to intense hostility towards anyone who split the nationalist camp. Nevertheless there were some radical nationalists who did not accept the authority of the Irish Parliamentary Party. These people wanted a much greater level of independence than that available under Home Rule and they included republicans who wanted complete separation from the King, the United Kingdom and the Empire.

In the case of Connemara, radicalism was relatively strong in areas where the Irish language remained strong but was waning, for example the areas around An Mám and Maigh Cuilinn. Radical nationalism was also strong in areas where the Irish language revival movement had been active i.e. An Spidéal (the location of an Irish College) and Ros Muc (where Patrick Pearse had a holiday home). Radical nationalism was far weaker in towns such as Clifden and Oughterard, where people were reasonably well off with a stronger connection to government institutions.

Radical nationalist organisations were also weak in the strongly Irish-speaking areas of southern Connemara. Those areas were poverty-stricken and weaker organisational development should not be equated with local hostility, however. Belonging to the republican movement cost money, through supporting radical newspapers, the loss of employment opportunities and, later, paying for one's own uniform and arms in the Irish Volunteers. This lessened the recruitment potential for radical organisations in poor areas.

Often, it was an individual who kept radicalism alive. Morgan Davoren wrote of one Sinn Féiner in Maigh Cuilinn:

I sure gave Pádraig (Ó Droighneáin) credit for making a number of us who were active at that time better Irishmen and more informed young men that you could find in many parishes around Galway.²



Figure 12.1 Patrick Pearse

The most important radical in Connemara was the Sinn Féiner Pádraic Ó Máille from the Mám area. The police force, the Royal Irish Constabulary, felt that Ó Máille would win the Connemara parliamentary seat if he chose to stand against the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1910. Sinn Féin held no seat at that point and the national leadership was not sufficiently confident to enter the fray. It is for this reason, apparently, that Ó Máille did not put forward his name.³ In reality the Irish Republican Brotherhood/Fenians (IRB) was the most important radical organisation although this was not apparent at the time. The IRB was a secret military organisation seeking to stage a rebellion, establish a republic and sever all ties with the British Empire. There were members of the organisation in Connemara but it would seem that they were not as numerous as in other areas of County Galway. Fenians became members of other organisations in order to steer them towards rebellion or to help improve the quality of life of supporters. One example of a Brother was Mícheál Ó Maoláin from Árainn. Ó Maoláin was in a number of different cultural and political organisations as well as being an active trade-unionist.⁴

At the dawn of the twentieth century, all of Connemara was a *Gaeltacht* (Irish-speaking) or a *breac-Ghaeltacht* (partially Irish-speaking) area.⁵ Visitors viewed Connemara as exotic being different because of the Irish language, poverty and the type of economic system that had developed in the area. Some viewed locals as semi-barbarous. Amongst these people can be numbered certain local senior

police officers who wrote comments such as: ‘These people are uneducated and Irish speaking and once roused are very wild and savage’ and ‘The people there and all along the coast are a very savage race.’⁶ For others, Connemara was a place of romance. They wished to stop the decline of the language and the loss of the culture. They viewed modern urban life as an un-natural phenomenon which oppressed people, although they were not opposed to modern developments and economic progress *per se*. They were Gaelic Leaguers who wished to teach the reading and writing of the language to adults in the Gaeltacht, to develop literature and to have state services available through the language. They understood that the language was in decline for economic reasons as well as cultural and historical ones and they wished to improve the quality of life of the community. They also hoped to spread the language to the non-Irish speaking areas on a long-term basis. Although the revivalists were constantly frustrated by the lack of progress in the *Gaeltacht* and *breac-Ghaeltacht* areas, some, at least in Connemara were attracted to the revival efforts. A branch of the Gaelic League was established on Inishmore at a very early stage. Another illustration of this point is that Pádraic Ó Domhnalláin was teaching Irish to a class of eighty people in Oughterard when he met Patrick Pearse for the first time.⁷

The west was regarded as a disappointment by Gaelic Leaguers, however. There were several reasons for this. Few of the local middle class, for example, had much respect for the language. It was said of An Spidéal in 1901: ‘Most of the shopkeepers, most of those who had made a little money, used English, even if they knew Irish, while they took care not to handicap their children in the race of life by letting them acquire any Irish.’⁸ This had also been the experience of the republican Pádraic Ó Conaire in Ros Muc. In comparison to those around them, his relations there were faring well. English was the language they spoke at home.⁹ Gaeltacht people were criticised for leaving most of the work to save the language to learners and, worse still, for showing those learners disrespect.¹⁰ There were various reasons for the lack of progress. Historically, every state institution and nearly all economic and ecclesiastical institutions had driven Irish speakers towards English. It was believed that Irish would hold people back in America. It did not help the language movement that there was a natural divide between many of the Irish language tourists and those communities they visited. No doubt, visitors who imagined the local community to be a learning aid tainted the relationship. The movement towards English continued as the investment in tourism that learners of Irish could bring was tiny in comparison to the vast economic problems in the west of Ireland and to the economic and cultural power of English.

Another difficulty the Irish language faced was the lack of interest in it by many in politics and the lack of understanding of English-speakers in Gaeltacht areas of the harm they were doing when they were unwilling to learn the language. In 1920,

the republican journalist Tomás Bairéad, a native speaker from Maigh Cuilinn complained of fellow republicans:

*We often wonder does the average Irishman who prates about Sinn Féin and an Irish Republic ever portray in his mind the spectacle of an Ireland free and independent bereft of a national language?*¹¹

When an attempt was made to pressure Sinn Féin in Connemara not to select monoglot English speakers as candidates, the idea did not receive support: ‘they were nearly all in agreement against it’ despite there being thousands of inhabitants in the area who spoke no English. A commentator in the republican newspaper, the *Galway Express* challenged Sinn Féiners: ‘If they are opposed to it (Irish), it is time there was a fight between Sinn Féin and the supporters of Irish.’¹²

Nationalism emerged from various sources and one of the most important was the oral tradition, a tradition which was very strong in Connemara. National and local events were discussed in that culture. The blind poet Raftery had a poem of more than 400 lines describing Irish history.¹³ His poetry was well known as the Volunteers of the revolutionary age were growing up. As a result of their oral tradition, the community viewed itself as part of a race that extended beyond the local community. Songs from all over the country were sung in Connemara and, although most were non-political, others were critical of the state or recalled old conflicts.¹⁴ Previous rebellions may be taken as an example. The first republican rebellion in Ireland was that of 1798 when the United Irishmen rose up against British Rule. Although no significant rebel activity occurred in County Galway, there were executions and Connemara was an important refuge for defeated republicans for a number of years following the rebellion. The community retained folk memory of these events.¹⁵

The next major revolutionary organisation was the Irish Republican Brotherhood, or the Fenians as they were commonly known. The fathers of Petie McDonnell in Leenane¹⁶ and of Colm Ó Gaora in Ros Muc were Fenians. Indeed one of Ó Gaora’s ancestors had also been active in the 1798 Rebellion.¹⁷ McDonnell and Ó Gaora were both senior IRA officers in the republican movement during the period 1913-23. Land agitation also had a huge effect on republicans in Galway. In Ceantar na nOileán, the campaign to have the land divided was the stuff of daily family conversation in the Standún household because of the family’s connection with it. Gearóid was later one of the most important officers in the IRA in south Connemara.¹⁸ In another case, the Hynes family was evicted in Maigh Cuilinn. To make matters worse, the landlord had waited until the Hynes had finished planting before evicting them. The family moved into Galway city where two of the sons were active in the republican movement.¹⁹

The relationship between nationalists and the Royal Irish Constabulary, the RIC, was unusual. It may be that the courts rather than the police were a greater source of concern for people. Folklore about people who had been executed because of murders relating to land, for instance Maolra Seoighe from Mám Trasna and Pádraig Breathnach from Letterfrack in the 1880s was retained.²⁰ It was felt that people were wrongly convicted in cases of that sort quite often and many Irish language proverbs were disparaging of the court system: *‘Is iomaí duine a chrochtar san éagóir’*; *‘Má théann tú chun dlí, bíodh bonn i do phóca’*; *‘Má théann tú chun na cúirte, fág d’anam sa mbaile.’*²¹ Although ancestral conflicts were raised when it was politically opportune, members of the police force were respected in the community in which they served. Despite that, conflict could erupt very quickly between the community and the force about land. Most of the policemen were from nationalist families themselves and the most common complaint of republicans concerned the manner in which the law was enforced when republicans were under attack from supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party. On one occasion, Colm Ó Gaora was beaten in Letterfrack by members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an organisation which shared much of its membership with the Irish Parliamentary Party. The policemen who were present made no attempt to stop the attack.²² Later, as republicanism increased in popularity, some of the policemen’s families came to identify with republicanism. This reflects these families being part of the general community rather than separated from them. The republican priest, An t-Athair Mac Giolla Sheannaigh in An Spidéal²³ was a policeman’s son. Volunteers John Geoghegan in Maigh Cuilinn, Eugene Gillan in An Cheathrú Rua, Pat Mons in Oughterard and the Bartleys in Clifden were sons of policemen.²⁴

Unionists, most of whom were Protestants, held to the belief that remaining in the British Empire and the United Kingdom represented Ireland’s best interests. A Catholic member of the upper-class, Lord Killanin, a landlord in the An Spidéal area, was a Unionist.²⁵ There was a small Protestant community in Connemara (mainly in the area around Clifden) and there were ancestral tensions between themselves and local Catholics concerning attempts by both sides to convert people. By the turn of the twentieth century, much of the religious bitterness had dissipated in the region as it was clear that the Catholic Church had won the battle. Not all Protestants in Connemara were Unionists and their religion did not prevent the Protestants Alfred and Percy Ward in Roundstone, Edgar and Bertie King in Carna, Thomas Pollington (and probably a brother of his) in Ballinakill (west Connemara) from joining the Volunteers.²⁶

By 1912, Home Rule was in the offing. Ulster Unionists threatened rebellion rather than yield to a Dublin parliament. The Ulster Volunteers were formed to fight to ensure partition. In response, the Irish Volunteers were formed to fight to ensure 32 county Home Rule. The first local meeting of the Irish Volunteers was held

in Galway in December 1913. At the launch, radicals Pearse, Roger Casement, Eoin MacNeill and George Nicolls gave speeches. Tomás Ó Máille, brother of Pádraic, was secretary of the meeting.²⁷ Although Home Rulers gained control of the organisation nationally and, to a point, locally in Galway, it was republicans who made the greatest effort to spread the Volunteers. Pearse was involved in the foundation of groups of Volunteers in Ros Muc, An Cheathrú Rua and Ceantar na nOileán. He also drilled the Volunteers in An Spidéal.²⁸ An attempt was made to acquire German arms and information was collected about the best places to bring them ashore. In 1918 an informer wrote to the police: ‘In



Figure 12.2 Professor Tomás Ó Máille, Muintir Eoghain, became the first professor of Irish in University College Galway in 1909. He was a firm supporter of the Volunteers in Connemara along with his brother, leading Volunteer Pádraic Ó Máille. *Source:* NUI Galway

July 1914, just before the war, they (Ó Máille) with Roger Casement, accompanied a German Professor through Connemara visiting all the important harbours from An Cheathrú Rua to Leenane.’²⁹ Casement apparently regretted that the Germans did not attempt to land in An Cheathrú Rua instead of Kerry during Easter Week. While preparing for his own death, he commented on the confidence he had in the people of the locality being willing to help him and to give him sanctuary.³⁰

When the First World War broke out the Irish Parliamentary Party strongly supported the British war effort and some local party figures were closely involved with recruitment. William O’Malley, MP for Connemara, paid heaviest for his recruitment efforts when his own son, Willie, was killed fighting in France in 1917.³¹ People ended up in the British Army for reasons of patriotism, poverty, family tradition, service in the reserve, economic factors and as a means of escaping normal life. There were, however, constant complaints throughout the war about the reluctance of rural people to enlist, a pattern which was also observed in Connemara. O’Malley spoke at a recruitment meeting in Oughterard which three hundred people attended. None enlisted. A week later he spoke at a meeting in Clonbur with five hundred in attendance and no recruitment resulted from that meeting either.³²



Figure 12.3 Mícheál Ó Droighneáin, Na Forbacha, was one of a band of republicans from Connemara and Galway town arrested during Easter Week. He went on to become a senior Volunteer in South Connemara during the War of Independence. *Source: Galway Advertiser*

The Irish Volunteers split over the war, most agreeing that some sort of support should be given to Britain and its allies. The radical element retained the name The Irish Volunteers although the RIC began to call them the *Sinn Féin Volunteers*. Gradually, the radicals reorganised. The RIC reported that ‘Sinn Féiners’ controlled or were partially supported by various companies, including those in An Spidéal and in Leenane.³³ Liam Mellows and Ailbhe Ó Monacháin were sent to Galway to reorganise the Volunteers following the split. Mellows had his headquarters in Killeeneen near Clarinbridge. Mellows spent much of his time with the Breathnach family, whose father was from Ros Muc. This family was extremely active during the Rising and its aftermath, especially Brighid.³⁴ As well as Mellows, others were active in expanding the Volunteers locally. Mícheál Ó Droighneáin, a schoolteacher in Na Forbacha, established companies in Bearna and in Maigh Cuilinn.³⁵

In Leenane, the republican Petie McDonnell acted against the Ancient Order of Hibernians³⁶ and then established a branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Irish American Alliance). This was a splinter group which split from the larger AOH organisation because of conservatism and sectarianism. McDonnell used this group, which could procure guns, to train his men.³⁷ Local officers were trained so that they could take charge of others. Petie McDonnell attended training camps in Cork and in Limerick.³⁸ The case of Mark McDonagh from Maigh Cuilinn is a sign of the increased confidence of the Volunteers. He was in charge of a group of volunteers who marched, deliberately, through a recruiting meeting in Maigh Cuilinn. McDonagh was sentenced to three months imprisonment.³⁹

As Easter Sunday drew closer, the leaders of the Volunteers began to draw up plans and to inform people of the rising. In August 1915, Mícheál Ó Droighneáin from An Spidéal was told of it when Pearse informed him of the plan at Coláiste Chonnacht.⁴⁰ Éamon Ceannt and Mícheál Ó Droighneáin made an arrangement that when the Rising was set to happen, Ceannt would send a note to Ó Droighneáin asking ‘*An bhfuair tú amach fós an t-ainm atá ar an rud úd a chonaic muid sa gcladach ar an 25ú . . .*’ (Did you find out yet the name of that thing we saw on the shore on the 25th...?). The date in the note was an indication that the rising was to happen three days before that particular day of the month.⁴¹

One way the leadership had of studying the organisation, while also putting the authorities at their ease regarding volunteers gathering together, was to call mass rallies. A number of these were held in County Galway, the last of them on St Patrick's Day 1916. That rally was held in Galway and the volunteers of the city and of the surrounding areas, those from An Spidéal included, took part in a large parade. The Leenane Volunteers took part in a parade of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Irish-American Alliance) held in Westport, probably as a result of the distance to Galway. However, when they saw a man in Volunteer uniform - The O'Rahilly (a senior officer from Dublin) - they left their own gathering to listen to him speak⁴². The mass meetings also helped the republicans to create an atmosphere which would increase the volunteers' will to fight. Returning from a rally in Athenry, Mark McDonagh, Captain of the Volunteers in Maigh Cuilinn, commented: 'Beidh sé ina chogadh a bhuachaillí, nár léir ar chaint agus ar chúrsaí an lae inniu é.'⁴³ (There will be war, lads, isn't it evident from the talk and actions of today?) The largest demonstration organised by the republicans was the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa in Dublin. People travelled from all over the country to Glasnevin for the occasion. Among them was a group from Ros Muc who heard Patrick Pearse give the graveside oration. It was in Ros Muc that Pearse had written his speech.⁴⁴

East Galway was chosen as the centre for the rebellion in Galway as it was the area in which the Volunteers had made most progress. It is not clear what plan exactly had been laid out for the Volunteers in Connemara. Brian Molloy from An Caisleán Gearr recalled that rather than have them come through the town of Galway, it was arranged that the Volunteers from An Spidéal and Maigh Cuilinn would be transferred in boats across Lough Corrib to support the uprising on the eastern side rather than engage with the Crown Forces on their own side of the lake. Tom Courtney, a champion rower, was in charge of organising the boats.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Tomás Bairéad, a member of the Maigh Cuilinn volunteers wrote that the volunteers in his area were to take command of the local RIC barracks in their own place, join up with the Volunteers from Bearna and from An Spidéal and then march on Galway.⁴⁶ The final despatches were sent to people during the days immediately prior to the Rising. It seems women performed much of that work. Peig Conlon, a member of Cumann na mBan in Dublin, was sent to bring a despatch to Mícheál Ó Droighneáin. She was a Galway woman and an Irish speaker, but it is not clear if those were factors in her selection for that task.⁴⁷

Then Eoin MacNeill, leader of the Volunteers, a person who had been kept unaware of the conspiracy, attempted to cancel the Rising. When his countermanding order went throughout the country the Rising was weakened critically. Nevertheless, the conspirators decided to proceed with the Rising through issuing their own order also and delivering it as extensively as they could. They failed to make contact in some cases. Petie McDonnell wrote:



Figure 12.4 Colm Ó Gaora. *Source:* Reproduced from Prionsias Mac Aonghusa, *Rosmuc agus Cogagh na Saoirse*

‘During Easter Week 1916 West Galway was completely cut off from the rest of the country, and no information - except rumour - could be had as to what was happening, and no instructions were received.’⁴⁸

The fighting broke out in Dublin on Easter Monday. The GPO was headquarters for the rebels. Among the volunteers there was Brian Joyce from Árainn, one of Pearse’s pupils in Scoil Éanna in Dublin.⁴⁹ Another Aran Islander who took part was John O’Brien. On the south side of the city, Katie Kelly from Cashel, a member of Cumann na mBan, was active in the fighting at the College of Surgeons/Stephen’s Green.⁵⁰ People

from Connemara were also found in the forces opposing the volunteers. Peter Folan from An Spidéal was a member of the RIC based in Dublin Castle. He was confined to the Castle for a week and was eyewitness to one of the first shootings of the Rising.⁵¹ Another person from Connemara who saw service in the RIC during the Rising was Frank King, apparently from the Oughterard area. He was amongst the policemen who raided the Kent family in Cork. A police officer was killed in this incident as was one of the Kents. Another member of the family was later executed.⁵²

Because of the contradictory orders, there was no certainty that any action would be undertaken in Galway. Mícheál Ó Droighneáin wrote about the uncertainty created by all the different orders:

‘At 6 o’ clock on Monday morning, a knock came to the door and I got up. Peter Fagan (Bearna) had come on horse-back with the message back from Dublin, by John Hosty: “The rising is off, don’t make any move”. I told my brother the news. I stayed around the house all day, and at 4 o’ clock in the afternoon George Nicholls and Liam Langley came to the house with another message - which Liam had brought from Dublin. The message read - “we have begun at noon today, carry out your orders - Pearse”. Nicholls and I had a consultation about the matter and before he left we had decided that we would do nothing until we got more information.’⁵³

But, when Mellows decided to rebel, he sent messages to Kinvara, Oranmore, Galway, Maigh Cuilinn, Baile Chláir and An Caisleán Gearr.⁵⁴ Apart from the

areas around Oranmore and Clarinbridge, most of the Volunteers in the county stayed out of the conflict. 'What's the use against the army without guns?' said the republican Pádraig Ó Droighneáin in Maigh Cuilinn when he was given the despatch. Although Ó Droighneáin is mentioned as captain of the volunteers there,⁵⁵ he had no significant role in the volunteers. It was because of his role in the IRB and his work in the Gaelic League that he was well known and the despatch from Mellows went to the wrong person.⁵⁶

With rumours around the country about what was happening exactly, some volunteers tried to contact those who had risen. The Volunteers from Bearna and Maigh Cuilinn assembled during the Rising but, with the captain of the Volunteers in Maigh Cuilinn imprisoned in Dublin and the founder of the Volunteers in Bearna, Mícheál Ó Droighneáin, locked up in Galway, nothing happened.⁵⁷ Ó Droighneáin had gone into the town to find out what was happening. He was informed that a Rising had happened in east Galway but he was arrested before he could inform his men.⁵⁸ Colm Ó Gaora attempted to go to east Galway through Cong but was arrested.⁵⁹ Petie McDonnell went to Newport in Mayo to see if the volunteers there knew more about what was happening in the country but they knew as little as himself.⁶⁰ In other cases, people ended up taking part in the Rising simply because they happened to be in a particular place. For instance, men from Connemara, probably labourers, became involved in the Rising in Clarinbridge:

'A couple of Connemara men who were working with Mattie Niland were among the Volunteers. Mattie asked the Connemara men if they were coming. They said, "Where are you going?" He replied, "To fight for Ireland". "If you are going sticking peelers we are with you", said the Connemara lads. They were put in charge of the police prisoners whom they would not let sit down. They said, "If you caught us at the potheen you'd tell us to keep stirring".'⁶¹

The Easter Rising greatly shocked the Establishment and the Irish Parliamentary Party or as Pádraic Ó Máille said: 'The foreigners and their followers in the city of Galway were shaken and in fear.' Even before the Rising had ended, it was appreciated that a change had taken place in Irish life. One of the most important things was that it had been shown that nationalists had a choice between the Home Rule Party and the radicals. One of the insults most commonly used against republicans was that they weren't manly enough to fight. Easter Week put an end to that for as Pádraic Ó Máille said, 'Gaels during those days showed the world their manliness'. At first the public did not know what the rebels were fighting for. When Pádraic Ó Máille was arrested the policeman referred to the Kaiser and assumed that the republicans were acting on behalf of the Germans (and for their money). The republican badge was angrily torn from his coat and trampled underfoot by the policeman.⁶²

The British Forces were not confident enough to deal with the republicans where they were strong and focused early in the week on arresting those it was easy to arrest. They held them in naval vessels which were anchored in Galway Bay. The most important of these vessels was the *Laburnum*. The prisoners had a poor opinion of their lodgings. Pádraic Ó Máille wrote about that same ship: 'The captain was a really bad devil. His name was Alwright.' The sailors on board had little respect for the captain either and one of those on guard duty said to his prisoners that All-wrong would be a more appropriate name. This vessel served a function other than that of prison ship. It was from this boat that shells were fired at the Galway rebels resulting in holes and dead cattle.⁶³ The fighting soon came to an end and it was through notices posted by the RIC in Leenane that people of that area found out about the end to hostilities in Dublin.⁶⁴

The question now was who would be arrested and who would serve prison sentences. This depended greatly on the Authorities locally, the attitude of the RIC and to whom they paid attention following the Rising. In Maigh Cuilinn, Tomás Bairéad assumed it was the relaxed, understanding local sergeant who kept villagers out of prison. He only required that ammunition be surrendered.⁶⁵ In Leenane, Petie McDonnell felt that he himself avoided a period of internment because of a local Protestant clergyman who spoke on his behalf.⁶⁶ Just as their predecessors had done, the defeated rebels viewed Connemara as a sanctuary from the state authorities. Mick Newell and Brian Molloy from An Caisleán Gearr attempted to travel there after the Rising but they were caught.⁶⁷ The arrested prisoners were sent to Frongoch or to normal jails. Among the people connected to Connemara who served prison sentences were a Mícheál Ó Maoláin from Árainn who was sent to Frongoch.⁶⁸ Brian Joyce and John O'Brien from Árainn, Pádraic Ó Máille, Mícheál Ó Droighneáin, Conchubhair Ó Laoghaire from Casla and a man named Stephen Larkin from Ceantar na nOileán were also sent there. Colm Ó Gaora received a prison sentence because he could be charged on more specific grounds.

There was a range of opinions and reactions to the Rising among the people of Connemara. One man who was hated by republicans because of his behaviour was Máirtín Mór McDonogh, the city-based capitalist who was originally from Ceantar na nOileán: "*is é a ghríos an Pílear Heard*" (it was he who prompted Peeler Heard) was the line in one republican song about him where he was accused of encouraging the RIC to imprison radicals.⁶⁹ The schoolteacher Patrick Joyce in Bearna joined the special constabulary established in Galway to help the authorities suppress the rebellion.⁷⁰ Others sympathised with the republicans and did not want to see them attacked. When he was on his way to be incarcerated in Britain, the train on which Mick Newell was travelling stopped in Nottingham. The crowd started to threaten them. One of the soldiers guarding the prisoners hit three people in the crowd and started to shout: 'Up Carraroe, Up Connemara.' John Keane was the soldier's

name and it appears he was killed in the War.⁷¹ In the case of Pádraic Ó Conaire, the Rising was the inspiration for his book *Seacht mBua an Éirí Amach* and he was one of those people who tried to explain what had come about. In many others, the Easter Rising tapped into radical sympathies which they were surprised to find within them in many cases. John C. King had been brought up in Leenane by an uncle who was apprehensive about radical organisations, King attended a school in which loyalists were teaching and the British Forces and their contentions with the Germans were: 'the greatest of excitement coming into our dull country life', but then news reached them that a rising was underway. He described how he felt as follows:

*'The first feeling of awakening came to me around Easter Monday, 1916, as I was doing some marketing in a loyalist shop in Leenane. A fellow came in who was a servant of some of the English land-holders about the district, and he was very excited. He said that Sinn Féiners had risen in Dublin and were spreading all over the country, and that the participants would be shot or hanged, as they were all in the pay of the Kaiser. I had a mile and a half to walk home and a lot of time to think of those strange men who dared to attack the great British Empire (not at war). I felt a funny feeling deep down in my stomach, and I could not stop the tears coming into my eyes.'*⁷²

There were many others like John C. King. Connemara was more republican than most of the country in the period which followed the Easter Rising although the remoteness, poverty and lack of military experience limited the amount of republican violence which took place. Pádraic Ó Máille was easily elected as T.D. in the 1918 election. The republican courts and the volunteers operated in the area with the will and support of the public, even if that support was not universal. Even during the Civil War, the forces of the Free State found it difficult to catch senior republicans until the end of the conflict, an indication that the people were willing to provide sanctuary and to keep their mouths shut. Echoes from that era are still to be heard in the region to this day. Perhaps the Irish language is one of them. The football club in Ros Muc was named after the Pearse brothers and Patrick Pearse and Colm Ó Gaora are held in esteem in the area to this day. Coláiste Chonnacht is still open in An Spidéal. The local drama group in Carraroe is named after Ruairí Mac Easmainn (Roger Casement). A commemorative garden has been constructed in Na Forbacha for those who were executed for their role in the Rising. Despite that, as is the case regarding most of those who fought for and against the Rising, their memory has been allowed to wane by the majority of people. In the case of others, their memory is invoked only for contemporary political advantage. It is hoped that publications such as this one will help people gain an appreciation of this critical period in the country's history so that we see those who took part (and didn't take part) as people again, rather than as symbols.

Note: The author submitted the text for this chapter in the Irish language originally and it was translated into English.

Endnotes

1. This article is based the author's book C. Ó Comhraí, *Sa Bhearna Bhaoil: Gaillimh 1913-23* (Cló Iar-Chonnacht, Conamara, 2015).
2. Letter from Morgan Davoren to Tomás Bairéad 24 June 1969 (GP 2/74, Papers of Tomás Bairéad, Galway County Libraries)
3. F. Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998), p.190.
4. See the biographical account of Mícheál Ó Maoláin <http://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=531>
5. The same was also true of large parts of east Galway.
6. County Inspector's Report, Galway Wrst Riding, August 1918 (The National Archives : Public Records Office Colonial Office (TNA: PRO CO 904/ 106); File on the death of Patrick Thornton TNA: PRO CO 904/42).
7. C. Ó Torna, *Cruthú na Gaeltachta 1893-1922* (Dublin, 2005), p. 59.
8. Eibhlín Ní Chionnaith, *Pádraic Ó Conaire: Scéal a Bheatha* (Cló Iar-Chonnachta, Indreabhán, Conamara, 1995), p.49.
9. *An Stoc*, June 1918. 'An mhuintir atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge siad atá ag déanamh bunáit na hoibre. In áit cuidiú a fháil ó Ghaeilgeoirí ní fhaigheann siad ach droch-mheas'
10. *Galway Express*, 13 March 1920.
11. *Galway Express*, 15 May 1920.
12. *Seanchas na Sceiche* is the title of the song.
13. A. Vogel, *Leabhar Inis Bearachain: Lámhscribhinn Gaeltachta ón 19ú Aois* (Leitir Móir, Co. Galway 2010); M. Ó Máille & T. Ó Máille, *Amhráin Chlainne Gael* (Conamara, 1991) and G. Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French* (Wisconsin, 2006), p.384, 90.
14. G. Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French* (Wisconsin, 2006), pp. 50, 96, 127, 132 and R. Uí Ógáin, *Éirí Amach 1798 in Éirinn* (Cló Iar-Chonnachta, Conamara 1998), pp.137-154.
15. William King Bureau of Military History Witness Statement (BMH WS) 1381, p. 2. (Military Archives)
16. C. Ó Gaora, *Mise* (Dublin, 2008), p. 26.
17. George Staunton BMH WS453, p. 2.
18. T. Bairéad, *Gan Baisteadh* (Dublin, 1972), p. 235.
19. T. Bairéad, *Gan Baisteadh* (Dublin, 1972), p. 49.
20. T.S. Ó Máille, *Seanfhocla Chonnacht* (Dublin, 2010), pp. 170-1. Many are hanged wrongfully. If you go to law, have money in your pocket. If you go to court, leave your soul at home.
21. Ó Gaora, *Mise*, pp. 121-2.
22. *Coláiste Chonnacht 1910-2010* (Indreabhán, 2010), p. 15.
23. <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>
24. J. J. Cunningham, *A Town Tormented by the Sea* (Dublin, 2004), p. 222.
25. IRA Membership lists http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Membership/8/RO%2060%20-%20611/MA-MSPC-RO-346.pdf and http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Membership/8/RO%2060%20-%20611/MA-MSPC-RO-347.pdf
26. *Connacht Tribune*, 6 December 1913.
27. P. Mac Aonghusa, *Ros Muc agus Cogadh na Saoirse* (Conradh na Gaeilge, 1992), p. 8; Mícheál Ó Droighneáin BMH WS 374, p. 1.
28. File P O'Malley MP: Firing on Police i TNA: PRO WO 35/102.)
29. A. Mitchell, "‘An Irish Putumayo’: Roger Casement's Humanitarian Relief Campaign Among the Connemara Islanders 1913-14" in *Irish Economic and Social History* (Vol. 31, 2004), pp.41-60, p.59.
30. W. Henry, *Forgotten Heroes* (Mercier Press, Cork, 2008), p.199.
31. Report of the County Inspector, West Galway, October 1914 (TNA: PRO CO 904/95).
32. Reports of the County Inspector, West Galway, September (TNA: PRO CO 904/94) agus Deireadh Fómhair (TNA: PRO CO 904/95).
33. M. Dolan, 'The Rising in County Galway' in *The Connacht Tribune*, 2 April 1966.
34. Mícheál Ó Droighneáin BMH WS 374, p.3.
35. C. O'Malley & C. Ó Comhraí, *The Men Will Talk to Me: Galway Interviews by Ernie O'Malley* (Mercier Press, Cork, 2013), p.68
36. PJ McDonnell BMH WS 1612, p.3.
37. PJ McDonnell BMH WS 1612, p.4.
38. *Connacht Tribune*, 4 March 1916.
39. Mícheál Ó Droighneáin BMH WS 374, p.3.
40. Mícheál Ó Droighneáin BMH WS 374, p. 4.
41. PJ McDonnell BMH WS 1612, p.3.
42. Tomás Bairéad, *Gan Baisteadh* (Sáirséal agus Dill, Dublin, 1972), p.95.
43. Ó Gaora, *Mise*, pp.133-4.
44. Brian Molloy BMH WS 345, p.7.
45. Tomás Bairéad, *Gan Baisteadh* (Sáirséal agus Dill, Dublin, 1972), p.104.
46. Mrs. Martin Conlon BMH WS 419, p.4.
47. PJ McDonnell BMH WS 1612, p.4.
48. See Fergus (Frank) de Búrca BMH WS 694, p.10.
49. See her pension application. SP34REF63780 available at www.militaryarchives.ie (Accessed 21

- September 2015).
50. She returned to Connemara and was very active in Cumann na mBan locally.
 51. Peter Folan BMH WS 316, p.3.
 52. Frank King BMH WS 635.
 53. Mícheál Ó Droighneáin BMH WS 374, pp.5-6.
 54. M. Dolan, 'The Rising in County Galway' in *The Connacht Tribune*, 9 April 1966.
 55. Thomas Courtney BMH WS 447, p. 6.
 56. Letter from Morgan Davoren to Tomás Bairéad 10 August 1966 (GP 2/72 Leabharlann na Gaillimhe)
 57. Tomás Bairéad, *Gan Baisteadh* (Sáirséal agus Dill, Dublin, 1972), p.108.
 58. Mícheál Ó Droighneáin BMH WS 374, p.6.
 59. Ó Gaora, C., *Mise*, p. 146.
 60. PJ McDonnell BMH WS 1612, p.4.
 61. Bridget Malone BMH WS 617, pp..3-4.
 62. *An Stoc*, February-March 1918.
 63. *An Stoc*, February-March 1918.
 64. Martin Conneely BMH WS 1611, p.3.
 65. Bairéad, *Gan Baisteadh*, p.109.
 66. C. O'Malley & C. Ó Comhraí, *The Men Will Talk to Me: Galway Interviews by Ernie O'Malley* (Mercier Press, Cork, 2013), p.66.
 67. Brian Molloy BMH WS 345, p.13.
 68. See the biographical account of Mícheál Ó Maoláin <http://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=531>
 69. File on George Nicolls (TNA: PRO WO 35/142).
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 72. John C. King BMH WS 1731, p.2.

Looking back, Galway County Council in 1916

Patria McWalter

Despite being in the midst of World War I, the local authorities of County Galway were functioning relatively well in 1916, with little or no reference in their minutes to the dreadful happenings at Flanders and beyond. Galway County Council and its subordinate Rural District Councils, established under the Local Government Act of 1898, continued to attempt to collect rates and provide services at the time. These included the provision of public works, such as roads and bridges, labourers' cottages, water and sewerage schemes and the management of burial grounds, to name but a few of their functions. Meanwhile, the Poor Law Unions, established under the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1838 (for the 'more effectual Relief of the Destitute Poor in Ireland'), provided indoor and outdoor relief to the poor, together with dispensary health services. The towns of Galway and Ballinasloe were urban districts, and had the power to collect a general rate, and so were effectively independent from Galway County Council.

The *Tuam Herald* reported that the newly elected Council, which consisted of 35 members, comprised

... a fair representation of property, profession and politics. It contains a landlord, a Unionist Catholic barrister and writer, three solicitors, a college professor and medical doctor, three merchants, an auctioneer, and seventeen or eighteen tenant farmers. The 10 chairmen elected by the district councils and the nominated grand jurors with the co-opted men should make and will, we are sure, a very respectable body for Galway as good as any in Ireland we should be inclined to say¹

At its first meeting, held in April 1899, Galway County Council proclaimed

That we the County Council of the County Galway at this our first meeting do pledge ourselves to the principal of Home Rule and earnestly urge on Her Majesty's Government the necessity of granting legislative independence to Ireland in order to enable the Irish people to make their own laws and manage their own affairs in harmony with the wishes of the great majority of the population.

That we only regard the Local Government Act as an instalment of justice to prepare our people for the larger and more comprehensive measure of auto-

*my which is the only scheme that will ever satisfy the hopes and aspirations of our people and make us a happy, prosperous and contented nation.*²

This resolution thus set out Galway County Council's stall, as it were.



A History of Galway Council, by Gabriel O'Connor, was published in 1999 by Galway County Council to commemorate its centenary.³ This provides good background information on the establishment of Galway's local authorities and a detailed history of Galway County Council's early years. *For the Record. The Archives of Galway's Rural District Councils*, published by the Council in 2014,⁴ provides similar detail on the Rural District Councils. The approach in this essay therefore is to skip forward to 1916 and to trace the actions and deliberations of Galway County Council during that one pivotal year in Ireland's long history of striving for political independence. It will also look briefly at some of the concerns of the Rural District Councils during that time. The essay relies almost exclusively on the various councils' minutes.

It is worth mentioning that in the years preceding 1916 Galway County Council (which until 1920 comprised primarily of members and supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party), passed some political resolutions, generally in support of Home Rule. It also supported the Irish language movement and tenant rights. Despite the enactment of various land acts in the preceding years, land agitation was widespread in the county; 'Galway was one of the more lawless parts of the island, due to agrarian agitation.'⁵

Galway County Council also supported the Rural District Councils' efforts to provide better housing for the labouring classes and through these Councils also made progress with the installation of water pumps in many parishes and communities throughout county. This, together with improvements in sanitation, had a positive impact on health and the reduction in certain diseases, such as typhoid, though tuberculosis (TB) continued to rage for several decades more.

An example of one of its political resolutions, passed after the establishment of the Ulster Volunteer Force and the subsequent founding of the Irish Volunteers, stated,

*... that the time has come when every effort should be made to organise the Irish Volunteer force in every Parish in Ireland. We are convinced that such a force, wisely led by men in whom our indomitable leader Mr John E. Redmond, MP, would have confidence, would prove to the world that the manhood of Ireland are ready to do their part in defence of their homes and their liberties, and if need be to protect our fellow Nationalists in Ulster from insult and attack.*⁶

A short time later Galway County Council, while rejoicing at the passage of the Home Rule Bill in September 1914 following the split in the Irish Volunteers, also supported Redmond's call for the establishment of an Irish Brigade and resolved

*... to adopt the term of the Treasury Regulations for Civil Servants and to pay County Council Employees, absent on Naval or Military Service their full salaries, less Army or Navy pay as sanctioned by the Local Government Board ...*⁷

Mr John McDonnell of Waterslade House, Tuam, was the Chairman at this time. He was a Roman Catholic merchant with substantial land holdings in the Dunmore, Headford and Tuam districts. He had been elected chairman in June 1914, following the local elections of 27 May 1914,⁸ and served as such until he was replaced by the republican Mr George Nicholls,⁹ in 1920. Nicholls, a Dublin born solicitor working in G.C. Conroy's office (Francis Street, Galway) was in 1916 a prominent Sinn Féin sympathiser, President of the Galway Irish Volunteers and Head Centre of the Galway Branch of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB).¹⁰ Being a well-known member of the Irish Volunteers Galway City Corps he was among the first arrested when hostilities broke out during Easter week 1916, so he was not in active military service during the Rising.

Galway County Council's Secretary, Walter Gordon Seymour,¹¹ was away from November 1914 until the end of World War I, on active military service with the British army. Therefore, William Fogarty¹², the Council's accountant, who was a member of the Irish National Volunteers, was Acting County Secretary.

Council meetings were held in the Courthouse in Galway.¹³

At the beginning of 1916 the Council was pre-occupied with the publication of the Jurors' List. It was also anxious to ensure road repairs and maintenance works would be carried out by direct labour, thus providing employment for men at local level.

Galway County Council minutes for 2 February 1916 include a newspaper cutting recording the Council's warm address of welcome to Ivory Churchill Guest,¹⁴ Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, during his first visit to the West of Ireland the previous month to attend a recruiting conference at the Town Hall in Galway. The visit was, according to a *Connacht Tribune* report of 5 January, greeted with much fanfare and ceremony, including a Guard of Honour of the Irish National Volunteers and another by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). Addresses were also presented to His Excellency by the Galway Urban District Council, the Harbour Commissioners and the Governing Body of University College, Galway. The Acting County Secretary for Galway County Council, William Fogarty, read the address, which stated:

Your Excellency comes to us in a time of national crisis, and for a purpose connected with that crisis. Our Co. and the whole Western Province have responded nobly to the call of patriotism, duty and honour, and have given generously their dearest and best to the Empire in its hour of need.

We believe that the happy change which has taken place in the mutual sentiments of the Irish people and their neighbours will be of a lasting nature, and, that the legislative expression of this change will enable Ireland to pursue to a happy realisation her national, social, and intellectual ideals - loyal to her Sovereign and to herself, and to the Imperial family of nations of which she is a free member; we also believe that the honour, the safety, and the material prosperity of Ireland call to Irishmen of every class to do what in-them lies to ensure a speedy and decisive victory for the Allies in the present war.

It further stated that,

*There are many matters which, under other circumstances, we would be glad to bring to Your Excellency's notice - many urgent calls for the removal of agricultural, social, transport, and harbour difficulties under which our constituents suffer - but we recognise that the successful conduct of the war now overshadows all other considerations ...*¹⁵

At the subsequent meeting, which was the Council's Quarterly Meeting, held on 6 February, it discussed the estimates for 1916/17 and ongoing public works. It also discussed the attempt to '... oust Dr J. Pye from his position as Registrar

of University College, Galway'. The Council stated that Pye would have been College President many years earlier if it were not for the fact he was an Irish Nationalist Home Ruler. It resolved that, if Dr Pye was removed from his position, Galway County Council would not send a member to sit on its Governing Body and 'will discontinue the grant from the Galway County Council rates for College purposes'.¹⁶

With the 'great expense incurred in the upkeep of ten [Poor Law] Unions' and the decrease in numbers accommodated in the workhouses in the county, the Council also discussed and appointed a committee to review and draw up a Scheme of Union Amalgamation.¹⁷

At the time there were, for instance, about 62 inmates in the Clifden Poor Law Union workhouse, reduced from just over 100 in 1906, 160 inmates in the Tuam workhouse, with a similar number in early 1906. There were 80 in the Loughrea workhouse, reduced from an average of 125 for January and February in 1906, and 100 in Gort, reduced from about 160 ten years earlier, while Mountbellew in 1906 had approximately 60-68 inmates, but had 70-75 in 1915.¹⁸ However, the decline in numbers was likely to be 'due to emigration and the perceived stigma attached to it [relief], rather than any improvement in conditions'.¹⁹

At the same meeting, the maintenance of various courthouses around the county was discussed as well as the schedule of tolls for Cleggan Pier and the election of a temporary County Surveyor.

The next set of minutes is the proceedings of the Proposal Committee, which was a quarterly meeting, held on 3 May 1916, the same day Pádraig Mac Piarais was executed. In attendance were Councillors James McDonnell (Chairman), Martin McDonagh,²⁰ Thomas C. McDonagh, John Lohan, Edward King, J.M. Lyden, Michael Joyce, M. Morrissey, Patrick Dermody, James J. Hoban, John McKeigue, Thomas Fahy, James Cosgrave and John Morris.

The Council commenced by discussing proposals for payment, such as for works to the County Buildings, and a vote of sympathy to the family of the late John Moran, County Surveyor, following his recent death. The Council then, like so many other local authorities and institutions throughout the country at that time, proceeded to issue a resolution condemning the actions of the Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army around the country, but did not make any specific reference to the activities of the Volunteers in the district surrounding Galway. Nor is there any reference to the arrest, along with other prominent Volunteers in the city, of one of its own clerks, Seamus Carter,²¹ who was secretary to the Volunteers.^{22 & 23}

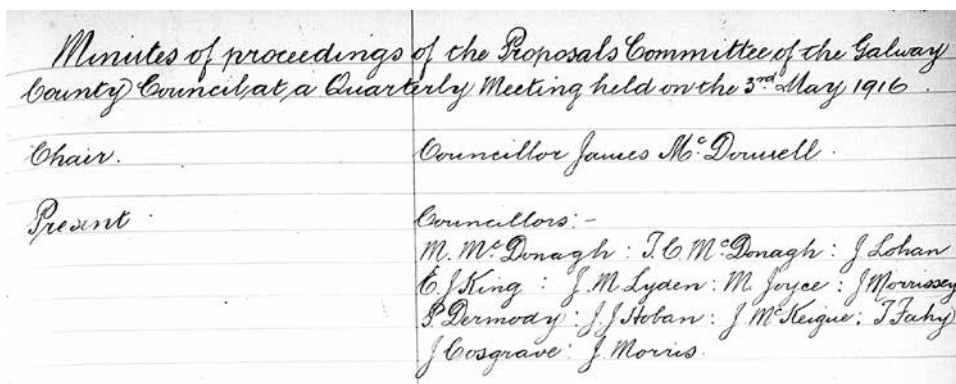


Figure 13.1 Galway County Council Minutes, 3 May 1916, GC1/2, p700.

Carter signed in for work with Galway County Council on 19 April 1916, but his name does not appear in a Clerk's Attendance Book again until 24 November 1916.²⁴ In July 1916, the Acting County Secretary advised the Finance Committee that 'as a consequence of the arrest of Mr Carter, Roads Clerk, he had placed Mr O'Connor in charge of this work and paid him 5/- extra per week'.²⁵



Figure 13.2 Galway County Council Staff Attendance Book, with Carter's signature (signed in Irish), 24 November 1916, GC/7/10.

The *Connacht Tribune* of 6 May gives a more detailed account of the Council's proceedings but does not include an extract of the resolution of condemnation. The resolution, which was proposed by the Chairman, Councillor James McDonnell, and seconded by Councillor Martin McDonagh reads that

Galway County Council desires to express its condemnation of the recent disturbances of social order brought about by irresponsible persons whereby great damage has been done to the material prosperity and prospects of Ireland, and numbers of simple uneducated peasants have been cajoled and threatened into open defiance of the Law.

We resent most of all the outrage upon the honour, and dignity of Ireland and the attempt which has been made to dishonour her pledge solemnly given by her responsible leader Mr Redmond.

We rejoice that this dastardly attempt has failed, and that the people of Ireland have shown by their conduct in this crises that Ireland is determined that her word shall be carefully kept.

We tender to Mr Redmond the fullest assurances of our sympathy and support in the present trying circumstances.²⁶

The meeting was due to ‘the existing circumstances’ almost immediately thereafter adjourned.

Following elections in 1920, when the Council was replaced by a predominantly republican one and presided over by George Nicholls (who had been arrested at the same time as Carter during Easter Week), the resolution was rescinded at a meeting in June that year. At that same meeting the Council also pledged allegiance to Dáil Éireann, condemned the imprisonment of James Larkin, and also resolved that minutes of the transactions of Galway County Council would no longer be forwarded to the British Local Government Board.²⁷

Galway County Council’s next meeting was held on 17 May 1916, when the minutes of the previous adjourned meeting were accepted. Proposals for work and various payments were discussed and agreed, rate collection and refunds and the amalgamation of the Poor Law Unions were also discussed. Reports from the Rural District Councils on a variety of issues, including direct labour schemes and the making of public roads, were submitted and approved. Other topics, as diverse as driving licences, sheep dipping and advertising the post of County Surveyor, were also raised. The sale of Maam Courthouse to the Council was approved. A resolution from the Galway Rural District Council, calling for an inquiry into the costs of running the ‘District Lunatic Asylum in Ballinasloe’, was read, as was one from the Clifden Council condemning the action of Dublin Castle ‘in their efforts to perpetrate a system of extra policing in the County’.²⁸

In addition, a resolution relating to political prisoners, proposed by Councillor Morris and seconded by Councillor O’Malley, was passed, calling for a general amnesty. It stated that

... we the Members of the Galway County Council request His Majesty’s Government to grant a general amnesty to all the prisoners deported from this county seeing that nine-tenths of the people of Ireland disassociated themselves from the rebellion, and have already through their representatives Councils expressed their condemnation of it, and that the great majority of the rank and file who took part went out believing that they were only going on parade, and in complete ignorance of the gravity of the situation.

That we consider the punishment already inflicted on the leaders is more than sufficient and more drastic than that inflicted on the South African Rebels, and that their further punishment by imprisonment or otherwise will not conduce to promote the better feeling which has existed mainly through the efforts of Mr Redmond and the Irish Party between this country and England.²⁹

The next meeting was the Council's Annual General Meeting, held on 4 June, at which McDonnell was re-elected Chairman. Councillor Peter J. O'Malley was elected Vice-Chairman, and members were appointed to various committees, such as the Ballinasloe Lunatic Asylum, Finance, County Buildings and Sanatorium Committees. Mr M.J. Kennedy was elected County Surveyor.

At this meeting the Council issued a resolution calling for a munitions factory to be established in Galway, stating that the City of Galway '... is in need of some encouragement and entitled to a share of the expenditure on War Material'.³⁰ The campaign for the factory was ongoing throughout 1916. An 18-pounder shell factory was eventually established in Galway toward the end of 1917.

The meeting also ordered that its resolution of 17 May relating to political prisoners be forwarded to the 'Premier, Mr John Redmond, Sir John Maxwell³¹ and the Members of Parliament'.³²

The next meeting was held on 1 August 1916. Mr G. Lee was appointed County Surveyor for the Eastern Division of the county. Rate collectors for various parts of the county were also appointed. Other general business issues, such as County buildings, courthouses, the amalgamation of the Unions, the purchase of quarries and so on, were also discussed.

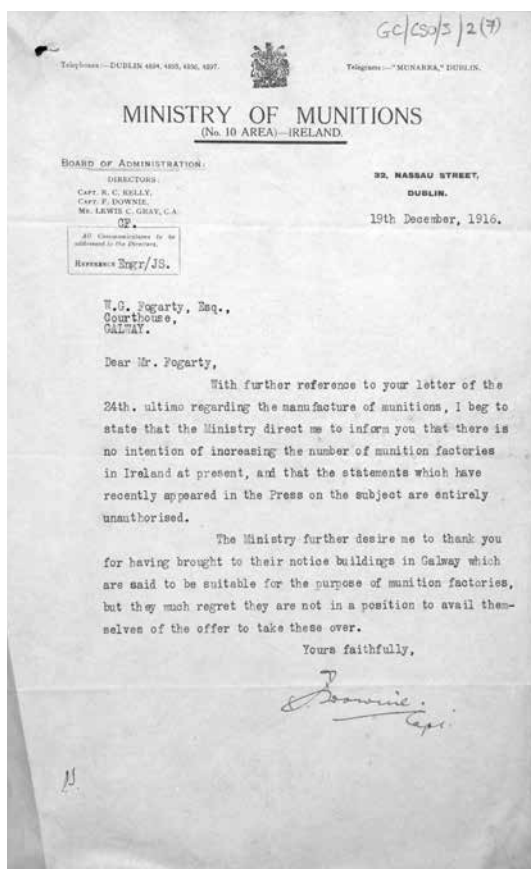


Figure 13.3 Letter from Munitions File, 19 December 1916, GC/CSO/3/2.

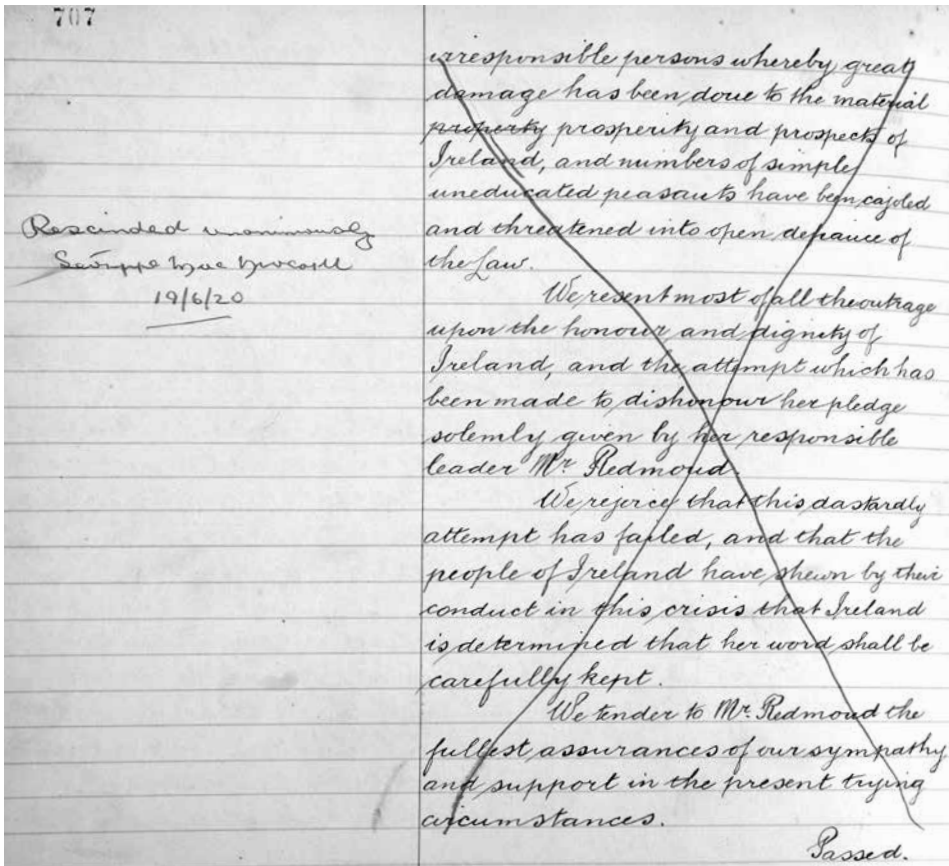


Figure 13.4 Galway County Council Minutes, 3 May 1916, GC/1/2, p707.

The meeting of 16 August again discussed general business, such as rate collection, erection of a surgical ward for tuberculosis patients, setting of a speed limit of 10 miles per hour for the towns of Athenry and Ballinasloe, breaches under the Disease of Animals Act, and walls and footpaths in Gort.

A letter from James Carter, interned clerk (referred to above), was read but its content was not included in the minutes. However, the *Connacht Tribune* of 19 August 1916 gives a good account of the debate among the Councillors relating to Carter's appeal for his post to be held open for him and also to be paid for the duration of his absence. Councillor Fahy stated that the Council pay Mr Seymour (County Secretary) while he is away on active military service, so Carter should be treated in a similar manner. Other Councillors, including the Acting County Secretary, Fogarty, disagreed, the latter stated that '...a man is entitled to fight for his county', with Fahy responding 'That is the very thing the other man [Carter] thinks he is doing'. The Council then decided to consider Carter's case at a later date but resolved that 'The County Council are of opinion that all the County Galway men interned should be released'.³³

No further meetings appear to have been held again until the penultimate meeting of the year, which was held on 1 November. This one followed a similar pattern as the previous few, dealing with items such as payments, advertising, the Kilkerrin-Carna-Recess road, the poor condition of Lough Inagh Road, the amalgamation of the Unions, the appointment of County Surveyor, Mr Lee, which was not approved by the Local Government Board, and also the appointment of a Veterinary Inspector (Mr Moffet).

Two resolutions from Kerry County Council were read and adopted. Though the content of the letters is not revealed in the minutes, one was protesting 'against the partition of Ireland' and the second was relating to the possible introduction of conscription to Ireland.³⁴ The Council also adopted a resolution from the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin relating to the release of Irish prisoners in England.³⁵

There was also discussion relating to the proposed closure of Galway Prison, which met with the disapproval of the Council. It resolved that,

*'The Council would be very glad if all prisons could be closed but if there must be one in Connaught there can be no justification for closing the prison situated in the Capital of the Province.'*³⁶

Galway County Council's final meeting of the year was held on 15 November; the subsequent meeting was held on 7 February 1917. It again discussed the usual variety of topics, such as payments, roads, rates, university scholarships, and the purchase of three new steam rollers and so on.

Meanwhile around the county the Rural District Councils were busy fighting poverty and the spread of disease, such as in Headford,³⁷ and were actively engaged in dealing with health and sanitary issues. They were particularly occupied with attempts to improve conditions and housing for the labouring class, most especially the Clifden Council. Meanwhile, the Tuam Rural District Council voiced

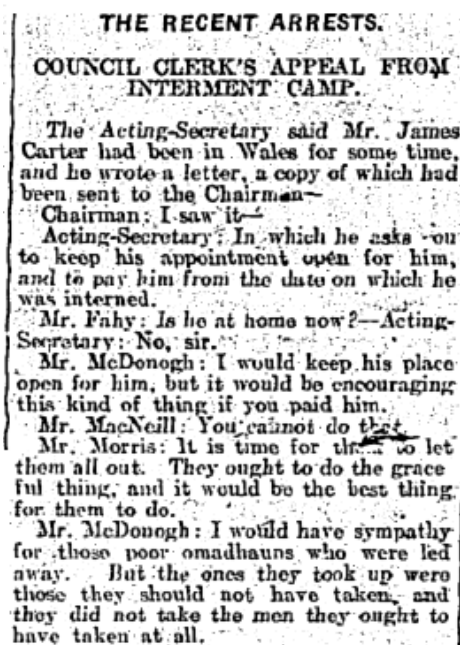


Figure 13.5 *Connacht Tribune* extract on a discussion at a Galway County Council meeting regarding Carter's request for his job to remain open for him while interned, 19th August 1916.

*'its displeasure at the administration of the Congested Districts Board stating it deplored 'the fact that three fourths of the tenant farmers of this Union are still living in miserable patches of thin wet land and that we earnestly request the Congested Districts Board and landlords to divide even portions of the farms held by them in the different districts for tillage purposes for the betterment of the Nation...'*³⁸

Though some of the Rural District Councils did condemn the Rising, such as Portumna, several, for instance Clifden, Gort and Tuam, appeared not to refer to it at all. Portumna's resolution read as follows,

*'That we the Members of the Portumna Rural District Council condemn the action of the Authorities in shooting the innocent people without any form of trial during the recent disturbance in Dublin, and we further condemn them for depriving us of the youth and manhood of Ireland by deportation and whose sympathies were heartily in accord with the wishes of the Government as far as recruiting is concerned. That a Committee of the whole Board be appointed to collect funds for the dependents of those noble Irishmen who were shot during the disturbance.'*³⁹

The Ballinasloe Urban District Council's resolution read,

*'That we earnestly and respectfully call on Mr J Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party to use their great influence to have those mis-guided Irishmen connected with the recent disturbances in Ireland treated with leniency (sp) and mercy.'*⁴⁰

The Tuam Town Commissioners remained silent on the subject of the disturbances.

The Loughrea Town Commissioners issued a strongly worded condemnation stating,

*'That we deeply deplore the recent action of a small section of fanatics calling themselves Irishmen, exploited no doubt by Agents of Germany, in fermenting an uprising against the authority of the Irish nation and the Government, at a time of sore trial to the cause of civilisation and we are horrified by the sacrifice of many innocent lives and the ruthless destruction of property caused thereby. We sympathise with the Leader of the Irish people Mr J. E. Redmond for the pangs of grief this wanton outrage has brought upon him after his life work in the service of the nation, by which he has brought the Irish cause to such a splendid triumph and in this sad ordeal we pledge him our unswerving support.'*⁴¹

Like Galway County Council, the Loughrea Town Commissioners expunged their resolution of condemnation in 1920.⁴²

Slightly later the Portumna Rural District Council issued a plea to His Majesty King George for clemency for Sir Roger Casement, stating ‘...we believe that now is a time at which the exercise of His Majesty’s Royal prerogative would do much to accentuate the friendship and devotedness of our native land to the Throne’.⁴³ However, Casement was executed by hanging at Pentonville Prison London on 3 August 1916.

Overall the various local authority minutes, particularly those of Galway County Council, give a very good sense of political attitudes at the time, and show that by the end of 1916, the tide had not yet turned, in terms of a softening in attitudes towards an actual physical fight for independence. It was really only following elections in 1920 which resulted in an overwhelming change in the political allegiances of the Councils – and indeed after much had happened in the interim – that a real change is evident in the minutes in the approach and stance of the various local authorities in the county of Galway.

A report in the *Connacht Tribune* in November 1916 reveals that living conditions in the west towards the close of the year were indeed still grim. It states,

‘In Lettermore there are 265 families, and not three per cent of these live in average comfort. Ninety-seven of them have no beds to sleep on: they lie by the fireside on bags of straw, with a cow or a pig for their companion. In the majority of houses entire families, of both sexes, sleep in a single apartment... No; the conditions under which the people are forced to live breed infection, and kill out a hardy peasantry as if the country could find no use for them. This year the potato crop has been a failure, and if prompt measures are not taken to meet the situation our correspondent informs us that an appeal will have to be made to the charity of the public...’

*‘These people must be released from the galling slavery that such conditions beget before any progress can be hoped for. They want good houses: they want some means to provide the wherewithal to live’.*⁴⁴

And so it was that the Galway County Council and the Rural District Councils from 1916 onwards had, aside from and perhaps despite politics, much work to do throughout the next few turbulent years, and indeed beyond. The attitudes of the Councils in 1916 can be considered a reflection of those of the wider general public, which seems at that stage to have been more preoccupied with eking out a substance living, in the midst of political change, rather than actively striving for

political change. As stated by Úna Newell in her article, 'The Rising of the Moon: Galway 1916', '*Subdued though it seemed, Redmond retained the unenthusiastic support of the great majority of the population for the Home Rule movement and the allied cause*'.⁴⁵

Greater change in attitude was to come a little later following the threat of conscription, which was vehemently opposed by a wide section of society, from Sinn Féin and the Volunteers to the Catholic Church, the GAA and others. This was to be the ultimate tipping point, but the events of 1916, the executions, the introduction of martial law, and the wide-spread arrests and internments without trial, with the latter leading to extreme hardship for the families of those involved, were to prime the flame of dissatisfaction; the Rising '*... played a most critical role in establishing a strong foundation from which this rise in militant nationalism could progress*'.⁴⁶ Thus the Republic declared in 1916 was just a few short years later defended and fought for with the widespread support of the Irish people and her native democratic institutions, such as Galway County Council.

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14. Guest, Ivor Churchill, first Viscount Wimborne (1873-1939), politician, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1915-1918, first cousin of Winston Churchill. George Boyce in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004.
15. GCC Minutes, GC/1/2, p. 694.
16. *Ibid.*, GC/1/2, p. 697.
17. *Ibid.*, GC/1/2, p. 700.
18. Figures extracted from the respective Board of Guardian minutes for 1906 and 1916, but from 1915 for Mountbellew as the 1916 volume is missing.
19. Kenny, Tomás, *Galway: politics and society, 1910-23*, Maynooth Studies in Local History No. 95 (Four Courts Press, 2011), p. 9.
20. Máirtín 'Mór' McDonagh (1857-1934) of Thomas McDonagh & Sons dominated local trade and public life. He was one of the biggest employers in the Galway region and a member of several committees and organisations, such as the Board of Guardians, the Urban District Council, the Harbour Commission and the Galway Race Committee. John Cunningham, 'West awakens to worker rights', in the *Irish Times*, 11 September 2013.

21. Seamus or James Carter (1873-1929), originally from the Rosscahill area, had been a teacher in St Joseph's school, Nun's Island, Galway before commencing work with Galway County Council in circa 1900. He was a fluent Irish speaker, a member of Galway City Harriers and one of the founders of the Galway Pipers' Band. He died 'while at his duties' with Galway County Council in February 1929 (*Connacht Tribune*, 9 February 1929, p. 3).
22. BMH WS 373, John Hosty (<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0373.pdf#page=11>) (April 2015).
23. BMH WS 406, Frank Hardiman (<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0406.pdf#page=22>) (April 2015).
24. GCC Clerks' Attendance Book, GC/7/10.
25. GCC Finance Committee Minutes, 1 July 1916, GC/3/1, p. 98.
26. GCC Minutes, May 1916, GC/1/2, pp 706-7.
27. *Ibid.*, 18 June 1920, GC/1/3.
28. *Ibid.*, 17 May 1916, GC/1/2, p. 715.
29. *Ibid.*, 17 May 1916, GC/1/2, pp 711-12.
30. GCC Minutes, GC1/2, p. 734.
31. General Sir John Grenfell Maxwell (1859-1929) was a British army officer and colonial governor. He served in Egypt during the British occupation and in South Africa during the Boer War. In World War I Maxwell returned to Egypt to defend the Suez Canal. He had previous knowledge of Ireland as he had served at army headquarters at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, from 1902-1904. He arrived in Dublin on Friday, April 28, 1916 after receiving orders from the British Minister for War Lord Kitchener to quell the Rising and pacify Ireland — operating under martial law, the rule of the soldier. Maxwell would only accept unconditional surrender from the rebels. He was "left to his own discretion" by his prime minister, Herbert Asquith, in ordering the executions at Kilmainham. Maxwell returned to England later in 1916. <http://www.easter1916.ie/> a digital media master's degree project at Griffith College, Dublin, 2011. Accessed Apr 2015. He was replaced as Commander-in-Chief, Ireland, in November 1916 by a Galway man, General Sir Bryan Mahon, (1862-1930), from Belleville, Co. Galway. *Connacht Tribune*, 11 November 1916.
32. GCC Minutes, GC/1/2, p. 736.
33. GCC Minutes, GC/1/2, p. 750.
34. GCC Minutes, GC/1/2, p. 762.
35. GCC Minutes, GC/1/2, p. 763.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Tuam Rural District Council Minutes, 28 Aug 1915, G01/11/15, p. 185.
38. *Ibid.*, 18 Dec 1915, G01/11/15, p. 267.
39. Portumna Rural District Council, Minutes, G01/3/18, p. 60.
40. Ballinasloe Urban District Council Minutes, BUC/1/10, 9 May 1916, p. 194.
41. Loughrea Town Commissioners Minutes, 8 May 1916, LTC/1/7.
42. *Ibid.*, 1 March 1920, LTC/1/7.
43. Portumna Rural District Council Minutes, G01/3/18, p. 118.
44. *Connacht Tribune*, 11 November 1916.
45. Newell, Úna "The Rising of the Moon: Galway 1916", *JGAHS*, Vol. 58, 2006, p. 119.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Clifden District 1916

Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill

The United Irish League was the most active organisation in Connemara in the years leading up to 1916. The League supported small farmers in their fight to safeguard the land from ‘grabbers and graziers’, and had a large, active membership. In contrast, the Sinn Féin Club in Clifden had a small membership. It met weekly in the old jail, where visiting speakers delivered political lectures and pamphlets and newspapers were distributed.¹

A branch of the Irish Volunteers was set up in Leenane in spring 1914 and following John Redmond’s declaration of support for the force in June, branches were established at Clifden, Tully Cross, Claddaghduff and Letterfrack.² Members of the United Irish League then enrolled in the Volunteers and openly participated in weekly drilling sessions.

When the Volunteers split in September 1914, the Connemara branches declared for Redmond and formed the National Volunteers. The few dissenting voices, like those in the Letterfrack and Leenane areas, struggled to hold their members together, but falling numbers and isolation forced the Irish Volunteers into decline.³

The police reports for Galway County state that the Clifden District was quiet during April 1916.⁴ This was not entirely surprising; under the influence of the nationalist politician, William O’Malley MP, and the parish priest at Clifden, Canon Patrick McAlpine, the district was known to be supportive of Redmond and the Irish Party. A native of Ballyconneely, O’Malley represented Connemara in the House of Commons for 23 years, between 1895 and 1918. McAlpine was a strong political force in the district since his appointment as parish priest for Clifden in 1898.⁵ He was an advocate of Home Rule and a supporter of O’Malley and the Irish Party. Both O’Malley and McAlpine fully backed Redmond’s stand on the war.

O’Malley regularly addressed recruiting rallies throughout the county and was present at a meeting held in Galway on 26 January 1916. John Redmond and the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne, also spoke at the meeting. At the time, men were needed to fill the gaps left in Irish Regiments following heavy losses sustained in recent battles. Recruiting advertisements in the *Connacht Tribune* pressed home the message, ‘You cannot permit your Regiments to be kept up to strength by other than Ireland’s sons!’⁶ The purpose of the Galway meeting was to impress on men of influence in the county the necessity to encourage eligible young men in their

locality to enlist. In his speech, Redmond made a straightforward appeal to the people to support him, as he explained the significance of their response to the war for the Home Rule campaign. He was there, the newspaper reported, to 'point out the path of duty' for the present generation. 'Make no mistake about it', he told them, 'upon our action depends the realisation of the dreams of many of our heroes and martyrs.'⁷ The Lord Lieutenant had some statistics for the audience, 'the East Riding of County Galway had given 518 men to the army since the beginning of the war and the West Riding 522, making a total of 1,040 from the county'. Ireland still held 230,000 males of military age, 22,207 of these were in County Galway: 'all that is asked is that [Ireland] should respond to the call that comes from her leaders and that comes from the trenches, and supply the 1,100 men per week to repair the wastage in her own ranks.'⁸ This was indeed a big ask, when one considers that a week earlier the same newspaper carried a long list of men from the 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers, who had been killed, wounded or were missing.⁹

In the three days that followed the Galway meeting, recruiting rallies were held at Oughterard, Rosmuc, Carraroe and Clifden. The Clifden rally was held in the town hall on 29 January and was attended by large numbers from the town and neighbouring district. A brass band of the Connaught Rangers arrived by train and played through the streets as it made its way to the hall. The local doctor, Dr Pit Gorham, opened the meeting and William O'Malley MP and several other speakers addressed the crowd. Among these was my grandfather, Michael Lavelle, a small farmer from Streamstown, outside the town. At the time, Michael was a District Councillor and a member of the Board of Guardians of the Clifden Union. He was a well-known activist in the United Irish League and was described by the press as 'an old Fenian'.¹⁰

In his speech Michael acknowledged that, years before, he had been a Fenian and a rebel, but now he was a supporter of the Irish Party and of Redmond. With the passing of the Home Rule Act, he felt that the English government deserved Ireland's loyalty and co-operation in the war. It would seem that he had recently heard a sermon given by a Belgian priest that had convinced even him, a man of almost 60 years of age, to consider enlisting, if they would have him.¹¹ Two of Michael's three sons had already enlisted in the Connaught Rangers. The eldest, also named Michael, was in officer training school in Cork at the time of the Rising. The second son, William, was already at war; he was sent to Gallipoli in September 1915. The third son, Joseph, was still at home, working on the family farm, but he too would enlist later that year. Thankfully, all three survived.

For the eldest son, Lieutenant Michael Lavelle (my father), 1916 would prove to be an eventful year. Michael was sent to France in July and three months later, while attached to the 9th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, he was awarded the



Figure 14.1 William O'Malley MP
Source: Unknown



Figure 14.2 Lieutenant Michael Lavelle M.C., Clifden. Source: Newspaper unknown.

Crime—Special.

Hd.-Qrs. File No. _____ S.

COUNTY OF GALWAY, W.R.

Political Societies, and other such Organizations for month of May 1916

No.	Name of organization	Membership	No of Branches	Remarks.
1	United Irish League	5947	46	
2	National Volunteers.	3404	36	10 Sinn Fein members arrested for taking part in the rebellion.
3	Irish Volunteers.	555	8	One branch dissolved & 114 arrested for taking part in rising.
4	G.A. Association.	707	26	54 members arrested for taking part in the rising.
5	A.O.H.	830	10	One Division dissolved during the month.
6	Boy Scouts.	19	1	One member arrested for taking part in the rebellion.
7	Gaelic League.	100	4	

Note:—The National Volunteers have 54 rifles and 132 shot-guns in possession.

When the rebellion started the Irish Volunteers had 19 rifles, 192 shot guns, and 66 revolvers. Of these only 3 rifles, 67 shot guns, and seven revolvers have been recovered up to the present.

G. B. Rutledge County Inspector.

Dated at Galway 1st June, 1916.

The
Inspector General.

Figure 14.3 NLI, MFA 54/59, The British in Ireland (CO 904) Police Reports 1914 - 1921, May 1916

Military Cross for gallantry in action. When he came home on leave in December, he was given a hero's welcome; he was met at the Clifden railway station by well-wishers and friends, and carried shoulder-high through the streets to the Railway Hotel, where Canon McAlpine had arranged a dinner in his honour.¹²

Michael Lavelle and his three sons were politically well schooled. Home Rule was not some abstract notion that had been recently introduced to them. They knew that generations before them had fought for self-government.

The demand for Home Rule had been a political issue on the streets of Clifden since John D'Arcy, the founder of the town, ran for parliament in the 1830s and Daniel O'Connell held one of his Monster Meetings there in 1843, demanding repeal of the Act of Union. Mitchell Henry, of Kylemore Castle, now Kylemore Abbey, was MP for Co Galway during the 1870s and 1880s (1871-85). He was one of the founding members of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the 1870s and was considered next only to Isaac Butt in importance and influence in the early years of the Party's history.

For supporters of the Irish Party the Rising was seen as an attack on the efforts of previous generations. At a great meeting held in the Galway town hall at the height of the Galway Rising, those participating in the rebellion were described as ‘disaffected fanatics and mischief-makers’. The names of those attending the meeting, all prominent Galway men, were listed in the local press. During the meeting the citizens of the town were asked to enrol as special constables to help the authorities restore order.¹³ However, the response of the authorities to the Rising, the execution of the rebel leaders and the internment of thousands of men from all parts of the country, would later cause many to question their previously held attitudes.

In its January 1917 review of events during the previous year, the *Connacht Tribune* captured the mood of the county following Easter week as follows:

*the irresistible topic of the Rising permeated all our thoughts, and the manner perhaps, of the Government’s dealing with the outbreak, much more than the outbreak itself, created a new “atmosphere” in the country. It remains for the years to come to see [who] reaped the fruit, whether bitter or sweet, of the incidents of 1916. We live too close up to the period to see or appreciate it historically.*¹⁴

Endnotes

1. Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill, *Beyond The Twelve Bens* (Galway, Third Edition 2006), p. 191.
2. Bureau of Military History (BMH) 1913-21, Witness Statement (WS) 1612, Peter McDonnell, p. 2; National Archives of Ireland (NAI), MFA 54/54, The British in Ireland (CO 904), Police Reports 1914 – 1921, June 1914, Galway West Riding.
3. BMH WS 1612, Peter McDonnell, p. 2.
4. NAI, MFA 54/58 The British in Ireland (CO 904) Police Reports, 1914-1921, April 1916, Galway West Riding.
5. Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill, pp 157-163.
6. *Connacht Tribune*, 6 November 1915, p. 3.
7. *Connacht Tribune*, 5 February 1916.
8. Ibid.
9. *Connacht Tribune*, 29 January 1916.
10. *Connacht Tribune*, 5 February 1916.
11. Ibid.
12. Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill, pp 188-191.
13. *Connacht Tribune*, 29 April 1916, p. 3.
14. *Connacht Tribune*, 6 January 1917, p. 5.

Galway's Infrastructure In 1916

Paul Duffy

In comparison with many other Irish counties, Co. Galway had a reasonably good infrastructural base in 1916. Though the eastern part of the county was better serviced than Connemara, due to significant development works undertaken during the previous twenty years, the western area was showing considerable signs of improvement. However, threats to the development of the services facilitating the progress of the county were beginning to appear. The most notable of these was the threatened reduction in capacity of the Midland Great Western Railway Company's line from Dublin to Galway. The Midland Company had been incorporated in July 1845 with the stated purpose of constructing a railway from Dublin to Mullingar. In 1846, the company obtained parliamentary sanction for an extension to Athlone and in the following year further approval to extend the line to Galway. This latter section was completed in 1851.¹ Significant lengths of the railway carried a double set of tracks; from the Dublin terminus of Broadstone to Ballinasloe, from Attymon to Athenry, and from Oranmore to Galway. Oranmore had a large military training ground which was used as a troop marshalling ground for regiments being transferred either into or out of Galway. By 1916, Oranmore also had an aerodrome catering for the Royal Flying Corps (subsequently renamed the Royal Air Force).² In May 1916, a memorandum on reducing the mileage of double track sections of the company's system was drawn up by General Manager M.F. Keogh. From this it is clear that the singling of the Broadstone to Ballinasloe section had been considered. It was decided that the traffic on this section "was sufficiently dense to justify the continuance of double line working".³ The obvious, though unstated, conclusion was that traffic volumes were to be monitored and if they showed a decline then one line of tracks would be lifted. This would mean a reduction in the frequency of both goods and passenger trains. At that time, Ballinasloe had exceptionally long livestock and goods loading platforms, located immediately to the west of the passenger station. These were constructed to cater for the three sizeable annual fairs held in the town, trading in wool, cattle and horses. The horse fair alone survives to this day. According to company statistics, the railway carried 918,592 head of livestock on its system in 1915⁴ and the bulk of this trade would have been generated by the Ballinasloe fair. Horses were shipped on foot of sales to the British army and cattle were transported in large numbers to satisfy the live export trade. Any reduction in service on the Broadstone to Ballinasloe line would seriously impact on the lucrative livestock traffic. Eventually, though, the line was singled, the works being executed in stages, - Galway to Oranmore in 1926, Athenry to Attymon Junction in 1927 and Ballinasloe to Clonsilla, Dublin in 1931.⁵ Oranmore station, which had



Horse Tram Williamsgate St Galway c. 1914

been opened in 1851, was closed in 1963, only to be reopened at a new location to the west of the town.

The Midland line was extended to the quayside at Galway docks in 1859 and a standard gauge branch line was opened to Clifden in 1895. This was shut in 1935.⁶ The railway company had also constructed a short spur line to service the Shantallow Quarry. This was closed in 1926 when the track was lifted. The Old Seamus Quirke Road now occupies a significant length of the old track bed. The company also worked the Loughrea and Attymon Railway Company's line, which opened for traffic on 1 December 1890, on a contract basis. This line connected with the Midland's railway at Attymon Junction. It was closed in November 1975 and the tracks were lifted in 1988.⁷ The Midland Company owned two hotels in Co. Galway, one in Eyre Square at the Galway station and the other at Recess on the Clifden branch.⁸

The County Council Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction had selected Athenry as the best site for an Agricultural College and then set about bringing the proposal to a fruitful completion.⁹ The Midland Railway Company provided facilities for a large railway siding to serve the college's needs. Had the Galway Volunteers remained at the College after mobilisation at Easter 1916, British troops could have been dispatched from Athlone, Galway and Limerick to attack and contain them. Limerick was connected to the Midland's line at Athenry by the Great Southern and Western Railway¹⁰ whose Co. Galway stations were at Gort, Ardahan, Craughwell, Ballyglunin, Tuam and Milltown. The railway networks owned by both of these companies, and the interconnections



Loughrea c. 1910

with other railways, meant that most of Galway was connected to virtually every port in the country, thus facilitating trade.

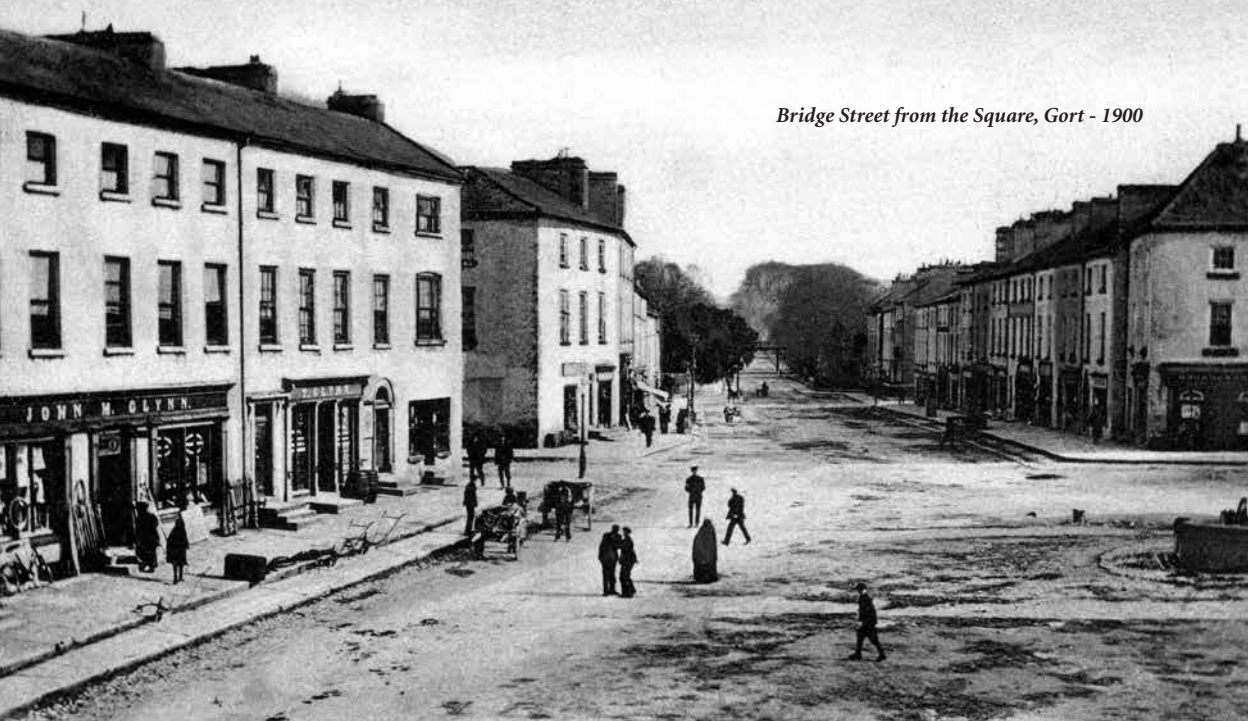
Despite the railway links to the rest of the country, transport costs for bulk items could be high, particularly when double handling, *i.e.* overland transport to a railway station, was required. However, areas of East Galway also had ready access to Dublin, Limerick, or Waterford via the Ballinasloe Extension Canal, the Shannon and either the Grand or the Royal Canals. Belfast was accessible via the Shannon and the Ballinamore-Ballyconnell and the Ulster Canals. Eastern Connemara and South Mayo were linked to Galway City via Lough Corrib and the Eglinton Canal which was constructed between 1848 and 1852.¹¹ A number of quays were constructed at various locations around Lough Corrib to facilitate trade boats plying to and from Galway City. Pleasure trips and excursions were also catered for. The excursion trade became so popular for a time that large groups travelled by train into Galway specifically to take a pleasure cruise on the lake. Whilst the excursion trade remained popular for a number of years, the goods traffic through the Eglinton Canal slowly declined. In 1857, some 6,825 tons of cargo passed through the canal, declining to about 4,000 tons by the early 1900s. This trade had all but ceased by 1916 because of competition from the railway to Clifden. The loss of the cargo trade impacted on the excursion business as the steamers were also used as trading vessels. The *Countess Cadogan*, which had been purchased from the Shannon Development Company in 1913, was withdrawn from service in 1917 and sold to Aberdeen. The vessel was still registered at Lloyds in 1930.¹²



Athenry - the RIC are out in force

While the Corrib Navigation was in a terminal decline, the Grand Canal, including the Ballinasloe extension, was operating successfully. In 1912, the tonnage carried on the system amounted to 308,851 tons, some 110,000 tons comprising grain and grain products.¹³ This latter figure illustrates the amount of traffic generated by the agricultural sector, not least by the people of East Galway who had long realised the cost-saving benefits of bulk transport. The Horseman family, who were prominent millers in East Galway, had their own barges trading on the Grand Canal system. By 1832, Kelly's Mills had deepened the Ballyshrule river and created a harbour at the mill to facilitate shipment of grain and grain products by water.¹⁴ At a later stage, the Pollock estate had its own wharf on the Ballinasloe Canal. Almost immediately after the canal was opened for business in 1829, a passenger coach and goods wagon service was set up to link the town to Galway. A passenger coach service was also established between Tuam and Ballinasloe.

The town of Ballinasloe was quick to capitalise on the benefits of the new transport system, erecting a gasworks just to the east of the new canal harbour. As the plant was constructed on the canal bank, bulk cargos of coal could be delivered directly from the quayside in Dublin to the plant without intermediate handling, thus saving a considerable amount of money in transport charges. The gas works opened in 1840 and finally closed in the 1950s.¹⁵ Both the Galway and Tuam gas works were constructed on sites chosen because they could be serviced with coal directly from the ports. The Galway concern was opened in 1851 on the quayside in Galway. The manager of the facility had a salary of £120 per annum, with a free house, fuel and light.¹⁶ The convenience of the site was further enhanced with the



construction of the Midland Railway Company's spur line from Galway Station to the docks in 1859. The spur ran along the southern boundary of the gasworks, which meant that the gas company had two competing supply avenues to choose from, thus having some bargaining power in relation to transport costs of their major ingredient, coal. The company survived into the 1950s despite competition from electricity suppliers. The Perry family began hydro-electric generation in a disused mill in Newtownsmith in 1888, extending the plant in 1889. They successfully tendered to supply the public lighting at the docks for the Harbour Commissioners in 1890 and subsequently set up the Galway Electric Company Limited in 1897. Initially, the company supplied power for domestic lighting but by 1904 it had secured the contract to maintain the public lighting system for the town, thus ousting the Galway Gas Company from the contract.¹⁷ They faced the same problems as had faced the Gas Company: long delays in the Council settling their bills and frequent complaints about either the quality of the light or undue delay in repairing damaged or defective lights. The Galway Electric Company was acquired by the Electricity Supply Board in 1929 as part of the National Electrification Scheme which had been set in train by the construction of the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme, the design and construction of which involved significant input from graduates of Galway's Engineering School.¹⁸ The Tuam Gas Works was strategically located immediately beside the railway station in Tuam which facilitated bulk delivery of coal directly into its storage sheds. It did not face competition from electricity suppliers until the National Electrification Scheme got underway with the completion of the Shannon Scheme. However, in 1887 there was a proposal to acquire the two mills at the lower end of Shop Street to set up a pumping station for a proposed water supply system and to utilise

British Military Camp at Oranmore c. 1916



Fair Green Ballinasloe 1905



Marconi Radio Station Clifden c. 1910



the surplus power to generate electricity to light the town.¹⁹ In 1903, the Gort Rural District Council set up a Lighting Committee resulting in the Sunlight Gas Company lighting the town using acetylene gas for a number of years.²⁰

Water power was harnessed for pumping purposes in the Galway Town, Tuam, Athenry and Loughrea Water Supply systems. The Galway scheme was designed by Samuel Ussher Roberts who had come to the town to take charge of the construction of the Corrib Drainage and Navigation Scheme which included the Eglinton Canal. Roberts subsequently became County Surveyor for the Western Division of County Galway and also for the town. Initially, the Galway scheme, opened in 1868, had two large water wheels to power the pumps but by the 1890s these were insufficient to meet the increased demand for water, given the enlargement of the town and the ever-increasing leakage from the system's iron pipework.²¹ A steam engine was installed in 1895 to boost pumping capacity and the entire system was overhauled during the period from 1903 to 1905 when much of the defective pipework was replaced, new pipelines laid to serve the expanding suburbs and two water-powered turbines installed to drive the pumps. Water Rates were a problem for some and in 1915 the Galway and Salthill Tramway Company sought a reduction in their rates. They stated that the company only traded profitably for the four summer months in the year. The Tramway Company had been set up in 1887 to cater for the emerging suburb and tourist destination of Salthill. The horse drawn system was never electrified and the Company ceased operating in 1919.²²

The Tuam Water Supply was set up, post 1895, utilising water power to pump water from Bermingham Mill to a reservoir to supplying the town. By 1907, the pumping system was proving to be inadequate so a new wheel was installed which drove a three-throw pump.

The new wheel and pump, coupled with modifications to the mill feed and weir, made a major improvement to the supply situation. A Crossley engine and pump were installed in 1918-19 which was subsequently replaced by a National Gas engine in the 1920s to further enhance the water supply. However, the outbreak of the Second World War led to a major scarcity of heavy fuel oil and machine parts. Accordingly, the old water-powered pumping arrangements were reactivated and stayed in operation from 1940 to 1950.²³ A supply of clean water is, and always was and will be, essential to maintain life. It is also essential in food production for both commercial and domestic purposes. The newly formed County Council, through its offshoot the County Committee of Technical Instruction and Agriculture, recognised this.

As well as driving forward the proposal to have an Agricultural Institute for Connaught established in Athenry because of its location at a railway junction, the

Tuam c. 1900



Pier Head Kilronan early 1900s



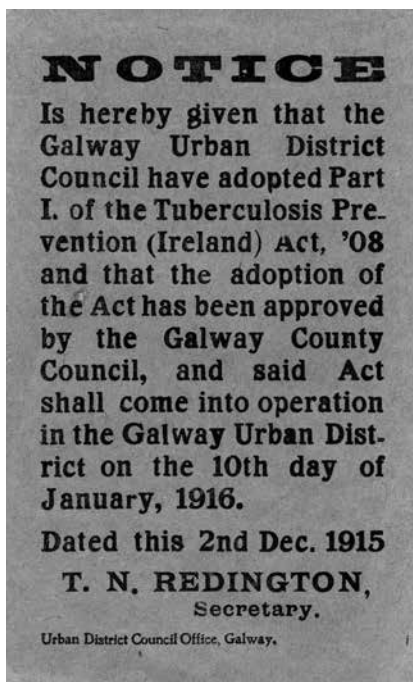
Technical School Portumna c. 1910



County Committee organised a wide range of classes in different centres. Courses in drawing, mathematics, carpentry and marble cutting were organised for the young men of the county and were given at various centres. The women were also given instruction in a wide variety of topics: dressmaking, crochet, embroidery and knitting, as well as shorthand and book keeping. Itinerant or Travelling Teachers gave classes in basic first aid, home nursing and household hygiene. These were well attended, according to the Committee's Annual Reports. On the agricultural side, training was given in livestock management and breeding, farm yard management and hygiene, bee keeping, poultry management, dairy hygiene and butter making. The Agricultural Instructors experimented with growing various varieties of crops in different soil types, using a range of fertilizers, and reported regularly on their findings in a bid to improve both the yield and quality of the produce. The poultry management classes led to an increase in egg production. Similarly, the instruction in dairy hygiene and butter making led to an increased output and improved quality of product.²⁴ Those involved in both these areas were able to use the county's rail network to their advantage, as did the livestock producers, particularly those rearing pigs who saw an improvement in the market as agents from the large Limerick Bacon factories were able to attend fairs in those towns served by the counties rail network. The egg and butter export business became so large that shopkeepers in every railway town acted as export agents, buying locally and selling on to England in the main. As sturdy timber cases were required to keep the products from getting damaged, Taylor's Mill in Athenry diversified, adding a saw mill to their complex.²⁵

The pig jobbers and egg and butter exporters also had the advantage of telegraph communications²⁶ with their overseas customers. The railway lines provided the most economical routes for the telegraph lines as using them did not need a multitude of separate wayleave agreements to be negotiated with a large number of landowners and occupiers. Where there was no railway the public road became the preferred option, Clifden being a case in point. Several years after the arrival of the telegraph, the construction of the standard gauge railway to Clifden made the area a very attractive one for Marconi to set up his wireless station at Derrygimla in 1907. The station had a direct link to Dublin and London. There were other attractions as well: cheap land, a plentiful supply of turf for the boilers in the generating hall, an ample water supply and an open sky to North America.²⁷

The construction of the Marconi Station marked the commencement of the telecommunications age with all its benefits and, some might say, all its drawbacks. Much of the material used during the erection of the station was landed at Clifden Quay which could accommodate vessels of 200 tons burden. This was one of more than 150 landing places, quays, piers and small harbours constructed in the nineteenth century. Most of these facilities were constructed as famine relief schemes



Tuberculosis Prevention Act, 1908

to give some temporary employment and cater for small local boats. A number of the piers could facilitate small steamers involved in coastal trading. Clifden Quay fell into this category. There were a significant number of Coastguard Stations built along the Galway coastline in a bid to deal with smuggling and the illicit spirit trade. These latter infrastructural items, coupled with the fact that a detachment of crown forces were guarding the Marconi Station, may well have influenced the choice of the Kerry coast as the proposed landing place for the German guns carried on the Aud for the 1916 Rising. A side effect of the Marconi construction works was the damage caused to the road by the haulage of machinery and equipment to the site. The damage was so severe that the road maintenance contractor was released from his contract without penalty.

At this period in time, the County Council had not moved away from the presentment system of awarding contracts for maintenance, repair or construction of roads. However, work was underway to designate certain roads as Main Roads and bring these into a Direct Labour Scheme carried out by the Council itself. Contract steamrolling of roads would appear to have been carried out as early as 1904, when the County Council had the road to the Galway Racecourse rolled.²⁸ James Perry, County Surveyor for the Western Division, in a report dated 13 February 1906,

advised the County Council that they should prepare for “the new kind of traffic” that was appearing by steamrolling their roads.²⁹ Shortly thereafter, Perry died and was temporarily succeeded by his daughter, Alice. When the competition for the permanent position arose some ten months later, Alice passed the technical interview and examination. However, the final selection was to be decided by the votes of the Councillors. Alice was not successful. She has the distinction, however, of being the only female County Surveyor in the history of that office in Ireland. Perry’s successors drove the Direct Labour Scheme forward and successfully planned and costed the purchase of steam rollers, and stone crushers for the new style roadworks.³⁰ The successful introduction of the scheme was due, in no small measure, to its gradual introduction; in Roscommon the abrupt introduction of Direct Labour caused a near riot among the road contractors who feared for their income.³¹ By 1916, the main roads of Galway were in a good state of repair.

Public health services came under the jurisdiction of the County Councils when they were established. In Galway the County Council took over the County Infirmary, a Fever Hospital, various workhouses, and the Connaught and District Lunatic Asylum at Creagh, Ballinasloe. Creagh had formed part of County Roscommon but had been transferred to the jurisdiction of County Galway.³² Construction work on the County Infirmary began in 1767 but the facility was not completed until 1802. It served the county area; the town had to wait for the opening of an infirmary in the workhouse in 1842. The Fever Hospital, located to the rear of the Galway Workhouse, was a relatively new building dating from 1910. It replaced the original one which had been built on Earl’s Island in 1820. The first workhouse in the county was opened in Gort in 1841. Both the Ballinasloe and Loughrea institutions opened in 1842. Whilst the Tuam establishment was completed in 1842, it did not open until 1846. Clifden opened in 1847 but was closed for a while in 1849 as a result of the County Sherrieff seizing its furniture and effects on foot of the Clifden Union’s unpaid debts. After the worst period of the Famine the number of inmates began to dwindle. By 1916 there was a total 1,124 inmates in the ten workhouses in the county. The workhouses were closed in 1921 but the Galway Infirmary remained open. The Rural District Councils had their offices in the buildings until they were abolished and their functions transferred to the County Council. The County Infirmary was woefully inadequate and poorly managed by a Board of Governors elected by the various Poor Law Unions. In 1892 new legislation changed the manner in which the institution was run. Patients from both the town and county could be admitted and the name was changed to The Galway Hospital. However, the building proved totally inadequate to cope with the ever increasing demand for its services. It was closed in 1924 and all patients were transferred to the infirmary in the former workhouse. This, in turn, was demolished to make way for the current University College Hospital.³³

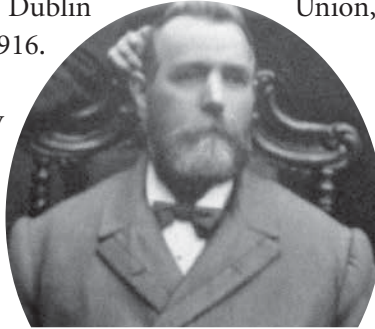
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Éamonn Ceannt - his life and times

Mary Gallagher

When Éamonn Ceannt was born in Ballymoe, County Galway, in September 1881 to RIC Constable James Kent and his wife Johanna, few could have imagined that he would live to sign the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and to lead the 4th Battalion of the Irish Volunteers during Easter week 1916 in the South Dublin Union, before being executed by firing squad on 8 May 1916.



Although he was only the family moved to came to love the spent many holidays in the Connaught dialect, of himself as a Galway the Gaelic League he an adult to Galway - how he coast, calling out in Irish to all the opportunity to talk to little

Figure 16.1 Éamonn Ceannt's father, RIC Head Constable, James Kent

two years of age when Drogheda, Ceannt county of his birth. He Connemara, adopted and always thought man. In a talk to described his first visit as would cycle out along the those he met. He often took groups of youngsters galloping up *bóiríní* (little roads) from the sea with loads of seaweed – ‘curious unsophisticated youngsters they are, ragged and rough and all browned by the sea and wind. Wind from the Atlantic.’¹ It was on a League outing to Galway that Ceannt met his future wife, Frances O'Brennan (who adopted the name Áine), for the first time. Their journey back from Galway was the start of a happy life together, cut short by Ceannt's untimely death.

Ceannt was one of the first generation of poorer Catholic boys to receive a secondary education. He learned his Irish history from the Christian Brothers when the family moved to Dublin in 1892. Ceannt was very bright and won valuable scholarships that allowed him to stay on in O'Connell School, North Richmond Street, until he was seventeen.²

Once he left school, Ceannt, who was a very shy and reserved boy, found his niche in the Gaelic League. He became passionate about resurrecting the language and music of Ireland, which was in danger of being lost. It was in the League that Ceannt established life-long friendships with other fellow separatists – among them the young Patrick Pearse. He also got to know and admire Douglas Hyde, the President of the Gaelic League. On 21 October 1901, Ceannt appeared as The Blind Piper in Hyde's *Casadh an tSúgáin* in the Gaiety Theatre.



Figure 16.2 Éamonn Ceannt, Uilleann Piper



Figure 16.3 Áine Ceannt, wife of Éamonn Ceannt

By this time, Ceannt had developed a passion for the Uilleann Pipes. As a founder member of the Dublin Pipers' Club, Ceannt used every opportunity to promote his interest in the pipes and his commitment to the Irish language. A colleague in the Gaelic League remembered a time, in 1902 or 1903, when 'there were droves of young enthusiastic Gaels, going off to Aran and elsewhere to "perfect themselves" in Irish'. A group of these men set off, 'to become native speakers in a fortnight'. Sadly disillusioned with their progress, they were returning to Dublin through Galway. Hearing of their arrival in Galway, Ceannt joined them. 'With the skirl of the pipes', Ceannt solemnly preceded them through Eyre Square and all the way to the station. Heads were popping, children running alongside and everyone gasping at the sight. The young Irish students 'would have been glad if the ground opened up to swallow [them], or if they could have wrung Ceannt's neck.' At the station, Ceannt marched up and down until a cheer was raised as the train moved off.³

If Ceannt had been fortunate in the timing of his education, he had equally good timing when it came to getting a job. Just after he left school, Dublin Corporation decided to make all appointments to clerkships subject to competitive examination. Éamonn's was one of the earliest appointments under the new system and he was appointed as a clerk in the City Treasurer's Office. His salary was £70 per year. For Ceannt, his work in Dublin Corporation was a means to an end. He did his work efficiently and effectively but it never provided enough challenge or reward.

In December 1903, Ceannt asked Áine to marry him. They kept their engagement secret while Ceannt looked for an opportunity to supplement their family income, while at the same time maintaining his commitment to the Gaelic League. The League had established a Leinster College of Irish in September 1906. Ceannt applied for, and got, the part-time post of Registrar, which he combined with teaching duties in the college. By 1908, however, it was becoming clear to some members of the Gaelic League, Ceannt among them, that too many of the members were either not interested in the language at all, or content only to say a 'cúpla focal'. Determined to influence the top echelons of the League, Ceannt got himself elected to its Executive Council in August 1908.

At around the same time, however, he had become more interested in finding a political solution to the issue of Irish independence. The political philosophy of Arthur Griffith's new political party, Sinn Féin, meshed closely with his own principles and he joined the Sinn Féin League in 1907.

By that time, even outside separatist circles, Ceannt's advanced nationalist views were beginning to be noticed. In September 1908, he accompanied a group of athletes and the Catholic Young Men's Society's Pilgrimage to Rome as their official Piper. While there, he led the pilgrims through the streets of Rome in an 11th Century Irish Pipers' costume and he played his pipes for Pope Pius X. He spoke only Irish during the visit and the pilgrimage organiser later remarked that 'Ceannt's views on politics were at variance with the vast majority of those who went to Rome from Ireland with him and, of course, he had discussions with many on the rightness of his political opinions.'⁴

Ceannt's political opinions were formed by close and critical reading of the newspapers and discussion within his small circle of friends and acquaintances, most of whom were advanced nationalists. They were in a minority. From the point of view of the man in the street, it seemed, by 1911, as if the prospects for Home Rule had begun to improve. The Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power in the House of Commons and when, in July 1911, the new king, George V, visited Ireland, he was greeted by cheering crowds.

Ceannt saw the royal visit as an opportunity to assert his nationalism. Together with Sean MacDiarmada, he decided to raise a banner across the end of Grafton Street encouraging his fellow citizens to attend a pro-Independence demonstration. The banner in Irish (and English) read, "Thou art not conquered yet dear land." Compared to the panoply of flags and banners that flew to welcome the royal couple, the banner was a small affair. Dublin Corporation was, however, convinced not to make a loyal address to the king.

At the time, MacDiarmada was the main recruiting agent for the secretive, oath-bound Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), which traced its origins to the Fenians and was committed to an independent Ireland, achieved, if necessary, by armed revolution. By the end of the year, Sean MacDiarmada had recruited Ceannt to the IRB.

The following year, 1912, was a critical turning point for Ceannt. He had been elected to the National Council of Sinn Féin the previous October but the fortunes of the party had fallen into decline as those of the Irish Parliamentary Party had risen.

In the meantime, Ceannt's political views, as MacDiarmada had recognised when recruiting him to the IRB, had become much more extreme than the Sinn Féin party that he supported. In March, Ceannt drafted a speech for delivery to the Socialist Party of Ireland on the topic of 'Constitutional Agitation'. In it he argued:

*Force is winning in Ulster, winning a political battle. It is up to the Nationalists of Ireland to adopt similar means. ... It is the duty of all men to be skilled in the use of arms. Preparation for war is the best guarantee of peace. ... Ireland needs peace. Then let her prepare for war.*⁵

In April 1912, when the Home Rule Bill at last came before the House of Commons, it failed on a number of important counts. It failed because the House of Lords could veto it for a further two years until at least 1914, it failed to meet the aspirations of the constitutional nationalists by leaving external affairs - war and peace - and control of taxation revenue largely in the hands of Westminster, and it failed to convince the Ulster Unionists that they would be able to opt out of a quasi-independent Ireland under Home Rule.

The House of Commons eventually passed the Home Rule Bill at the end of January 1913. Inevitably the House of Lords rejected it. The same thing happened again in July. By now the government was convinced that Home Rule would lead to bloodshed in Ulster. In Ulster itself, 100,000 men in the Ulster Volunteer Force were openly drilling and collecting money to buy arms and ammunition.

Ceannt's prediction that the very threat of force was winning the political battle in Westminster was proving correct. It was a view widely shared among his small circle of advanced nationalists. At a meeting of the National Council of Sinn Féin in January 1913, he proposed a resolution, 'That it is the duty of all Irishmen to possess a knowledge of arms'.⁶

Ceannt's increasing politicisation was also evident from his evolving role within the Gaelic League. He was one of a number of advanced nationalists, mostly

members of the IRB, who were losing patience with the refusal of the Gaelic League to abandon its apolitical stance and to use all the weapons at its disposal - including politics and, if necessary, physical agitation - to revive the language.

For many people in Dublin, the future of the Irish language was a luxury. They just wanted to put bread on the table for their children in the hideously overcrowded tenements. When James Larkin's union, the ITGWU, attempted to organise the general workers into the union, the very existence of the union was violently opposed by employers, most prominently William Martin Murphy. Both Sinn Féin and the Gaelic League were divided as to whether Larkinism was a benevolent or malign force.

Ceannt had no doubt. Two years earlier, in a dispute over membership of the ITGWU in Wexford, Arthur Griffith took the side of the employers and warned that native industry would close if the workers continued their dispute. Ceannt responded with a blistering criticism of Griffith's argument. He dismissed Griffith's suggestion that the development of Irish industries could take priority over the welfare of the Irish men and women working in them, as well as insisting that 'The right of free speech, of public meeting, and of organising for a lawful purpose ought to be unquestioned and unquestionable.'⁷

When the strike came to Dublin during Horse Show week 1913, the capital city descended into a crisis that continued until the end of the year. Ceannt's wife, Áine, later recalled that, 'This was the atmosphere when, in November 1913, Éamonn Ceannt received an invitation from The O'Rahilly to meet John MacNeill and others in Wynne's Hotel.'⁸

The meeting was the first step in the establishment of the Irish Volunteers and Ceannt was an enthusiastic founder member. The new organisation had its first public meeting on Tuesday 25 November, in the Rotunda Rink, Dublin. Over 3,000 men enrolled immediately. From the start the Irish Volunteers set out to be a citizen army - defensive and protective, never contemplating aggression. In the long term, it was envisaged that they would form a national army, under a national government.



Figure 16.4 Éamonn Ceannt, Commandant, 4th Battalion, Irish Volunteers

At last Ceannt had an 'Irish' army that, with a clear conscience, he felt he could join. In an article to the *Irish Volunteer* he said that he hoped the Volunteers would not have to fight – that just the look of them as an armed and disciplined force would be enough to fill their enemies with 'a wholesome respect'. He urged the Volunteers to 'be skilled in the art of war so that there may be no war'.⁹

At the first meeting of the Irish Volunteers, Ceannt and other advanced nationalists had deliberately kept a low profile to avoid coming under the notice of Dublin Castle. Secretly, however, the IRB had set out to infiltrate their members into positions of influence in the new organisation.

The year 1914 was a turning point, not just for Ceannt, but also for Ireland, for the continent of Europe, and ultimately for the geopolitical world order. The 'mirage' of Home Rule was becoming ever more illusory. Faced with the threat of force from the Ulster Volunteers, the Cabinet in Westminster made secret plans to use the British Army to contain the risk. On Friday 20 March, a majority of officers based in the Curragh military camp said that they would prefer to be dismissed rather than carry out active military operations against Ulster. The crisis deepened when, on the night of Friday 24 April, the Ulster Volunteers landed 25,000 rifles and 3 million rounds of ammunition, sourced from Germany, into Larne, Donaghadee and Bangor.

The Irish Volunteers decided that they would have to respond. In July, the yacht *Asgard* entered Howth harbour with a shipment of rifles. Ceannt, by now Acting Commandant of the 4th Battalion of the Irish Volunteers, marched openly out to Howth with his men and was waiting at the end of the pier to help off load them. A week later he took part in the second landing in Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow.

While Ceannt and his colleagues were preoccupied with arming the Volunteers, events on the continent of Europe were spiralling out of control and, on Tuesday 4 August, Britain declared war on Germany. The war changed everything. For the Westminster politicians, Irish Home Rule dropped off the political agenda. The Third Home Rule Bill was rushed through the House of Commons but was suspended for the duration of the war.

A wave of military euphoria greeted the war. The vast majority of the Irish population believed that Germany and its allies were in the wrong and that Irish support for Britain during its hour of need was a duty, a duty, moreover, which would ultimately be rewarded with the prize of Home Rule – after the war was won. By committing the Volunteers to active participation in the war, John Redmond split the Irish Volunteers into two opposing camps. The original founders of the Volunteers, including Ceannt, retained the name of the Irish Volunteers while Redmond's followers, by far the majority, became the National Volunteers.

Within 12 months, 75,000 Irish men had enlisted in the British army. Approximately half of all of the recruits came from the National Volunteers and the Ulster Volunteers. It was soon clear that the war would not 'be over by Christmas' as many had predicted. The early enthusiasm for enlistment tapered and, with no relief in sight, the Irish soldiers on the front line from Ypres to Gallipoli suffered severe losses.

Ceannt and his colleagues in the IRB privately welcomed the announcement that war had begun in Europe. They believed that their time had come – that 'England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity'. Together with Patrick Pearse and Joseph Plunkett, Ceannt was appointed to a secret IRB Military Council tasked with drawing up plans for an armed uprising. As the war dragged on, Ceannt and his colleagues on the IRB Military Council led a secret double life. Publicly, Ceannt was Commandant of the 4th Battalion of the Irish Volunteers who were quickly reorganising themselves into a disciplined force. He was also a member of the Volunteer's Central Executive, with responsibility for paying the bills and keeping the books. Some time later, he was appointed to the Military Headquarters' staff as Director of Communications. At the same time, he continued with his secret role as a member of the IRB inner circle. The IRB Military Council was extended to include Clarke and MacDiarmada and they were planning, unknown to Eoin McNeill and the rest of the leadership, to use the Irish Volunteers to stage an insurrection to win independence for Ireland before the end of the war.

Frustratingly, little or no evidence survives of Ceannt's activities on the Military Council of the IRB. Many of their meetings took place in his home and it is reasonable to assume that he took part in the discussions on the military plan but no evidence survives. Ceannt was meticulous about maintaining the secrecy of the IRB Military Council.

The Military Council kept their plans secret from the IRB's own Supreme Council as well as from the rest of the members of the National Executive of the Irish Volunteers. In January 1916, however, the Supreme Council of the IRB approved Sean MacDiarmada's motion that, 'we fight at the earliest date possible.' Even they didn't know that the Military Council had already agreed on the date of the Rising – 23 April, Easter Sunday. The Military Council now faced two challenges. They needed to keep their plans secret from Eoin MacNeill and the other non-IRB members among the leadership of the Irish Volunteers, and they needed to bring James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army (ICA) on board. They managed the last latter of these by effectively kidnapping Connolly and revealing their plans to him in secret. Connolly joined the Military Council and the stage was set for the Rising. Plans were made to land German arms on the south coast.

In the meantime, the Irish Volunteers continued to engage openly in manoeuvres around the centre of Dublin city and in the Wicklow mountains. The Dublin Castle authorities watched carefully but did not interfere. Under cover of the public display by the Volunteers, the Military Council continued with its own plans. Ceannt was responsible for reconnoitring the locations chosen by the Military Council for their designated garrison areas during the planned Rising. The area to which the 4th Battalion was assigned was the South Dublin Union (SDU), a workhouse complex that was very close to Ceannt's home in Dolphin's Barn.

The Military Council had decided to hide their plans for the Rising in plain sight. In early April, Pearse publicly announced that the Irish Volunteers would carry out Easter manoeuvres over the coming holiday weekend. A few days later the shipment of arms set off from Germany. Unknown to the Military Council, however, British naval intelligence had found out about the shipment and was tracing it from the start.

In the weeks immediately before Easter, happily ignorant of this potential disaster, Ceannt and the other Battalion Commandants in the Volunteers and the ICA began alerting their senior staff to the likelihood of action. When the Military Council met in Ceannt's house on Friday 14 April – a week before the planned Rising – they were all in 'very good spirits and laughing and talking with each other'.¹⁰

During the following week – Holy Week – events conspired to derail their carefully laid plans. The German arms failed to arrive; Roger Casement, en route from Germany, was arrested; the 'Castle document', which had been circulated to show that the authorities were planning to arrest the leadership of the Irish Volunteers, was cast into disrepute; and Eoin MacNeill, having eventually realised what the Military Council were planning to do, issued an order late on the night of Holy Saturday, cancelling the scheduled mobilisation on Easter Sunday.

When news of MacNeill's countermanding order reached them, early on Easter Sunday morning, Ceannt and other members of the Military Council decided that, since they might not ever get a better chance, they would go ahead with the Rising but defer it until the following day, Easter Monday. The rest of Dublin went on its way that Easter Sunday morning in blissful ignorance of the events that were about to unfold. The effect of MacNeill's countermanding order and the decision to defer the Rising to Easter Monday would have disastrous consequences for the Rising's chances of success.

Before he left home that morning Ceannt told Áine 'If we last a month they - the British - will come to terms'.¹¹ They lasted a week - and the British military had no intention of coming to terms.

When Ceannt, in the uniform of Commandant of the 4th Battalion of the Irish Volunteers, led his men – and a small number of women - away from their mobilisation point in Emerald Square on Easter Monday morning, he had just over 100 Volunteers out of the Battalion's full strength of 700. En route to the South Dublin Union, the 4th Battalion divided into a number of smaller groupings. "A" Company, under Captain Seamus Murphy, made their way to Jameson's Distillery in Marrowbone Lane; "C" Company, under Captain Thomas McCarthy, to Roe's Distillery in Mount Brown; and "F" Company under Captain Con Colbert, to Watkin's Brewery in Ardee Street.

With a small group of armed men Ceannt cycled his bicycle up to the Rialto gate of the South Dublin Union. They pushed past the astonished gatekeeper, tied him up and cut the telephone wires. Meanwhile, at the James's Street entrance to the Union, Ceannt's second in command, Cathal Brugha, had forced his way through the front entrance and established a barricade. Leaving a small team to guard the Rialto gate, Ceannt made his way to join Brugha at the front gate, close to which he set up his headquarters in the Nurses' Home, a three story stone structure in a commanding position within the huge workhouse site.¹² The South Dublin Union occupied a site of approximately 50 acres and housed some 3,000 inmates together with a large staff of doctors, nurses, orderlies, kitchen staff, bakers and other ancillary workers. With his depleted force Ceannt had fewer than 65 men under his direct command on this vast and sprawling site.

The arrival of the 4th Battalion at the South Dublin Union was timed to coincide with the storming of the General Post Office. In front of the GPO, Pearse read out the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and announced the establishment of a Provisional Government for Ireland. The document bore the names of seven men. One of them was Éamonn Ceannt.

The arrival of a force of armed men on the site of the South Dublin Union had caused consternation among the staff and residents. The inmates were moved quickly to places of relative safety and Red Cross flags were draped from the windows of buildings occupied by inmates and staff. Safety soon became a relative issue. During the day that followed, intense fighting took place between the British troops and the Volunteers in the labyrinthine alleys, roads and cul-de-sacs around the hospitals and wards and the Volunteers soon found themselves restricted to the Nurses' Home and a group of buildings surrounding the main gate at James's Street.

On Tuesday morning, the British troops who had gained access to the site on Easter Monday were, to their surprise, withdrawn from the walls of the Union and ordered to concentrate on Kingsbridge Station where trainloads of reinforcements were arriving from the Curragh. The rest of Tuesday and Wednesday were relatively

‘uneventful’, although the Volunteers in the Union and in Marrowbone Lane came under intermittent firing from surrounding forces. It was to be the calm before the storm.

The British army was preparing a full-scale military response to the Rising. At Mount Street Bridge some of the fiercest fighting of the week was taking place and the HMS Helga had moved up the Liffey and started firing 18-pound shells at Liberty Hall. On Thursday morning, the British forces advanced on the GPO with machine guns and artillery shells and a cordon of British troops tightened around the other Volunteer outposts.

The South Dublin Union came under renewed British assault that afternoon, as reinforcements, under Major Sir Francis Vane of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, arrived with orders to prevent the Volunteers from firing on an ammunition convoy, which was en route to Kilmainham. Throughout the afternoon the Volunteer garrison in the Nurses’ Home came under attack from all sides. As Ceannt was fighting his way back from the building at the James’s Street entrance, Cathal Brugha, his second in command, was fighting a virtually single-handed rearguard action against the British troops in the heavily barricaded front hall of the Nurses’ Home. By the time Ceannt and his men reached him, Brugha was a mass of wounds. As fierce fighting continued throughout the evening, the British commanders, for the second time that week, were ordered to withdraw from the South Dublin Union. With careful nursing, Brugha survived the night and, on Friday morning, was carried under a Red Cross flag to one of the Union hospitals.

The witness statements by members of the 4th Battalion testify to the esteem in which their men held both Ceannt and Brugha. John Styles referred to Ceannt as ‘the most unselfish man I ever met ... He never thought of himself, gave everything he possessed to his men and the cause he had so very much at heart’. Of Brugha he said, ‘He was a very determined man who did not know what fear was.’¹³ The historian Charles Townshend commented that ‘the comparatively small garrison of the Union was energised by the leadership style of Ceannt and his Vice Commandant, Cathal Brugha.’¹⁴

By Saturday, the action of the British troops was focussed on the city centre and the South Dublin Union was again quiet, except for the ever-present sniper fire from Kilmainham.

On Sunday, Éamonn Ceannt, under direct orders from the Provisional Government, reluctantly surrendered. He led his men and women, first to St Patrick’s Park, where the formal surrender took place, and then on to Richmond Barracks, Inchicore. At a secret and hastily convened field court martial, he was accused of taking part in

an armed rebellion, of waging war against his Majesty the King, and – critically in a time of war - with the intention of assisting the enemy. In the confusion of that week, the prosecution case against him was incorrectly based on his being present in Jacobs' Biscuit Factory – he pleaded 'not guilty'.

The Court Martial nevertheless found Ceannt guilty and sentenced him to 'Death by being Shot'. By the time Ceannt's death sentence had been confirmed by the Military Governor, General Maxwell, the execution of his fellow rebels Patrick Pearse, Tom Clarke, Thomás MacDonagh, Joe Plunkett, Edward Daly, Michael O'Hanrahan, Willie Pearse and John McBride had already taken place. Con Colbert, Sean Heuston and Michael Mallin were executed at daybreak on the same morning as Ceannt (Monday 8 May). The executions of Sean MacDiarmada and the grievously wounded James Connolly followed on 12 May.

Even before the final executions had been carried out, the politicians in Westminster were having serious doubts about the wisdom of leaving the suppression of the Rising in the hands of the military. The Irish people, who had reacted initially with a mixture of outrage and horror, were developing a dawning respect for the rebels.

Endnotes

1. National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI) MS 13,069/49, Ceannt Papers, 'The first night I arrived in Galway as a Gaelic Leaguer by Éamonn Ceannt'.
2. NLI MS 13,069/44, Ceannt Papers.
3. NLI MS 1,479/8, Ceannt Papers.
4. NLI MS 41,479/8, Ceannt Papers.
5. NLI MS 13,069/47, Ceannt Papers.
6. UCD Archives, P163/1, Sinn Féin Minutes, Quarterly meeting of the National Council, 20 January 1913.
7. *Sinn Féin*, 30 September 1911.
8. Bureau of Military History Witness Statement (hereafter BMH WS) No. 264, Áine Ceannt.
9. *Irish Volunteer*, 7 February 1914.
10. BMH WS No. 0161, Donal O'Hannigan.
11. BMH WS No. 264, Áine Ceannt.
12. BMH WS No. 0268, William T. Cosgrave.
13. BMH WS NO. 0175, John J. Styles.
14. Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London, 2006), p. 203.

The Spirit of freedom

Michéal Ó Máille

Ros Muc is very different today to the place where Pádraig Mac Piarais built his cottage on the banks of *Loch Oiriúlach* early in the twentieth century. If he were to venture through the parish of Ros Muc today, he would recognise the beautiful village nestled between na *Beanna Beola* and the sea. The first thing he would notice travelling through *An Gort Mór* is the effect he himself had on the area. Heading west past the church in *An Gort Mór* he would come to *Páirc an Phiarsaigh* the home ground of *Cumann Peile an Phiarsaigh*, situated across the road from *Coláiste na bPiarsach* (the vocational school) and a distance of only half a mile from *Coláiste Cuimhneacháin an Phiarsaigh* (the memorial college). Continuing westwards towards *Teach an Phiarsaigh* (Pearse's Cottage), the building site for *Ionad Oidhreachta an Phiarsaigh* (the heritage centre) is reached. I am sure that he would be pleased by the affluent nature of the buildings of *Scoil Bhriocain*, *Gairmscoil na bPiarsach* and of the old school building which is now *Séipéal An Ghoirt Mhóir*. He would also be pleased I am sure by the fine building situated on his old friend Pádraig Ó Conghaile's home which is of course now called *Saotharlann Chonamara*. He would also be impressed by the standard of housing now in the locality, a far cry from the days of *Sean Mhaitias & Eoinín na n-Éan*.

He would also be pleased to hear the best of Connaught Irish spoken by both young and old.

The principal change which Pádraig Mac Piarais would notice is the dramatic depopulation of the local community. I am sure he would question the reason so many people had to leave. He would also question what role if any the Irish State had in this depopulation. He might question where were their local representation, those T.D.s and councillors that were elected to represent the interests of his beloved people. I feel that the modern day parish of Ros Muc would leave him confused and dare I say disappointed.

When Pádraig Mac Piarais came to Connemara on the thirteenth of September 1903, the place was poverty-stricken with a large population crammed into a small area bound by the Twelve Bens on one side and the sea on the other. The people survived from day to day using the small land holdings and the nearby shoreline. Most people in the area depended on four or five acres of poor quality land to feed themselves and their families. The little provision they farmed from those acres could sustain only one or two milk cows and provide a few fields in which to grow oats and potatoes.



Figure 17.1 Pádraic Mac Piarais
Source: National Library of Ireland

For the most part, *Iar-Chonnacht* was a monolingual community at that time although the English language was encroaching rapidly. English was the main language of the villages of An Spidéal, Cill Rónáin, Oughterard, Clifden and Roundstone. English was the language of commerce for the area's business people as well as the language of the state system. The barracks were full of policemen who spoke little or no Irish and performed all their duties through English. Good evidence for that fact is available from the censuses of 1901 and 1911. This left Irish as the language of the poor, with no rights attached, merely a means of communication among the lower orders. Tuition in the national schools was of course exclusively through English, although some Irish began to be taught from the early twentieth century. This was the case in the National School of *An Gort Mór*, where the Principal of that school, Pádraig Ó Conghaile, placed great emphasis on love of the language and patriotism. Nevertheless, his wife Jane who had little Irish taught in the same school. This was an example of the lack of interest state authorities had in the language outside of the British policy to anglicise the country's children via the educational system.

Despite this, there remained a healthy font of Gaelic culture in Ros Muc when Pádraig Ó Conghaile began teaching in Scoil Náisiúnta An Ghoirt Mhóir in April 1891. Ó Conghaile appreciated this wealth of culture and its importance. He also understood that this held no value if people could not earn a living. For this reason, he decided to prepare the school children for employment in the position of *Timire Gaeilge* (Irish language organiser) for the newly founded Gaelic League, *Conradh na Gaeilge*. At that time, the League was employing *timirí* or travelling teachers to revive Irish in those areas where English had taken the place of Irish for ordinary people. Qualification through an examination was required to gain a position and Pádraig Ó Conghaile held night classes in the school in An Gort Mór to prepare students for this examination. When the examination was held, Padraig Mac Piarais was the examiner *Conradh na Gaeilge* sent to Ros Muc.

He travelled by train as far as Maam Cross where a waiting horse and cart brought him the rest of the way. He had intended to stay in Pádraig Ó Conghaile's house but, due to a misunderstanding, slept that first night in *Tí Mháille's* Post Office in *An Turlach*. The room in which he slept is still to be seen today beside the door of the Ó Máille's Post Office. After that first night, and from then until he had his own house, he stayed with Padraig Ó Conghaile and his wife Jane at the teacher's residence in An Gort Mór. *Saotharlann Chonamara Teo*. now occupies this site. As well as the rest of *Iar-Chonnacht*, *An Gort Mór* was an area of extreme poverty at the time. Many were dependent on potatoes and on the one cow to keep them from death's door. The population of the area had increased greatly from the time of the Famine when the starving travelled from inland areas to try to survive on what the sea provided. This meant a large increase in population in an area that was already

congested. Although the large population was a huge disadvantage, there were a number of benefits. At this time there was a fine vibrant community in the area, where conversation, music and songs flourished. There was, and thankfully still is, a strong tradition of music and song in Ros Muc. There would often be gatherings at the crossroads and people regularly participated in sporting contests on both land and sea, one thing that was not scarce in Ros Muc at the time was a vibrant ancient Gaelic culture.

Housing in the area was in a poor condition and very many lived in small hovels under thatch often shared with animals. Life was harsh and disease would frequently rage through the locality, killing hundreds. Clear evidence of how bad life was at the time is available in newspapers such as the *Manchester Guardian*. The major problem in this area was the lack of land of a reasonable standard to sustain the large population. Of course, thousands emigrated to relieve this pressure. The 1880s saw a large number of families head for Minnesota under a scheme organised by Archbishop Ireland. This was a scheme, similar to that regarding migration to County Meath in 1935, aimed at reducing the population and increasing the size of farms. As part of Prime Minister Gladstone's policy of killing Irish Home Rule with kindness the *Congested Districts Board* had a huge effect in this area when government investment from Britain was applied to fishing resources, roads and piers throughout Connemara. During this period also, the *Congested Districts Board* decided to introduce foreign stallions to increase the size of the horses, in a mistaken belief of improving the bloodline of the local breed. It was as a consequence of this that Micheál Ó Máille from *An Turlach* decided to establish the *Connemara Pony Society* in 1923 in order to preserve the bloodline of Ireland's native pony. *The Congested Districts Board* caused a small improvement as regards people's livelihoods but the region remained the most densely populated area in the United Kingdom at the time.

Before the Famine Iar-Chonnacht was considerably better off than it was at the turn of the twentieth century. A living could be eked from the sea, between fishing and kelp making, as well as the land. Of course, there was plenty of smuggling carried out as well and this is still evident from placenames such as *Brandy Harbour*, *Carraig na nGall* (Rock of the Foreigners), *Oileán Gheansa* (Guernsey). One example of the wealth to be gained from this trade is the fame and fortune attained by the famous smuggler of An Cheathrú Rua, Máirtín Mór Ó Máille. This trading had completely ceased by the time Mac Piarais reached Ros Muc. Nevertheless, it appears people's thoughts and outlook remained directed towards the sea and the wider world. Proof of this is supplied by Colm Ó Gaora in his biography, *Mise*, where he describes the life lived by his father Seán who travelled the world as a merchant sailor. Colm recounts the wonderful tales his father brought home from his travels. In one case he said the English Navy had no chance of taking the straits

of the Dardanelles from the Turks because of the defences placed in the straits by the Turkish army. Seán Ó Gaora sailed through the straits during his life at sea and he well understood that it would be impossible to land an army where the defences were so strong.

Ros Muc was quite an interesting place at the beginning of the last century. The population of the area had risen greatly over the previous fifty years. The census returns for 1901 and 1911 show that the peninsula had an extremely high population, indeed there was a large number of inhabitants in townlands where not one person resides today. Townlands such as *Cnoc an Daimh* are now deserted but in Mac Piarais's time, a large number lived in that townland and in others which are unpopulated at present. The census returns also show the effect the large house in *Scrib* and *Inbhear* had on the locality especially in regard to the number of outsiders living in *An Turlach* and *An Gort Mór*. Around the same time, Pádraic Ó Conaire was composing stories in which the reader is afforded a fine illustration of social life in Ros Muc at the time. Ros Muc was then a reservoir of the older culture which was dying out in the rest of the country. It was this culture and the independent spirit of the people which drew Pearse to them, he saw things in them which were to his liking, confidence and pride.

The Ó Máille family had a shop in *An Turlach*, the Conroys were in *Gairfean* and the Breathnach family had yet another shop in *Cill Bhriocáin*. The Breathnach or Walsh family are interesting in that they were close friends of both Mac Piarais and of Pádraic Ó Conghaile. Their son Father Walsh was involved in the Zambian independence struggle and indeed is a national hero there to this day. There were a good number of sailing boats in the area at the time, trading turf to the three Aran Islands and eastwards to County Clare. The shop owners also had boats that carried goods and merchandise from Galway. One of these, of course, was *Bád Chonroy* or the *Saint Patrick* on which Pádraic Mac Piarais and other volunteers were brought to the Aran Islands. Ó Cathasaigh and Ó Clochartaigh in Carna and the Trayers in Leitir Mealláin had thriving businesses building sailing and fishing boats. Money was being sent from America to help those remaining at home as well as paving the way for the next generation of emigrants.

The memory of the Famine remained strong and people were despondent. The Famine had a huge effect on the Ros Muc area as the population of the locality rose greatly because of the number of people arriving in search of seafood. Because of the Famine, the largest estate in Europe, stretching eastwards as far as Bushy Park and westwards to Renvyle, that of the Martins, collapsed and the land was sold. Following division of the estate, the Berridges purchased much of the land around Ros Muc. Around this time, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Dudley, moved to Screeb House. Lord Dudley was a very powerful man,

one of the most important personages in the country. Indeed, he was later to become the king's representative in Australia.

On account of the poverty she saw in the area, Lady Dudley established the *Dudley Nurses* who came to the aid of the local people. Lady Dudley is reputed to have been a kind woman who died tragically in 1921 when she drowned in close proximity to the house in the eastern part of Cuan Chamaís (Camus Bay). Patrick Pearse was definitely in Ros Muc at the same time as Lord Dudley but there is no proof that the two men ever met each other. Pearse was more interested in the older people, visiting their houses and listening to their stories. This was a source of amazement to the local people as no previous visitor had ever displayed such interest in them. The respect he displayed for them showed that their culture was important, that they themselves were important.

There were national schools in the Ros Muc area, one in An Turlach Beag and another in An Gort Mór. The educational system was based entirely on the English primary school system and the aim was to prepare people to leave the area as soon as they were old enough.

Of course, Ros Muc was a Gaelic stronghold at that time and although the people were poor and owned little of value, they were hopeful, playful and knowledgeable about the wider world and the events occurring around them. Their native culture was vibrant, and people knew music, songs and ancient tales. There was a large number of people in every townland and they met regularly at the crossroads, engaging in humorous conversation. The RIC barracks was in An Gort Mór at the time and up to eight policemen were stationed there. This is further proof of the large population in the area. Because of the proximity of two big houses to them, one in *Inbhear* and one in *Scríb*, the local people were keenly aware of who held the wealth in this country.

While Pearse was staying in the old residence in An Gort Mór with the Ó Conghaile family, he took in the rich culture of the local people. It seems he also took note of the moneyed classes in the two large houses. I'm sure he felt that the foreign culture would spread from these two houses and also, of course, from the eastern areas of the country that had already turned to English. He decided to make every effort possible to stem this tide from the east. It is my own opinion that this example of the anglicisation of the few remaining Gaeltachts would lead to the destruction of Irish Culture in the whole country and that the only way to stem this flow would be through rebellion. A revolution would be needed.

During his time in the region Pádraig Mac Piarais visited the coastal village of Roundstone where he observed at first hand the change from Irish to English as the



Figure 17.2 Patrick Connolly, the man who brought PH Pearse to Rosmuc and his wife Jane Grant. Both Patrick and his wife Jane taught for many years in Gortmore, National School

working language of the people. He says that while the youth of the village had knowledge of Irish the older inhabitants were monolingual Gaelic speakers. He saw in Roundstone how the Irish language had been destroyed and understood it was only a matter of time until the situation would be the same in Ros Muc and in the rest of the surviving Gaeltachts. When he heard that the Dudleys were organising a culture/entertainment night in their Screeb House, he himself organised a night of traditional

entertainment in the school in An Turlach Beag. He saw what was happening and understood that the people of the Gaeltacht needed to have respect for their own culture if it was to be saved. He also appreciated that it would be an uphill battle unless a major change happened in the way the country was ruled. I believe that he saw an armed rebellion as the only way of achieving this goal.

It is said he spent his days at the school in An Gort Mór listening to the school children and teaching them songs. During this time, he taught his own version of *Óró 'sé do bheatha abhaile* to the little children. It is said he gave sweets to the children but would give two to any child named Pádraig. He went from house to house on night visits, listening attentively to the old people's stories. He had little to say himself, so keen was he to soak up all that was to be heard.

He liked the place a lot and the people greatly impressed him. He showed this in his stories by basing the characters on people of the locality. He understood also that this way of life would soon come to an end unless there was a huge change in the government's policy towards the Gaeltacht areas. He knew that the educational system in Ireland would need to address Irish History and Geography and that the Irish Language would have to be central in this system. Before he founded Scoil Éanna, he paid a visit to Belgium to study the bilingual system used there.

He believed this country's educational system would need to be changed radically and the pupil prioritised over the system. A story is related about a parent who approached him complaining that her son had no interest in anything but music. His advice to her was that she should buy him a tin whistle. This theory of education was radical at the time as the only emphasis was on rote learning and discipline. The philosophy of education was not held in high esteem in this country until Mícheál Martin T.D. introduced the Education Act 1998, an act which emphasises the complete development of the child.

Pádraig Mac Piarais was an easy-going person, his old friend Pádraig Ó Conghaile tells us he was interested in fishing but that he had no inclination to kill the fish he caught. He is often accused of being a combative militaristic man but I feel that his love for the environment and for the animals inhabiting it proves that he was not that type of man, but a kind and reasonable person.

Of course the greatest proof of his love for the area was that he bought a piece of land and built a house at the side of *Loch Oiriúlach*. This house caused him a huge amount of trouble as it cost money he did not possess at the time. Pádraig Ó Conghaile wrote to him regularly to keep him informed about the progress on the house. It appears that quite often many people were demanding payment and that this was a cause of great concern to him. Of course the Black and Tans burned the house to the ground when they attacked it in 1921. Pádraig Ó Conghaile rented the house from Margaret Pearse after he repaired it. When Pádraig Ó Conghaile looked for wood to roof the house, he headed west towards *Iorras Aintheach*, to the townland of *Aird an Chaisleáin* to be exact. Some wood had remained there since the War of Independence in the possession of Meáirt Ó Caodhlaigh. Meáirt didn't accept as much as a shilling for the timber as it was for Pádraig Mac Piarais's house. This is another example of the great respect in which he was held by the people of Connemara.

Pádraig Mac Piarais organised the Ros Muc branch of *Óglaigh na hÉireann* while he was in the area. It is said that he used to drill the local volunteers in *An Turlach*, at *Cnocán na Móna* and down at the *Cill Bhriocáin* crossroads. The local people say this was the only time Pearse spoke sharply and that his orders could be heard miles away. The people of Connemara are not in the habit of paying attention to orders given to them by a stranger, especially a stranger who is not paying them. This is yet more proof, if such were needed, of the esteem in which he was held.

One of the people to come under his influence was a young boy from *Inbhear*, Colm Ó Gaora. Colm fought bravely during the War of Independence later and spent some time imprisoned in the U.K due to his activities in 1916. Colm is the author of the book *Mise* which he published in the 1940s. Another Volunteer,

Pádraig Ó Niaidh gave a great account of Pearse and his own part in the War of independence in an interview he gave in the 1930s. Of course *Gairmscoil na bPiarsach* and *Coláiste Cuimhneacháin An Phiarsaigh* were named after himself and his brother when they were built in the 1930s. When the football club was formed in the 1950s, it was called *Cumann Peile an Phiarsaigh* by the people of the parish. Indeed, when the community built a football field for the first time in the parish during the 1990s, they named it *Páirc Peile an Phiarsaigh*. There were many other heroes in Ros Muc over the years but the local community chose, and indeed continues to choose to commemorate the Dubliner.

Without doubt, Pádraig Mac Piarais greatly influenced the community of Ros Muc and left his mark on the area. But how did Ros Muc influence Mac Piarais? When he arrived in Ros Muc he sided with the *Home Rulers* but when he left for the last time on the 31st of August 1915 to give the oration over the grave of O'Donovan Rossa, an oration he wrote while in Ros Muc, he was a total republican. Why did his outlook change so much? It is clear that the British Government's retraction regarding the Home Rule Bill 1914 had a large part to play in it. It is certain also that he was in an area where the fighting spirit was strong and where people did not yield to the Englishman. The Irish-speaking hero was held in high esteem in the area and English law abhorred. In one of the first battles of the newly founded Land League people from Ros Muc had taken part in *Cath na Ceathrún Rua* (the Battle of Carraroe) in 1880 when hundreds of people opposed the eviction of a household in Doire Fhatharta.

There are many examples from the time of Mac Piarais of the effect he had and continues to have on the people of this parish. They have shown since his time that they were happy to fight vehemently for their rights and to advance their community without regard for the state authorities. Something of the spirit of the Rebellion was in the community once more in 1942 when the parents of children at the national school in An Gort Mór kept their children home from school in protest at the poor condition of the building. This protest drew national attention to the community, indeed there was an article about the strike on the front page of the *Irish Times*. In that article, the people of the locality describe how disappointed they were that the school which brought Mac Piarais to Connemara was allowed to fall into such disrepair. Similar to the 1916 Rising, their efforts were not without effect as a new school was built a little way back the road from the old building. The priest in Ros Muc at the time was very much against the protest but little attention was paid to him. Once again the people were willing to stand together against state and ecclesiastical authority.

When the Gaeltacht Civil Rights movement started in the 1960s, the people of Ros Muc were once again central in the campaign. *Saor-Raidió Chonamara*, a pirate

radio station which showed the Gaeltacht Community the intelligence and ability of their own people, was broadcast from Ros Muc. Of course, when the time came to put a pirate television station on the air, the first programme was broadcast from *Tigh Mhaidhcó Phatsa* in *An Turlach Beag*. The civil rights campaigners fought strongly to attain a large number of rights for the people of the Gaeltacht. Of course, it is as a consequence of their efforts that Raidió na Gaeltachta, TG4, Údarás na Gaeltachta and much else came to exist. I am sure that Pádraig Mac Piarais would be proud of their work.

If we needed any example that the spirit of Pearse alive and well among the people of Ros Muc, it was to be found in Madison Square Garden, New York City on the 19th of October 1984. It was on that date, of course, that the hero from Cill Bhriocáin, Sean Ó Mainnín faced Mike McCallum in an attempt to bring the World Boxing Council Middleweight Championship of the World back home to Ros Muc. Although he failed to win the belt, this writer is of the opinion that this was the bravest display ever given by an Irish boxer in a title fight. Seán Ó Mainnín raised the hearts of the Gaeltacht people as he stood in the middle of the ring with Ros Muc clearly written on his shorts, trading blow for blow with one of the best boxers ever to fight in that weight division. As long as Irish speakers are to be found in Ireland and as long as the Gaeltacht survives, this occasion will be remembered.

It is my own belief that Pearse was greatly influenced by Ros Muc. Although the people were poor, they were independent. Although they were suppressed to some extent by the English, their spirit remained unbroken (local lore has it that no policeman was willing to venture past the crossroads at An Gort Mór after nightfall). Although their culture felt the outside pressure, it was still strong. Although the schools were merely another branch of John Bull's rule, the people knew their country's history courtesy of the oral tradition. Pearse saw an independent community which was not yet suppressed by church or state. The attitude of the people appealed to him, their culture appealed to him, their humanity appealed to him as did their spirit. He liked them so much that he thought the customs of this region should be extended to the entire country. He had so much love for them that he was willing to risk his own life on their behalf.

Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friends

Sources of information: Seosamh Ó Cuaig, *Aill na Brún*.

Peter P.Kane, Doire Iorrais.

Pádraig Ó Conghaile 1934 interview with the Irish Press.
Irish Times Archives.

Census 1901 & Census 1911 National Archives.

Michael McHugh (1873-1924)

Caherlistrane-born combatant in Dublin during Easter Week 1916

Mary J. Murphy



Figure 18.1 Michael McHugh
Source: Kevin Ball

During fierce fighting in Dublin around the Church Street/North King Street area toward the end of Easter Week, British troops from the South Staffordshire Regiment rampaged into houses along North King Street and exacted revenge on the local population for the heavy casualties they had suffered earlier in close combat with a small group of Volunteers. This carnage has been documented in books like Desmond Ryan's *The Rising*¹, which describes how more than fifteen civilian men, women and children were killed in that bloody scramble for 150 metres of territory:

Machine guns, bombs and rifles hammering, bursting, and volleying became familiar sounds from daylight to dark. Under the long strain the nerves of the British troops broke. They saw red, ran amok, and through panic and rage murdered civilians, dragging them from the houses, shooting them and throwing them into attics or burying them in cellars.

One of the Volunteers in the very thick of that action was Caherlistrane-born Michael McHugh, who had joined the organisation in the Rotunda² in November 1913, along with men like Piaras Beasláí (a prominent and extremely influential IRB figure) and Seán MacDermott. McHugh fought with Beasláí in North King Street and both were under the command of Fionán Lynch, a close ally of M. Collins, who would later become a judge.

It was all a very long way from the quiet surroundings of Knockma, where McHugh rambled as a boy, just a few miles south-west of Tuam, and equally far from the *Tuam Herald* office where he worked from the late 1880s. The father of Maureen O'Carroll, born in Dublin's Wellington Street and Ireland's first female Labour TD (elected in Dublin North-Central in 1954), Michael was the patriarch of an extraordinary clan. His granddaughter, Maureen O'Carroll's youngest daughter

Eilish O'Carroll, recently wrote the foreword to *Caherlistrane*, which examines previously unexplored aspects of the parish's rich Rising heritage.³ Eilish had harboured a wish to visit the parish for over 50 years, having listened to her mother speak of the place as something of a *Shangri La* all through her childhood.⁴ In 2014 she seized her opportunity and joined this writer to retrace the footsteps of her famous grandfather and even more famous mother for the first time.

Born in Raheen townland⁵, Caherlistrane, to Thomas McHugh and Mary Burke, Michael McHugh grew up in a family home that had run the postal service⁶ in the parish since 1857. From there he moved to Dublin where first he boarded with the Flynns in Great Western Square. According to the 1911 census, he then resided with a Higgins family in Infirmary Road; he gave his occupation as a printer/compositor. At the time of his marriage in 1912 to printer's machinist Elizabeth O'Dowd of 53 Manor Street, he was residing at Hardwicke Street and describing himself as a teacher of Irish. He was involved too in the founding of the McHale Branch of the Gaelic League, often called the Connaught Men's Branch. Both Seán T. O'Kelly and Douglas Hyde were members.

Michael, after working as a journalist with the *Tuam Herald*⁷ newspaper, and as a compositor and foreman, Michael worked as a linotype operator with the *Freeman's Journal*. At an event held in April 1910 to mark Michael's departure from the *Freeman's Journal* to take up a position at Gill & Sons⁸, Piaras Beasláí⁹ was one of those who sung McHugh's praises. Even at that stage, his accomplishments as a Gaelic scholar were widely admired, as was his commitment to the language movement. He wrote, in Irish and in English, for numerous papers, including *An Claidheamh Solas* (edited by Padraig Pearse from 1903), taught the Irish language all over the country, and was a Gaelic League activist in Dublin, involved with both the Keating and the McHale branches. In the *Tuam Herald* report at the time, Edward Duggan said "his sterling National qualities were admired by all with whom he came in contact".¹⁰

McHugh had been a paid treasurer of the Dublin Typographical Provident Society¹¹ (of which Arthur Griffith, and the three men who later printed the Proclamation were also members, and which, according to numerous Witness Statements to the Bureau of Military History, was known to be a meeting place for the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and other nationalists, and a HQ for the Volunteers), an organisation which shared the same 35 Lower Gardiner St address as Michael Collins's HQ.

McHugh joined the Volunteers in 1913, was prominent in the IRB, and became an important member of Collins's network around Dublin Castle. Originally a member of C Company (under Fionán Lynch) of the 1st Battalion, Dublin

Brigade, Michael McHugh transferred to F Company and worked subsequently as an Intelligence Officer in the Volunteers.¹² His intelligence career seems to have started in about 1919. Because of its very secretive nature it is not clear what precisely McHugh's duties were. He worked at one point in conjunction with a man called Peter Folan, from Galway, who was an RIC Head Constable at Dublin Castle. Apparently, Folan wished to leave his position but McHugh persuaded him to remain in place to be of 'service to the cause'.¹³ According to Peter Folan's Witness Statement to the Bureau of Military History¹⁴, McHugh considered himself to be part of Collins's 'inner circle' which also included Thomas Gay – whose wife made pancakes for Collins, apparently one of his favourites.¹⁵ Gay, whose name is in McHugh's Pension File, had known Michael McHugh since their cycling days together as Gaelic Leaguers in the Bulfin Cycling Club in Dublin around 1906, and worked in Capel Street library, a safe 'drop off' and pick up point for Collins.¹⁶ Gay asserted that McHugh was 'a wonderfully sturdy man', was 'possessed of amazing energy' and was 'seemingly tireless'.

During the Rising Michael McHugh fought in the hell hole that was the Church St/North King Street battleground, under the leadership of men like Sean Flood and Martin Conlon. Sean Flood was a senior Volunteer who asserted in the 1920s that Michael was with them for years, doing "Intelligence", and further confirmed that he was with them in Church Street and North King Street in 1916. McHugh served under Martin Conlon, who himself was an Intelligence Officer serving directly under the late General Collins. Thomas Gay explained that "his [Michael's] activities in Easter Week led to his arrest subsequently but his nimble wittedness resulted in his being released after a short term of imprisonment". According to Kevin Ball, Senator James Douglas (Quaker and founder of the White Cross), remarked of McHugh that "he was an Intelligence Officer attached to F Company, Dublin Brigade. His work brought him into close contact with the late Michael Collins".¹⁷

Peadar and Michael O'Carroll, brothers of Dolly, were also involved in the North King Street battle, and O'Carroll family lore has it that, on 16 October 1920, Michael McHugh was one of the first people to come across the slain body of their father, Peter O'Carroll (who was his neighbour at 92 Manor Street).¹⁸ Peter O'Carroll was murdered by British forces in his home near an RIC Barracks (which is still standing). It has been alleged he was killed by an officer called Hardy, because of his republican activities and because he refused to turn in his sons to the authorities.¹⁹ Another of Peter's sons, Gerard, married Michael McHugh's daughter Maureen in 1936.²⁰

In November 1920,²¹ while on a tram going to visit his wife in the Rotunda, Mc Hugh was unexpectedly arrested as part of the military sweep that hoovered up

scores of men days after the so-called 'Bloody Sunday' incident in Dublin in that month. Elizabeth had just given birth to their fifth child, Kevin, who, alas, did not survive. Michael had married Elizabeth O'Dowd in Aughrim Street Catholic Church on 25th June in 1912²² and they were living in Manor Street, Dublin, at the time.

After his arrest, Michael caught a cold during his short stay in prison which developed into pleurisy, pneumonia and pulmonary tuberculosis and he died in June of 1924.²³ Gay said that he had been shocked to see the changes in him, saying that McHugh was only a shadow of the man he had known him to be. "It was with very sincere regret that I learned of his death in the summer of 1924 and have pleasure in testifying to his service as a Volunteer because it was because of the rigours he endured in that service that he, in my view, so prematurely died."²⁴

Under the Army Pensions Act 1923, his formidable widow, Elizabeth (O'Dowd), born in Dublin, wrote to the authorities for seven years to claim a widow's pension, based on her husband's service to his country.²⁵ It was finally granted on appeal in 1930, "as a consequence of military service".²⁶ Those whose names were documented in support, in one way or another, of Elizabeth's claim²⁷ included the then Minister for Defence, Desmond Fitzgerald (Garret's father), Áine Ceannt (widow of Eamonn, a signatory of the 1916 Proclamation) and Thomas Gay, a close intelligence collaborator of Michael Collins. Also involved were Joseph Nanetti, a Lord Mayor of Dublin, Martin Conlon, McHugh's commanding officer in earlier years and later a TD, and Fionán Lynch as well as the Colonel Vize of the National Army, P.J. McGrath of *Independent Newspapers*, Seán Flood, and James Sullivan from Limerick. The Sullivans of Limerick were related by marriage to a good friend, Ellen Nell O'Mara, of a Caherlistrane-born member of the landed gentry called Eva O'Flaherty²⁸, who was also involved in the Rising in Dublin²⁹ as a bicycle courier around the GPO through Cumann na mBan, and links with people like Louise Gavan Duffy³⁰, Dr Kathleen Lynn, Linda Kearns, Kathleen Clarke and Máire Comerford; they were all letter-writing friends of Eva.³¹

According to McHugh's file in the Military Pensions Collections, Elizabeth McHugh received 10 shillings per child, per week, from the White Cross Association in 1925, the year following her husband's death. Two of their children, Eilish (Sr Elizabeth) and Julia Mary (Maureen) were sent as boarders to Gortnor Abbey in Crossmolina, County Mayo, at a fee of £45 per annum. The two boys, Michael and Seán (father of Miriam McHugh, the wife of Kevin Ball), were schooled in Brunswick Street in Dublin.

Some general reflections on the Rising

The entire circle of men and women who constituted ‘the movement’ is alluded to by ‘John Brennan’³² in *The Years Flew By*.³³ He makes the shrewd observation that the Rising did not just fall out of the sky. There was a backdrop. Thomas James Clarke, born in the UK in 1858 to an Irish father, one of the seven executed signatories to the Proclamation was arguably the driving force behind the Rising. The involvement of Clarke, with his Fenian background and fifteen years of imprisonment in England, did two things. It kept the spirit of revolt alive and his presence saved ‘the movement’ from being merely ‘theoretical’. Divergent minds, Brennan opined,³⁴ slowly converged on the one idea of there being a need for a revolution in Ireland which would repeal the conquest. Scores of people, including the likes of Michael McHugh and Eva O’Flaherty, who came from different backgrounds and places in the social order, had been working away quietly for years, furthering the cause of Nationalism. According to Brennan, “it was not because of a sudden outburst of emotion, not because of the impetuous heroism of a moment, but because fervent hearts and idealistic spirits had worked patiently and well through a long night of national apathy and degradation ... creating the situation that would *knit the nation for the fight*”³⁵

Brother James ‘Canice’ Craven, Padraig Pearse, Mrs. Pearse & Dr. Kathleen Lynn

Conor Cruise O’Brien, in a 2001 television documentary about Padraig Pearse, *Fanatic Heart*, Mint Productions (Steve Carson, producer), television documentary, Dublin, 2001³⁶, said that the 1916 leader never forgot a tongue-lashing given to his class in Westland Row in Dublin in 1894 by one of his Christian Brother teachers. That teacher was James (later Canice) Craven, born in Caherlistrane village in a house opposite³⁷ Johnny Casey’s on 2nd March 1852. His father was the local rate collector and James went on to receive his education in the CBS in Tuam. Anna McHugh, Headford historian, has written that he and Pearse maintained a life-long friendship until he was executed in 1916. Apparently the expression that precipitated the tongue-lashing was the description by the boys of the British navy as ‘our navy’. Pearse remembered that episode all during his life and learned his lesson well. He later described his old friend and mentor, Br Canice as³⁸ “the most generous man I ever met”. Cruise O’Brien maintained that Br Craven was considered to be one of the most influential figures responsible for the formation of Pearse’s thinking on advanced nationalism.

O'Brien asserted that in all probability it wasn't inherited from his English father, and it was unlikely that it came from Pearse's mildly nationalist mother, notwithstanding the fact that some of her ancestors were involved in the United Irishmen. And then there were Pearse's writings, awash with the imprint of Craven's teaching. When my aunt, Rita Curran, gave me my grandfather's (Michael 'Millie' Curran) first edition of the original *Complete Works of PH Pearse* a number³⁹ of years ago, they were left mustily unread for quite some time. Only recently have I examined them for this and other articles and what is stunning about their content is their utter clarity. Brother Craven's influence – for he was a stickler for accuracy, clarity and precision – is evident throughout. Pearse wrote succinctly and with extreme clarity himself. One of Br Canice's favourite expressions, "trifles make perfection and perfection is no trifle"⁴⁰ sums up his attitude to the importance of being accurate in all things. That shone through in Pearse's work. Br Canice paid attention to the posture of his students, as well as the manner in which they held their pens, before he even started to teach them penmanship. That exactitude flowed over into Pearses' own writings, as did Craven's similarly dismissive attitude towards wordly goods. Br Canice went on to edit *Our Boys* in 1916, a magazine which featured Pearse on the cover, on the 25th anniversary of his death. His former teacher was idolised by the leader of the Rising, as evinced by this line - "The noble-hearted Padraig Pearse maintained for him the warmest affection to the day of his tragic death".⁴¹

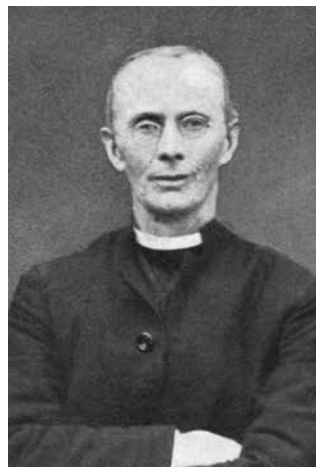


Figure 18.2 Br Canice Craven 1930
Source: Karen Johnson

The importance of Canice Craven to Pearse also rates a mention in Ruth Dudley Edwards' much lauded biography of the 1916 leader.⁴²

Dr Kathleen Lynn and Mrs Margaret Pearse.

Pearse's mother, Margaret, is interwoven in this Caherlistrane 1916 nexus too because it was she who provided the leaves for a laurel wreath for the funerals of the executed republicans who were buried in Donaghpatrick graveyard, eight years after her own son was executed. The laurel wreath was laid by Dr Kathleen Lynn. This is how we know that Michael McHugh's nieces, daughters of his brother John, were formidable, well educated women. One, Mrs Mitchell of Ballinderry, Corofin (Galway), was the mother of Monsignor Gerard Mitchell, President of Maynooth College, who married Maureen McHugh and Gerard

O Carroll (parents of Eilish and Brendan O Carroll) in Dublin in 1936. Two others, equally formidable and educated, Mary Kate and Mrs Bridie Heneghan of Shrule, wrote letters frequently to each other, and the extraordinary Headford historian, Anna McHugh has come across one of those enthralling letters.⁴³ Some of the fascinating contents of one are being made known here publicly for the first time, to the effect that the 1916 Chief Medical Officer, and decades-long friend of Eva O Flaherty, Dr Kathleen Lynn, attended the funerals of those (nine in total) men in Donaghpatrick graveyard, Caherlistrane, in October 1924. The bodies were exhumed after burial a year earlier.⁴⁴ Mary Kate McHugh was a teacher in Caherlistrane and her fiancé was Martin (Máirtín) Burke, one of five men shot in Athlone on 20th January 1923, and reburied in Donaghpatrick. (The others were executed elsewhere). Mary Kate wrote to her sister Bridie Heneghan:

Dr Kathleen Lynn came from Dublin specially – she certainly spoke very nicely - not too bitterly nor vehemently - as befitted the occasion. She held a simple wreath made of laurel leaves - the laurel leaves were given specially by Mrs Pearse for the purpose and in finishing she said - “it is a simple wreath but a wreath which can be laid only on the grave of heroes” - then she laid it down with the coffins.

It is fitting that Br Canice Craven, Padraig Pearse, Mrs Pearse and Dr Kathleen Lynn be remembered in this chapter of Reflections, because they were all curiously entwined in the Caherlistrane story that unfolded in the parish one hundred years ago.

Endnotes

1. Desmond Ryan, *The Rising* (Golden Eagle Books, University of California, 1966). Ryan had been a pupil of Padraig Pearse in St Enda's school in Dublin, and later became his secretary.
2. Information courtesy of Kevin Ball, 9 September 2014. Mr Ball is a Dublin-based expert on the O'Carroll and McHugh families. He is married to Michael McHugh's granddaughter, Miriam McHugh Ball, and is currently researching the life of Michael McHugh for a biography.
3. Mary J. Murphy, *Caherlistrane* (Knockma Publishing, Galway, 2015). Kevin Ball attended the launch of *Caherlistrane* in the village in October 2015, when, for the first time, a detailed summary of Michael McHugh's life and the O'Carroll family parish connection were stitched into the parish record.
4. To quote Eilish: “My mother always used to talk about a place in Galway, where her father Michael McHugh was born and raised, and where she had spent many a memorable summer holiday with aunties and cousins. That place was Caherlistrane. So whilst she was born in Dublin her heart and soul belonged to Caherlistrane. ‘I am a Galway woman’, was her mantra. Throughout my childhood my mother enchanted me with stories about her father, Michael McHugh, and I was always fascinated when she spoke about him. He constantly praised her and was the biggest influence on her life. He believed that education was the way forward.” Eilish is also researching her own north-Galway parish, family and 1916 connections.
5. Census records 1901 and 1911, and Caherlistrane Church Records, courtesy of Fr Patrick O'Brien, PP, Caherlistrane.
6. Michael J. Hughes, *History of Caherlistrane* (Connacht Tribune, 1999), p. 107.
7. *Tuam Herald*, 6 June 2013, p. 12.
8. MSPC MACBB.
9. Piaras Beaslaí was also a close friend of Michael

- Collins; Piaras Beaslai, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland* (Arrow Books, Dublin, 1926). Beaslai was one of six people involved with the First Dáil, who held a private meeting in the Mansion House on 7 January 1919 (see S Gifford, *The Years Flew By*, p. 239); another was George Gavan Duffy, a family friend of Eva O'Flaherty.
10. *Tuam Herald*, 2 April 1910.
 11. *Irish Independent*, June 1924, Obituary. Interestingly, according to Louise Gavan Duffy (BMH WS No. 216), Eva O'Flaherty, McHugh's fellow parishioner, was a 'paid secretary' of the Cumann na mBan in Dublin's Central Branch some years earlier. There, she worked alongside Gavan Duffy, who mentions Eva in her statement, commenting admiringly on her organisational and administrative skills. Ms Gavan Duffy was in the kitchens of the GPO during the Rising, as was Seán MacDermott. Eilish O'Carroll's aunt, Mary O'Carroll Lawlor (Dolly), also participated as a young Cumann na mBan member, and at one point carried ammunition through the streets of Dublin in a milk can. In 1966 she received three medals for her services.
 12. Military Service Pensions Collections, Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin (hereafter MSPC MACBB) and K. Ball. Ernie O'Malley (a frequent visitor to Achill and an acquaintance of Eva O'Flaherty) was in that same unit. Ernie's son, Professor Cormac O'Malley, in an email to this writer (17 February 2016), expressed a wish that further research may establish a link with his father and Eva.
 13. Peter Folan featured in an episode of the RTE TV *Genealogy Roadshow* in which presenter Derek Mooney and historian Kevin Ball explored an incident involving McHugh, Folan, a raid by the Auxiliaries, and five Parabellum revolvers. Mr Ball's interest in this matter was initially piqued when he came across Michael McHugh's old desk diary from the early 1890s. Anna McHugh, Headford historian, put this author in touch with Mr Ball, who kindly provided information on Michael McHugh's early career on 17 January 2014. Mr. Ball's assistance on this – and other – projects has been immeasurable.
 14. Bureau of Military History (hereafter BMH) Witness Statement (hereafter WS) No. 316, Peter Folan, 29 October 1949. At a time when Collins was the most wanted man in the British Empire, he cycled around Dublin on a bicycle with a squeaky chain (see David Neligan, *The Spy In The Castle* (MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1968), collecting information from many of his 'safe houses'. Those refuges included the home of Linda Kearns, a woman who later nursed on Achill Island during the 1918 influenza outbreak, and on whose board of Kilrock House in Dublin (for retired nurses) Eva O'Flaherty served in the late 1940s (see Proinsias O'Duineáin, *Linda Kearns, A Revolutionary Irish Woman*, Drumlin Publications, Leitrim, 2002), p. 129.
 15. David Neligan, *The Spy In The Castle* (MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1968).
 16. MSPC MACBB and personal communication from K. Ball.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Personal communication from Kevin Ball.
 19. Mary J. Murphy, *Caherlistrane*, p. 6.
 20. The priest who married Gerard O'Carroll and Maureen McHugh, Fr Gerard Mitchell from Corofin, Co. Galway was Michael Mc Hugh's nephew. He later became a Monsignor and President of Maynooth College. Maureen and Gerard had ten children; the best known two of them are Brendan (*Agnes Brown*) and Eilish, who plays the part of 'Winnie' in *Mrs Brown's Boys*, and who wrote the Foreword to the book, *Caherlistrane*.
 21. MSPC MACBB.
 22. Aughrim Street RC Church records, Marriage Registry, Dublin.
 23. *Connacht Tribune*, 21 June 1924, Obituary.
 24. MSPC MACBB.
 25. Ibid. Michael McHugh's file runs to over 400 pages.
 26. MSPC MACBB and personal communication from K. Ball, 1 September 2014.
 27. Ibid.
 28. See Chapter on Eva O'Flaherty elsewhere in this book and Mary J. Murphy, *Achill's Eva O'Flaherty: Forgotten Island Heroine 1874-1963* (Knockma Publishing, Galway, 2012), p. 93. Eva was revered on Achill Island not only because she provided employment where and when most needed but also because she was one of the influential co-founders of Scoil Acla in 1910, along with Darrell Figgis, Claud Chavasse, Anita MacMahon and Colm Ó Lochlainn. In Hilary Pyle, *Cesca's Diaries 1913-1916: Where Art and History Meet* (The Woodfield Press, Dublin, 2005), p. 153) Miss O'Flaherty is mentioned on a number of occasions, as are Chavasse and Ó Lochlainn, but the most interesting are perhaps two allusions to Piaras Beaslai. He, a friend of Michael Collins, Pearse & Michael McHugh, was at the Scoil Acla summer school in 1914 (*Cesca's Diaries*, p. 261), so O'Flaherty and McHugh may have known each other, given that their circles overlapped.
 29. Information based on a conversation in March 2013 with Mary Timlin (née Noonan) who was Eva O'Flaherty's private nurse and companion in Achill for six months before Eva died in Tuam on 17 April 1963.
 30. BMH WS No. 216, Louise Gavan Duffy, 1 April 1949.
 31. In conversation in August 2008 with retired Caherlistrane-born nurse, Bridie Gannon, who worked in Eva O'Flaherty's Knitting Industries on Achill during the Summer holidays in the 1950s.
 32. Sidney Gifford, sister of Grace, who married Joseph Plunkett, and Muriel, wife of Thomas McDonagh.
 33. Sidney Gifford (aka 'John Brennan'), *The Years*

Flew By (Arlen House, Galway, 2000).

34. S. Gifford, *The Years Flew By*, p. 143.
35. S. Gifford, *The Years Flew By*, p. 145.
36. *Fanatic Heart*, Mint Productions, (Steve Carson, producer), television documentary, Dublin, 2001.
37. In communication with historian Anna McHugh (biographer of Colonel Patrick Kelly) , 14 January 2016, regarding material she wrote for an exhibition held in Caherlistrane in 1989 for the launch of Michael J. Hughes' book, *Caherlistrane GAA & 150 Years Of Parish Life* (Tuam Herald, Tuam, 1990). Mrs McHugh explained to this writer that Fr. Kilkelly, a former Caherlistrane PP, brought the Br. Craven parish connection to her attention in the first instance. Br Canice had a remarkable educational career, which included a stint in Belfast where he established the Trades Preparatory School (where one of his pupils was Joe Devlin), a template of sorts, perhaps, for Pearse's St. Enda's School, established in Rathfarnham, Dublin in 1908. Devlin was one of his backers.
38. *The Christian Brother's Educational Record*, published by the Christian Brothers, Dublin, year of the extract unknown, p459.
39. Pearse, Padraig, *The Complete Works of PH Pearse* (The Phoenix Publishing Company Limited, Cork, 1924). Michael 'Millie Curran, College Road & Renmore, Galway, was Adjutant, Fifth Battalion, First Western Division, Intelligence, under Commandant Brian Molloy, Castlegar (WS 345, BMH MA CBB) during 1922/23.
40. *Ibid.*, p.440
41. *Ibid.*, p.439
42. Dudley Edwards, Ruth, *Patrick Pearse, The Triumph of Failure*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1977, p.14
43. Letter in the ownership of Ger Heneghan and family, Shrute, and shared with this writer by Headford historian, Anna McHugh. Ger is Mary Kate McHugh's nephew, and the son of Mrs Bridie Heneghan.
44. *Roots of Faith, A Journey of Hope, To Mark the 150th Anniversary of St. Mary's Church Headford*, (Headford Parish Church Committee, 2015). Chapter on Civil War Funerals in Headford Church, by Brendan Kyne, p95

Eva O’Flaherty (1874-1963) and her contribution to the fledgling Irish State

Mary J. Murphy

Born in Lisdonagh House in Caherlistrane, County Galway, to landed Catholic nationalist parents, there were many sides to Eva O’Flaherty. An intellectual, a milliner, a nationalist, a patron of the arts and a business woman, she was also a member of Cumann na mBan in Dublin in 1914. Her branch, the Central Branch, was a very active hub and had many well-known members, such as Louise Gavan Duffy, Kathleen Clarke and Sorcha MacMahon. During the Rising of 1916, confusion reigned amongst Cumann members, as it did amongst the other participating groups who were not in the tight inner circle of Connolly and MacDermot. According to Cal McCarthy¹, Cumann na mBan



Figure 19.1 Eva O’Flaherty

Source: Unknown

was left out in the cold amidst the flux, although subsequently many members were used as bicycle couriers to carry orders and counter-orders during the week. According to McCarthy again, senior Cumann members, like Sorcha MacMahon, set up their headquarters somewhere near the Broadstone, the Central Branch having apparently been attached to Ned Daly’s 1st Battalion prior to the Rising. It seems that they linked up with that battalion on Easter Monday. Limerick-born Ned (Edward) Daly was the only brother of Kathleen Daly (who married Tom Clarke) and her seven sisters. Somewhere amidst the military muddle during Easter Week was Eva O’Flaherty, then a striking 42-year old who had spent most of her teens and early twenties in Limerick with the family of her half-sister, Mary Quin. McCarthy further points out that the Cumann was outside the formal military command structure and thus members acted upon their own initiative in order to make their contribution to the rebellion.² This suited

Eva O’Flaherty very well, a woman who was quick to use her initiative. By 1916, she had modelled veiled motoring hats in Paris in the early 1900s, and posed for Dunhill cigarettes in London, had a millinery outlet in London’s Sloane Street, and had revived a struggling knitting enterprise in Achill. That business subsequently evolved into the flourishing St Colman’s Knitting Industries in Dooagh, which Eva ran for fifty years. She was an official Cumann secretary, perhaps a paid employee, having joined Cumann na mBan after her return in about 1913 from London³ where she had run her millinery emporium. By 1916 she was back in Dublin. An elderly woman (Mrs Mary O’Donnell), with whom she had lived on Chester Terrace⁴ in London, perhaps as a companion, had died in 1913, leaving Eva some money in her will. Those funds may have enabled her both to return to Ireland and to set up St Colman’s Knitting Industries.

Louise Gavan Duffy, sister of George and daughter of Charles, reported how extraordinarily tidy, precise and accurate Eva’s Dublin 1914 Central Branch Cumann na mBan records were, explaining how she kept track of everything in a little notebook. Each stamp used was itemised and accounted for by her, according to Louise, the intense accuracy of which she had never seen before.⁵ We know of those details from Gavan Duffy’s Witness Statement, number 216, to the Bureau of Military History, unearthed by Achill historian Maria Gillen. Gillen is the biographer of Emily Weddall, the driving force behind the founding of Scoil Acla on Achill Island in 1910, along with Eva, Darrell Figgis, Colm Ó Lochlainn, Claud Chavasse, Anita MacMahon, *et al.* Figgis, a former resident of Achill, went to the island in 1913 to learn Irish. He was, by all accounts, an eccentric character and Colm Ó Lochlainn, in a radio documentary in 1966, described him as an ‘unaccountable man’.⁶ In June 1916, just months after Easter Week, Figgis wrote to Eva O’Flaherty with some familiarity from Staffordshire prison about his longing for Achill, and mentioned the Rising. He addressed her in his letters as ‘Dear lady’⁷, and made numerous references to “important people” visiting her on the island.

A contemporary of Figgis, and a man known well to him, was Scoil Acla co-founder Colm Ó Lochlainn, who ran the Three Candles Press. He was a printer whose mother was from the wealthy Carr printing family of Limerick, and he was actively involved in plans leading up to the Rising. The role he played - with Eva O’Flaherty’s good friend, Seán MacDermott - in attempting to land German arms off the south coast a few days before Easter Monday 1916, has been well documented by Tim Pat Coogan⁸ and T. Ryle Dwyer amongst others. Geraldine Plunkett Dillon, in *All in the blood*, writes evocatively of the churning months and weeks that led up to the Rising, and mentions that Ó Lochlainn was one of the many visitors who came to her Dublin home at the time to visit her semi-invalidated brother, Joseph Mary Plunkett.⁹ Meanwhile, Louise Gavan Duffy was in

the GPO, working in the kitchens when the Rising was underway, and it is quite clear from her statement that she was not at all happy about the timing or the actual fact of the Rising – and she said as much to Padraig Pearse’s face.¹⁰

The Witness Statements of the Bureau of Military History, now part of the Military Archives in Cathal Brugha Street, consist of 1,773 signed documents, dictated by men and women who were involved in the Irish revolution between 1916 and 1923.¹¹

In 1962-3, Eva O’Flaherty, relating her recollections of fifty years before, told Ms Mary Jo Noonan that she acted as a bicycle courier/messenger around the GPO during the Rising. Eva cycled in from the city’s outskirts, right onto Sackville Street (now O’Connell Street), bluffing her way past sentries by bursting into tears and claiming to have a sick relative in need.¹² It is unclear what her precise ‘mission’ was or under whose auspices she operated. She may have been one of the Cumann na mBan couriers known as “basket women”, so called because they carried messages in the baskets of their bicycles. They were chosen by Kathleen Clarke and Sorcha McMahon at the behest of Tom Clarke and Seán MacDermott, all friends and acquaintances of Eva.¹³ It is thought that, while participating in the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan, Eva was living with relatives in Blackrock.

Ms Noonan was Eva O’Flaherty’s private nurse for the last six months of her life. Eva died in Tuam’s Bon Secours Hospital on 17th April 1963. Mary Jo had been with her day and night during those last months and they had chatted for hours, Eva’s memory of the Rising being sharp at the time, despite the forty-plus years’ remove. Mary Jo, who was barely in her twenties when she attended Ms O’Flaherty, clearly recalled that Eva knew Seán MacDermott well and was particularly fond of him, and spoke a lot about the Rising from the point of view of one who had participated in it. Seán MacDermott was “a good friend”, confirmed Mary Jo.

Seán MacDermott was recuperating in Limerick (where Eva had lived as a child during holidays from Mount Anville and Alexandra Colleges, following her mother’s death in 1881) with John Daly’s family around 1911 after contracting polio. MacDermott was a great friend and confidant of Tom Clarke¹⁴, Clarke having met Padraig Pearse for the first time through MacDermott. Clarke married Daly’s niece, Kathleen, and played bridge on occasion with John Daly, Roger Casement and Fionan Lynch in Sandycove, Dublin.¹⁵

Another good friend was the famous Cumann na mBan activist, Máire Comerford.¹⁶ Many articles and books have been written about her exploits, and she has been filmed too, speaking about her 1916 activities, including in *A curious*



Figure 19.2 Brendan and Bridie Gannon at Eva's vault 2013

Source: Mason Glynn

journey, for RTE.¹⁷ Ms Comerford, a former driver for Frank Aiken during the War of Independence, was the aunt of film maker Joe Comerford, the Women's Editor with the *Irish Press* from the 1930s to the 1960s, and a staunch letter writer to Eva for decades. Máire and Eva were close, they had numerous friends in common, and shared a similar political outlook. The *Irish Press* link is strong because, although Eva was no great fan of De Valera (according to nurse Noonan), another of Ms O'Flaherty's great Cumann na mBan friends, nurse Linda Kearns, wrote a knitting column for the *Irish Press* in the 1940s and 50s, employing the pseudonym *Penelope*. Kearns had been a nurse on Achill in 1918 during the influenza outbreak, and drove a car with the registration number 1Z 50 at great speed around the island, as described in Proinsias O Duigneáin's biography of Kearns, *Revolutionary Irish woman*.¹⁸

In 2013, even at the remove of half a century from the time Eva O'Flaherty died, Mary Noonan was quite clear in her mind that Eva was, in some capacity, an active participant in 1916 - "she knew many of the main organisers. ... She admired MacDermott very much and knew him personally. They visited her. They all mixed in the same crowd." Mary also remembered Senator Mark Killilea extol Eva's nationalist and Cumann na mBan connections at her funeral in Donaghpatrick, Caherlistrane, in April 1963. Ms O'Flaherty's imposing, raised family

vault has been restored in that cemetery and, in July 2015, documentary maker, Marcus Howard, filmed one of his 1916 Easter Stories there.

Dr Kathleen Lynn was another great friend of Eva and Ms O'Flaherty also knew fellow Cumann na mBan member Anita MacMahon very well, as well as Kathleen Clarke via the aforementioned Limerick city connection through her half-sister, Mary Quin. Eva corresponded with Kathleen Lynn, Kathleen Clarke and Máire Comerford for almost half a century after the Rising. Dr Mark Ryan was mentioned as a friend in her obituary, as was Cardinal Dalton.¹⁹ Mary Jo Noonan also mentioned that renowned 1916 historian, Fr F.X. Martin, visited Eva in Achill on a number of occasions before her death in 1963.

London-based but Tuam-born senior IRB figure Dr Mark Ryan, a Fenian of note, according to Padraic Colum²⁰, was a 'mentor' of sorts to Eva O'Flaherty when she lived in London, as mentioned in her obituary in the *Irish Press* in April 1963.²¹ Dr Ryan had been an influential IRB figure in London since the 1880s, having been inducted into the Fenians by Michael Davitt in the 1860s.²² He in turn inducted people like John MacBride into the movement²³, and his rooms in Gower Street in London were the unofficial headquarters for all matters Gaelic²⁴ and Gaelic League related events²⁵ in London for the forty years until he returned to Dublin in 1924. Ryan was also pivotally involved in the Irish Literary Society and in the Prisoners' Defense Fund. Eva was based in London during the years leading up to World War I, following her training in millinery in Paris where she knew Maud Gonne and Countess Markievicz.²⁶

In London, Eva lived at Chester Terrace in some style.²⁷ Her avid nationalism, politics and intellectual activities existed quite comfortably in tandem with her love of Parisian high fashion, knitwear and millinery. She was a well known beauty in the Café Royal,²⁸ mixing with an eclectic intellectual set in an artistic milieu, many of whom visited her over the years in Achill. Eva's father, Martin F. O'Flaherty, had been a lawyer on the defence team representing John Mitchel in 1848²⁹, and he shared a practice with Valentine Blake Dillon (who became Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1894) in Dublin in the 1860s. It was Valentine's brother, John Blake Dillon³⁰, who sent both William Mitchel and his friend, Martin O'Flaherty, to the US as agents for the Young Irelanders in August 1848. During his visit to America, and as reported in the *New York Herald* on 8 August 1848, Eva's father spoke at the great 'fraternisation' meeting in New York that month. He died, aged 85, in Dublin's Mountjoy Square in April 1899. Eva's only brother, Bryan, had also died in Dublin, from tuberculosis, in 1894, in Charlemont House, aged 17.³¹

Back in Ireland before World War I, Eva was involved with the setting up of Scoil Acla on Achill island in 1910, and a few years later she developed St Col-

man's Knitting Industries there, in Dooagh. The enterprise was based in a building originally constructed by Mrs Emily Weddall as a Sinn Féin hall, for Gaelic League activities. Weddall, who, along with Darrell Figgis, laid the first wreath ('O Acaill')³² on O Donovan Rossa's grave in Glasnevin in 1915, gifted the hall to Eva for the knitting enterprise in about 1917. This provided much needed employment for poverty-stricken local girls and women, a fact remembered there to this day. Her portrait was painted by Marie Howet (in 1929) and by Derek Hill (in 1947); Paul Henry was a friend of long standing, and Graham Greene³³ regularly played cards in her home.

Eva's friend, Darrell Figgis, part of the 'Achill crowd' (according to Mabel Fitzgerald) lived near her in Achill when he went there to learn Irish around 1913, and was the leader of the Volunteers there in 1916. In his biography from the 1930s, Desmond Fitzgerald's wife, Mabel, alludes in a letter to "Miss O'Flaherty" (sic), Darrell Figgis and the 'Achill crowd'³⁴, illustrating that she, Eva, was an acknowledged member of that socio-political milieu, elusive and all as her tracks are through history.

Such was Eva O'Flaherty's contribution to the fledgling Irish state that President Eamon De Valera sent Senator Mark Killilea as his government representative to give the oration at her funeral. Her coffin was draped with a tricolour and she received military honours. Some of those who were there, like Caherlistrane's Brendan Gannon, who was involved in her funeral arrangements, and the late Henry Comerford (who looked after her legal affairs in 1963), recalled the extent to which Senator Killilea extolled Eva's fullsome 1916 and Cumann na mBan activities. Henry's father, lawyer William Comerford, knew Eva's father Martin O'Flaherty. According to Henry, his father told him that Eva O'Flaherty was "mixed up with Maud Gonne and those busy-bodies who were involved with the prisoners",³⁵ possibly the forerunner of the Women's Prisoners' Defence League. Eva O'Flaherty's mother, from the O'Gormans of Ennis clan,³⁶ also came from staunch green-blooded stock. She, Mary Frances Barbara O'Gorman Lalor O'Gorman O'Flaherty, to give her full name, was the daughter of Daniel O'Connell's colleague, Richard O'Gorman Senior, the sister of Young Irelander Richard O'Gorman Junior, and the niece of Purcell O'Gorman. Purcell was O'Connell's 'second' for his famous 1815 duel with Mr D'Esterre.³⁷

Eva was an intriguing mixture of a fashionista and an intellectual with a heightened political awareness; her former nurse, Mary Jo Noonan, summed Eva up very succinctly:

She was unique. Beautiful, witty, good fun and young at heart until the day she died (at nearly ninety). She had a fighting spirit and must have

been something when she was younger. ... It was a privilege to have looked after her ... I am only sorry that I didn't take more note of things she said at the time. ... Yeats was her favourite poet. She liked Seán MacDermott and talked about him and 1916 a lot. He was her favourite. She knew him well and often said that he never got the credit he was due for all he did. Ms O'Flaherty joked about having the ferocious O'Flaherty temper. She also liked me to read from the Oxford Book of Verse to her over breakfast. She was a real rebel at heart, in a nice kind of way. ... It would be nice if her contribution to the 1916 Rising was recorded, whatever it was. God bless you Eva"³⁸

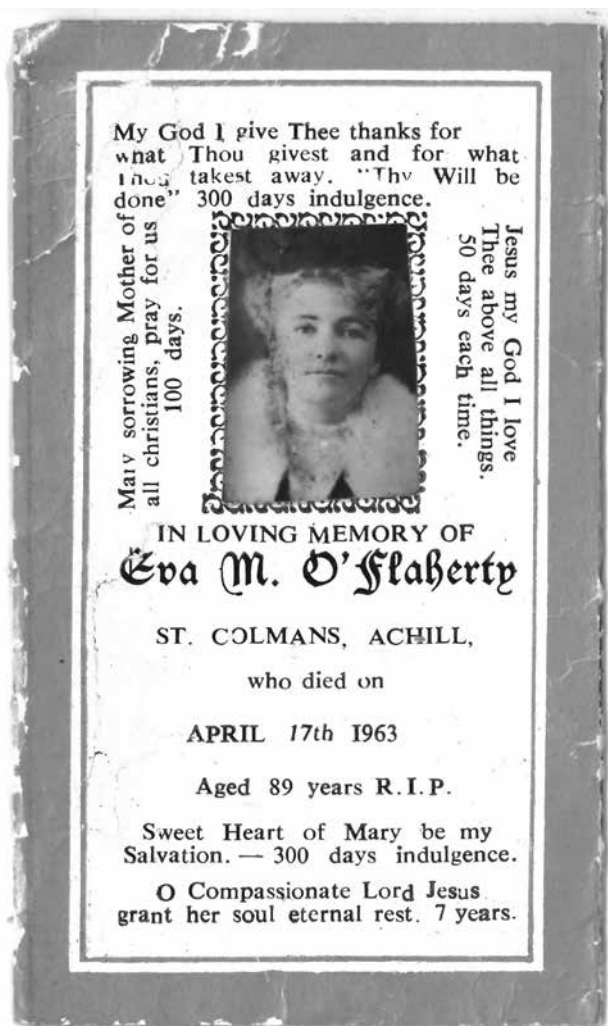


Figure 19.3 Memorial Card
Source: Diarmuid Gielty

Endnotes

1. Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Collins Press, 2007).
2. *Ibid.*
3. *London Electoral Register 1909*, information courtesy of Anne Tierney, President of the Old Tuam Society.
4. *UK Census 1911*, information courtesy of Anne Tierney.
5. Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement (BMH WS) 216, given on April 1st 1949 by Ms Lousie Gavan Duffy. Ms Gavan Duffy was on duty in the kitchen in the GPO during Easter Week, and was Joint Secretary of Cumann na mBan in Dublin in 1914, when she knew Eva O'Flaherty. Information courtesy of Achill historian Maria Gillen.
6. *RTE Radio1*, March 2015, Roger Casement 50th anniversary special, presented by John Bowman.
7. Kilmainham Gaol, 17LR – ID41-08, Darrell Figgis letter - written in Staffordshire prison to Eva O'Flaherty, June 1916. Information courtesy of Maria Gillen and Anne Marie Ryan, Acting Archivist, Kilmainham Gaol.
8. T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins, The man who won the war* (Cork, 1990).
9. Geraldine Dillon Plunkett, *All in the blood* (Farrar & Farrar, 2012).
10. BMH WS 216, given on April 1st 1949 by Ms Lousie Gavan Duffy.
11. Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin.
12. Information from Mary Jo Timlin (nee Noonan), interview, 6 March 2013. Mary, now a resident of the UK, is a sister of Arthur Noonan. He was born in Belcarra, worked as a political journalist with RTE for many years, and retired to Achill.
13. Sinéad McCoole, *Easter widows* (Transworld, 2014).
14. Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman*, ed. Helen Litton (O'Brien, 1991).
15. Fionan Lynch (BMH WS 192, Fionan Lynch, Captain IV, Dublin 1916) was the Commanding Officer of another Caherlistrane-born Rising participant, Michael McHugh. For McHugh's role in the Rising, see chapter 18, Michael McHugh (1873-1924), Caherlistrane-born combatant in Dublin during Easter Week 1916, pp 278-8. McHugh was the father of Maureen O'Carroll, Ireland's first female Labour TD, who was elected in Dublin North Central in 1954. Maureen in turn was the mother of Eilish O'Carroll, best known as Winnie in the *Mrs Brown's Boys* TV series. Eilish is the older sister of Brendan O'Carroll, who created the series, and she has written the foreword to this author's third book, *Caherlistrane*, which explores for the first time her grandfather's and mother's links with the north-Galway parish. Eilish O'Carroll launched the book (Mary J. Murphy, *Caherlistrane*, Knockma Publishing, 2015) in Caherlistane in October 2015 during a community event which honoured the McHugh connection to Caherlistrane for the first time.
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17. *A curious journey*. An RTE film by Kenneth Griffith, 1973.
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20. Padraic Colum, *Arthur Griffith* (Browne and Nolan, Dublin, 1959), p. 160.
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24. *Irish Press*, 26 April 1963.
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26. Personal communications from Brendan Gannon and the late Henry Comerford (2007 and 2011).
27. *UK Census 1911*, information courtesy Anne Tierney.
28. Information courtesy of Declan Barron, Ennis historian, based on research carried out by Richard Carruthers-Zarowski, in *Some Ancestry of London's Mayor Boris Johnson* (<http://vademecumgenology.blogspot.ie/2012/02.london.html>).
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- Achill, retired NS principal and historian, and Ni Dheirig, Iosold, *Scoil Acla* (Coiscéim, 1999).
33. Information from Eva O'Flaherty's own handwritten notes, date unknown, probably 1950s, courtesy of Nicolas O'Gorman, London, step-grandson of Ms O'Flaherty.
 34. Desmond Fitzgerald, *My Rising* (Liberties Press, 2006).
 35. Personal communication from the late Henry Comerford, 2007.
 36. Information courtesy of Declan Barron, Ennis historian.
 37. Eva O'Flaherty's handwritten notes, c. 1930s, courtesy of Nicolas O'Gorman.
 38. Letter from Mary Jo Noonan (now Timlin), August 2015.

Remembering Tuam's 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising

Anne Tierney

The 50th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising was commemorated by a number of official events in Dublin in 1966. Many local commemorations were also held throughout the country to mark the Golden Jubilee.



Figure 20.1 Mr Mattie Niland (third from the left) with veterans of Tuam Brigade, Old IRA

In February 1966, Taoiseach Séan Lemass announced the commemoration programme of events which would take place in Dublin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising. The programme included arts and cultural events such as military parades, children's parades and a dramatic Croke Park pageant, 'Aiséirí', which recounted the events of the Rising.¹ It also included the opening of the Garden of Remembrance at Parnell Street and the unveiling of the Thomas Davis statue in College Green, Dublin.²

Planning for Tuam's commemoration

In late 1965, a series of meetings were held in every county across the country to discuss initial preparations on how to commemorate the 50th anniversary.

A meeting of the north Galway Old IRA was held in Athenry Town Hall and was attended by representatives from Athenry, Tuam, Loughrea, Gort, Mountbellew, Headford, Moylough, Connemara and Galway City.

In his opening address, Chairman Mr Mattie Niland, Kilcolgan (a former TD and IRA leader during the fight for freedom), stated that the “Department of Defence had instructed the army authorities at Renmore Barracks to consult with the Old IRA, as to a joint action in the celebration”. Secretary Stephen Jordan (former TD, member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Volunteers, Athenry) and Niland were to meet with the army officers to discuss how the members of the Old IRA would participate.³

After much discussion it was decided that Tuam would be the venue for the north Galway jubilee commemoration. The principal Galway City ceremony would take place on Easter Sunday, 10 April 1966. Ceremonies would take place at Limepark, Ardahan, Peterswell, Tuam and Gort on the following successive Sundays.⁴

On Sunday 17 November 1965, a second meeting took place in the Central Hotel, Shop Street, Tuam, and discussions continued on how to celebrate the event. A proposal was made to erect a memorial in the town, dedicated to those who gave their lives in north Galway during the fight for freedom.⁵ A 1916 committee was formed to oversee the necessary arrangements. Among those elected to the committee was Senator Mark Killilea Snr (a founder member of Fianna Fáil), Martin Higgins (brother of the late Volunteer Lieut. Sean Higgins, Gardenfield, Tuam), Pat Dunleavy (Brigade Commandant, Barbersfort, Tuam), Stephen Jordan (Athenry) and Thomas Hussey (Ballygaddy Road, Tuam).

The 1916 committee had been meeting for several months and was progressing well with the Golden Jubilee preparations. In March 1966, at a monthly meeting of the Galway County Council, Senator Mark Killilea asked “that a space could be given in the car park in Tuam, opposite the Cathedral, for the erection of a memorial in connection with the Jubilee of 1916”.

The secretary of GCC stated the County Engineer, Claude M. Warner, had reported that there was no objection to the proposed works, but the proposal would require the usual planning permission.⁶

In the lead-up to the anniversary, the Irish state distributed bilingual versions of the Proclamation and large posters with images of the executed 1916 leaders to every school in the country.



Figure 20.2 Tuam, Mercy Convent Secondary School students who participated in the 1916 Jubilee celebrations

As part of the nation-wide commemoration, the Proclamation was read in schools throughout the country, preceded by a parade and a special mass. Four of Tuam's schools participated enthusiastically in the Golden Jubilee celebrations, namely the Presentation Convent, Scoil Bhríde (Mercy Secondary School, Tuam), the Christian Brothers School (Tuam CBS) and McHale Technical School.

On 23 April 1966, 700 girls gathered at the Presentation Convent school courtyard, where schools inspector Mr Eamon Carey unveiled the Proclamation. Fr Eamon Concannon, who spoke in Irish, urged the students "to live and work for the country, to awaken a new interest in the language and in all things Irish and in that way Ireland can truly become a nation once again". Brid O'Donnell, a native Irish speaker from Carraroe, read the Proclamation in Irish and the English version was read by Brenda Gilmore from Ballinrobe. The ceremonies ended with the school band playing *Amhran na bFian*.

Also on that day, over 450 schoolboys celebrated the unveiling of the Proclamation at the Christian Brothers School. Rev. Bro. Garvey (Superior) asked the students to use the language more frequently, and to take pride in their native tongue. He also

stated, in this way they would be carrying on the traditions of the 1916 leaders who wanted to see Ireland not only free but Gaelic as well.

The Proclamation was unveiled by Rev. Martin Geraghty at McHale Technical School. Speaking to the boys and girls, he said many of them would live to see the centenary of the Rising being celebrated and asked them to play their part in building up the country to one of which the dead leaders could be proud.⁷

More than 600 pupils were in attendance at Scoil Bhríde (Mercy Secondary School, Tuam), as they marked the Jubilee with a pageant of music, song, and dance on the theme of *Mise Éire*.⁸

Sr Teresa Delaney, Religious Sisters of Mercy, Galway Archivist, stated “The pupils and staff vividly remember this colourful, cultural, melodic experience. Sr Sebastian Dolly recalls that she made copies of the signatories from the stamps that had been issued that year. She cleaned X-ray sheets she got from the Tuam Grove Hospital and traced the faces on with a compass, to be used in a display within the school”.

She also informed me that “Sr Philip Divilly remembers that she kept a copy of the 1966 pageant script for a number of years, until she eventually gave it to a Louisburgh school. The school pageant *The Spirit of Easter Week*, which was directed and produced by Sr Magdalene Flannery, had two groups of girls on either side

of the stage - one did verse-speaking and the other group did the singing. One of the schoolgirls, Rita Hynes, was Éire - she was dressed in white with green sash and gold stole. There were four others wearing the emblems of the four provinces. One of the boarder students, Maureen Freeman, from Urlar, Ballyhaunis, won an essay competition and she was presented with a framed painting of Éamonn Ceannt, one of the Signatories.”⁹



Figure 20.3 Maureen Freeman, essay competition winner presented with a painting of Éamonn Ceannt

As final preparations for north Galway parades continued, Dublin, the focal point of the nation, marked the first of the Golden Jubilee celebrations alongside Galway City. The Tuam parade, which was planned to be held on 24th April, was changed

to 1st May due to Galway footballers playing Longford in the National League Final in Croke Park, Dublin (incidentally Galway lost 0-8 to Longford 0-9).¹⁰

Tuam ceremony on 1st May 1966

The Tuam parade drew hundreds of spectators to the town for the north Galway 1916 Jubilee commemoration. They were entertained by twenty-five local organisations and five bands that assembled at various meeting points, which converged into the Tuam Town Square.

The parade was made up with units from the local FCA Colour Party, Old IRA Veterans, Cumann na mBan, public representatives from north Galway, Fire Brigade, Civil Defence, An Garda Síochána and the Order of Malta. Led by the Tuam Brass Band, the Tuam Town Commissioners were joined by a large number of local clubs, organisations, societies and over 2,000 schoolchildren who all marched under their own school banners and bands.

The procession proceeded to the Cathedral of the Assumption for a special mass held at 12 noon.¹¹ Rev. Eamon Concannon (now Canon Eamon) delivered the mass in Irish, presided by His Grace the Archbishop, Most Rev. Dr Joseph Walsh. Mr Martin Dempsey, one of the founders of the Irish National Opera Company, actor, singer and star of RTE programmes, sang Gaelic hymns throughout the mass.¹²



Figure 20.4 Former Old IRA Veterans with their medals

After mass, the procession reassembled in the Cathedral grounds and continued through the town, up along the Dublin Road to the new cemetery. Thomas Wilson (Captain, Cortoon Company, Tuam Battalion IRA) laid a wreath on the grave of Michael Moran, Commander of the Tuam County Galway Battalion of the IRA, who was shot during the War of Independence.

Afterwards, the procession returned to Bishop Street, where everyone gathered in the car park (now O'Tooles supermarket) for the commemoration ceremony.¹³

A record crowd gathered outside the Tuam Parochial Centre where invited members of the Old IRA, dignitaries and representatives of local organisations were seated on the viewing platform.

The Old IRA veterans marched in formation and formed an honour guard under the command of 1916 veteran Stephen Jordan (Athenry). Pat Dunleavy (Barbersfort), who had the distinction of holding four national medals, was in charge of the men on parade. The ceremony continued with speeches from the platform. Acting State Solicitor Noel O'Donoghue, who gave the oration, said he was honoured and privileged to have been selected by the commemoration committee to speak at the commemoration. In his speech, he discussed Ireland's past under the rule of England and the attempted decimation of all elements of Irish society, including "our games, our language and our culture". He spoke of the advances that had been made since the 1916 Rising and the way it united the nation and resulted in

Figure 20.5 Mr Noel O'Donoghue, delivering his oration, surrounded by Master of Ceremonies Martin Higgins (Old IRA), Noel O'Donoghue, Acting State Solicitor, Deputy John Dunnellon, Deputy Michael F. Kitt, Senator Mark Killilea Snr, Councillors Paddy A. Patten, William Burke, Sean M. Glynn, Peter Raftery, Padraic O'Ceallagh and Tom Hussey. Others included Colonel P. O'Ceirin, Renmore Barracks; John Coughlan (Chairman) and the Town Commissioners, Gerald H. O'Connor (Town Clerk); Rev. Martin Geraghty, Supt M. Gonigle, An Garda Síochána.



developments in all aspects, including social advances, educational institutions, material prosperity, preserving and extending our culture without any outside influence. He also shared what he envisaged when the hundredth anniversary would be celebrated in 2016. He stated that “Ireland will be one united and free country and that ideal will be a reality”¹⁴ that vision was not to be fully realised.

At the end of the ceremony, a CBS, student Neil Kedward, read the 1916 Proclamation in both Irish and English. When Kedward had finished, the Tricolour was lowered to half-mast during the sounding of the *Last Post* and was raised again as the bugler sounded *Reveille*. The ceremony concluded with the playing of the National Anthem.¹⁵

The erection of the 1916 monument

After the Easter Jubilee ceremonies, the 1916 committee continued to hold a number of meetings in Tuam. It was during one of these meetings that it was decided that a public collection would defray the cost of the memorial and a notice was published in the local newspapers. The fundraising effort was spearheaded locally by three Old IRA men, then prominent members of the main political parties, namely Senator Mark Killilea Snr, Pat Dunleavy and Town Commissioner Jack Coughlan, respectively representing Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Labour party.¹⁶



Figure 20.6 Mattie Niland unveiling the Tuam 1916 Monument

The monument, which was designed by County Council Clerk, Willie Mannion, Galway Road, is highly symbolic in nature. The granite memorial bore brass numbering 1916 -1966 with the symbol of the Sword of Light in the centre. When completed it stood over nine feet tall and was topped with a capstone of the rising sun emblem, symbolic of the Easter Rising.

Willie Kelly, stonemason, Bishop Street, built and erected the monument; it was built of local stone and, in the base, also included a stone from every county in Ireland, which added to the significance of the monument and the ideal of a united Ireland.

Unveiling the 1916 commemorative memorial

When the year-long celebrations of the Easter Rising Golden Jubilee came to an end, Tuam paid one of the last tributes to the veterans who sacrificed so much in the fight for Irish independence. On Sunday 18 December 1966, the monument erected at Bishop Street, Tuam, was unveiled by Mr Mattie Niland, Kilcolgan.



Figure 20.7 David Burke, Tuam, CBS Secondary student reading the proclamation in English

Niland took part in the 1916 occupation of Moyode Castle near Athenry, under the command of Liam Mellows. He stood proudly as some of his comrades stood to attention before the viewing platform. In his speech, he recalled the stirring times in the fight for freedom. He also described the early days in Dublin, when the rising was planned, and the people he met with, such as *Pádraig* Pearse, Countess Markievicz, James Connolly, Sean Mac Diarmada and many more, who were all very ordinary people and shared *amazing* acts of *courage* and a tremendous faith in the face of all the odds.

He was particularly proud of Galway's part in the Rising and the men who responded to the call of arms. He thanked the Tuam memorial committee for inviting him to perform the unveiling. *Many of his comrades he fought alongside were from the area and some were in attendance that day. The events of the unveiling ceremony were reminiscent of the Golden Jubilee celebration held on 1st May.*¹⁷

Two Tuam CBS boys, Neil Kedward and David Burke, read the Proclamation aloud again, both in Irish and English. David, now the editor of the *Tuam Herald*, was a second year student at that time. He said: "there was a pretty big crowd up where the monument was unveiled; the Tuam Brass Band played and the FCA were there as a guard of honour. I don't remember much more, I was concentrating on getting the reading right. The Irish version was read by Neil Kedward, who would have been a year or two older than me."¹⁸

The closing of the ceremony involved the memorial being unveiled and the Tuam Brass Band playing the National Anthem.



Figure 20.8 Willie Kelly, Tuam Stonemason, who built and erected the 1916 monument

In the mid 1970s, one particular incident of controversy surrounding the monument was the vandalising of the brass numbers '1966' which were *sawn off* and stolen, possibly an action linked to disgruntled republicans over from England who may have taken them down. The numbers were retrieved and, it is believed, were stored locally for a number of years.¹⁹

As we approach the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising, plans are afoot to erect a plaque at the Bishop Street memorial by the Old Tuam Society to honour *those* who took *part* in the *Easter Rising*.

Hopefully, this article will serve as a small tribute to the veterans of 1916.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my daughter Caroline Tierney and Local Tuam Historian Maurice Laheen for their help and advice in compiling this article.

Photographs from the Joe Dillon Collection in possession of the Author.

Endnotes

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4. *Tuam Herald*, 15 October 1965.
5. *Tuam Herald*, 20 November 1965.
6. Galway County Council Minutes, GC1-11(a) 26.04.1965-01.04.1968, p. 1 to 18 Oct 1966 (26 March 1966).
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8. *Mise Eire* (meaning 'I am Ireland') is a 1912 Irish-language poem by the Irish poet and republican revolutionary leader Patrick Pearse.
9. Personal communication, Sr Teresa Delaney, Religious Sisters of Mercy, Archivist, Galway, 3 March 2015.
10. *Tuam Herald*, 16 April 1966.
11. *Connacht Tribune*, 30 April 1966.
12. *Tuam Herald*, 7 May 1966.
13. *Tuam Herald*, 16 April 1966.
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15. Ibid.
16. Jack Coughlan, a native of Cratloe, Co. Clare, served with the East Clare Brigade IRA, mainly as a sentry when the brigade, including the famous Brennan brothers, were hiding out in his home area. At the time of the Truce in 1921, Jack was transferred to work at Tuam railway station which ended his involvement. Information on the late Jack Coughlan, Galway Road, Tuam in an interview with local historian Maurice Laheen.
17. *Tuam Herald*, 24 December, 1966.
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Remembering the Rising in Galway, 1916-1966

Shirley Wrynn

Markers of memory are everywhere ... they are buried in language and dialect, found on commemorative plaques, on buildings and battlefields ... and woven through the city's visual and literary cultures. Markers of memory are also powerfully encoded into popular cultural practices – sports teams, local bands and theatre groups and the buildings that have housed these activities.¹

The superior military capability of the British Army ensured that the task of extinguishing the 1916 Easter Rising was 'fairly straightforward'. However, the colonial power was 'less able to seize control of the myth', and consequently, the nature and extent to which it was remembered and commemorated by Irish nationalists. While history is generally perceived to be objectively based on available facts, it has also been suggested that 'societies' memories, whether individual or collective, are a second centre of history', which can be susceptible to infiltration by myth and tradition. Thus, it may be espoused that the malleability of memory is a significant factor when remembering, commemorating and interpreting historical events. Consequently, this chapter will explore not only the range of commemorative practices that embodied the memorialisation of the 1916 Rising in Galway, but also the extent to which 'remembering and forgetting' influenced such practices.

The struggle to remember, 1916-1921

The year following the 1916 Rising was one of national reflection which led to a noticeable adjustment in how the events of the Rising were interpreted and therefore remembered by the public. The execution of the rebel leaders in Dublin and the ensuing shift in public sympathy resulted not only in an emergent reverence towards those who died for Ireland, but also a growing appreciation for all the rebels who bravely took on the might of the British Empire. It was even observed that many people in Galway wore 'mourning badges consisting of a green ribbon tied in the centre with black' in memory of the executed leaders.⁴ However, the continued implementation of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA)⁵, served to impede early commemorative efforts. The British authorities prohibited any public meetings or processions throughout the week of the first anniversary of the Rising. This effectively eliminated any possibility of public acts of remembrance taking place.⁶

Initially, public support was most notably demonstrated through contributions to the National Aid and Volunteer Dependents Fund (NAVDF).⁷ While the primary

function of this body was to generate practical financial assistance for the families of interned veterans, it invariably took on the role of ensuring that the memory of the Rising remained in the public consciousness. This was also achieved through the frequent celebratory manner in which incarcerated veterans were greeted on their return home to Ireland. It was not unusual for released prisoners to be met with 'bonfires and torch-lit processions' on their return from British jails.⁸ On his return from Britain in June 1917, Brian Molloy recalled how 'the whole company' of Castlegar Volunteers turned out to greet him at Oranmore Station.⁹ These returning veterans, newly schooled from the so-called 'University of Revolution', in Frongoch, Wales, were determined to continue pursuing their nationalist objectives and were the key agents in preserving the memory of the Rising.¹⁰ They successfully capitalised on the turnaround in public opinion and took advantage of a receptive public to expound their republican rhetoric. However, participation in such public demonstrations invariably meant that the veterans often re-encountered the wrath of the British administration. One of them, Michael Athy, Captain of the Maree Volunteers, was re-arrested in February 1917 for 'disloyal utterances'.¹¹ Similarly, Laurence Lardner from Athenry was resolute in publicly declaring his continued allegiance to the cause for which Patrick Pearse and the other 'martyrs' made the ultimate sacrifice. As a result of reading the Proclamation of Independence on St Patrick's Day 1918 in Galway, he was also re-arrested and imprisoned once again.¹²

The support of the Catholic Church was of crucial importance in the early years of commemoration, when the Irish 'eagerly expressed their identity through their Catholicity'.¹³ In Dublin, General Maxwell was quick to realise that nationalists were taking advantage of requiem Masses and holding 'political demonstrations outside the churches'.¹⁴ While there were no such demonstrations in Galway, the blending of religion and political nationalism nonetheless intensified. As a result, memorial masses quickly became the most usual form of remembrance in the immediate aftermath of the Rising. Masses were held as early as May 1916 in Galway and again towards the end of the year.¹⁵

Some of the executed leaders of the Rising had sufficient foresight to be mindful that their actions would create a legacy. Patrick Pearse wrote in a poem to his mother that 'people will say harsh things of us now, but we shall be remembered by posterity and blessed by unborn generations'.¹⁶ This was certainly the case in Galway in the years following the Rising. In light of the dramatic shift in public sympathies, an emergent need developed among some public officials to purge the official record of its initial censure. The desire to alter these public declarations and thus adjust the official memory, took place among several public bodies throughout the county. In Galway town, however, the Redmondite nucleus held firm and many council members reiterated their original feelings and declined to retract their previous expressions of contempt. The issue did not fade away quietly,

but rather gained additional momentum as the revolutionary period progressed. In 1920, amid the War of Independence, the broader significance of both the original entries and their subsequent airbrushing from the national memory was identified by Mrs Nicolls of the Galway Urban Council, who proposed:

that the minutes of the resolutions of 4th May 1916, dealing with the Rising of Easter Week 1916, be rescinded and marked 'rescinded' on the minute book, but that said resolution, though marked 'rescinded', be preserved on the minute books a[s] a record of the state of corruption prevailing in Galway and other districts prior to the time when ... Pádraig Pearse and his gallant comrades bore fruit.

When passing Mrs Nicolls' motion, the chairman, Dr Walsh, demonstrated the strength of his feelings on the matter when he commented that 'he was sorry he had not red ink to do it with'.¹⁷ A similar action was taken by 1916 veteran George Nicolls, when he was elected to Galway County Council a few months later. In June 1920, he also drew a line through the minutes and wrote 'expunged' in red but took care to preserve it as a 'document of national importance'.¹⁸ Significantly, the issue of retrospectively purging the public record of unfavourable views logged in 1916 would continue to stir strong feelings for many years to come.¹⁹

Perhaps the most pervasive demonstration of memory was garnered through the electoral poll. In the aftermath of the Rising, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) suffered a devastating loss of support as the nation questioned its capacity to deliver the nationalist agenda, while the Sinn Féin party found itself in a new position of strength. Their cause was further aided by the fear of conscription which arose in 1917 and which also served to '[swing] the pendulum in favour of the restyled and resurgent Sinn Féin party'.²⁰ With a captive national audience eager to pay homage to the martyrs of 1916, Éamon de Valera used the occasion of the 1917 Sinn Féin convention to promote the concept of remembering the dead by supporting the Sinn Féin political campaign, equating it to 'a monument to the brave dead'.²¹ Needing little encouragement, the Irish public found expression for their communal loss by supporting candidates whose 'status as "rebels"' was foremost among their political credentials.²² Unsurprisingly, Sinn Féin secured a landslide victory in the 1918 General Election. In Galway, all four seats were secured by veterans of the Rising.²³ Liam Mellows, the only Commanding Officer of 1916 to escape, and despite being wanted 'dead or alive' by the police, was elected by the people of East Galway as their Sinn Féin parliamentary representative.²⁴

The 1921 General Election also served to reinforce a sense of national spirit by returning the Sinn Féin candidates uncontested to their parliamentary seats. The Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6 December, however, was to yield some divisive results. In

line with the situation nationally, Galway secured a narrow margin in favour of the agreement and as a result, Mellows, who opposed the Treaty, no longer had the undivided support of the Galway people.²⁵ As a result he lost his seat in the 1922 General Election.²⁶ Later that year, Mellows was executed by the Free State government on 8 December 1922 as a reprisal for the assassination of Seán Hales TD.²⁷ Noteworthy, however, is the fact that, despite the deterioration of his political relationship with Galway, sufficient regard for his memory endured for his brother, Herbert Charles (Barney), to be elected in his stead the following year.

Dissonant memories and the Free State, 1922-1932

The signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the subsequent Civil War that was fought between Pro-Treaty and Anti-Treaty republicans invariably damaged the legacy of the 1916 Rising. By agreeing to Partition, the Pro-Treaty side were judged by Anti-Treaty republicans as having deserted the ideals of 1916. Furthermore, 'the non-republican character of the Free State [most notably its] ... governor general, symbol of the British monarch' was seen as the ultimate betrayal.²⁸ As a result, the Pro-Treaty republicans were judged to have adulterated their connection with the Rising. It has, therefore, been suggested that after the Civil War, the Cumann na nGaedheal government had no overwhelming appetite to remember 1916, and instead sought to commemorate people such as Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, 'whose vision promised the rise of a stable and normalised society'.²⁹ However, as 1916 veterans also, they could not conceivably eliminate completely their connection to the Rising. It was inevitable, therefore, that a resultant dichotomy would emerge which would have a direct impact on future commemorations when 'coming together at Easter increasingly translated into exclusive and inimical occupations of public space as former comrades refused to commemorate together'.³⁰

In spite of suggestions that they had abandoned the spirit of 1916, the Cumann na nGaedheal government nonetheless preserved the historical memory of the Rising through the Military Service Pensions scheme, set up by the Oireachtas in 1923. This proved to be a valuable means of preserving and recording the personal memories of those that fought during 1916 and the subsequent War of Independence. Described in 2012 by the Minister for Defence Alan Shatter as 'the single most important archival collection relating to Ireland's revolutionary period', the collection contains almost 300,000 files in total.³¹ The submission of written testimonies and the retention of interview transcripts from more than 82,000 applicants proved to be an invaluable record of historical data on a nationwide scale. Moreover, the array of files also meant that minute details could be verified

and corroborated. This was clearly demonstrated in the case of Alf Monaghan, who could not recall the name of one of the dispatchers to Galway during Easter Week. In her application, Annie Fahy identified herself as the dispatcher who travelled from Dublin to Galway, a fact that was confirmed by Laurence Lardner in his application testimony.³² The collection also includes applications from 11 Galway veterans who had since emigrated, and whose memories, therefore, were at the greatest risk of being excluded from the national record.

However, as the stated purpose of the scheme was for monetary recompense for military service rendered, concerns were raised by examining boards in relation to the accuracy of some of the submitted information. Fears of glorification were noted where it was felt that exaggeration was at play by applicants in a bid to secure a pension.³³ As a result, the Army Pensions Board went to great lengths to verify submitted evidence and sometimes held additional interviews, providing further depth to many of the files. Furthermore, given that people who provided service in the form of dispatchers, look-outs, first-aiders and other non-combative roles did not meet the primary definition of 'active service', large quantities of additional testimony and correspondence exist in these files as well.³⁴ This was most notably demonstrated in the case of Thomas Courtney, Intelligence Officer for the Castlegar Company. Courtney spent Easter Week industriously seeking information and organising transport for the Volunteers, criss-crossing Galway town several times, in spite of the risk of arrest. Despite his courage, commitment and determination to be of service during Easter week 1916, he did not qualify for a Military Service Pension either initially or under the subsequent Military Service Pensions Act 1934, in which the definition of the term 'Active Service' was broadened in scope.³⁵

Another initiative of the Cuman na nGaedheal government to honour the memory of 1916 occurred in 1924 when it organised the first official military ceremony to commemorate the Rising in Dublin. During the same year in Galway, Moyode Castle, where Mellows had camped with the Volunteers, also held a noteworthy ceremony, which invoked the concept of 'remembrance of Irish history through place'.³⁶ While overwhelmingly republican in tone, calls were nonetheless made for unity amongst Irishmen. Support from the public was abundant with over 1,000 people in attendance to hear an address delivered by the mother of the late Liam Mellows. Nineteen-sixteen veteran Eamon Corbett also spoke and highlighted the historic importance of the sense of place, and the man who had led them there stating that '[the] courtyard was hallowed ground. History was made in it, and Galway had the privilege of being represented by a man in the person of Liam Mellows who made history'.³⁷ Reflecting on the ceremony the following week and accurately assessing its tone, a contributor to *The Connacht Tribune* newspaper stated:

*The Moyode of today is a changed place from the sacred ground of eight years ago – the crowd of today is also different too. Then all was hope and grandeur, now disappointment, division and recrimination. Many of the old soldiers of 1916 [were] here again, some scarred in the wars, some recently out of imprisonment, some absorbed in the life of the country, some hopeful, some uncertain, some dispirited.*³⁸

The lingering resentment and recriminations noted at the ceremony would become even more divisive and entrenched in subsequent years when republican ‘Irregulars’ diverted attention from sites such as Moyode, and broadened the focus of memorialisation to the republican dead of 1919-1923, whose remains were buried in cemeteries such as Shanaglish and Donaghpatrick.³⁹

The appropriation of the 1916 legacy by Fianna Fáil, 1932-1948

The first Fianna Fáil government came to power in February 1932 under the sole surviving military leader of 1916, Éamon de Valera. On taking up office, the republican character of the party was immediately expressed with the release of 97 Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners and the suspension of the Public Safety Act brought in under the previous government.⁴⁰ Under de Valera, there was a surge in commemorative activity, and the first steps to erect a 1916 memorial in the GPO was taken only a year after he came to power, while ‘busts of Patrick Pearse, Cathal Brugha and Austin Stack were also commissioned’.⁴¹ Significantly, however, de Valera ensured as well that the busts of Collins and Griffiths, commissioned by the previous government, were also completed.⁴² Furthermore, he sanctioned public access to the graves of the executed leaders at Arbour Hill, which had been prohibited by the previous government and initiated a new commemoration on the date of the first execution of the leaders of 1916.⁴³ While numerous projects were undertaken in Galway during this period, they were all initiatives prompted by local veterans.

Patrick Pearse became the first focus of attention among those wishing to pay tribute to the executed martyrs of 1916. Interest was expressed as early as 1922 when it was suggested that a ‘Pearse Memorial College’ should be built in Ros Muc, where he had a holiday cottage. This choice was reflective of Pearse’s chosen profession of educator and his love of the Irish language. The plans only began to take shape in 1932, however, when the country had recovered some stability after the Civil War. A new committee was formed locally which publicly lamented the hasty state in which the cottage had been rebuilt and issued a determined plea for funds to allow them to transform the cottage and surroundings in line with

Pearse's original vision, and to be something 'worthy' of his memory. His sister Mary-Bridget readily agreed to be the patron of the project and only four months later it was revealed that donations had been so plentiful that the college would be able to open that summer.⁴⁴ Contributions were even forthcoming from public representatives such as Domhnall Ó Buachalla, An Seanaschal, (Governor General) of the Free State. Ó Buachalla provided £25 to the project on the condition that students attending the college undertook not to speak English while there – a rule which was later adopted by the committee.⁴⁵ The project was given a further boost when the Department of Education agreed to ratify the Irish certificates that would be awarded to the students who sat the language exams held by the college.⁴⁶ Support for the college was immediately evident and an estimated 5,000 people attended a Féis that was held there in August. In pursuance of Pearse's wish that 'Ireland not only be free but Gaelic, not only Gaelic but free', it was happily observed after the event that no 'English could be heard in Rosmuc ... [and] that nowhere in Ireland was there less English spoken'.⁴⁷

With the 'true adherents' to the ideologies of 1916 now in power, the Fianna Fáil government took the decision to bring commemorations around the country under their control. The stated purpose of this endeavour was to amalgamate local events scattered across a broad geographical spectrum into a single commemorative event in each county. The result was a gathering of more than 8,000 people at the New Cemetery in Bohermore, Galway city in 1932. Ironically, this cemetery was also the final resting place of the sole casualty of Galway's Rising, RIC Constable Patrick Whelan. With participants from Clifden, Oughterard, Carraroe, Moycullen, Claregalway, Castlegar, Spiddal, Barna and other areas, it was described as 'the most striking demonstration seen in Galway in a long time'.⁴⁸ The following year de Valera repeated the measure and announced that 'only one Easter Week Commemoration [would] be held in each county'.⁴⁹ Galway city was once again chosen as the location for the event, which saw an increase in numbers attending, with almost 10,000 people taking part. While such participation levels reflected the increase in republican sentiment under the rise of the Fianna Fáil government, 'the threat of extremism ... was quite real and the atmosphere was tense'.⁵⁰ As a result, de Valera established an Army Volunteer Reserve specifically to divert recruitment from the IRA.⁵¹ By 1934, nationalist sentiment had reached such a pitch in Galway that Eyre Square was decorated for the Easter Commemorations with streamers and banners hung from the windows. The banners re-counted Irish revolutions dating back to 1798 and bore the slogan 'We Shall Rise Again – Uphold the Republic'.⁵²

After some particularly 'grisly murders' (including those of a retired Royal Navy Officer, Vice-Admiral Henry Boyle Townshend Somerville at his home in Cork and Richard More O'Ferrall, the son of a land agent in Co. Longford), the IRA,

which de Valera had been trying to curb using the military tribunals introduced by the previous Cumann na nGaedheal government, was finally 'declared an unlawful organisation' in June 1936.⁵³ Significantly, only a couple of months before, in a bid to distance themselves from Fianna Fáil, a clear line of distinction had been drawn in Galway between the Fianna Fáil organisers of the 20th anniversary commemorations and the local IRA who were organising separate partisan events. Ultimately, the official Fianna Fáil event assembled in Eyre Square and marched through the main street towards the New Cemetery in Bohernmore. Marking it out from previous years, however, was the scale of the procession and the impressive military style parade provided by the Local Volunteer Force, complete with the salute being taken by Mr Tomás O' Deirg, the Minister for Education.⁵⁴

A further distinguishing characteristic of the 1936 commemorations was the broadening of the programme of events. For the first time, national attention was drawn to the contribution made by the provinces. The national broadcaster, Radio Éireann, transmitted a series of interviews relating to the Rising, including a 20-minute programme focusing on the events in Galway and Wexford. Interviewed by Mrs McEnri, Alf Monaghan (Ailbhe Ó Monacháin) was given the opportunity to bring to the nation a personal account of what had taken place in Galway. Proudly describing Galway as 'one of the best organised counties in Ireland' and acknowledging that it was 'largely due to the organising ability of the late Liam Mellows', Monaghan recognised the contribution made by both the rank and file and the senior officers. After highlighting the week's events, he ended his recollections by noting that 'all the men had been brave and cheerful in the face of danger ... [and that] very few of them were found by the British'.⁵⁵ This was a slightly misleading statement, given that the confidential police records for May 1916 note that over 400 rebels were arrested across Galway; however, Mellows, Monaghan and a few other senior figures did manage to evade arrest.⁵⁶

This series of interviews recalling the events of Easter Week was indicative of the growing realisation of the importance of preserving people's personal memories of the Rising. Twenty years had already passed and many experiences were inevitably silenced forever among those who did not survive the revolutionary period. After the radio interview, Alf Monaghan, mindful of the need for accuracy, wrote to *The Irish Independent* to rectify an error that he believed he had made during the broadcast relating to the identity of dispatchers. Monaghan also took the opportunity to publicise his ongoing efforts to correctly identify every man from Galway who had mobilised in 1916. He beseeched the captains of the Galway companies to send him the names of all the men under their command, as he 'had not yet got this information fully'.⁵⁷ The men of Galway were either slow or unwilling to help in this matter, however, as Monaghan, bereft of an adequate response, was forced to write to the paper again a few weeks later. In this second

letter he indicated that he had personally written to individuals who he believed could give him the necessary details but that they ‘did not reply to [his] enquiries’. Ending his letter, Monaghan included his full postal address, presumably in the hope that further information would be forthcoming from his 1916 comrades.⁵⁸

Overall, the period under the Fianna Fáil government saw a concentrated effort to institute memorials in memory of those who led the Easter Rising. In Galway, the first local initiative recognised both the role of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in promoting the sporting heritage of the nation and its links with the Irish Volunteers in the run-up to the Rising when the Galway Gaels was renamed the Mellows GAA club in 1933.⁵⁹ Only a few years later in Athenry, it was decided to erect a graveside memorial to the Easter Rising veteran Laurence (Larry) Lardner who passed away on 21 April 1936, almost two decades after the historic event.⁶⁰ Wide-scale support for the venture was demonstrated by the establishment of a committee comprising 54 members. Most significant was its inclusive nature and its refusal to be divided by Civil War politics. Determined to pay a suitable tribute to Lardner, the committee appealed to all those ‘whose sympathies [were] Gaelic and patriotic’ to assist it in paying a suitable and deserving tribute to the man.⁶¹ By summing Lardner up as a ‘patriot, soldier and sportsman’ and confining the nationalist rhetoric to the use of ‘Gaelic’ and ‘patriotic’, the committee avoided any direct reference to specific republican perspectives and provided an open opportunity for all those who took up arms during the revolutionary period to come forward and support the project. The memorial was unveiled the following year by Frank Fahy, Ceann Comhairle (Speaker of Dáil), and attracted such crowds that it was reported that ‘thousands’ attended the event. The memorial took the form of a Celtic cut-stone cross which was erected in the new cemetery in Athenry where Lardner was buried.

Only a month later, another prominent veteran, Thomas Ruane, also passed away. Ruane was one of the Claregalway Company of Volunteers involved in the shootout at Carnmore Cross on Wednesday 26th April 1916 when RIC Constable Patrick Whelan was shot and killed. Once again, a memorial cross was chosen as the most suitable form of remembrance, and it was subsequently



Figure 21.1 A Side view of the Thomas Ruane memorial, Claregalway Cemetery, Co. Galway
Source: Shirley Wrynn

unveiled at Claregalway cemetery on 8 September 1940, with 60 IRA veterans and 180 members of the Local Security Force in attendance, alongside Ruane's fellow comrades, Stephen Jordan and Seán Brodrick.⁶² The limestone cross was engraved in both Irish and English and specifically identified Ruane as 'Old IRA'.⁶³ The significance of the Rising was emphasised with an added inscription at the side of the cross, comprising of two crossed rifles and the year '1916' (Figure 1).⁶⁴

The Silver Jubilee of the Rising, 1941

On Easter Sunday 1941 a large military parade took place in Dublin showcasing the speculative military capabilities of the resilient small island in the face of a Europe embroiled in World War II. However, as Ferriter has noted, de Valera was careful to avoid overdoing the 'republican celebrations', not just because of World War II, but due to the 'IRA bombing campaign in Britain'.⁶⁵ While the might of the Dublin display was recorded as 'one of the most spectacular national ceremonies ever held in the country', both political and economic dissatisfaction cast a shadow over the proceedings.⁶⁶ However, McCarthy has noted that, notwithstanding the disappointments expressed at the 'various shortcomings since the achievement of independence', the decision by de Valera to proceed with a 'large-scale military parade' was 'a significant commemorative gesture'.⁶⁷

A more modest affair took place in Galway. Athenry, as an important hub of activity in the lead-up to the Rising, was the chosen location for the main commemorative event. While on a smaller scale than in Dublin, those participating were no less proud. An estimated 40 men, including Seán Brodrick and Stephen Jordan, were bedecked with recently issued 1916 medals. Proceedings began with Rev. Father Cassin celebrating a Mass which was imbued with military resonance, as arms were presented and 'trumpeters sounded the reveille'. Afterwards, a parade marched through the streets of Athenry comprising 350 Local Defence Forces and 150 Local Security Forces.⁶⁸ In Galway city the following night, the Galway branch of the Gaelic League held a céilidhe in the Commercial Boat Club which was 'specially decorated' to commemorate the event.⁶⁹

The period after the Silver Jubilee commemoration also saw an increase in the amount of new monuments in honour of those that died during the revolutionary period. The first instance came in 1942 when the Oranmore Company, who were heavily involved in the Rising, proposed to commemorate their fallen comrade Commandant Joseph Howley, who died after being shot during an ambush near Broadstone Railway Station (now Bus Éireann headquarters) in Dublin in December 1920.⁷⁰ While a lengthy endeavour, the project nonetheless met with



Figure 21.2 Statue of Joseph Howley, Oranmore, Co. Galway
Source: Shirley Wrynn

full public support and was unveiled on 21 December 1947 by Mr Frank Fahy TD (Figure 2).⁷¹ This project was the first in a new phase of initiatives to increase the public memorials in Galway in tribute to fallen comrades.

During the years 1942-1947, when the Howley monument was in planning, Galway lost five of its most prominent nationalist figures. George Nicolls, Fr Harry J. Feeney, Eamon Corbett, Pádraig Ó Máille and Tom Kenny, all veterans of the 1916 Easter Rising, died.⁷² The significance of such losses in the decades following a revolution has been noted by Kenneth E. Foote and Moaz Azaryahu who have identified the first fifty years after a major historical event as being the most critical in the chronology of the memorialisation process, as thereafter ‘direct witnesses begin to die ... and efforts to erect memorials crescendo as the last survivors seek to bear final witness for future generations.’⁷³ This is precisely what came to pass in Galway. Only in the run up to the 30th anniversary of the Rising were the first tentative steps taken to remember the role played by the leader of the 1916 Rising in Galway, when the ‘Old Comrades IRA’ held a meeting in Clarinbridge where it was decided to erect a memorial to Liam Mellows.⁷⁴ The project, however, was to become a long protracted process which officially began in March 1946 when Mattie Neilan, a fellow veteran of Mellows and chairman of the Mellows Memorial Committee, made a public appeal for funds to support the endeavour.⁷⁵ Several other 1916 veterans were also members of the committee, including Brian Molloy,

Peter Howley, James Barrett, John Fleming, Michael Athy and Pádraig Ó Fathaigh.⁷⁶ The early efforts were given a boost with the anonymous donation of £20 by ‘an admirer of Captain Mellows’.⁷⁷

The final and most ambitious project initiated on the part of the Fianna Fáil government was a countrywide mission to preserve the national history of the revolutionary period. They thus provided a framework within which the personal testimony of veterans of the struggle for independence could be officially recorded. The Bureau of Military History was set up by the Minister for Defence on 1 January 1947, with the express aim to ‘assemble and coordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the movement for Independence from the formation of the Irish Volunteers on 25 November 1913 to the 11 July 1921’. The project would have to be completed under a different government, however, as Fianna Fáil failed in their quest to return to office the following year.

Remembering rebel heroes, 1948-1957

The decade following the establishment of the first Interparty government in 1948 saw the dynamic of the political landscape change greatly in Ireland. In stark contrast to the lengthy periods in government held by Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil for the previous twenty-five years, the decade beginning in 1948 was characterised by significantly shorter periods of office. Nonetheless, the extensive project initiated under the previous Fianna Fáil government, The Bureau of Military History, would continue to be administered by successive governments. Within 18 months of being established, the Bureau turned its attention to Galway and placed a public notice in the local press inviting veterans to contribute oral and written evidence relating to the 1916 Easter Rising or the War of Independence, along with any original documents including:

*signed letters, notes, memoirs, correspondence, operation and mobilisation orders, roll books and membership cards [as well as] documents issued by the British authorities, orders and correspondence issued by the British authorities to Local Government bodies, posters or notices by the British Forces.*⁷⁸

Similar to the Military Service Pensions Collection, the Bureau would eventually become an invaluable archive of memories of the revolutionary period. However, there would be a couple of noteworthy distinctions. Only a fraction of people who applied for pensions contributed Witness Statements to the Bureau. Furthermore, those who did contribute, were separated from the event by a far greater lapse of time, and, finally, the Witness Statements did not go through a vigorous

assessment board as in the case of the pension applications.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, 1,773 Witness Statements were taken by the Bureau during the decade 1947-1957, and of these a total of 82 statements (4.62%) focused primarily on events in Galway during Easter week 1916. The project fell victim to lingering political hostilities, however, which resulted in some notable omissions. One example which affected the depth of material relating to Galway was the case of Elizabeth O'Farrell, who brought a mobilisation order from Dublin to Galway. O'Farrell declined to submit a statement due to her residual political dissatisfaction that 'all governments since 1921 had betrayed the republic'.⁸⁰

It was the distance of time since 1916 that was to have the greatest effect on the quest to record the memories of Galway veterans. While the passage of time has been acknowledged by historians as having an effect on the accuracy of recorded memory, in Galway it was to have an additional impact. In the 30 years since the Rising, several prominent figures, many of whom played additional roles in the War of Independence and the establishment of the first Dáil, had already passed away. Men such as Liam Mellows, George Nicolls, Larry Lardner, Pádraig Ó Máille, Tom Kenny and Fr Harry Feeney are all examples of key players who did not live long enough to contribute statements. Furthermore, as senior figures, their absence resulted in the loss of important information about the events which shaped the period. Another point worthy of note is that only two Galway women submitted Witness Statements relating to Easter 1916 and only one of these, Bridgid Breathneach (Walsh), was at Moyode with Mellows. This was despite the fact that in 1917 Mellows recorded with pride that at least 30 members of Cumann na mBan had mobilised during Easter Week.⁸¹ Given that Alf Monaghan had earlier encountered problems in 1948 in securing the cooperation of Galway veterans, it is possible that the low participation rates from both men and women was indicative of a certain degree of apathy or political disaffection.⁸² Equally, given that there were a much higher number of Galway veterans who submitted pension applications, it is possible that the difficult and protracted process that many encountered negatively impacted on their willingness to engage in another state-organised process.

The second significant project during this period was the ongoing quest to honour the memory of Liam Mellows. By 1948, public fundraising had gathered significant pace and was further enriched by American donations, demonstrating the strong alliances established by Mellows during his time in exile after the Rising. Furthermore, it was the American donors who decided on both the location and form of the memorial when the New York Committee wrote a letter to the Galway committee suggesting that 'the memorial should be erected in Galway city' and should take the form of a statue on a pedestal with an accompanying inscription in Irish and English. The suggestion was later approved in Galway by a vote of

eleven to five.⁸³ At subsequent meetings in Galway, further requests were made to limit the inscription to Irish only. The issue of the language had to be temporarily side-stepped, however, as a more pressing matter arose when it was discovered that the monument was going to be more costly than previously believed. Thus, further calls for public contributions were necessary to ensure that ‘a monument worthy of their beloved 1916 leader [would] be erected in the capital city of Connacht’.⁸⁴

By 1953 the Mellows memorial project had been in active development for seven years with no end date in sight and an exasperated committee beseeched the sculptor Dómnall Ó Murchadha to provide a completion date for the monument.⁸⁵ Furthermore, prominent figures such as Sarah Mellows (mother of Liam) and Seán Brodrick (Brigade Quarter Master during Galway’s Rising) had since died.⁸⁶ Thus, the number of people with a connection to the Rising continued to be reduced annually. The absence of a completed sculpture now appeared to be the only significant impediment to the conclusion of the project. The site at Eyre Square had been secured free of charge from Galway Corporation, and over £1,500 pounds had been raised, principally by the 1916 comrades-in-arms of Mellows.⁸⁷ Despite pushing for a completion date for Easter 1953, another year would pass before a date was announced. In September 1954, St Patrick’s Day 1955 was agreed as the date for the unveiling.⁸⁸ Complications surrounding the new location at Eyre Square resulted in further delays, however, and it was another two years before it was announced that the statue would be unveiled at Easter 1957.⁸⁹

Despite this, the project continued to be overshadowed by additional setbacks. Although Galway County Council granted an additional £2,000 in funding towards the provision of an island surrounding the statue, another crisis arose when it was realised that no provision had been made to light the memorial.⁹⁰ Galway Corporation intervened and, despite objections by some of its members, it indicated its willingness to accept responsibility for the lighting.⁹¹ As a result of these additional delays and complications, it was inevitable that Easter 1957 passed without occasion and a new date of 18 August 1957 had to be agreed upon for the formal unveiling.⁹² Ultimately, the event attracted wide-scale public support with newspaper reports detailing how Eyre Square was ‘thronged’ with people while many buildings flew flags for the occasion and coloured souvenir pictures were also commissioned for the event.⁹³ Significantly, representation from the Old IRA was not limited to the Galway Brigade but also included men from Dublin (Four Courts Garrison), Cork, Limerick and Wexford, as well as the Munster Fianna and women of the Cumann na mBan.⁹⁴

Despite the circumstances surrounding Mellows’ death, there appears to have been a deliberate effort on both sides of the political divide to unite in honouring his memory. Thus, in an effort to avoid resurrecting Civil War politics, it was his

role as 1916 leader which was the focus of the unveiling ceremony. This fact was acknowledged on the day by the Bishop of Galway, the Most Rev. Dr Michael Browne when he said:

It is for his great qualities as a man and a soldier that his comrades keep him in abiding memory and that they have erected this statue to him. One of the most remarkable and significant facts is that even those who differed from him when the division caused by the Treaty came in 1922, have joined in erecting this statue.⁹⁵

Bishop Browne described Mellows' death as 'one of the greatest tragedies of [the] Civil War ... [and that it was] saddening to think that he who would have gladly faced death at the hand of the invader was fated to die at the hands of brother Irishmen'.⁹⁶ At the same time, he championed the Christian spirit of the Irish nation, and their capacity to 'forgive and forget', emphasising that it was Mellows' life and his work for Irish freedom that was being commemorated, as opposed to his death.⁹⁷ This selective focus demonstrates the malleability of communal memory as outlined by Ian McBride and highlights how commemorative events are 'overlaid with contemporary preoccupations', most notably current political needs.⁹⁸ Moreover, while it has been suggested that 'the wording on monuments and in commemorative ceremonies ... [can serve] to justify and glorify war', the inscription on Mellows' statue was purposefully brief.⁹⁹ It simply identified him as the leader of the Rising in Galway and once again carefully avoided any mention of his execution by the Free State.

While the statue of Mellows (Figure 3) was the most central public monument to the leader of the Galway Rising, it was not the sole gesture to publicly honour his memory. In the decade that the project was in process, a few smaller acts of remembrance were brought to successful conclusions. A local initiative between the areas of Killeeneen, Kilcolgan and Clarinbridge, resulted in the creation of what can be called a 'territorial marker'.¹⁰⁰ This took the form of a monument located at the cross-roads at Killeeneen, identifying the historic significance of the area.¹⁰¹ A commemorative plaque was later erected at the site of the old school in Killeeneen where the men gathered in advance of the Rising.¹⁰²

J.G. Mellon has noted how urban collective memory is often manifested 'in such elements



Figure 21.3 Statue of Liam Mellows, Eyre Square, Galway
Source: Mark McCarthy

... as architecture ... and street names' and it is unsurprising that the memory of Mellows was also manifested in this fashion.¹⁰³ In a local context, personal expressions of patriotic nomenclature were visible from 1916 veterans such as Eamon Corbett TD, who named his house on Fr Griffin Road 'Mhaoil Íosa' [Mellows], while a more public expression emerged in 1950 when a new row of houses in Loughrea was named 'Liam Mellows Terrace'.¹⁰⁴ The significance of Mellows' military contribution to the fight for independence was further recognised at a national level two years later when the government decided to rename the Army Barracks at Renmore Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa in his honour.¹⁰⁵

As already noted, the contentious political nature of Mellows' death resulted in a somewhat constricted commemoration of his life, focusing on his role in the Easter Rising. However, evidence suggests that a will also existed to smooth over the politics of the past and to purposefully commemorate the entire revolutionary period. Consequently, a proposal for a memorial on O'Brien's Bridge, to honour the men and women who 'suffered for freedom from 1916-1923' was put forward. This suggestion received unanimous approval from the Mayor, Galway Corporation, the County Manager as well as the chairman of the County Council in March 1950.¹⁰⁶ The plans were detailed and precise from the outset. The Cork sculptor, Séamus Murphy, was chosen to construct an arched wrought iron gateway with additional stonework in limestone. It was envisaged that the arch would open onto a public walkway which would thereafter be known as 'Republican Walk'. As with Mellows' statue, support from America was evident with a donation of £105 from Boston.¹⁰⁷ Additional American support was secured when Hollywood film producer John Ford, whose ancestors came from Spiddal, committed to making a collection among film executives and actors in Hollywood. His efforts secured \$160 from the American actor John Wayne, \$100 from Herbert J. Yates, President of Republic Productions Inc., and \$50 from film executive J.R. Granger.¹⁰⁸ Despite this initial enthusiasm, the plans would ultimately stall and never progress past the design state, in spite of additional attempts in subsequent decades to resurrect the project.¹⁰⁹

The developing culture of commemoration in Galway was once again demonstrated the following year in Castlegar when a monument in memory of several Galway-men who took part in the fight for independence was unveiled.¹¹⁰ Ironically, the base of the new monument previously held a statue of the despised landholder Lord Dunkellin, the Earl of Clanricarde. When the British left in 1922, his statue was hastily removed from Eyre Square and dragged through the streets before being dumped in the River Corrib.¹¹¹ Noteworthy also is the fact that the Castlegar monument recorded not only men who had been killed in action, but also Fr Harry Feeney, who acted as chaplain to the Galway Volunteers during Easter Week 1916.¹¹²

The cumulative activity during the 1940s to establish public memorials to the patriot dead was equally matched by an array of commemorative projects in the wake of the Rising's 40th anniversary in 1956. Unsurprisingly, in Dublin 'big crowds packed the streets' for the commemorations, while in Galway a much smaller, but proportionally significant number provided evidence of equal fervour.¹¹³ Coverage in *The Tuam Herald* noted how over 200 survivors, all wearing service medals 'form[ed] up in front of the ruined castle' at Moyode where they 'threw back the years and marched with proud step, grey beards held high ... and recall[ed] Galway's part in the glorious history of 1916'.¹¹⁴ A guard of honour was provided by the Athenry FCA under Lieutenant Frank Kilkelly, while the salute was sounded by Corporal Cassidy of Dún Uí Mhaoiliosa.¹¹⁵ Noteworthy, however, was the fact that the issue of Partition continued to weigh heavily on the Old IRA who declared that 'we the Old IRA do not advocate force or strife, but there will always be a tendency in our hearts to lend our moral support to Irishmen who are not afraid to challenge fortune in their efforts to undo Partition'.¹¹⁶

Commemorating the Rising in Galway in the lead-up to the Golden Jubilee, 1958–65

While annual commemorative events continued to be held in Galway at historic sites such as Moyode and Limepark and were most typically attended by Old IRA veterans of the Rising, the most significant act of remembrance in the years preceding the Golden Jubilee of the Easter Rising was the successful appropriation of the memory of Mellows to the national stage. In a bid to see Mellows recognised as much more than a local hero, his Old IRA comrades felt that the proper place for his motorbike 'was in [a] Military Museum'.¹¹⁷ Thus, his motorbike was presented to the National Museum in Dublin by his 1916 comrade-in-arms Commandant Peter Howley in May 1959. The bike had been kept in the Loughrea RIC Barracks until 1920, before being rescued by the local IRA and buried in the grounds of the local Mount Carmel Convent. It was later moved to the Bullaun area before being commandeered by Free State troops during the Civil War. Howley subsequently retrieved it and kept it at his home thereafter.¹¹⁸

By the early 1960s, a sense of apathy was creeping in among the younger generation and it was felt that remembering 1916 was no longer a priority for the nation. It is worth noting that this perceived lacklustre interest in remembering the patriot dead, coincided with the end of the lengthy parliamentary career of 1916 military leader, Éamon de Valera. McCarthy has noted how, under the new leadership of Seán Lemass, 'the country's confidence levels escalated ... as the country's economy was steered in a new outward-looking direction'.¹¹⁹ The increasingly enlightened

and progressive national mood permeating the 1960s could also be considered responsible for the prominent position afforded to the memory of the assassinated American President John F. Kennedy in the lead up to the Golden Jubilee. Just five months before his assassination he had been made the ninth Freeman of Galway and as such his death was experienced as a personal loss for the people of Galway.¹²⁰ Consequently, his image was chosen as the corresponding picture to accompany a mosaic portrait of Patrick Pearse in the newly-constructed Galway Cathedral.¹²¹ While the inclusion of Pearse may be explained by his posthumous status akin to that of a martyred Christian saint, the inclusion of Kennedy completely overshadowed the poignancy of the fact that the Cathedral was built on the site of the old Galway Gaol, where so many Galway Volunteers had been incarcerated in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, as well as those from the subsequent War of Independence. Despite this fact, no veteran of the Galway Rising (or subsequent conflicts from the revolutionary period) was accorded a mention or position of honour within the Cathedral, and no reference exists to the previous incarnation of the site as Galway Gaol. Therefore, unlike Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin, which 'had come to be seen as an almost living participant in the history of Ireland' and would go on to be 'reconstituted ... as an integral part of the nationalist narrative', the part played by the old Galway Gaol was effectively erased from both the national and local history and memory.¹²²

However, the veterans themselves fully intended to ensure that their comrades were appropriately remembered. Efforts began as early as November 1964, when the Old IRA took the initiative and invited the Galway TDs and Senators to a meeting where they could discuss 'ways and means for the erection of a National Monument at Limepark', the site where the rebels disbanded after the Rising.¹²³ The veterans held strong feelings that the memory of the celebrated events that had taken place there 'should be perpetuated, and that the men who assembled at Limepark should be commemorated'. Championing the historical importance of the site to future generations, Michael Carty TD suggested that the Board of Works should be approached with the suggestion of preserving the site as a national monument. Countering this suggestion, the Minister of Defence, Gerald Bartley, recalled how the houses at Mount Street bridge in Dublin 'where the heaviest fighting of the Rising occurred' had not been accorded such recognition and therefore doubted Limepark's capacity to secure such a status. As the date drew closer to the 50th Anniversary, it was not only what would be done in Galway to commemorate the actions of those who had taken part in the Rising that was of concern, but also what position Galway would secure in the national commemorations. Reflecting this, 1916 veteran Martin Newell put forward his fears to *The Connacht Tribune* that 'Galway's part in [the] stirring events [should] not ... be minimalised or passed over'.¹²⁴

Overall, the importance of the forthcoming Golden Jubilee commemoration was recognised as a meaningful occasion which should be ‘on a lavish scale in keeping with the importance of the date’. Furthermore, it would be the first time that the commemorations would be televised and as such an increased ‘self-awareness ... came from the size of the perceived audience’.¹²⁵ Writing from Dublin, the special correspondent for *The Connacht Tribune* stated:

*[The] commemoration is important to us all at home in order to worthily express what we really feel about the men of Easter Week, but it is vital in regard to Ireland’s image abroad. It is essential that it be properly and adequately done; not cheapened or vulgarised, but at the same time not so conservative and mournful that it is out of keeping with our own age. As well as being a commemoration of the dead heroes, it must of course express its joy in what has been achieved ... and have a vitality expressive of the new Ireland and her confident people.*¹²⁶

Conscious of the contentious political legacy which arose from the subsequent wars fought on the coat-tails of the Rising, and the enduring issue of Partition, the correspondent further addressed the political legacy of the Civil War and its capacity to impact on the Golden Jubilee commemorations. Identifying the resultant dichotomy, which had long since found countenance as the two main opposing political parties which continued to dominate the political landscape, he concluded his piece with the caution that:

*Old prejudices ... are hard to kill, and it is perhaps too much to expect those directly involved at one time or another to be completely objective, indeed in some cases it is a tribute to their honesty that they do not pretend to be so. But my generation and the rising generations expect simple impartiality and justice in this matter for after all it is not a Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael commemoration but a gesture from all the people at home and abroad. If it is made or allowed to become predominantly a party matter it will become a mockery.*¹²⁷

Róisín Higgins has identified the existence of a further tripartite set of narratives relating to 1916 on the island of Ireland – those of republicans, northern nationalists and unionists - and has suggested that the existence of such opposing perspectives ensured that the ‘Irish State was never in complete control of the meaning of the jubilee commemoration’. Consequently, political triumphalism was replaced with a theme of modernisation and progression. Thus ‘the message of the official commemoration was one of looking to the future’.¹²⁸ In the 50 years since the Rising, Ireland had proved itself capable of successful self-government and in the years immediately preceding 1966 had even enjoyed improved relations with Britain. Britain itself magnanimously capitalised on the occasion to return

the Green flag that had flown over the GPO during Easter week.¹²⁹ Furthermore, the Taoiseach Seán Lemass had also made tentative steps to improve relations with Northern Ireland by 'open[ing] up communications with his northern counterpart Terence O'Neill'.¹³⁰ In light of such developments it was crucial to Lemass that the 'commemoration would not interfere, or at least would interfere as little as possible, with the improved relations with Britain and Northern Ireland'.¹³¹ Purposefully dealing with the possibility of lingering divisions at home, Lemass also 'expressed the hope that all causes of disagreement would be set aside for the duration of the jubilee celebrations'.¹³² At a local level, a similar sentiment was voiced in an editorial in *The Connacht Tribune*:

*If [the] bitterness is not to be wiped out and replaced by a spirit of unity in the organisation of the commemoration, it would be better if Galway, who had so much ties with the 1916 Rebellion to remember with pride, refrained from marring the great occasion with its disunity ... For this occasion at least they should lay aside their differences and march together united in tribute. Only such a tribute would be a worthy one.*¹³³

Political concerns aside, Galway's fears that it would not form part of the national commemorations was alleviated when it was announced that representations from Galway would be included in the principal military ceremonies in the capital, and that Galway was designated as one of only twelve official locations outside of Dublin which would host an official commemoration. Despite this, it was noted with some reproach that there was an 'over-concentration of the celebrations in Dublin'.¹³⁴ Paradoxically, despite this criticism, Galway was relatively slow when it came to organising its own programme, and it was not until late October 1965 that the organisation committee was announced.¹³⁵

Higgins has observed how 'commemorations are important vehicles through which to educate the nation' and consequently a 'strong educational element ... [reflective] of the personal histories of the signatories' formed part of the dedicatory gestures for the Golden Jubilee anniversary commemorations. Seven scholarships to commemorate the signatories of the Proclamation of Independence were announced as part of the national commemorations.¹³⁶ Similarly, at a local level, the County Galway Vocational Education Committee announced its intention to hold an Irish essay competition amongst its students as part of the national commemoration ceremonies, and assigned half of the prize money to pupils in the Gaeltacht.¹³⁷ Likewise, the Connacht GAA announced its intention to provide five scholarships to the western Gaeltacht which would 'commence in this commemorative year of the 1916 Rising'.¹³⁸ Finally, the Galway Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored an Irish language essay competition as its contribution to the anniversary commemorations.¹³⁹ The expression of national identity

through cultural and artistic tributes also formed part of the national ceremonial programme with competitions in literature, music and art announced. These offered lucrative prizes ranging from £25 for the children's essay competition to £750 first prize for painting and sculpture.¹⁴⁰ The Taoiseach led by example and penned his memories of the Rising. These were published in the Jesuit journal, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Journal*.¹⁴¹ Paradoxically, his daughter revealed many decades later that he 'never talked about' his role in 1916 at home'.¹⁴²

Locally, efforts were made by local dramatic societies and theatre companies to schedule performances of patriotic plays. An Taibhdhearc Theatre Company in Galway city produced 'Easter 1916 Remembers', while the Clifden, Mountbellew and Moylough dramatic societies also put on patriotic dramas.¹⁴³ As Easter Week 1966 approached, there was sufficient cultural and historic interest in the Rising for the local newspaper to advertise its forthcoming four-part supplement on the history of the Rising and advised its readers in advance to 'be sure to order your copy'.¹⁴⁴

Individual expressions of dissatisfaction arose in the public domain among some 1916 veterans. There was, for example, concern that a distinction had not been made between veterans who were out in 1916 and those who were active in later periods.¹⁴⁵ In the correspondence section of *The Connacht Tribune*, a man identifying himself only as 'Moyode Man' questioned the 'cheek' of Loughrea to hold 1916 celebrations given that 'Loughrea and its men had let Mellows down'. He then went on to suggest that they 'keep out of it as they did in 1916'.¹⁴⁶ A fortnight later, a piqued citizen of Loughrea, writing under the pseudonym 'Loughrea Man', offered a measured but unwavering defence of Loughrea. The noteworthy case of Brendan Donelan, who had fought and died in the Dublin Rising, was cited as the primary example of Loughrea's patriotism while four other Loughrea men and one woman were also noted as having fought in Dublin. Acknowledging the various shades of nationalism in existence before the Rising, the writer also sought to situate the patriotic choices of the Loughrea men into the broader political context of the times. As such, he defended the men of Loughrea who fought in World War I, who were 'told that they were going to fight for the freedom of small nations, their own included' and, most significantly, that it was 'England [that] broke that pledge'. Noteworthy also was the repugnance shown by 'Loughrea man' at the notion of a commemorative parade, which he felt was only 'something where the living can show off their vainglory and pride'. A more suitable form of commemoration, he felt, would be a memorial mass for those who died.¹⁴⁷ It is also interesting to note that Loughrea had purposefully sought to avoid such clashes and had previously recommended that the local commemorations should be organised on a 'non-political and non-sectarian basis'.¹⁴⁸

The Golden Jubilee, 1966

The Golden Jubilee of the Easter Rising was a seminal event which was commemorated on a large scale by the national government. As an important anniversary it provided an opportunity not only to remember and memorialise, but also to celebrate the achievements of the fledgling state. In recognition of this, the government received many notable messages of congratulations from the leaders of foreign powers, including India, the USA, Spain, Monaco and the USSR.¹⁴⁹

Mirroring the national programme, the official commemorative plan for Galway was comprehensive and extended over a full week. Nationally, wide-reaching involvement was expected and as such, 'citizens were encouraged ... to publically celebrate what had been achieved' in 1916.¹⁵⁰ A festive atmosphere was widely encouraged and to facilitate this, Galway Corporation authorised a sum of £200 to decorate the route of the parade in Galway. The corporation also 'appealed to the public to make an extra effort by decorating their own homes, particularly on the parade route'.¹⁵¹ A variety of events were planned which ensured participation by a broad section of society, from school children to politicians to celebrities. Earlier fears were realised, however, when it was learned that the Army Band of the Western Command (No. 4 Army Band) would not be made available for the commemorations in Galway.¹⁵² This decision created such resentment that the issue was raised in the Dáil by Galway's Fine Gael TDs, John Donnellan and Fintan Coogan, who demanded an explanation from the Minister for Defence, John Hilliard. Prioritising the commemorations in Dublin, the minister simply stated that as 'the Band of the Western Command will be required for the ceremonies in Dublin on Easter Sunday, it will not be possible to make it available for the parade in Galway on that date'. Objecting further, Donnellan queried, 'is it not rather unfair that what belongs to Galway is not left in Galway for this Easter Sunday?'¹⁵³ The only solution forthcoming was the offer of the pipe band from Dún Chostium, Athlone, which was later accepted.¹⁵⁴ The decision on the part of the government to incorporate a regional presence at the Dublin commemorations was probably an effort to acknowledge on an equal footing the contribution made by the provinces in 1916. This was further confirmed by the fact that a platform was erected outside the GPO for 900 survivors of the 1916 Rising, including 166 veterans from Galway, 79 from Wexford and 76 from other parts of the country.¹⁵⁵

The Galway ceremonies opened with the unveiling of a memorial in the grounds of the army barracks in Renmore. The structure consisted of a four-foot-high Connemara granite pillar with a perpetual flame lit at the base. The Gaelic inscription was dedicated to all those who had died in the fight for Irish freedom. The principal commemorative parade in Galway which marched to Eyre Square on Easter Sunday was reported as being 'the largest and most representative parade

... in modern times'.¹⁵⁶ While survivors of the Rising in Dublin were afforded positions of prominence at proceedings in the capital, Galway survivors were similarly honoured with 'pride of place given to veterans of the Rising'. The parade concluded in the vicinity of Mellows statue in Eyre Square, where the Proclamation was read by renowned local actress Siobhán McKenna, while Rt. Rev. Monsignor T. Fahy delivered an oration in Irish.¹⁵⁷

A conscious decision was made at a national level to make the Golden Jubilee relevant to the younger generation and as such a Children's Day formed part of the official programme.¹⁵⁸ A special holiday was declared for 22 April to facilitate school children attending events and a framed copy of the Proclamation and the Tricolour were issued to each school.¹⁵⁹ In addition to the principal city celebrations held in Galway on Easter Sunday, a special mass and youth parade of 800 children, led by the St Patrick's Boys' School Band, were held on the preceding Friday. Despite this display of enthusiastic patriotism on the part of the schools, Jane Leonard has noted that few schools went so far as to feature 'displays honouring past pupils' who had served during 1916.¹⁶⁰ Proceedings came to a close in Galway at the end of the week, on Saturday, when a 21 gun salute was discharged at South Park by the 4th Battery 5th Field Regiment from Dún Uí Mhaoiliosa.¹⁶¹

When Galway city was officially designated as one of the 12 provincial centres to commemorate the jubilee, the decision was initially accepted by the County Galway Old IRA.¹⁶² However, at a subsequent meeting of the 1916 Commemoration Committee, delegates from Athenry stressed the significance of the 'Athenry area as the centre of the Galway Rising under Liam Mellows'. As a result, a decision was made to hold an additional commemorative event there, necessitating the establishment of a sub-committee to organise an Athenry event 'in conjunction with the Galway city commemoration'.¹⁶³ Unsurprisingly, other areas which saw action during the fateful week, such as Oranmore and Limepark, also went on to organise events. Outside Dublin, Galway, which hosted 16 events, was second only to Cork regarding the total number of events organised.¹⁶⁴

Proceedings in Athenry were organised for Monday, the day after the main military parade in Galway city. Mass was followed by a veterans' parade through the streets which was headed by a combination of the local national school band and the St Brendan's Boys Band from Loughrea. Unlike Dublin, where 'no monuments to the event or its leaders were unveiled', Athenry unveiled a bronze bust of Liam Mellows mounted on a limestone pedestal and base in the grounds of the Athenry Boys National School, Knockaunglass.¹⁶⁵ By situating the memorial in the grounds of a national school it was intended to 'remind the younger generation of the ideals of the Easter Rising in Galway'.¹⁶⁶ The sculptor, Dómhnaill Ó Murchadha, was also responsible for the statue of Mellows previously unveiled in Eyre Square in 1957.

Monsignor Fahy spoke at the event and stressed that, if Galway had not come out, the Rising would have failed to be a national event.¹⁶⁷

Areas such as Connemara, Headford, Aughrim and Clifden also held small-scale civic and religious ceremonies. Additionally, the unveiling of a memorial specifically dedicated to the Volunteers who rose in 1916 formed part of the programme of events in Tuam.¹⁶⁸ In Oranmore, veterans marched to the statue of 1916 veteran Joe Howley, where the established practice of reading the Proclamation was once again performed. In Limepark, a plaque was unveiled by Very Rev. J. Larkin at the



Figure 21.4 Monument unveiled in 1966 at Limepark House, Peterswell, Co. Galway
Source: Mark McCarthy

house where the rebels had disbanded at the end of the Galway campaign (Figure 4). Departing from the often imparted commemorative message that ‘patriotism meant dying in war’, Rev. Larkin espoused a more practical definition. Reflecting the economic aspirations of the 1960s he called on the youth to be patriots ‘who did their work well for Ireland ... who spoke Irish and ... who bought Irish’.¹⁶⁹ The occasion was nonetheless marred with violence when the plaque narrowly escaped being destroyed by explosives. The attempted bombing was inadvertently foiled by the presence of Kathleen Howley, who was making last-minute preparations for the unveiling later that day. As a result, the perpetrators detonated the explosives at a distance greater than originally planned and only succeeded

in damaging the gate pillar. The attack was widely condemned by those attending the ceremony and a month later, at a meeting of the Gort battalion of the Old IRA, ‘the cowardly attempt’ was further condemned and dismay was expressed that ‘any man would stoop so low as to dishonour the men of 1916’.¹⁷⁰

Despite the public squabble that was previously played out in the local press, Loughrea held a large-scale ceremony which was attended by an estimated 5,000 people. Perhaps to compensate for the lack of direct links to action during 1916, the ceremonies were expanded to encompass all those who fought for Irish Independence. Ballinasloe also held a large-scale commemoration and hosted one of the largest programmes of events outside of Galway city, involving a three-day festival of events. The commemoration was later described as ‘the

most elaborate and impressive ever in the town' with an estimated 1,000 people in attendance.

McCarthy has observed how 'Ireland's rural traditions were also underlined during the course of the commemorations' when the agricultural college on the outskirts of Athenry town (which served as the first base camp for Mellows and his troops during the Rising) was renamed Mellows College.¹⁷¹ The suggestion was first raised by 1916 veteran Martin Newell, who served under Mellows. Newell advocated that the timing of the opening of a new wing to the college would provide 'the ideal occasion to commemorate those historic events, forever to be associated with that building, and the noble part played in Easter Week by many gallant men and women from Athenry and surrounding districts'.¹⁷² Consequently, as part of the Golden Jubilee commemoration the 'Mellows Agricultural College' was opened by the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr Charles Haughey, on 14 April 1966. Speaking at the unveiling of a plaque, the minister highlighted the pertinence of the occasion given the important contribution made by Galway men of 'farming stock' who fought for their country. Moreover, he felt that men working the land today owed a debt to the men of 1916. The paucity of documentary evidence, however, possibly resulted in the overestimation of historical fact. Haughey championed the 'magnificent' effort of Galway in 1916 before enthusiastically venturing that 'over 1,000 answered the call in Galway' which he felt compared favourably to the estimated '1,600' in Dublin.¹⁷³

The Golden Jubilee commemorations also provided the opportunity for the citizens to remember another man from Galway who played a prominent role in the Dublin Rising, namely Éamonn Ceannt who led the rebels in the South Dublin Union and was also one of the signatories of the Proclamation of Independence. Galway veteran Martin Newell (who lived in Liam Mellows Terrace in Loughrea), once again put pen to paper and wrote to a local newspaper in an effort to ensure that adequate recognition be bestowed on Ceannt and he suggested Glenamaddy, which he erroneously identified as the birthplace of Ceannt, as a suitable location for a commemorative service.¹⁷⁴ In fact, Ceannt was born in nearby Ballymoe, in 1881. Newell's error prompted a number of responses in the subsequent weeks in the interest of preventing historical inaccuracy. The mistake also caused 'consternation amongst committee members' in Ballymoe who had 'been quietly making plans for the Commemoration'.¹⁷⁵ A full month after Newell's letter, the matter was irrefutably solved by Joseph P. O'Shaughnessy of Ballymoe, who pointed out that 'Ballymoe' was clearly identified on Ceannt's birth certificate as the place of birth.¹⁷⁶ On 8 May 1966, a commemorative plaque was unveiled at the RIC barracks in Ballymoe, the birthplace of Ceannt, by President Éamon de Valera. The date chosen, 8 May, was imbued with added significance as it was the 50th anniversary of the execution of Ceannt.

Ceannt was also accorded his rightful place on the national stage, when as part of the countrywide commemoration his name was included in those chosen for the re-branding of the country's main railway stations. Fifteen stations were renamed after those executed in the aftermath of the Rising. Being in the county of his birth, the main railway station in Galway city was renamed Ceannt Station. While the decision to rename the stations was taken at a national level, the importance of local input was recognised and, therefore, each station made its own arrangements for the erection of the new name-plates which would act as 'permanent reminders'.¹⁷⁷ The station in Galway was officially renamed on 22 May 1966, when the plaque in English and Irish was unveiled at a 'simple ceremony' by the Mayor of Galway, Mr Brendan Holland. Linking Ceannt's interest in the Irish language and the geographical proximity of the Galway Gaeltacht, the Mayor also observed that 'no other railway station in the country heard as much Irish spoken as the Galway station and so it was most appropriate that it should be named after Éamonn Ceannt'.¹⁷⁸

Conclusion

The lack of rebel casualties in Galway during the 1916 Rising played a significant role in determining how the Rising would be remembered and commemorated in the county. While initially the west looked to the capital and revered the executed leaders of the Rising, the subsequent expansion of the fight for independence generated local martyrs and provided a more regional focus that required local memorialisation and commemoration. Significantly, despite a complex legacy, Liam Mellows became the embodiment of the Rising in Galway, with less than a handful of memorials to other local veterans. Furthermore, despite the political nature of his death, sufficient regard for his memory ensured that he was not only memorialised in statue, but that this monument became the most visual and central piece of built heritage of the 1916 Easter Rising in Galway. However, to avoid a contentious memory evolving, it must be noted that the focus of memory remained on his role in 1916. The political nature of his death and his anti-Treaty stance was strategically avoided or 'forgotten'. Moreover, the Mellows statue in Eyre Square would become the focal point for future 1916 commemorations in Galway.

Endnotes

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2. B. Conway, '1916 in 1966', in M.P. Corcoran & P. Share (Eds), *Belongings: Sharing Identity in Modern Ireland* (IPA, Dublin, 2008), p. 139.
3. M. Ferro, *The Use and Abuse of History: Or How the Past is Taught to Children* (Routledge, London, 2003), p. 359.

4. National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI), Police Reports from Dublin Castle Records, POS. 8541, County of Galway West Riding, Monthly Confidential Report for June 1916, Part I, 1 July 1916.
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6. C. Wills, *Dublin 1916: The Siege of the GPO* (Profile Books, London, 2010), p. 118; R. Ryan *et al.*, 'Commemorating 1916', *Retrospect*, Vol. 4 (1984), p. 59.
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14. General Maxwell to Archbishop Walsh in M. McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising: Explorations of History-Making, Commemoration and Heritage in Modern Times* (Ashgate, London, 2012), pp 123-124.
15. *Connacht Tribune*, 5 May 1917 and 24 November 1917.
16. T.P. Coogan, *1916 The Easter Rising* (Phoenix, London, 2001), p. 165.
17. *Connacht Tribune*, 3 April, 1917.
18. Obituary of George Nicolls, *Connacht Tribune*, 16 May 1942; see also for a similar motion passed by Loughrea Town Commissioners, Galway County Council Archives (hereafter GCCA), Loughrea Town Commissioners, Minutes LTC1/7, 3 May 1909-8 November 1920, Minutes of Proceedings at the Monthly Meeting of the Loughrea Town Commissioners, 1 March 1920.
19. The Chairman of the Loughrea Town Commissioners, Mr M. O'Regan, gave notice of his intention to put forward a motion in September 1936 to expunge the resolution dated 8 May 1916 of Loughrea's condemnation of the 1916 Easter Rising. See GCCA, Loughrea Town Commissioners Minutes, LTC1/10, 16 March 1931 – 12 October 1936, Minutes of Proceedings at the Monthly Meeting of the Loughrea Town Commissioners, 6 July 1936, p. 429.
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- of war: a) Attack on enemy forces or position, b) Destruction of enemy property or c) Manufacture, purchase or disposal of munitions, d) Collecting of information for (a), (b) or (c) or e) Organising or training for (a), (b) or (c). See http://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MSPC/_documents/Active_Service/Active_Service_2.pdf (accessed on 2 November 2015).
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 66. *Sunday Independent*, 13 April 1941; *Tuam Herald*, 19 April 1941.
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 69. *Connacht Tribune*, 12 April 1941.
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Authors' Biographies

Anne Tierney born in Manchester, England, of Irish parents developed her interest in genealogy through researching her own family tree in Co Wicklow, dating back to the 1780s. In 2007, Anne was awarded a Galway Person of the Year Award, for bringing in focus a piece of North Galway's history. Her diligent and painstaking work tracking down information on the RAF crew who died when their plane crashed near Lavally, Tuam in 1943 led her to making contact with the men's families. Anne was one of the leading organisers who erected a Monument and Garden of Remembrance near to the crash site. A booklet launched at the unveiling ceremony carried a royal seal of approval from Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles.

In 2010, she was awarded the Certificate in Local History from NUI Maynooth. She has published articles in JOTS (Journal of the Old Tuam Society), Cortoon Echo 2007, 2008, and Flying Ireland April 2008 (Issue 4 Volume 4). In 2013, she was co-editor of the Journal "Glimpses of Tuam Through the Centuries", which was published as part of Tuam's celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the granting of a royal charter in 1613. She is currently President of the Old Tuam Society.

Dr Bernard Kelly is an Honorary Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Edinburgh, specialising in war and conflict in 20th century Ireland. He is the author of two books on various aspects of Ireland during the Second World and is currently working on a third.

Dr Conor McNamara is NUI Galway's 1916 Scholar in Residence, and will co-ordinate many of the events in the University's commemorative programme. Conor's research focuses on political violence and social upheaval in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland. He has written extensively on food shortage in the West of Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century, social upheaval during the revolutionary period, and the intersection between political violence and banditry. He is the author of the best selling study, *The Easter Rebellion 1916, A New Illustrated History*.

Cormac Ó Comhraí is a native of Furbo, Co. Galway, and a graduate of NUI Galway. He teaches history and Irish at second level in Galway. He has been researching the revolutionary period in the west of Ireland since he was in university and has given many public talks on aspects of local history as well as contributing to TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta documentaries. He is co-editor of 'The Men Will Talk to Me: Galway Interviews by Ernie O'Malley' as well as author of 'Sa Bhearna Bhaoil: Gaillimh 1913-23', 'Peadar Clancy: Easter Rising Hero, Bloody Sunday Martyr', 'Revolution in Connacht: A Photographic History 1913-23' and 'Ireland and the First World War: A Photographic History'.

Dr Dara Folan is a Digital Arts and Humanities PhD scholar in History at the Moore Institute, NUI Galway. His research focuses on the interaction between Irish cultural and political nationalism in the period 1893-1922. He has contributed to the Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society, to *Saothar*: journal of Irish labour History, and to the Atlas of the Irish Revolution (forthcoming).

Declan Kelly was archivist to the diocese of Clonfert for ten years and was awarded his MA in Landscape Archaeology from NUIG in 2012. He has written a history of the diocese of Clonfert and a number of works on his home town of Ballinasloe.

Eilish Kavanagh: Eilish is a recent graduate of GMIT and was conferred with a BA (Hons) in Heritage Studies; she also received a student achievement award in her final year. Since then Eilish has immersed herself into the discipline and has participated in several projects both nationally and locally. Eilish is a founder member of Kinvara Folklore Digital Archive, where she can indulge in her passion for oral histories and folklore. Kinvara Company of 1916 has become a labour of love for Eilish and something that continues to reveal new accounts of events during a historic period of Irish history albeit at a local level.

Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh is Professor Emeritus in History and former Vice-President at NUI, Galway. His numerous publications on modern Irish history include, most recently, as editor, *The GAA & Revolution in Ireland 1913-1923* (2015) and *An Píarsach agus 1916: briathar, beart agus oidhreacht* (2016).

Hedy Gibbons Lynott: Chairperson of Clarinbridge Heritage Group, collects oral histories and folklore. A published writer, her fiction and creative non-fiction has won literary prizes, with essays regularly broadcast on national radio. Her play about Clarinbridge's involvement in the 1916 Rebellion was recently produced at local and national events.

Jim Herlihy is a retired member of An Garda Síochána with 36 years in the service. He has been involved in genealogical research for over 40 years and is a founder member of the Garda Síochána Historical Society.

He has written six books:

A history of the Royal Irish Constabulary;

A history of the Dublin Metropolitan Police;

A Complete Alphabetical List of all members of the RIC;

A Complete Alphabetical List of all members of the DMP;

A Biographical Dictionary of all Officers of the RIC;

A biography of the Macroom born Poet, Patriot & Orator, Peter Golden.

Jim is a member of the RIC & DMP Commemoration Committee which remembers all Irish policemen killed in the line of duty before the foundation

of the Irish Free State in 1922. The revised edition of his first book is being reprinted at the moment and will be available later this month.

<http://www.fourcourtspress.ie/books/2016/the-royal-irish-constabulary/>

Dr John Cunningham is a Lecturer in History at NUI Galway, a former editor of *Saothar: Journal of Irish Labour History*, and author of several books, including 'A town tormented by the sea: Galway, 1790-1914' (2004). He is writing a biography of Tom Glynn (1881-1934), an Australian labour radical born in Gurteen, Co. Galway.

Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill is a native of Clifden and the author of several books and numerous articles on the history of West County Galway. Her work is based principally on primary sources, from public archives and private collections. In recognition of her contribution to the heritage of the county, she has received two Heritage Awards from Galway County Council and an honorary Master of Arts degree from NUI Galway. Kathleen lectures frequently to local history societies and other groups throughout the country.

Leona Armstrong is a native of Clarinbridge who has just completed her BA Arts (Joint Honours) degree majoring in History and Sociology from University of Limerick. Her final year project was titled 'The Forgotten Voice of Killeeneen Cumann na mBan' and was completed this year and awarded the Brian Faloon Prize from University of Limerick. Leona is passionate about history especially modern Irish history from 1900 onwards including the struggle for Irish freedom and the role in which women played. As well as having a passion for Irish history she also enjoys wider world history having completed a film project on Warsaw Ghetto and a European Public History blog last year.

Dr Mark McCarthy is Lecturer and Programme Chair in Heritage Studies at the Department of Heritage and Tourism, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. His book, *Ireland's 1916 Rising: Explorations of History-Making, Commemoration & Heritage in Modern Times* (Ashgate, 2012), was shortlisted for the Geographical Society of Ireland's Book of the Year Award. It was republished by Routledge in 2016. For the duration of 2016, Mark is also acting as GMIT's 1916–2016 Centenary Programme Coordinator. For details of more than 50 events, see: www.gmit.ie/1916.

Dr Martin O'Donoghue is an Irish Research Council Scholar at NUI Galway. Having previously obtained a B.A. and M.A. from NUI Galway, his doctoral study examines the legacy of the Irish Parliamentary Party in independent Ireland 1922-49. Martin's research interests include Home Rule, the Irish revolution, political history, commemoration and local history. He is also currently treasurer of the Old Tuam Society.

Mary Gallagher is the author of *16 Lives; Éamonn Ceannt*, which was published by O'Brien Press in October 2014. She was born in Dublin and studied in UCD where she graduated with a BA in Economics and History (1975). She was subsequently awarded the degree of Master of Public Administration (1985) and an MA in Modern Irish History (2011). She spent her public service career in the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and NSCDA. She is a grand niece of Eamonn Ceannt.

Mary J Murphy, a writer, journalist, avid local historian, former broadcaster and Menlough-born mother-of-three, lives in Caherlistrane, County Galway. Following post-graduate Journalism in DCU she co-founded the NEWS-CELLAR press agency in Dublin, was Ireland correspondent for a number of publications, researched for The Gay Byrne Radio Show, made documentaries, worked as Administrator of a small Theatre Company, taught English, and was a press officer for the Galway Arts Festival. She has worked in New York, London, Reykjavic and Nashville, and is the author of three books - 'Viking Summer: The Filming by MGM of Alfred the Great in Galway' (Knockma Publishing 2008); 'Achill's Eva O Flaherty: Forgotten Island Heroine' (Knockma Publishing 2012), and 'Caherlistrane: With Eilish O Carroll, Seán Keane & Vivian Nesbitt' (Knockma Publishing 2015). Mary is working on a number of projects including research into the life of Anglo-Irish poet, Emily Lawless (whose work inspired Anne Enright's 'The Green Road'), who spent her holiday's in her mother's home, Castlehackett House, Caherlistrane.

Michéal Ó Máille. Married to Siobhán Ní Shuibhne from Cúil Aodha, Co Cork, father of Aibidh, Aedín & Mairéad. Bainisteoir of Coláiste na nOileán since 2002, Príomhoide of Scoil Bhriocáin since 2003. Great interest in all sports especially GAA, managed and trained various clubs in Co. Galway senior championship. He has a great interest in local history especially hidden or suppressed history. Has published a historical account of Scoil Bhriocáin in 2012 and produced a DVD of the history of Ros Muc in 2005 and again in 2014. Currently working on a publication regarding Scoil Bhriocáin, *An Gort Mór & An tÉirí Amach*.

Patria McWalter, B.A., H. Dip. A.S., received her BA in history and sociology in UCD in 1996, and qualified as an Archivist the following year. Since then she has worked with local government, and was appointed to Galway County Council in 2000.

Aside from assisting Galway County Council ensure the proper care and preservation of its Archives, some of the other major projects she has worked on in the intervening years are the development and provision of an on-line catalogue of the Archives' holdings, the development of the Digital Archive (www.galway.ie/digitalarchives), which enables free global access to several interesting and important collections. She was also worked on the publication of

Collecting and Preserving Folklore and Oral History: Basic Techniques (2006), and For the Record, The Archives of Galway's Rural District Councils (2014).

Paul Duffy has lectured and published extensively on Ireland's engineering heritage and has, also, contributed to several radio and television programmes and documentaries. He is the author of two books on Galway and was the recipient of the 2015 Special Achievement Award presented by The Industrial Heritage Association of Ireland in recognition of his work in promoting the industrial and engineering heritage of Galway.

Dr Shirley Wrynn is a librarian at the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. She has recently completed her PhD thesis with the Department of Heritage & Tourism, GMIT. The title of her thesis was '*Galway and the Easter 1916 Rising: An Investigation of Local Histories, Memories and Heritage Tourism Possibilities*'.

Tomás Kenny is a member of the Kenny Bookselling family in Galway. He is a graduate of NUIG and has previously written a book on the period - Galway: Politics & Society 1910-23 (Four Courts Press, 2013)

Dr Tony Varley lectures in politics and sociology at the National University of Ireland, Galway. He has co-edited *Integration through Subordination: The Politics of Agricultural Modernisation in Industrial Europe* (Brepols, 2013) and *Land Questions in Modern Ireland* (Manchester University Press, 2013).

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Figure 2.16 The site of the rebels’ disbandment at Limepark House, Limepark North, County Galway. *Source:* Mark McCarthy.

Figure 2.17 The site of William Blanche’s home, Drumminalough, County Galway. *Source:* Mark McCarthy.

Figure 2.18 William Hoode’s outhouse (or cattle shelter or barn), Courageeha, County Galway. *Source:* Mark McCarthy.

Figure 2.19 Mellows’ hut, Kilduff Upper, County Clare. *Source:* Mark McCarthy

Figure 3.1 Liam Mellows photograph displayed in Teagasc Athenry. *Source:* Marie Mannion.

Figure 3.2 America 1919 or 1920. Harry Boland, Liam Mellows, Éamon De Valera, Patrick McCartan and Diarmuid Lynch standing in front of wall with John Devoy seated at the forefront. This image is reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland. Reference NPA PRH6.

Figure 3.3 Volunteer membership card. *Source:* Galway County Council Archives, Irish Volunteer File (GS13/02).

Figure 4.1 Tom Kenny as a young man. *Source:* anonymous.

Figure 4.2 Craughwell County Senior Hurling Champions 1915. Front Row: (Left to Right) Michael Callanan and Dick Morrissey. Middle Row (Left to Right) Martin Rooney, Jack Maloney, John Rooney, Tom Kenny, Pat Rooney, Tom Callanan, Tom Morrissey, Mattie McEvoy. Back Row: (Left to Right) Mattie Kelly, John Fahy, Paddy Hynes, Martin Newell, Gill Morrissey, Paddy Joe Morrissey, Tom Shaughnessy, Gerry Deely and Matt Nester. *Source:* Courtesy of Brian Quinn.

Figure 4.3 Tom Kenny in later life. *Source:* anonymous.

Figure 5.1 Kate Armstrong (nee Glynn) and Michael Armstrong’s wedding, February 1921. *Source:* private collection of Mrs Mary Armstrong.

Figure 5.2 1916 medal and ribbon received by Kate Armstrong in recognition of her 1916 Service. *Source:* Kathy Keane.

Figure 5.3 IRB Volunteers gathered at the Liam Mellows memorial in Killeeneen in April 1965. Kate Armstrong is the lady wearing the black hat, second row, fifth from left. Mary Rabbitt is at her right shoulder, fourth from

left. *Source: Connacht Tribune*, 1 May 1965.

Figure 6.1 The edition of the *Gaelic American* newspaper that carried 'the True Story of the Galway Insurrection' in January 1917.

Figure 6.2 Liam Mellows. *Source: C. Desmond Greaves*.

Figure 6.3 Postcards such as this were sold by supporters of *Clan na Gael* in New York. *Source: private collection*.

Figure 6.4 Through the selling of bonds, *Clan na Gael* raised large sums of money for the Independence struggle in Ireland. *Source: private collection*.

Figure 6.5 Liam Mellows addresses the annual Bodenstown commemoration held at the grave of Theobald Wolf Tone. *Source: Éamonn Ó hEochaidh*.

Figure 7.1 The Fleming Family, Clarinbridge, c. 1908. *Source: Joseph Murphy, in The Redingtons of Clarinbridge, 1999*.

Figure 7.2 The Feeney Family, 03 April 2016, outside the house in which he lived in Clarinbridge on the occasion of the mounting of a plaque to commemorate his contribution to The Rising. *Source: Clarinbridge Heritage Group*.

Figure 7.3 Fr. Feeney's niece - Margaret (Peg) Feeney Molloy. *Source: Clarinbridge Heritage Group*.

Figure 7.4 Fleming Family members attending the 1916 Commemorations in Clarinbridge: Mary and Maria Stacey, Jean Downey and Michael Fleming, all direct descendants of Michael Fleming with Councillor Martina Kinnane, extreme left, Anne Rabbitte, TD, extreme right, and Eamon De Valera (grandson of Eamon De Valera) centre. *Source: Clarinbridge Heritage Group*.

Figure 7.5 Bridget Walsh Malone, Killeeneen. *Source: Aoileann Nic Gearailt, Sáirséal agus Dill 1947-1981 Scéal Foilsitheora, 2014*.

Figure 7.6 Fr. Harry Feeney (Clarinbridge) and Commandant Eamonn Corbett (Craughwell) c. 1923. *Source: Courtesy of Joseph Murphy, Clarinbridge*.

Figure 8.1 RIC DI George Bennett Heard. *Source: Jim Herlihy*.

Figure 8.2 RIC Constable Patrick Whelan. *Source: Jim Herlihy*.

Figure 9.1 The names were compiled from the Military Archives, Roll of Honour and Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook. Although the number in some statements was quoted as forty, confirmation of more than thirty-five names was not possible. Fr John William O'Meehan is not on this list. There is only one Cumann na mBan name listed: Mary Higgins, Ardahan.

Figure 9.2 Photograph courtesy of Thomas Quinn. This photograph was taken during the War of Independence; it shows men who served in Kinvara Coy 1916. Sitting on the left: Bertie Quinn, Pádraig Fahy. Sitting at the table: Seamus Davenport, Joe Kilkelly. Standing: Tommie Reidy, Tommy Quinn, Michael Mikie Hynes.

Figure 9.3 This picture shows an RIC constable

standing at the corner watching the events of the day. *Source: Courtesy of Thomas Quinn*.

Figure 9.4 Thomas McNerney from Cahermore, Kinvara, taken during War of Independence. *Source: Courtesy of Micko McNerney, Thomas's son*.

Figure 9.5 Foy's (Seapark House) abandoned house. Here many of Kinvara Company awaited orders. The house was once used as a fever hospital during the Famine, established by Dr Denis Hynes. *Source: Courtesy of Eilish Kavanagh*.

Figure 9.6 Drawing by Thomas Quinn depicting the RIC waiting in a small grove outside Fr O'Meehan's house. This picture was used in schools to portray events of Easter Tuesday 1916.

Figure 9.7 Medal received by Sgt Thomas Reilly, for his part in arresting Pádraig Fahy outside Delamain Lodge. He was also awarded £5 in War Stock at the RIC Depot on 17 May 1917. *Source: Courtesy of www. irishconstabulary.com*

Figure 9.8 Drawing by Thomas Quinn depicting the incident with the RIC on the way to Northampton.

Figure 9.9 Thomas McNerney was born in Kinvara and although he was a member of another company (Ardahan) he ensured his neighbours and friends were protected. The investigators continue to question McNerney and he finally admits to have ordered the Company to retreat. This small section is part of a long statement that contributed to a court case for a pension for John Burke. John Burke Military Pension Ref MSP34REF9331. John Burke's service pension application with regard to case of John Burke v The Minister for Defence, typed summary and verbatim transcript of sworn evidence given by Thomas McNerney on 5 April 1945.

Figure 9.10 Medals awarded to Michael Hynes. Kindly displayed by his family during exhibition 2015. *Source: Thomas Quinn*.

Figure 9.11 Display case kindly donated by Gort Men's Shed for exhibition 2015. Two Irish Volunteers from 1916 originally owned the gun and bayonet displayed in cabinet. Artefacts collected by Eddie Forde. *Source: Eilish Kavanagh*.

Figure 9.12 Exhibition held in Kinvara during Heritage Week 2015. *Source: Courtesy of Eilish Kavanagh*.

Figure 10.1 Patrick Dunleavy. *Source: The Dunleavy Family*.

Figure 10.2 Liam Langley (on left with straw hat) and Tuam Fianna Gaelic football team. *Source: The Old Tuam Society archive*.

Figure 10.3 Liam Langley. *Source: Eimear Cremen*

Figure 11.1 Image taken at top of St Michael's Square, Ballinasloe for 1966 commemorations. Left to Right: Fr Peter Dunne, Monsignor Timothy Glennon, Rev Cyril Champ, Tadhg Mac Lochlainn, Paddy Carroll. *Source: Patricia Carroll*.

Figure 12.1 Patrick Pearse. *Source: unknown*.

Figure 12.2 Professor Tomás Ó Máille, Muintir Eoghain, became the first professor of Irish in University College Galway in 1909. He was a firm supporter of the Volunteers in Connemara along with his brother, leading Volunteer Pádraig Ó Máille. *Source:* National University of Ireland, Galway.

Figure 12.3 Micheál Ó Droighneáin, Furbo, was one of a band of republicans from Connemara and Galway town arrested during Easter Week. He went on to become a senior Volunteer in South Connemara during the War of Independence. *Source:* *Galway Advertiser*.

Figure 12.4 Colm Ó Gaora (reproduced from Proinsias Mac Aonghusa, *Ros Muc agus Cogadh na Saoirse, Conradh na Gaeilge*, 1992.).

Figure 13.1 Galway County Council Minutes, 3 May 1916, GC/1/2, p700.

Figure 13.2 Galway County Council Staff Attendance Book, with Carter's signature (signed in Irish), 24 November 1916, GC/7/10.

Figure 13.3 Letter from Munitions File, 19 December 1916, GC/CSO/3/2.

Figure 13.4 Galway County Council Minutes, 3 May 1916, GC/1/2, p707.

Figure 13.5 *Connacht Tribune* extract on a discussion at a Galway County Council meeting regarding Carter's request for his job to remain open for him while interned, 19th August 1916.

Figure 14.1 William O'Malley MP *Source:* unknown.

Figure 14.2 Lieutenant Michael Lavelle M.C., Clifden. *Source:* Newspaper unknown.

Figure 14.3 NLI, MFA 54/59, The British in Ireland (CO 904) Police Reports 1914 - 1921, May 1916.

Chapter 15. All images: *Source:* Paul Duffy Collection.

Figure 16.1 Éamonn Ceannt's father, RIC Head Constable, James Kent. *Source:* Mary Gallagher.

Figure 16.2 Éamonn Ceannt, Uileann Piper. *Source:* Mary Gallagher.

Figure 16.3 Áine Ceannt, wife of Éamonn Ceannt. *Source:* Mary Gallagher.

Figure 16.4 Éamonn Ceannt, Commandant, 4th Battalion, Irish Volunteers. *Source:* Mary Gallagher.

Figure 17.1 Pádraig Mac Piarais, *Source:* NLI.

Figure 17.2 Patrick Connolly, the man who brought PH Pearse to Rosmuc and his wife Jane Grant. Both Patrick and his wife Jane taught for many years in Gortmore, National School. *Source:* Máire Barnard & Philomena Ní Leathlobhair.

Figure 18.1 Michael McHugh *Source:* Kevin Ball.

Figure 18.2 Canice Craven 1930 photograph. *Source:* Karen Johnson, Archivist, Christian Brothers, Province Centre, Marino, Dublin.

Figure 19.1 Eva O'Flaherty. *Source:* Diarmuid Gielty, Achill.

Figure 19.2 Siblings Brendan and Bridie Gannon, Caherlistrane, unveiling a specially commissioned memorial plaque at Eva O'Flaherty's refurbished, raised family vault in Donaghpatrick graveyard on 17 April 2013 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of her death. The portrait of Eva at the vault was painted by Belgian artist, Marie Howet, in Achill in 1929. *Source:* Mason Glynn.

Figure 19.3 Eva O'Flaherty Memorial Carad. *Source:* Diarmuid Gielty, Achill.

Figure 20.1 Mr Mattie Niland (third from the left) with veterans of Tuam Brigade, Old IRA. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 20.2 Tuam, Mercy Convent Secondary School students who participated in the 1916 Jubilee celebrations. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 20.3 Maureen Freeman, essay competition winner presented with a painting of Éamonn Ceannt. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 20.4 Former Old IRA Veterans with their medals. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 20.5 Mr Noel O'Donoghue, Acting State Solicitor, delivering his oration, surrounded by Master of Ceremonies Martin Higgins (Old IRA), Deputy John Dunnellon, Deputy Michael F. Kitt, Senator Mark Killilea Snr, Councillors Paddy A. Patten, William Burke, Sean M. Glynn, Peter Raftery, Padraic Ó Ceallaigh and Tom Hussey. Others included Colonel P. Ó Ceirín, Renmore Barracks; John Coughlan (Chairman) and the Town Commissioners, Gerald H. O'Connor (Town Clerk); Rev. Martin Geraghty, Adm. Supt M. Gonigle, An Garda Síochána. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 20.6 Mattie Niland unveiling the Tuam 1916 Monument. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 20.7 David Burke, Tuam, CBS Secondary student reading the proclamation in English. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 20.8 Willie Kelly Tuam Stonemason, who built and erected the 1916 monument. *Source:* Joe Dillon Collection.

Figure 21.1 A Side view of the Thomas Ruane memorial, Claregalway Cemetery, Co. Galway. *Source:* Shirley Wrynn.

Figure 21.2 Statue of Joseph Howley, Oranmore, Co. Galway. *Source:* Shirley Wrynn.

Figure 21.3 Statue of Liam Mellows, Eyre Square, Galway. *Source:* Mark McCarthy.

Figure 21.4 Monument unveiled in 1966 at Limepark House, Peterswell, Co. Galway. *Source:* Mark McCarthy.

Please note: in chapters 2 and 21 the Figure numbers given in the main body of the text are merely given as Figure 1,2,3, etc not 2.1,2.2 or 21.1 etc.

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