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*Front Cover:
Brigadier-General Joe Ring.*

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BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOE RING

'A brave soldier whose courage was never in doubt'
by Peadar Ó Flanagáin

Introduction

The above quotation is from a fellow combatant-in-arms in the West Mayo Brigade, who, following the Treaty took the opposite side to Joe Ring, Commandant 3rd (Westport) Battalion, in the civil war that followed. The present article commemorates the 65th anniversary of the death of Brigadier-General Ring on 14 September 1922, at the age of 31, in the Battle of the Ox Mountains.

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the staffs of the Garda Museum and Archives, Phoenix Park, and the Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, and all those who granted personal interviews. Thanks are also due to Michael Ring, grand-nephew of Joe Ring, for photographic research.



Michael and Katherine Ring after they settled in Drummindoo in the 1890s.

Michael Joseph Ring was born in Co. Galway on 17 August, 1891, fourth of a family of eight, to Michael and Katherine Ring (nee Conway). Michael Ring of Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, married Katherine Conway of Westport, Co. Mayo. He was a sergeant in the R.I.C. She was the daughter of a well-known Westport merchant family from Bridge Street, Westport. The family settled in Westport on Castlebar Street in the 1890s, and Joe and his elder brother Jim were admitted to the Christian Brothers' school on Castlebar Street on 4 January 1898.



Rev. M. MacGréil's house Drumindoo (site of Joe Ring's home).

The family later moved from Castlebar Street to a cottage and small farm in Drumindoo, one mile from the town. Three of his brothers, Walter, Jim and Jack, subsequently emigrated to the United States together with two surviving sisters, Tess (Flatley) and Nora (Walsh). His elder brother Jim served in the U.S. Forces during World War I.

From an early age Joe was involved with the Young Mens Sacred Heart Sodality and with the G.A.A. being captain of the Aghagower team. Summoned for playing Gaelic football in the 'Nuns' Field', he appeared before Mr. Milling, R.M. charged with trespass. He refused to give an undertaking as to future trespass and also refused to pay any fine.

On the formation of the Volunteers in Westport in 1915, Joe Ring was one of the many who joined up. One of the most prominent was Major John MacBride, a native of Westport Quay, and Boer war veteran, who was subsequently executed by the British following the Rebellion of 1916.

Joe Ring was appointed in charge of the Westport Volunteers. After the Rebellion in Dublin he organised a route march for his troops. Subsequently those identified by the R.I.C. were rounded up, to be interned in Frongoch south camp, in south Wales.

On 9 May 1916, Joe Ring, together with some thirty others, were arrested at their homes under the Defence of the Realm Act and brought to Castlebar jail where they spent the night. Next day they were sent under armed escort to Richmond barracks in Dublin, where they were joined by others from various parts of the country. From Richmond barracks they were sent across channel to Wandsworth detention centre in London, where they were visited by Joe's maternal uncle, Walter Conway B.L., formerly of Bridge Street, Westport.

From Wandsworth they were sent to a detention camp in south Wales called Frongoch. This became their university for the duration of their internment until the general amnesty at Christmas 1916. They were given a rapturous welcome on their return to Westport. Joe returned to his family home in Drumindoo having made many friends and acquaintances at Frongoch – among them Michael Staines of Newport, later to be an Alderman and T.D. for the city of Dublin and first Commissioner of the Civic Guards.

With most of the leaders interned, there had been little local activity among the Volunteers. Ring soon commenced re-organising the Volunteers and training the young members of Fianna Éireann, who were their prospective recruits. Regular assemblies and drilling took place, particularly in rural areas. As a result of one such manoeuvre Edward Moane from Carrabawn, Westport, was arrested at his home on Saturday 9 March 1918, and brought to the R.I.C. barracks on Shop Street, where he was charged before Mr. Milling, R.M., with unlawful assembly and drilling. He refused bail and was remanded in custody to Sligo jail, to appear in Westport courthouse on Thursday 14 March 1918.

Joe Ring organised the local Volunteers and they assembled on the Octagon on the day of the court case. Cushlough fife and drum band led the parade to the railway station for the arrival of the prisoner under heavy escort. They marched from there to the courthouse where Moane refused to recognise the jurisdiction of the court, under Messrs. Kilbride and Milling, Resident Magistrates. Mr. J. C. Garvey, solicitor, prosecuted. Moane was charged with unlawful assembly and drilling outside the Sinn Féin hall, and was convicted and sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

During the court case District Inspector Shore, R.I.C., left the court and was confronted by a party of Volunteers drawn up on Castlebar Street. He approached them and ordered them back, giving them three minutes to disperse. Almost immediately afterwards the R.I.C. baton-charged the Volunteers, who retaliated with stones. The battle raged for some time, and some of the pupils from the nearby C.B.S. joined in the fray with stones from the schoolyard. Many were injured on each side before the



Comdt. Joe Ring in Volunteer uniform.

police eventually cleared the street. That evening and night the R.I.C. took reprisals in the town, breaking shop windows at Lang's, Hughes's, Talbot's, Flanagan's and Shanley's, and raiding and ransacking Thady Walsh's public house.

Joe Ring was easily identified as the leader of the Volunteers who assembled on the day of the court case, and made no attempt to go into hiding. On the following Saturday morning 16 March, he was arrested at his home in Drumindoo together with Charles Gavin, Mill Street, William Malone, High Street, and William O'Malley, Drumiltra, by armed R.I.C., and brought to the barracks on Shop Street where they were charged later in the day with unlawful assembly and drilling. Thomas Kitterick of High Street, had been arrested the previous night and was charged with the same offences.

At the court hearing O'Malley's case was heard first and he was remanded in custody to Castlebar court. Then the cases of Ring, Kitterick, and Gavin were heard. They stood with their backs to the court and their caps on, when the charges were read by J. C. Milling R.M. Ring spoke for them, stating, 'we are soldiers of the Irish Republic and do not recognise the court. You said already below in the hotel that you were going to give Ring eighteen months'. Constable Butler gave evidence that on 14 March he heard Joe Ring blow a whistle at the Octagon, Westport. Volunteers having assembled with the Cushlough band, Joe Ring gave the band orders and marched the Volunteers to the station. They marched back from the station to Castlebar street where the baton-charge took place. There were forty-eight volunteers and the band. Ring interrupted by asking 'what about the police that broke Shanley's windows?' They were remanded to Castlebar court on Wednesday 21 March and escorted to the two o'clock train through cheering crowds, handcuffed to R.I.C. men. The handcuffs were removed at the station except for Ring's. They were sent to Sligo jail.

The case was heard in Castlebar on 21 March. On their arrival at the station the prisoners were escorted by a company of the Essex Yeomanry and 100 R.I.C. O'Malley's case was heard first and he was given one month. The other three accused began singing in Court with their backs to the Magistrates, Kilbride and Milling, throughout the proceedings. They were sentenced to six months each, with hard labour. Afterwards there were baton charges on the large crowd of supporters on the Mall. Joe Ring, with his companions, left Castlebar courthouse under escort to the cheers of the crowd, to serve his term in Sligo jail.

On his return to Westport in September, he was to learn that his widowed mother had lost her R.I.C. pension as a result of his actions. He resumed his activities with the Volunteers and though not himself interested in politics, he was considered as a possible Sinn Féin candidate in the December 1918 election. The nomination went to Joseph MacBride of Westport Quay, who was elected.

Hostilities opened in the War of Independence in January of 1919 with

the ambush at Soloheadbeg in Co. Tipperary, led by Dan Breen. In the west the first shots were fired on the night of 29 March 1919, from positions along the Demesne wall, fatally killing J.C. Milling, R.M., at his residence on the Newport Road, (at present Dún Maeve, residence of Dr. H. Farrell). Milling was in the front room in the act of winding his clock, when four shots were fired. He died within twenty-four hours. The Milling Affair is still a matter of local controversy, and has been attributed to 'The three Joes'. It probably never will be established who fired the fatal shots. This act was widely condemned at the time and obviously did not have any official sanction. It was condemned by Most Rev. Dr. Gilmartin, Archbishop of Tuam as 'A dastardly crime'. Westport U.D.C. at a special meeting the following week issued their strongest condemnation of the horrible outrage. The *Mayo News* in their editorial of 5 April, stated that 'The murder of J. C. Milling, R.M. is the first foul crime of this character that has occurred in Westport'. The Chief Secretary in Dublin Castle sent his sympathy to Mrs. Milling, who was subsequently awarded £5,000 compensation, to be levied on the Westport Urban District. On the following Tuesday, it was announced from Dublin that the Westport District was to be a military area under martial law. Military were drafted in and sealed off the town, not even allowing carts into the market. The R.I.C. questioned the young men of the district as to their whereabouts.

At the inquest that followed evidence was given by James Sheridan, a contractor, who lived next door to Milling's house, that on hearing the shots, he called to Milling's house and noted four holes in the window glass. The door was opened by Milling and he uttered the words 'I am shot'. He was put to bed and the doctor called. The doctor treated him for abdominal wounds, but he was too ill to be moved to the Co. Infirmary. The following morning his brother-in-law, Charles Walsh, a County Inspector of the R.I.C., visited him and he uttered the words 'they have got me at last'. The jury under foreman Mr. Good, after fifteen minutes, returned a nine to five majority verdict worded as follows: 'We find that the said John C. Milling was murdered by bullets fired at him by a person or persons unknown on the night of Saturday 29th March at 11 o'clock'. They were sent back and later returned with a unanimous verdict, in which the wording was changed to 'foully murdered'. Whether or not Joe Ring was one of the 'three Joes' will perhaps never be definitely known.

Despite martial law, surveillance and questioning by the R.I.C., no culprits were found for the Milling assassination. As a result the activities of the Volunteers had to be strictly curtailed. The Milling affair served no useful purpose. R. M.s could easily be replaced, and it must be seen rather as a personal vendetta, than an action sanctioned by the I.R.B.

In September 1920, The West Mayo Brigade of the I.R.A. was organised, and the brigade O.C. was Tom Derrig of High Street, Westport. The Westport district became a battalion area and the O.C. was Joe Ring of Drumindoo. In November 1920, the Black and Tans arrived in

Westport to augment the R.I.C. They were drawn mostly from ex-servicemen in England, and earned a reputation in this country which will never be forgotten. They depended on the local R.I.C. for their intelligence regarding I.R.A. membership and operations.

In January of 1921, Tom Derrig was arrested and interned, and Michael Kilroy of Newport became brigade O.C., Ned Moane of Carrabawn, Vice O.C., J. Gibbons, Adjutant, and Tom Kitterick, quartermaster. A new departure was the setting up of Active Service Units in all Battalion areas, of men who were reliable and would be available at all times for special operations. Joe Ring formed the Westport A.S.U. with Broddie Malone as Vice O.C. The Westport men were the best trained, organised and equipped, and could depend on sympathetic local businessmen for financial support. They possessed twelve Lee-Enfields, together with revolvers and shotguns. They trained in rural areas and stayed in safe houses. The remaining Volunteers formed a reserve which could be called on when required. Their intelligence on enemy intentions was drawn from various sources, in particular from shopkeepers and publicans, and possibly from sympathizers within the R.I.C. The new structure used military rank, and Michael Kilroy was brigade Commandant and Joe Ring, Commandant of the 3rd (Westport) battalion.

Ring organised route marches to train his personnel. Edward O'Malley in his *Memories of a Mayoman* relates such a route march in the Cushlough district and refers to him reading a dispatch which stated - 'The Crown Forces at Westport Quay have a life-sized photograph of you. If captured, you will be shot, and your body dragged through the streets of Westport. This information comes direct from Military headquarters'. He also relates that arms were stored at Owenwee, having been brought by Quartermaster T. Kitterick and Vol. John McDonagh in Breheny's lorry, including Mauser and Martini rifles, Lee-Enfields, and Webley and Bulldog revolvers, together with Parabellum and Luger pistols, and grenades. These were for the use of the Active Service Unit in operations. Commdt. Ring himself carried a Lee-Enfield and an ex-R.I.C. Webley revolver.

The earliest engagement involved three of the leaders, Michael Kilroy, Joe Ring and Broddie Malone. When walking at Derrykillew they engaged four armed R.I.C. men, and in this engagement they killed Sgt. Coughlan and wounded and disarmed the R.I.C. men. The next engagement in April 1921 was at Clogher cross-roads three miles from the town where the Westport A.S.U. under Ring ambushed three lorries of Black and Tans, wounding a number of them.

On 3 May 1921, Ring and his men were at Brackloon bridge having received intelligence that enemy lorries were due to pass through that position on their way to Leenane. When in the process of setting up the ambush, they received information that Commdt. Tom Maguire, O.C. South Mayo Brigade, was encircled at Tourmakeady and required

assistance. They left to go to his assistance but received information that Maguire and his men had evaded the large force of encircling troops. They returned to their respective areas only to learn that six lorries had meanwhile passed through their ambush position.

Following the abortive ambush at Islandeady on 6 May, during which two Volunteers were killed, the various units returned to their respective areas. The Westport A.S.U. under Ring made nightly patrols into the town, but failed to engage the enemy.

On 19 May the combined A.S.U. set up an ambush at Clooneen, Kilmeena, on the Westport-Newport Road, under Commdt. Michael Kilroy. During this engagement five Volunteers were killed and six seriously wounded. Commdt. Ring with Volunteers J. Keane, Gortaroe, and N. Hoban were engaged in communication duties. They later joined the other members of the Westport A.S.U. under Broddie Malone, and on hearing that after the Kilmeena ambush, Kilroy and his men had retreated to Skirdagh, outside Newport, and were surrounded, they held up the morning train out of Westport on 24 May, in case any prisoners had been taken. In fact Kilroy and his men slipped through the enemy lines. The various units re-assembled at Curvey and Lanmore, later moving to Owenwee, and on 1 June burned Drummin R.I.C. barracks.

Ring had received intelligence that a combined R.I.C.-Black and Tan convoy was due to travel to Letterfrack. It was decided to set up an ambush position at Carrowkennedy on 2 June 1921. A trench had been cut in the road, but this was filled in and the lorries passed. It was decided to ambush them on their return. In the Carrowkennedy engagement, twelve of the enemy including a District Inspector were killed and thirteen, some wounded, surrendered.

A Lewis machine gun, together with all arms and equipment, was captured. The I.R.A. made a magnanimous gesture in sending one of the captured R.I.C. to seek medical aid. The Column went to Claddy Village and from there to Drummin and the Louisburgh district, where they remained until 9 June. They returned to Shraheen and from there to Newport district, when the well-known photograph of the Column was taken in the foothills of Nephin mountain. A large force of enemy troops, including R.I.C., Tans and military, was assembled to capture the Column, who returned to the Owenwee area, where on 4 July they dispersed into small groups and evaded the enemy.

Carrowkennedy was the last major engagement, and one of the most important, in the West, prior to the truce in July 1921. As a result there were reprisals by the R.I.C. and the Tans in Westport town and on the homes of the leaders. Michael Kilroy's house outside Newport and Joe Ring's at Drumindoo were burned to the ground. The authorities offered a reward of £2,000 for information leading to the capture of Ring. Tom Heavey relates that after the Truce, Michael Staines, T.D., arrived from



Gárda officers in Kildare Barracks. In front row – Chief Superintendent Joe Ring (with stick), Commissioner Staines, Superintendent Delaney (later first Bandmaster Gárda Band).

Dublin to meet Kilroy and requested the services of Ring to join him as Liaison Officer for Galway and Mayo. After consulting brigade staff, Kilroy reluctantly agreed. Ring took up office, first at University Road in Galway and later at Castle Street, Castlebar, and in his capacity as Liaison Officer dealt with such matters as the occupation of Rosturk Castle and Castle Gore by the I.R.A., and with various assaults and the shooting at District Commissioner Cruise's car. It was an administrative job and this did not suit a man of action like Ring. When approached by Staines in February 1922 on the formation of the Civil Guard, he relinquished his position as Liaison Officer and was involved with the formation and recruitment of the Gárdaí from their inception 21 February 1922, initially in the grounds of the R.D.S. and later at Kildare artillery barracks, where contingents of recruits arrived from all parts of the country. In this position he held the nominal rank of Chief Superintendent.

While on a recruiting campaign in the west, Commdt. Ring was arrested on the evening of 1 April 1922 in the premises of Mr. P. Haran, court registrar, at upper Bridge Street. He proceeded to address the large crowd outside, before being removed, together with Mr. Haran, and Mr. Lavelle, to Castlebar military barracks, which was under the command of Commdt. General Kilroy. Haran was later released, and on Monday 3 April Ring went on hunger-strike, sending the following communication to Kilroy, with a copy to Staines in Dublin:

I wish to inform you that I am on hunger-strike since 11 p.m. on April 3rd and will continue to do so until I am set at liberty.

My reasons for doing so are as follows:

- (a) As Commandant of 3rd Battalion, West Mayo Brigade, I stand loyal to the oath I took to the Republic of Ireland and the Government of the Republic which is Dáil Éireann. As such I have a perfect right to my opinion, and any action I have taken or may take, I am responsible to that Government and none other.
- (b) Being loyal to my oath and the Government I took it to, I hold you have no legal right to arrest or detain me, as you are no longer recognised as officer acting for the official General Headquarters of the I.R.A.

Ring was later released and joined Staines, who was in the process of moving his staff and recruits from the R.D.S. to Kildare barracks.

On 25 April 1922, the 1,500 recruits for the new Civic Guard left the R.D.S. for Kildare artillery barracks, accompanied by the new Commissioner, Michael Staines, and his staff. Their first task was to clean out the barracks recently vacated by the British. Most of the senior officers were former R.I.C. who had co-operated with Collins during the recent troubles, and the rank and file were mostly men from the columns throughout the country. There was understandable conflict between the two groups, which broke out in what is known as the Kildare Mutiny, on the morning of 15 May 1922. Staines and his staff appeared before the assembled recruits under the command of Chief Superintendent Joe Ring. A number of spokesmen from the ranks stepped forward, but Ring called the parade to attention to be addressed by the Commissioner. He referred to the services of the former R.I.C. officers and warned about the seriousness of mutiny. There was heckling in the ranks and Staines called on those who supported him to move to the right; some sixty did so. Joe Ring with another sixty remained where they stood, and the vast majority of the recruits moved to the left. The Commissioner spent the day in discussion with such officers including Ring, as were acceptable to both sides, and finally that evening left by car for Dublin, accompanied by Ring, to break the news to a horrified Provisional Government. A party of national troops with an armoured car was sent to take over the barracks, but following discussions with Supt. Liddy, they withdrew. Staines set up his new H.Q. in the Ormond Hotel in Dublin and later took over Dublin Castle, the headquarters of the British administration in Ireland.

Following the Kildare Mutiny, Staines, as an Alderman and T.D. for Dublin, offered his resignation to the Provisional Government, but it was not then accepted. It would appear that at this time he offered Joe Ring an appointment as Assistant Commissioner of the Civic Guard. However with civil war now raging, Ring's services were required in the West. He was appointed a Brigadier-General of the National Army.

Major-General Seán Mac Eoin was in charge of the western campaign and was operating from Athlone. The strategy adopted by the G.H.Q. took the occupying Republican forces by surprise. West Mayo was a bastion which would have been very difficult to overcome by conventional means. It was decided to send a sea-borne force to the west to augment



Brigadier-General Joe Ring in the uniform of the National Army, with Webley revolver.

Mac Eoin's land-borne troops. Ring was picked out as the most suitable leader for this expedition and a cross-channel ferry the *Minerva* was fitted out as a troop-carrier, and sent via the Antrim and Donegal coasts, arriving in Clew Bay in the early morning on Monday 24 July 1922. The *Freeman's Journal* gives a graphic description of the capture of Rosmoney and Westport under Brigadier-General Joe Ring.

The relief of Westport was a well-planned and brilliantly successful operation. It was carried out without loss and with scarcely the cost of a rifle bullet. The famous old sea-port town, which had been the headquarters of the Irregulars in the West, and their chief base of operations, passed into the hands of the National troops on Monday night.

It was regarded as their surest and most strategic citadel in Connacht. Nobody ever dreamt its fall would have occurred so easily.

On the approach of the National troops the Irregulars fled into the fastnesses of North Mayo, portion of their forces going southwards towards Connemara.

The onslaught on Westport was made by sea, and there is a chain of interesting incidents connected with it.

This move was made primarily to effect a lodgment on the western seaboard, whilst at the same time, a vigorous sweep forward under the supervision of Major-General McKeon was conducted from the east, the object of both movements being to hem in the Irregulars and cut them off from all connection by sea or land.

Taken thus on both flanks, the occupying forces simply had to bow to the inevitable. Their rule, or rather orgy, of lawlessness in the west, at once fell to pieces. There was no pretence to put up any sort of opposition. They are still congregated in some force in a number of places scattered over Mayo. But they are there precisely because the National troops has not reached those districts. Some trouble may be anticipated from such places still. There may also be some annoyance caused to the National troops by roving bands who are located in the hills. But to all intents and purposes the physical defiance is at an end in Connacht.

The expedition arrived, anchoring safely in Clew Bay on Monday morning. It was just then daybreak. Little sign of life appeared in the harbour. A few hookers were gently bobbing their heads on the broad bosom of the waters. All was otherwise calm and quiet. In a twinkling the lazy old hookers were swarming with life. The troops had taken possession of the craft. Brigadier-General Ring was despatched to reduce Rossminey, a coastguard station, five miles from Westport, and situated on the north side of the bay. He had also instructions to effect a landing there. His mission was crowned with success. The landing was effected from both sides of the peninsula upon which the coastguard station is situated.

For this purpose the force under Brigadier-General Ring had to be divided. Accordingly the latter detailed two captains to the north side,

while he himself superintended the operations on the south side. The men landed in rowing boats from hookers which were brought to within about 50 yards of the beach. The officers occupied the neck of the peninsula, thus cutting off the garrison from the mainland. At the same time Brigadier-General Ring advanced on the stronghold, coming within 50 yards of it. Fire was then opened on the station.

There was no reply from the garrison, and after a few minutes the white flag went up. The occupants then came out cheering with their hands up. They proved to be National troops who had been made prisoners and detained in the coastguard station by the Irregulars. They numbered about 90 men. They had been rounded up during the last 3 weeks from Mayo and Sligo. Amongst them was Commandant Reynolds, who is attached to the North Western Command under Major General McKeon.

The garrison, numbering a dozen men, fled with their arms and ammunition on the approach of the National troops. They were making for the mainland when they were captured by the northern detachment.

All surrendered without firing a shot.

A number of grenades as well as rifles and revolvers were in their possession. In the building itself two rifles, some bombs and shot-guns were also found.

When the Captain was about to land, he noticed two men running along the peninsula. He at once jumped out of the boat, thinking he had bottom. He was in deep water at the time, but he managed to keep his rifle above the water until he reached his depth. Then, standing breast high, he fired at the retreating figures. They disappeared, but were subsequently taken prisoners, uninjured. After placing a guard in the coastguard station, the detachment returned to assist in the landing at Westport.

Here the garrison retreated on hearing of the presence of the National troops in the harbour. The military barracks were burning and the troops were just in time to save the building. The fire was promptly put out. A mine was discovered outside the main entrance.

Following the successful Rosmoney operation, the national troops landed at Westport Quay, took over Westport town and district, and in a historic photograph outside Westport town hall, which they used as their H.Q., Brigadier Ring and his staff and troops are pictured with the armoured-car known as 'The Big Fella'. It was during this period that the troops billeted in the town hall, shot the head off the Clendenning statue on the Octagon.

A military dispatch regarding the engagement which led to the death of Joe Ring was sent to the Commander-in-Chief and Adjutant-General, dated 6 p.m. 14 September 1922:

Big action in the West. Am sending cipher despatch which will reach you in an hour's time or so. Casualties including - Brigadier Ring killed. Tony Lawlor - badly wounded, armoured-car *Big Fella* captured by enemy. Note - connection bad, could hardly hear.



'Ring's Own' outside their H.Q. at Westport Town Hall with armoured car 'The Big Fella'.

A contemporary report in the Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin dated 28 October 1922, relates the events in the western operations leading up to the death of the Brigadier-General in combat, in what became known as the battle of the Ox Mountains:

The late General Joe Ring co-operated with us, he landed in Westport, released 103 national troops who were interned there at Rosmoney Island. Also captured irregular leader Browne and Column of thirteen men, with guns, bombs and transport – three lorries. Also captured irregular Comdt. Healy and 100 others near Castlebar, being ambushed on the way to Newport; we captured a Thompson-gun, ammunition and rifles.

Irregular Column with armoured-car *Ballinalee* took Ballina while most of the garrison attended Requiem Mass. Our troops under the command of Commdt.-General Lawlor arrived in Ballina the next day and left the following morning for Tubbercurry; ½ mile outside Bonnyconlan our troops were ambushed on both sides of the road. In this engagement Brigadier Joe Ring, R.I.P., was killed and Comdt.-General Lawlor wounded, together with five of the rank and file; we advanced then to the hill and captured fifteen prisoners.

The *Mayo News* in their edition of the 16 September gave the following front page editorial, edged in black:

As we go to Press on Thursday evening news reaches us that in a fight between National troops and irregulars at Bonniclon, Ballina,

to-day, General Joseph Ring was shot dead. The news has caused most poignant grief here in his native town of Westport. During the recent reign of terror the enemies of Ireland like sleuth hounds pursued him, but they failed to get him. Is it not melancholy to think he should have gone down at the hands of his own countrymen, many of them his former friends and fellow fighters on the hills of Mayo. Joe Ring was the first man in Ireland to form a flying column, and he gathered about him a faithful band who in many a scrap gave a good account of themselves. From his earliest infancy he was a great personal friend of ours, and we hope and trust he is to-day enjoying the reward of a good and exemplary life. Opposition to tyranny is obedience to God, and in this certainly Joe Ring obeyed. When the fact of his death became known in Westport, though market day, all the business houses immediately closed and shuttered their shops, while the blinds on private residences were drawn. It bore eloquent tribute to the esteem in which he was held by his neighbours in Westport – the friends of his boyhood and admirers of his manhood – R.I.P.

The remains of Brigadier Ring were removed to Ballina workhouse, then under military occupation, where they were laid out. The following evening 15 September, his brother Jim, accompanied by Charles Hughes, Edward Haran and John O'Donohue, travelled to Ballina to remove the remains, under military escort, to St. Marys Church, Westport, where they were received by Rev. Fr. Patterson and placed on a catafalque, draped in the tricolour and with his cap and insignia of a Brigadier-General, in front of the high altar. The Church remained open all night to accommodate those wishing to pay their respects. Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated the following day at 12 noon, and when it was learned that the military band and firing party were held up at Castlebar, because a line was up at Islandeady, the funeral procession was delayed for an hour. Finally at two p.m., led by a military contingent with reversed arms, the funeral



Funeral on the Quay Road with National troops with reversed arms, followed by the First Gárda Pipe Band.

procession moved off. The remains were borne by ex-comrades of the deceased, flanked by members of Mayo Civic Guard in their smart new uniforms. The newly-formed Gárda Pipe Band from Kildare Barracks, under Pipe-Major Meighan, played funeral laments, and the Irish Army Band from Athlone, funeral marches, on the three mile route to Oughaval Cemetery. Also following the cortege were members of Fianna Éireann, Ladies of Cumann an tSaorstáit and members of the Men's Sacred Heart Sodality wearing their medals. The funeral was the largest ever seen in Westport.

At the graveside Fr. Patterson presided and orations were given by Michael Staines, T.D., dealing with Joe Ring's involvement with the Gárdaí, and by Colonel Cooney dealing with his military career. The last post and reveille were sounded by military trumpeters and three volleys were fired by the military firing-party.

In the following week's *Mayo News* there appeared an Appreciation by the well-known Kerry Irish author, Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha, which ended:

The marching tread of his fighting column will never again re-echo in the night through his native hills, and the red grouse squat in the purple heather undisturbed. Woods and stream and western sea are hushed in sorrow. A chivalrous heart is stilled, a brave and generous soul gone. MAYO YOU DARE NOT CLAIM A BRAVER SOUL THAN RING.

An Seabhac.

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COUNTY MAYO MEN WHO DIED WHILST SERVING WITH THE CONNAUGHT RANGERS 1914-1918

by Stuart Barr

The five counties of Connacht: Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo were the principal recruiting areas for the 88th Foot, The Connaught Rangers, from the raising of the Regiment in 1793 until its disbandment on 31 July 1922. After 1881, there were two regular battalions of The Connaught Rangers, with one usually based in Britain or Ireland whilst the other served overseas. After 1908 the Regiment had two reserve battalions which were successors to the old Militia and which were designated the 3rd and 4th Battalions. When war broke out on 4 August 1914, recruitment was immediately begun to expand the Regiment and the 5th and 6th (Service) Battalions were formed in the autumn of 1914. Thus, during the first World War, there existed six battalions of The Connaught Rangers, four of which, the 1st, 2nd 5th and 6th saw active service mainly in France. Flanders, Gallipoli, Salonika, Mesopotamia and Palestine.

The official casualty records for the Regiment published in 1921¹ show that just under 1,000 men of The Connaught Rangers died in the War. Despite the many errors of detail contained in the official lists, they are useful as a working record and particularly so for our purpose, since Colonel Jourdain's three volume history of the Regiment,² substantial though it is, does not contain WWI casualty lists. From the official casualty record, we have compiled a list of men born in County Mayo who died in the War whilst serving with The Connaught Rangers. Our listing follows the lay-out of the official record, but we have added a note on the war service of each battalion so that the bald figures of the casualty return can be seen in a fuller context. We have also referred to certain major actions and noted the Mayo men who died in them. The listings give the name, place of birth (b), place of enlistment (e), domicile in brackets, service number, rank, whether killed in action (KIA), died of wounds (d of w) or died from other causes (d.) and the date of death. F&F stands for France and Flanders.

The records reveal that at least 151 County Mayo Men are known to have died whilst serving with The Connaught Rangers during the War. They were born in all four corners of the county and a good number who had emigrated, volunteered to serve in the Regiment which was associated with their place of birth. Of the 151 men who gave their lives, almost half (77) came from the three towns of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport. Ballina was the hardest hit with 46 dead from the ranks of the Rangers; Castlebar lost 16 of its sons and Westport 15.

The 1st Battalion, The Connaught Rangers

The old 88th Foot was stationed in India when war broke out. The Battalion left Karachi for the Western Front on 19 August 1914 with the

Indian Corps and reached the front line at Messines in October 1914. After some very heavy fighting during the subsequent six weeks, the 25 officers and 831 other ranks of the Battalion who had gone into action were reduced to 8 officers and 343 men. The 2nd Battalion was in a similar state after the retreat from Mons and on December 5 1914, the two battalions of the Rangers were amalgamated and fought as one battalion throughout the rest of the War. After taking part in the 2nd Battle of Ypres (April) and the Battles of Festubert (May) and Loos (September) in 1915, the Rangers were sent to Mesopotamia, arriving on 10 January 1916. Eleven days later they were thrown into a major battle at Hanna and suffered 273 casualties. This action took place on 21 January 1916 and the casualty list indicated that five Mayo men were killed on that day: William Kennedy (Ballina) who was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry; Tom McAuliffe (Low Park); Michael McHale (Ballina); Dominick Murray (Ballina); Patrick Prendergast (Ballyhaunis). The Rangers fought in Mesopotamia for two years and were sent to Palestine in 1918. There they took part in the final advance and fought at the Battle of Sharon (19/20 September 1918). When the War came to an end, the Battalion was quartered in Nazareth. Evidence of the harsh climate conditions and the high incidence of disease suffered by those who served in the East is indicated by the fact that almost a third of the Mayo casualties are listed as 'died', i.e. were not killed in action but probably died of disease.

Brett, Michael, b. Rafnamust, e. Glasgow (Crossmolina), 8076 Pte., d. Egypt, 25/12/18. Formerly 33730 Scottish Rifles.

Boyle, Edward, b. Kilkelly, e. Swinford (Ballyhaunis), 3889 Pte., KIA, F&F, 26/4/15.

Cabry, Patrick, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 6689, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 17/4/16.

Cahill, Martin, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Castlebar), 3433, Pte., KIA, F&F, 19/3/15.

Clarke, John, b. Westport, e. Glasgow (Ballycroy), 8057, Pte., KIA, F&F, 26/4/15.

Gibbons, John, b. Kilcommon, e. Glasgow (Glasgow), 7497, Pte., d. Mesopotamia, 8/7/17.

Griffin, Michael, b. Kilcommon, e. Claremorris (Claremorris), 8216, Pte., d. Egypt, 5/4/19.

Harvey, Patrick, b. Castlebar, e. Ballinasloe (Govan), 8562, Pte., KIA, Egypt, 19/9/18.

Henry, Patrick, b. Ballina, (Ballina), 10161, Pte., KIA, F&F, 23/11/14.

Huddy, Joseph, b. Cong, e. Castlebar (Cong), 3417, Pte., d. Mesopotamia, 16/6/16.

Joyce, Patrick, b. Ballina, e. Bathgate, West Lothian, 1113, Pte., d. Mesopotamia, 15/4/17.

Kelly, Peter, b. Claremorris, e. Tyldesley (Manchester), 6240, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 13/4/16.

Kelly, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4435, Pte., d. India, 29/3/16.

Kennedy, William, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10164, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 21/1/16. Awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Kilgallon, James, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 4140, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 17/4/16.

Kilgallon, Martin, b. Bohola, e. Rotherham (Rotherham), 6693, Pte., d. of w., India, 5/5/16.

King, Michael, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar, 8323, Pte., d. Mesopotamia, 23/5/16.

Lapparth, Michael, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Castlebar), 6668, Pte., d. India, 17/8/14.

Lyons, Edward, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4112, Pte. KIA, F&F, 26/4/15.

McAuliffe, Thomas Vincent, b. Low Park, e. Clonmel (Ballaghaderreen), 10917, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 21/1/16.

McDonnell, Patrick, b. Swinford, e. Swinford (Swinford), 6550, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 11/3/16.³

McFadden, Christopher, b. Castlebar (Castlebar), 10868, L/Cpl., d. Mesopotamia, 28/4/16.

McHale, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Edinburgh (Ballina), 10192, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 21/1/16.

McManus, John, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10804, Pte., KIA, F&F, 17/7/15.

McMullen, Michael, b. Westport, e. Westport (Westport), 6093, Pte., d. of w., Mesopotamia, 2/4/16.

Malley, Hugh, b. Mayo, e. Glasgow (Belmullet), 7874, Pte., KIA, F&F, 14/9/14.

Malone, John, b. Claremorris, e. Ballina (Claremorris), 9423, L/Sgt., KIA, F&F, 26/4/15.

Marley, Samuel, b. Kilmoremy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 5505, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 11/3/16.

Merchant, Patrick, b. Westport, e. Westport (Westport), 4054, Pte., KIA, F&F, 19/3/15.

Mitchell, Patrick, b. Kilmoremy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3877, Cpl., KIA, F&F, 14/3/15.

Murray, Dominick Wilfred, b. Ballina, e. Mullingar (Ballina), 8698, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 21/1/16.

Murray, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Bonnieconlon), 9181, Pte., KIA, F&F, 19/12/14.

O'Donnell, Patrick, b. Kilmanore, e. Warrington (Ballaghderreen), 5043, Pte., d. Mesopotamia, 21/8/17.

Padden, Patrick, b. Belmullet, e. Ballina (Belmullet), 19177, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 28/4/15.

Prendergast, Patrick, b. Ballyhaunis, e. Ballyhaunis, 4200, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 21/1/16.

Quigley, Martin, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3960, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 12/2/15.

Rouse, William, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 6266, Pte., d. India, 8/1/15.
 Ryder, William, b. Ballina, e. Stratford (Ballina), 5229, Pte., KIA, F&F, 15/10/15.
 Scott, John, b. Westport, e. Westport (Westport), 4909, Pte., KIA, F&F, 16/3/15.
 Sweeney, Laurence, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Castlebar), 10039, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 27/4/15.
 Walsh, Francis, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Westport), 10351, Pte., KIA, F&F, 10/4/15.
 Walsh, Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Ballina), 7772, Pte., d. of w., Home, 17/5/16.

The 2nd Battalion, The Connaught Rangers

The 2nd Battalion, the old 94th Foot, was stationed at Aldershot when war broke out. They mobilized immediately and, as part of the 2nd Division, landed in France on 14 August. The Battalion moved up to meet the advancing German Army and made contact on 22 August at Bougnies, near Mons. The first battle casualty in the Connaught Rangers during the 1914-1918 war was Stephen Kennedy from Ballina who died of wounds on 22 August 1914, eight days after landing at Boulogne. The enemy attacked on 23 August and the Rangers began, with the rest of the Old Contemptibles, the harrowing and bloody retreat from Mons. The withdrawal consisted of a series of bitterly-fought rear-guard actions followed by long exhausting marches in an attempt to avoid the pursuing Germans. In one action at Le Grand Fayt, part of the Battalion was cut off and lost 6 officers and 280 men. A number were made prisoner, including the C.O., Lieut. Col. Abercrombie who died as a prisoner of war early in 1915. On 5 September the allied forces halted and counter-attacked. The 2nd Battalion was prominent in pushing back the enemy across the Aisne, but suffered heavy casualties at La Cour de Soupir. In mid-October the Battalion was moved north and took part in the first Battle of Ypres. Over the next few weeks the Rangers were engaged in repelling determined assaults on Ypres by the Germans. The fighting was savage and is reflected in the following list, where so many Mayo men fell in October and November 1914 in front of Ypres. It will be noted that all of the casualties in the 2nd Battalion except one occurred in 1914, in the first four months of the War. By the end of November, the 2nd Battalion, like so many regular battalions in the B.E.F., was a spent force and was amalgamated with the 1st Battalion on December 5, 1914.

Barrett, Anthony, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 3907, Pte., KIA, F&F, 7/11/14.
 Bourke, James, b. Westport, e. Westport (Westport), 10111, Cpl., d. of w., F&F, 18/11/14.
 Collins, Thomas, b. Ballinrobe, e. Galway (Claremorris), 3791, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 13/11/14.
 Convey, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4179, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 22/10/14.

Corley, Timothy, b. Swinford, e. Swinford (Kiltimagh), 3797, Pte., KIA, F&F, 22/12/14.
 Costello, Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 3708, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/11/14.
 Coyle, Francis, b. Belmullet, e. Ballina (Belmullet), 4061, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 6/11/14.
 Cullen, Patrick, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 8403, Pte., KIA, F&F, 25/8/14.
 Cullinane, Michael, b. Ballinrobe, e. Galway (Ballinrobe), 10958, Pte., KIA, F&F, 7/11/14.
 Dunleavy, Anthony, b. Bangor, e. Hamilton (Hamilton), 6464, Pte., KIA, F&F, 19/9/14.
 Farrell, William, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Castlebar), 7786, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 28/10/14.
 Fleming, John, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 3947, Cpl., d. of w., F&F, 13/11/14.
 Forde, John, b. Ballina, e. Glasgow (Ballina), 4055, L/Cpl., KIA, F&F, 28/10/14.
 Gallagher, Michael, b. Foxford, e. Swinford (Bacup, Lancs.), 3790, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/11/14.
 Gannon, Robert, b. Westport, e. Westport (Westport), 8406, Pte., KIA, F&F, 11/11/14.
 Gildea, James, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Castlebar), 7783, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/9/14.
 Goulding, James, b. Ballinrobe, e. Glasgow (Ballyglass), 8196, Pte., KIA, F&F, 14/9/14.
 Grehan, Edward, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Crossmolina), 7754, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/11/14.
 Hopkins, Michael, b. Cong, e. Ballinrobe (Headford), 7279, Pte., KIA, F&F, 29/10/14.
 Kelly, Christopher, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4235, Pte., d., F&F, 10/11/16.
 Kennedy, Stephen, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10691, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 22/8/14.
 McCarthy, Joseph, b. Castlebar, e. (Castlebar), 7760, KIA, F&F, 14/10/14.
 McDermott, Michael, b. Hollymount, e. Castlebar (Hollymount), 6588, Pte., KIA, F&F, 14/9/14.
 Monaghan, Martin, b. Belmullet, e. Dublin (Ballina), 10172, L/Cpl., d. of w., F&F, 25/9/14.
 Moyles, James, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 3479, Pte., KIA, F&F, 2/11/14.
 Mullen, Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Keighley, Yorks.), 7845, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/10/14.
 Murphy, Thomas, b. Westport, e. Westport (Westport), 3919, Pte., KIA, F&F, 1/11/14.
 Murray, Martin, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3929, Pte., KIA, F&F, 23/11/14.
 O'Donnell, Frederick, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 4141, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 6/11/14.

O'Hara, Edward, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4023, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 11/11/14.

O'Hara, Michael, b. Swinford, e. Swinford (Swinford), 3780, Sgt., KIA, F&F, 1/11/14.

Walsh, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 7771, Pte., KIA, F&F, 2/11/14.

Ward, Michael, b. Westport, e. Westport (Westport), 4067, Pte., KIA, F&F, 11/11/14.

The 3rd Battalion, The Connaught Rangers

The 3rd and 4th Battalions were reserve units, stationed in southern Ireland throughout the greater part of the War until both were amalgamated at Dover in 1918. Their function was to train recruits and send them as replacements to the battalions on active service. The casualties listed are men who died 'at home', i.e. in Ireland until the spring of 1918 and thereafter at Dover.

Dolan, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Clonmel (Ballina), 8396, Pte., d. Home, 10/10/18.

McGrail, John, b. Westport, e. Sligo (Westport), 7483, Pte., d. Home, 19/5/18.

McGuigan, Anthony, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 5083, Pte., d. Home, 16/7/15.

Stokes, Francis, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10416, Pte., d. Home, 10/9/14.

The 4th Battalion, The Connaught Rangers

Durkan, John, b. Killala, e. Ballina (Killala), 5552, L/Sgt., d. Home, 22/4/16.

The 5th Battalion, The Connaught Rangers

The 5th Battalion was raised at Galway in the autumn of 1914 and commanded by Lieut. Col. H.F.N. Jourdain, an officer with 21 years' service in the Regiment. The new battalion formed part of the 10th (Irish) Division, which, after initial training in Ireland, moved to Basingstoke, Hampshire in May 1915. From there, the Division went out to Gallipoli where it took part in the Suvla Bay landings on 6 August 1915. 29 Brigade, of which the Rangers formed part, was detached from the Division, landing at Anzac Cove to assist the Australian and New Zealand troops in their attack on the formidable Sari Bair heights. The Battalion played a particularly distinguished part in the operations. On 21 August 1915 they launched a furious bayonet charge against the Turks at Kabak Kuyu. Australian troops who witnessed the charge declared it the finest bayonet attack they had seen during the War. The Turks were redoubtable fighters themselves and contested every yard of ground: the result was heavy casualties on both sides. The 5th Battalion suffered severely in their two attacks on Hill 60, on 21/22 and 27/28 August 1915. Five Mayo men died in these two heroic actions: Tom Bennett (Westport); Pat McHugh (Ballinrobe); Tom Mulderrig (Ballina); Michael Walsh (Kilmovee) and

Tom Walsh (Castlebar). By the 3 September, the 5th Battalion was reduced to 4 officers and 134 men available for duty out of the 25 officers and 749 other ranks who had landed at Anzac Cove less than five weeks previously. On 10 October 1915, the Rangers moved to Salonika where they spent two very uncomfortable years on this bleak and forgotten front. On 6/7 December 1915, the Rangers held on to a mountain position near Kosturino in the face of repeated Bulgarian attacks. The Battalion was forced to withdraw when its ammunition ran out and after suffering 576 casualties. Mayo lost fifteen Rangers in this gallant stand: John Carroll (Turlough); Austin Darcy (Ballyhone); Tim Feeley (Cloonturk); Tom Folliard (Ballyhaunis); Martin Harte (Ballina); Tom Kearney (Killala); John McHugh (Swinford); James McNeela (Achill); Patrick Moran (Kilmeena); Parick Naughton (Ballycroy); James Varley (Cong); Tom Leonard and Patrick Moran. Martin McGinn (Westport) and Michael Rafter (Ballina) died of their wounds a few days later. In September 1917 the 5th Battalion moved to Palestine where it took part in Allenby's advance on Jerusalem. In June 1918 the Rangers were sent to France to fight in the final advance to victory and were engaged in October at Serain and Le Cateau. On Armistice Day the Battalion found itself at Sivry, not far from Mons, where the 2nd Battalion had seen the opening skirmishes of the War.

Barrett, Patrick, b. Attymass, e. Selby (Selby), 7557, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/10/18.

Bennett, Thomas, b. Westport, e. Dublin (Castlebar), 707, Pte., d. of w., Gallipol, 22/8/15.

Burke, David, b. Ballandine, e. Manchester (Salford), 5565, Pte., d. Salonika, 18/6/17.

Carroll, John, b. Turlough, e. Leigh, Lancs. (Leigh), 5800, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Darcy, Austin, b. Ballyhone, e. Birmingham (Birmingham), 3799, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Duffy, John Joseph, b. Rahbane, e. Glasgow (Kinsale), 9650, Pte., KIA, F&F, 9/10/18.

Durkan, John, b. Cloonague, e. Swinford (Cloonague), 6221, Pte., KIA, F&F, 9/10/18.

Farrell, Patrick, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Castlebar), 4284, Pte., d., F&F, 4/11/18.

Feely, Timothy, b. Cloonturk, e. Warrington (Cloonturk), 5262, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Flemming, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 3050, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/10/18.

Folliard, Thomas, b. Ballyhaunis, e. Huddersfield (Ballyhaunis), 6667, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Harte, Martin, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3529, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Higgins, Larry, b. Foxford, e. Shaw, Lancs. (Shaw), 5798, Pte., KIA, F&F, 9/10/18.

Kearney, Thomas, b. Killala, e. Ballina (Carrowmore, Galway), 5385, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Leonard, Thomas, b. Co. Mayo, e. Liverpool (Liverpool), 5182, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Lyden, Michael, b. Westport, e. Edinburgh (Edinburgh), 6259, Pte., KIA, F&F, 9/10/18.

McGinn, Martin, b. Westport, e. Galway (Leeds), 4414, d. of w., Salonika, 10/12/15.

McHugh, John, b. Swinford, e. Galway (Swinford), 5579, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 8/12/15.

McHugh, Patrick, b. Ballinrobe, e. Galway (Ballinrobe), 587, Pte., KIA, Gallipoli, 21/8/15.

McNeela, James, b. Achill, e. Paisley (Paisley), 5660, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Maher, Joseph, b. Castlebar, e. Castlebar (Dublin), 8152, C.S.M., d., Salonika, 3/2/16.

Maughan, John, b. Ballinrobe, e. Boyle, (Boyle), 4788, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/10/18.

Moran, Patrick, b. Co. Mayo, e. Halifax, Yorks. (Rochdale), 5174, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Moran, Patrick, b. Kilmeena, e. Atherton (Tyldesley), 5586, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Mulderrig, Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Leeds (Leeds), 3822, Pte., KIA, Gallipoli, 21/8/15.

Naughton, Patrick, b. Ballycroy, e. Ardrossan (Saltcoats), 5946, L/Cpl., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Rafter, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Hamilton (Ballina), 668, Sgt., d. of w., Salonika, 12/12/15.

Regan, John, b. Ballaghaderreen, e. Longford (Ballaghaderreen), 104, Pte., d. Gallipoli, 26/1/17.³

Carley, James, b. Cong, e. Warrington, (The Neale), 4940, L/Cpl., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Walsh, Michael, b. Kilmovee, e. Warrington (Golborne), 2904, Pte., KIA, Gallipoli, 28/8/15.

Walsh, Thomas, b. Castlebar, e. Liverpool (Castlebar), 951, Pte., d. of w., Gallipoli, 28/8/15.

The 6th Battalion, The Connaught Rangers

The 6th Battalion was raised in 1914 soon after the outbreak of war and Lieut. Col. Lenox-Conyngham of Moneymore, who had joined The Connaught Rangers in 1881, was given command on 10 October 1914. The new battalion trained at Kilworth until August 1915 when it moved as part of the 16th (Irish) Division to Blackdown Camp, Aldershot. The Battalion

went across to France in December 1915 and first saw action in the Loos sector, where it remained until the end of August 1916. It was then moved to the Somme front where the battle, begun on 1 July, was still being waged. The 6th Battalion attacked at Guillemont on 3 September 1916 and suffered heavy casualties. The charge was led by Lieut. Col. Lenox-Conyngham who was killed as he left the trench and Pte. T. Hughes won the V.C. Mayo men, John Anderson (Ballina) and James Tighe (Annagh) died in the attack. Later in the month the Battalion moved up to the Ypres sector and was engaged during the winter of 1916/17 in grim but static trench warfare. On 7 June 1917, the Rangers took part in the successful Battle of Messines and then in August moved down to the Arras front where they were involved in some vigorous action at Tunnel Trench. On 21 March 1918, the Germans launched a massive offensive designed to sweep the Allies back to the coast. The attack, preceded by an intensive barrage and under cover of thick fog, was successful despite the stoic efforts of individual battalions to hold their ground. The Rangers, because of an erroneous order, actually counter-attacked into the full fury of the enemy assault and suffered heavy casualties. The few survivors were then used as a rear-guard at St. Emilie to protect other retiring units. The Rangers then withdrew through Péronne to Bray where the remaining 7 officers and 180 men were formed into two ad hoc Companies. On 31 July, the survivors were sent to the 5th Battalion. The Connaught Rangers 6th Battalion ceased to exist. Nine Mayo men died on the 21 March 1918: Eugene Beirne (Ballina); William Beresford (Castlebar); Patrick Carroll (Killala); John Casey (Glensaul); Mark Fox (Ballinrobe); Joe Gibbons (Keelogue); John Kennedy (Ballina); William McNicholas (Kiltimagh) and Patrick Murray (Foxford).

Anderson, John, b. Ballina, e. Glasgow (Ballina), 4888, Pte., KIA, F&F, 3/9/16.

Beirne, Eugene, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Galway), 3959, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Bennett, Francis, b. Westport, e. Westport (Glasgow), 4008, Pte., d., F&F, 6/8/17.

Beresford, William, b. Castlebar, e. Swinford (Castlebar), 8195, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Berry, William, b. Mayo, e. Glasgow (Glasgow), 6934, Pte., KIA, F&F, 19/2/17.

Broderick, Henry, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 5934, Pte., KIA, F&F, 9/3/17.

Carroll, Patrick, b. Killala, e. Ballina (Killala), 6366, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Carroll, Thomas, b. Bohola, e. Liverpool (Bohola), 4214, Cpl., d. of w., F&F, 12/6/17.

Casey, John, b. Glensaul, e. Glasgow (Glasgow), 7489, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Connolly, Robert, b. Ballaghaderreen, e. Boyle (Ballaghaderreen), 11155, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.³

Corcoran, Patrick, b. Balla, e. Earlstown, Lancs. (Newtown-le-Willows), 5991, Pte., d., F&F, 7/9/18.

Escott, John, b. Claremorris, e. Castlereagh (Claremorris), 11271, Pte., d., F&F, 3/8/18.

Feerick, William, b. Ballinrobe, e. Ballinrobe (Ballinrobe), 2929, Pte., KIA, F&F, 23/3/18.

Ferguson, Patrick, b. Kilmoremoy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4175, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Fox, Mark, b. Ballinrobe, e. Ballinrobe (Ballinrobe), 11177, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Frain, Thomas, b. Doogerri, e. (Birmingham), 7267, Pte., KIA, F&F, 9/9/16.

Gallagher, James, b. Achill, e. Galway (Achill), 4756, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/2/18. Formerly 23687 South Wales Borderers.

Gallagher, Joseph, b. Achill Sound, e. Greenock (Greenock), 4057, Pte., KIA, F&F, 11/8/17. Awarded the Military Medal.

Gibbons, Joseph, b. Keologues, e. Dublin (Castlebar), 8192, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Grehan, Joseph, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 5532, Pte., KIA, F&F, 23/3/16.

Henry, Michael, b. Swinford, e. Middlesborough (Stockton-on-Tees), 2609, Pte., KIA, F&F, 5/2/16.

Kennedy, John, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3811, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Langley, Francis, b. Foxford, e. Ballina (Foxford), 6494, Pte., d., F&F, 14/6/18.

Leonard, Francis, b. Swinford, e. Ballina (Ballina), 5762, Cpl., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Leonard, James, b. Co. Mayo, e. Galway (Charlestown), 5874, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Lyons, John, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 280, Cpl., d., Home, 4/4/15.

Lyons, Timothy, b. Castlebar, e. Galway (Castlebar), 4215, L/Cpl., KIA, F&F, 13/5/16.

McHale, John, b. Killala, e. Ballina (Killala), 6373, Pte., KIA, F&F, 7/1/17.

McIntyre, James, b. Newport, e. Manchester (Stretford), 6237, Pte., KIA, F&F, 11/1/17.

McLoughlin, Thomas, b. Kilmoremoy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 11153, Pte., KIA, F&F, 9/9/16.

McNicholas, William, b. Co. Mayo, e. Warrington (Kiltimagh), 1574, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Murray, Patrick, b. Foxford, e. Ballina (Foxford), 3974, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Neilon, Anthony, b. Ballina, e. Jarrow (Jarrow), 7365, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Rowan, James Patrick, b. Straid, e. Manchester (Manchester), 2629, Pte., KIA, F&F, 31/1/17.

Sweeney, Michael, b. Mayo, e. London (Castlebar), 7085, Pte., KIA, F&F, 17/8/16.

Sweeney, Owen, b. Kilmoremoy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4091, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Tighe, James, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3769, L/Cpl., KIA, F&F, 3/9/16.

Treston, Michael, b. Annagh, e. Galway (Ballyhaunis), 3987, Pte., d. of w., Home, 18/9/16.

Walsh, Michael, b. Kiltimagh, e. Dewsbury (Dewsbury), 5813, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Notes

1. *Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919, Part 69, The Connaught Rangers*, HMSO, (London, 1921).
2. Lieut. Col. H.N.F. Jourdain, C.M.G., and Edward Fraser: *The Connaught Rangers*, 3 vols., RUSI, (London, 1924-1928).
3. The last allied troops left Gallipoli on 9 January 1916. Did John Regan die as a prisoner of war or is there an error of either date or place in the entry? Ballagherreen names have been included because the town formed part of Co. Mayo until 1898, and it is more than likely that these men were, in fact, born Mayo men.

Note from author: The official casualty list which I have used contains minor errors, but I haven't corrected anything. Some of the place-names may be wrongly spelt – this is because they were taken from (sometimes illiterate) soldier's enlistment forms. I'm hoping that any descendants of the casualties will correct or even add to the official lists.

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PREHISTORIC COOKING IN CO. MAYO

Victor M. Buckley and Christy Lawless

Ireland is a country rich in archaeological remains. At present it has been estimated that there may be as many as 80,000 monuments extant within the Republic,¹ but with the increasing information from intensive field survey and aerial photography,² this would appear to be a conservative figure.

Mayo, the third largest county in Ireland, with a total of 1,381,088 acres in extent, is particularly well-endowed with sites, not having suffered the depredations of the prairie-farming of the eastern tillage counties. Although an extensive survey of the archaeology of Mayo has yet to be carried out, it is thought that up to 5,500 sites remain in the county. Particularly numerous are the 'upland sites', which are those above the 400' contour. In this area the temperature is lower and the rainfall higher than on lower land. It was attractive to the earliest farmers because the tree cover was lighter than on the heavier soils, the temperature at that time was higher than today, and the blanket bog had not yet grown. Because of these factors we find the earliest remains in these areas.³ The blanket bog in Co. Mayo has preserved vast areas of this prehistoric landscaping intact, sealed in a time-capsule of peat.⁴

The most conspicuous monument in the landscape is the ringfort, often known locally as a 'fairy fort' or 'raheen'. These are the remains of Early Christian farmsteads dating from c. 400-1100 A.D. Also easily recognised are the megalithic tombs, colloquially 'Druids' altars' or 'Diarmuid and Gráinne's beds', dating from the Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages.⁵ However, in the last few years a little known and barely



Typical horseshoe-shaped mound of a Fulacht Fiadh (Plate 1).

recognisable site-type has been the focus of much attention for prehistorians. These are known as *fulachta fiadh* or 'burnt mounds', and are ancient cooking-sites. Fulachta fiadh if found in perfect condition, can be recognised as small horseshoe-shaped mounds (Plate 1) of fire-cracked stone and charcoal, usually found in low-lying areas of boggy ground or beside small streams. The average size of a fulacht fiadh is from 5 m – 17 m in diameter, and 50 cm – 2 m high, but more frequently due to erosion they appear as very low irregular grassy areas in otherwise boggy soil. If ploughed-out in the past they will appear as black patches of soil with a slight scattering of burnt stones. Mayo, until the winter of 1986, appeared to have only two examples of these, at Dooras td. near Balla,⁶ and another near Ballina,⁷ but this picture was soon to change.

In October 1986, Mr. Christy Lawless of Turlough, Castlebar reported a small group of fulachta fiadh in the townlands of Lack East and Cashel Upper, parish of Turlough, which were in danger from a drainage project. Within a few months, due to his interest and perseverance, Mr. Lawless had located 120 fulachta fiadh in this one parish. The largest concentration of sites, 20 in all, is situated along the line of a small stream, some 350 metres long, which forms the boundary between the townlands of Lack East and West on its Western side and Cashel Upper and Lower to the East. Some of the sites, which can be seen in section because of the realignment of the stream to form a drainage channel, are covered by a depth of up to a metre of peat – evidence of their extreme antiquity. In one of the examples, the pit of the fulacht can be seen in section (Plate 2), filled with the debris of cracked stones, charcoal and burnt hazelnut shells.



Fulacht 11, cut by drain revealing pit (Plate 2).

The discovery of these previously unknown sites is interesting in itself – but how were they used, by whom and when, and more to the point – why are they of such importance to archaeologists?

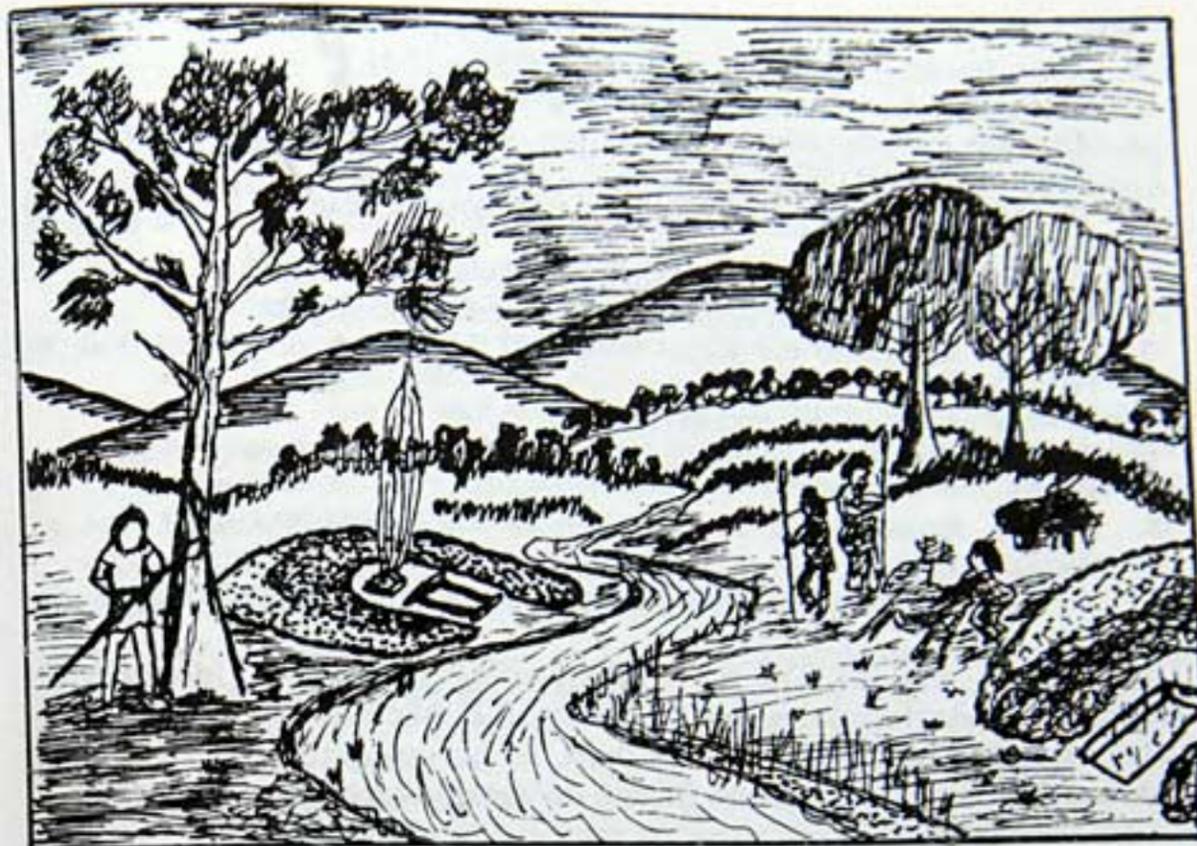
The early Irish literature records the use of this type of site, and in *Cormac's Glossary*⁸ they are referred to as 'fulacht fianse' – 'cooking place of the roving huntsman'. This association with the mythical Fianna of Fionn mac Cumhaill is compounded in Keating's *Forus Feasa ar Éirinn*⁹ at a later date.

... Agua is é gnáthughadh do bhíodh aca gach sealg do-níthí leo ar maidin do chur timcheall meadhóin laoi leis an ngiollanraidh go tulaigh d'áirithe mar a mbídís i gcomhgar choille agus riasca agus teinnté treathanmhóra d'adhnadh ann, agus dá chlais talmhan do dhéanamh san riasc i gcriaidh bhuidhe, agus iomad do chlochaibh eimhir do chur san teinidh, agus cuid don fheolmhach do chur ar bearaibh da bruith ris an dteinidh, agus cuid oile dhi do cheangal i ndlaoithibh seasca lé suagánaibh agus a cur da bearbhadh san chlais fá mó don dá chlais, agus bheith ag biathadh na gcloch do bhíodh san teinidh orra, go mbeantaoi fiucha minic asta go beith bearbhtha dhóibh. Agus do bhíodh do mhéid na dteinnté-se go bhfuilid a láithreacha dubhloiscithe i mórán d'áitibh i nÉirinn aníú, agus is díobh ghairmid na criadhaireadha Fulacht Fian aníú.

... And it was their custom to send their attendants about noon with whatever they had killed in the morning's hunt to an appointed hill, having wood and moorland in the neighbourhood, and to kindle raging fires thereon and put into them a large number of emery stones; and to dig two pits in the yellow clay of the moorland, and put some of the meat on spits to roast before the fire; and to bind another portion of it with suagans in dry bundles, and set it to boil in the larger of the two pits and keep plying them with the stones that were in the fire, making them seethe often until they were cooked. And these fires were so large that their sites are today in Ireland burnt to blackness, and these are now called Fulacht Fian by the peasantry.

Excavation of a few selected examples of fulachta fiadh have found Keating's description of the method of use to have been basically sound. Firstly a pit was dug into the ground, and in some cases a wooden trough was then placed into it. This was then filled with water and a hearth built nearby. Stones were heated till red-hot on the hearth and then tipped into the water. Experiments have shown that 100 gallons of water can be brought to the boil in 30-35 minutes by this means.¹⁰ A leg of mutton wrapped in straw (suagans), to keep the meat free from contamination by grit and to prevent charring, was then immersed in water. Tests have shown that it takes 20 minutes per lb. and 20 minutes over to cook to perfection in this way. The discarding of the fire-cracked stones on three sides of the trough, allowing one side free for access, gives rise to the characteristic horseshoe-shape of the mounds (Figure 1).

The excavated sites have produced a range of dates from 2000 B.C. –



Reconstruction of typical Fulacht Fiadh in use in the Bronze Age.

1200 A.D., but the bulk of sites seem to be from 1400 B.C. – 500 B.C. i.e. Bronze Age in date. A recent example at Curraghtarsna, Co. Tipperary gave a C¹⁴ date of 1170 ± 35 B.C.¹¹ Finds from fulachta fiadh are extremely rare, as are animal bones, but this can best be explained by the ravages of wild animals or the hunting dogs which would have carried off any vestiges of animal carcasses. The site at Fooras td., near Balla, was remarkable in that it produced an expanded dress-fastener of the type known as a 'fibula', dating to the late Bronze Age.

The study of prehistory in Ireland has been dominated by the concentration on graves and grave-goods, partly because of the conspicuous nature of the field monuments, and partly because of the finds, which provide a dating framework in a period lacking in the historical record. However, to look more deeply into everyday life in prehistory we must examine the everyday sites, such as fulachta fiadh. It is an interesting thought that one dies and is buried/cremated but once; but for the average Bronze Age person, if they ate a cooked meal but once a day between the ages of 3 and 33, they would have eaten 10,950 'fulachtadh' dinners. It is with this in mind that we must look to settlements associated with the fulachta fiadh for pointers to everyday life in Irish prehistory, and the authors seek any further details of unlocated sites known to the reader with this view in end.

Notes

1. V. M. Buckley, *Seirbhís Phoiblí*, viii (1987), pp 17-21.
2. G. Barrett, *Aerial Archaeology*, vi (1981), pp 27-38.
3. *Farming and the Historic Landscape*, Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland (1986), p.6.
4. A. Halpin, *Preliminary Survey of Archaeological Material from Peatlands* (1985).
5. *Survey of the Megalithic Tombs of Ireland*, Vol. 2, Co. Mayo (1964).
6. Ó Riordáin, *Antiquities of the Irish Countryside* (1953), p.44.
7. O'Kelly, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 84 (1954), p. 151.
8. *Cormac's Glossary*, ed. Stokes (1868), p. 69.
9. Keating, *Forus Feasa ar Éirinn*, ed. Dineen, (Irish Texts Society 1908), ii, pp 328-9.
10. O'Kelly, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 84 (1954), p. 121.
11. V. M. Buckley, 'Curraghtarsna', *Current Archaeology*, 98 (1985).

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KILMEENA – Part 3

by Jarlath Duffy

Part I

Famine was never very far away from the people of Kilmeena during the nineteenth century. Writing in 1848 the Rev. Thomas Hardiman painted a dismal picture to Archbishop Murray of Dublin:

This most afflicted parish has not got a pound during this year though my neighbours have been in many instances enriched by your bounty. . . I shall not trouble you with a detailed history of our frightful state at present. But this I shall say that from the first day of the famine to this, I saw no such appalling scenes of destitution nor so universal as I am doomed to witness here now every day. . . the abomination of desolation. . . We have seven thousand human beings starving – most of them naked. . .¹

Martin Manning recalling what his parents told him, wrote in the 1930s the following account of the famine:

. . . it was only getting on for Christmas that the people noticed the potatoes getting black or rotting in the pits. They began to change them from pit to pit trying to save them. . . until at last the clay fell in and all was lost. . .

The people were advised by the clergy not to trust the potato anymore but to grow turnips and grain crops, which they did and the turnip became the staple food for a time. . .

In this part of the parish around Carrowholly the land was suitable for wheat and barley, which after selling enough to pay the rent left a little over for food which they got milled at Knappagh. Now the people who attended the mill should be sure to take it home at midday, or it would be taken from them and even then they travelled in considerable strength. . .

Shellfish were used in great numbers which caused many deaths by. . . dysentery. . . The nettle was cut up and boiled with a little oatmeal. . . The dockleaves were also used. . .

There were few evictions because 75% of the householders had no land at all; they lived by labour at building Westport and laying out the Demesne. . . Some sailed from Pigeon Point. . . some went to the workhouse. . . a fair contingent went to the Colony of Achill. . .

Fr. Tom Hardiman got all the Relief Schemes in the parish in working order, the making of roads. . .

The workmen got 4d. a day and the gangers 8d. . .

The burials from the Workhouse when the tumbling-cart and the bottomless coffin were in use. . .²

The same tale of woe was once more a reality in 1879 and 1880 when the crops again failed. The Kilmeena Sub-Committee of the Duchess of Marlborough's Relief Fund for Westport Union was formed in 1880 under the Chairmanship of Rev. Mr. O'Donnell, P.P. Other members of the Kilmeena Local Committee of the above Fund were:

Secretary: W. D. Wallace, Farmer, Buckfield.
Treasurer: Michael Duffy, Farmer and Postmaster, Carabeg.
Committee members: Rev. Robert Ruddick, Incumbent, Rusheen Lodge.
 Martin Moloney, Rossbeg House, Kilmeena, Westport.
 William Browne, Farmer, Dringarriff, Kilmeena.
 Hugh O'Donnell, Farmer, Carabeg, Kilmeena.
 Peter McNamee, Farmer, Castleaffy, Kilmeena.
 John Lyons, Farmer, Ballinlough, Kilmeena.
 Austin Staunton, Farmer, Dringarriff, Kilmeena.
 Richard Gibbons, Farmer, Rosssduane, Kilmeena.
 John Duffy, Farmer, Clooneen, Kilmeena.
 Edward O'Malley, Farmer, Knockboy, Kilmeena.
 Patrick McKay, Farmer, Rosssduane, Kilmeena.
 Patrick Fleming, Farmer, Buckfield, Kilmeena.
 Thomas Nolan, Farmer, Claggan, Kilmeena.
 Austin Gibbons, Farmer, Rusheen, Kilmeena.

The causes of the destitution were in their opinion as follows – small farmers and labourers, failure of crops, high rents and want of employment. From grants of over £37 they had assisted in meal for food about 400 families numbering 2,000 persons.³

In February 1880 Mr. Wallace reported that 1,040 families or 5,714 persons had been relieved and continued:

... a great many more seeking and requiring assistance. Kilmaclasser is called the Half-Parish of Kilmeena. . . parts of it being a long distance from this. . . Committee. . . and as we find it inconvenient to work the 2 together we would respectfully ask the Mansion House Committee to separate Kilmeena from Kilmaclasser. . .⁴

The Rev. Cather of Westport supported this request as Kilmaclasser was part of his parish the Union of Westport.

There are 263 families (tenants and sub-tenants) in Kilmaclasser comprising about 1,400 persons. A large number of these go habitually for employment to England but this year returned without money saved there and are now struggling with want.⁵

The Fahy Relief Committee at its first meeting spoke of the great destitution existing amongst the people holding each 10 acres. . . of mountain and poor land. . .

The members of the committee were as follows:

Rev. M. O'Donnell, P.P., Rev. Archdeacon Cather, Dr. Allman, Patrick O'Donnell, John Reidy, Michael Gallagher, John Boyle, Patrick Corcoran, Hugh O'Donnell, Robert Brewster, Thomas McDonnell. Solomon O'Boyle from Derryribbeen was the Secretary.⁶

By June of 1880 the situation was desperate. Fr. James Heaney wrote from Kilmeena to the Mansion House Relief Fund Committee:

... The Kilmeena Committee is without funds. . . The people are in utter despair. . . I have been in 3 different parishes since Christmas. In none is there distress as intense and general as here. In Kilmeena all but a few are on relief. . . They depended almost entirely on oyster drudging. Each family used to make over £30 or £40 yearly. For the past 3 years they are deprived of this means of livelihood as the oyster beds were so impoverished that the Board of Fisheries ordered them to be closed. . . There are about 20 inhabited islands in the parish with a population over 70 families. They are very poor, destitute and wretched as they also depended much on oyster drudging and fishing. . . They have got no meal or anything else from the gunboats which were supposed to supply the islands. It is pitiful to see them coming from the different islands with their boats for 2 or 3 stone Indian meal and often disappointed. . .

They were granted a further £30. Kilmaclasser fared no better. Some of the people became so emaciated that those who knew them intimately could scarcely recognise them. Only for the kindness of Mr. Livingstone deaths would have taken place.⁷

Relief works were confined in the Kilmeena area to the repair of about 3 miles of country by-roads. The poor law relief was not sufficient for the maintenance of the district without other aid. The Rev. Cather sought 90 pairs of shoes for impoverished Kilmaclasser persons. Mr. Deane inspecting for the Duchess of Marlborough reported 'Kilmaclasser is a most wretched village'. 495 stone of Indian meal was distributed as follows:

94 families got 7 stone each
 95 families got 2 stone each
 23 persons got 1 stone each

Even the weather was unkind with heavy rains in July putting back the harvesting of the potatoes by two weeks. Some of the poor were forced to eat their crops before they were ready. Fr. Heavy saw the signs of a second famine:

'I have heard tales that would turn my hair grey had I not been able to assist them a little. . .⁸

Later in another appeal to the Mansion House Committee he states: 'Members have also come to me to have their bed clothes and clothing redeemed from the pawnbroker. . . compelled to pawn their clothing to support the human frame. . .'⁹

Father John Philibin, Curate of Kilmeena, writing in the 1940s, gives an account of the effect of famine and evictions on the population of the villages of Kilmeena and Fahy as he was told it by the people. What follows is a summary of his story.

In the bad times no families were evicted from Mucklagh. . . A man, named Peter Joyce left Mucklagh and went to America. So did Richard Mayberry. In the old times, Knockasprocha was an exceptionally large village but now its many dwellings are in ruin; several of them quite

vanished while the dwellers are long since gone to lands beyond the sea and their names still remembered in the locality. About 30 families left in the old days; eleven were evicted when the crowbar brigade visited the place, put the people from their homes and knocked down their dwellings. The evicted families went to America. Three families went to Mucklagh – John Cannon, Patrick Joyce and Charles Cannon. The following emigrated to America – Martin Rooney, Martin Grogery, Martin Sweeney and Michael Toole. Coolbareen was once a large village but had been cleared by Sempson, a man of Scottish nationality, who had Barley Hill house erected. Four families were evicted from Barley Hill. North of the old National School in Carrowholly there once stood a great village of some forty dwellings or more. There was a village at Rosslea. All the people of these villages went either to England or to America. In the old times an emigrant boat sailed from Pigeon Point or from Derinish Island. The people of the old hamlet of Derrynaraff possessed little or no land but got employment from the Marquis of Sligo. Rosmindle suffered from evictions and the peoples of this village endured much in the Famine of 1846 and 1847. The Casey and Nolan families left for America from Inishlyre. John Casey had been evicted but kept by his brother-in-law for one night and the landlord imposed a penal fine on the one who gave the shelter.

In the old times there were 15 or 16 families living in Drumgariff. The following emigrated to America – McDonaghs (2 families), O'Malleys, Mrs. Brown and Mulryans. The evictions took place in 1882. On the north side of Drumgariff Hill is a small plot of ground known locally as 'Logán na Marbh' where people were buried during the Famine and later this plot was the burial place for unbaptised infants. The people of Rose Hill were poor and needy and gradually emigrated. A family of Brownes went to America. Two families of the name Gibbons were evicted and they came to live in Knockanuisce.

Four families emigrated from the village of Roscahill. Thomas and Christopher Russell and the McNally and Joyce families went to America. A family of Morans went to England. No evictions took place in this village but there were a few in Castleaffy. In penal times families here were rendered homeless. Three families of the name Gibbons left and went to America; a family of Joyces and a family of Gibbons left and went to America; a family of Joyces and a family of Gibbons went to England. There had been two traditional sayings in the Castleaffy district namely, 'a time will come when there will be a good harvest but there will be no one to reap it' and 'the value of food and money will change so much that a man having a bag of meal would not exchange it for a bag of gold'. In the old times Gubbathick was a large village but many emigrated in 1847; among them a family of Hobans who went to America.

Six families left Claggan and some of these went to America including a family of Corrigans. Adjoining Claggan is Ardkeen, once a very large village but owing to need and necessity twenty-eight families left; some to

America and some to England or Scotland. Amongst the families emigrating were – Morans, Gavins, Nolans, Ryders and Reillys. Some evictions also took place. There is no trace now of the abodes of the once great village of Roskeeran from whence thirty-eight families emigrated.

Moyna was once very populated but the land was given to men who were known as graziers. Up to 1882 there had been a number of small habitations or cottages in Carrowbeg. The following dwelt there – John Chambers, Paddy Burke, Michael Moran, Ned Walsh, Dominick Mylotte, Thomas Moran and Mrs. O'Donnell (who had a shop). The first five aforementioned have died out. Thomas Moran went to Roscommon. In one of the cottages there was a shebeen. Once there were fifteen habitations in Clooneen. Long since vanished are Patrick Toole, Paddy Ryder (weaver), James Tunney, James Mooney, John Moran and McNally. The ruins of their humble abodes are not to be seen. There had never been a large village in Sprighill – sometimes partly flooded in bad weather. Fr. Thomas Hardiman quoted above lived here. In 1882 Mr. James Hawkshaw got possession of the Hardiman's farm. In the old bygone days a man named Bartholomew Cornfield, another named Haunagher and a weaver called Purcell lived in Sprighill.

Drunagh, an ancient village situated on an inlet, once had 12 families nearly all of whom were Geraghtys. Six families went to America – 4 Geraghtys, O'Malleys and Morans. Ross had 15 dwelling houses in ancient times but 3 families – O'Malleys, Joyces and Nolans, went to America and one, Keanes, to England during the years 1865 to 1881. Once Denis Sheridan, Peter Grady, Thomas Reilly and John Carty lived there. No evictions took place in this village. Cushalogart was never a big village. 2 families of Flynns and Greevys went to Chicago. Once a Patrick Gannon lived there.

Rosduane was once like a little town. In 1873 there were more than 28 families living there, but in 1847 it is claimed that there were 75 families living there. In the old times, the following were domiciled there – Edward Walsh, Peter O'Flynn, Michael Lavelle, Richard Gibbons, Edward O'Flynn, Paddy Corcoran, John Quinn, Hugh Feehan, Michael Gibbons, Naven, Millets, Affy Ruddy, Patrick Moran, William Walsh, James Burke, Edward Kenning, Patrick Kenning, Joseph Kenning, Michael Walsh, John Corcoran, Michael McKay, Denis Munnely, Patrick McKay, Anthony Mulroy and Shiels, most of whom had families. It must have been difficult for this large number of families to provide themselves with the mere necessities of life, not to speak of ordinary comforts. Many went to England and America. Shiels, Millets Walshes and a family of Kennings went to America. A shoemaker and two seamstresses of the name Munnely lived in Rosduane. Many people were changed to Rossow about the year 1916. Rossow had been cleared in the old times by Sir Richard O'Donnell and his agent Bridger, and there had been a little plantation of Scotsmen there – Ormes, Aitkens, Dick, Rose and Sprole. Knocknabola

once had sixteen families but eight families emigrated, most to the U.S.A. including Flynns, McManus, McKay, Duggan, Moran, Garavan, Nolan and Mullee. Once there was almost a complete clearance of this village through evictions. In the old times Michael and Connor Shiels, John and Michael Forrestal had their abodes in Roslaher, which now belongs to Ross House, the residence of the O'Malley family.

Once 20 families resided in Gortawarla but many left for America to better themselves e.g. the Morans, Walshs, Jordans, McLoughlins and O'Donnells. Shandrum once boasted of 11 families but evictions and emigration took its toll. Sheridans, Lavelles, Tunneys, O'Donnells and O'Malleys emigrated to England or Scotland or America. Paddy Fadian was a tailor there. In 1862 many evictions took place. Roemore once had six families but Sheridans and Derrigs emigrated to America. Ten families endured much hardship in Cultaroe in ancient times. Evictions took place here too. Families once living in this village were Ryans, Morans, O'Donnells, Reidys, Quinns, Davitts, Sammons and Gibbons.

Drumhuskert is an antiquated and old-fashioned village from whence in the bad times a family of Ruddys was evicted. Hobans and Morans were evicted from Knockboy. A large-scale eviction took place in Ruagh. As one family was unable to pay the rent to the landlord (Lord Lucan), all the tenants were evicted amongst whom were Carneys, O'Neills, Joyces and Stauntons.

James Dooher was evicted from Cross and went to live in Croy. Two families – Burns and Maguires – went from Drimard to America. Garavans and Carolans emigrated from Cross to America. The names of the old families of Buckfield were O'Malleys, Flemings, Flynns and Gibbons. The Feehan family are an old resident family. Walter Wallace, Secretary of the Committee in 1880 lived in this village. Three families – McDonaghs, O'Malleys and Faheys left Ballour and went to America.

It is stated that in 1846, a girl was found dead of hunger on the road to Buckfield. A man returning from Mass died on Mayour Hill and was buried there. A large flag-stone was put over his grave. Another man arriving in Buckfield had no food for a long time but got a meal in the home of Patrick Gill and fainted and diéd.

In the days of yore the people of Kilmaclasser endured more than the majority of the people in Myna. Throughout Fahy are a number of little gardens which are the only traces of houses of former days, while the stones of those houses, long since vanished, are in walls and cast about here and there. There is little evidence of emigration or evictions in Ballinlough, Tawneyemon, Rushbrook, Ballincarriga, Ballyglass, Ballintleva and Slingane, although many families must have left.

Famine times halved the families in Derryribbeen. Brownes, Hollands, Walshes and O'Connors went to England. Some evictions also took place here. Mr. T. W. O'Boyle, who taught in Fahy School in 1873, was born in this village and in 1883 he emigrated to America. He wrote a

little book of poems entitled *The Western Rover*. Two families of Cawleys left Derrynaknock and went to America. Cusacks, Duffys and Cookes went to England, Walshes to Scotland. Once two shoemakers, a blacksmith, a tailor and a weaver lived in this village. From Easbridge went McLoughlins and Horkins families to America and Stoneys to England. Once there were sixty families in Derrynumera but evictions were carried out. The impoverished families emigrated to Great Britain and America. There is a little cemetery on the north-west side of the village where famine victims were buried.

In the old days Brockagh was a large village, with both corn and flax mills. A field nearby is called the 'bleach green'. There was also a pound for the seized animals of the poor who failed to pay their rents and the bailiff once resided there. There was once forty dwellings in Aughagowla but many left, being forced to do so in the cruel days of landlordism on a morning in the month of December. These evictions were followed by similar evictions in Fahy.

Gurtheen is another village that suffered from emigration. Morans and Rowans left Gurtheen and went to America. Likewise a family of Craddocks left Drimgar and went to America in 1884.

II

From an examination of the records of the Church of Ireland in relation to Kilmeena, it appears that the church in Carrowholly was in use right up to the 1920s and that the church in Buckfield ceased to be used around 1887, while the church and school-house at Slingane opened around 1820 and thrived for over a hundred years. Some of the following references throw some light on the history of those churches from the nineteenth century:

- 1812 Wm. O'Malley born to Sir Samuel O'Malley, Rosehill.
- 1826 Kilmaclasser Church is painted.
- 1835 Church at Buckfield erected.
- 1847 Church at Carrowholly opened.
- 1857 Richard Ormsby and Mary Cleary, daughter of Patrick, lodging-housekeeper, both from Rusheen, married in Carrowholly Church.
- 1878 Rev. R. Geddes holds service in Kilmeena Church. Congregation fluctuates from 7 to 33.
- 1879 Alfred Ruddock born to Rector Robert, Carrowholly.
- 1881 Robert Fitzsimons and A. Ormsby (Daughter of Schoolmaster Richard) married in Carrowholly.
- 1883 First proposal to join Kilmeena with the Parish of Aughaval (which included Kilmaclasser and Knappagh and Louisburgh).
- 1884 Church at Carrowholly enlarged and re-opened.

- 1886 Sarah Taylor born to Henry and Sarah, Carrowholly Lodge.
- 1888 Schoolhouse erected at Slingane.
- 1889 109 children present at Fete in Rectory. A brake was sent to Rosmoney for the coastguard children. First weekly Evening Service in Slingane Church.
- 1892 Canon Hannay comes to Westport and holds services in Carrowholly and Slingane.
- 1904 Last entry for baptisms in Carrowholly Church Register
- 1913 Parishes of Aughaval and Kilmeena amalgamated.
- 1917 Last entry for marriages in Carrowholly register. Matilda Taylor, Carrowholly, daughter of Excise Officer, marries Fred Moore from Castlebar, schoolmaster.
- 1921 Sgt. Callinan buys old schoolhouse in Carrowholly.
- 1923 Service held in Carrowholly and Slingane up to end of July.
- 1936 (Jan): No service held in Slingane because of heavy snow.
- 1945 Last reference to service at Slingane.
- 1949 Decision to demolish Carrowholly Church taken.
- 1957 Carrowholly loses licence for marriages.

III

In the old days there was a rather brisk trade carried on between western European countries and the West of Ireland. In the eighteenth century Newport Harbour was an important trading port. Measures were taken against smuggling. Coastguard stations were erected on Inishoo and Inishgowla. From the 1840s trade in Newport declined and Westport harbour gradually took over. New coastguard stations were erected on Inishlyre and Pigeon Point. Later in 1880 the coastguard station at Rosmoney (employing twelve) was erected and the ones at Inishlyre and Pigeon Point closed. The coastguard station at Rosmoney closed in 1922.

The following description of Westport Bay was given in 1893:

... a shallow inlet. . . principal entrance between Inishgort lighthouse and Dorinish Bay, a long spit of shingle and stones nearly covered at high water, that extends from the conspicuous little island of Dorinishmore, to within a quarter of a mile of Inishgort lighthouse. The channel is well-defined by the lighthouse on its north side, and by a black conical buoy on its south side, moored on the north-west projection of Dorinish bar, in 3 fathoms at low water, with Inishgort lighthouse bearing E by N $\frac{1}{4}$ N, a little over 2 cables distant.

Inishlyre harbour where vessels of too great depth to go up the Quay of Westport usually discharge their cargoes. . . has the advantage of easy communication with the town by land. . . Vessels may lie at one cable from it in 20 feet at low water, perfectly sheltered against all winds and sea; and it has a good bend for careening.¹³



Coastguard Station, Rosmoney.



Coastguard Station, Pigeon Point.

- 1840 Pigeon Point Station was financed by Mr. Hildebrand – the agent of the local landlord.
- 1850 Stores supplied to Inishlyre and Inishgowla and Pigeon Point. Houses to be built at Moynish for crew.
- 1850 McNamee's Carrowholly watch-house approved.
- 1851 Compensation sought for cottages built at Pigeon Point by Thomas Gill.
- 1852 Moynish proposed coastguard station.
- 1853 Letter from London to coastguard – strictly confidential – '... reason to suspect that snuff and tobacco stalk. . . about to be imported under denomination of Bone Dust',
Inishlyre Chief Boatman and 6 others.
Pigeon Point Chief Boatman and 5 others.
- 1854 Road completed to Flagstaff at Inishlyre by Mr. John Gibbons.
- 1880 Report of 'no seizures' as 'not sufficient grounds that any successful runs of smuggled goods have been affected within the limits of this port. . .'
Norwegian vessel with cargo of indian corn from Philadelphia boarded at Inishlyre Bay in consequence of the disturbed state of the country, with a view to prevent any illegal importation of arms into the district.
- 1881 Depression in trade reported – a bad year for the country is a good year for the port.
- 1883 Bernard McNamee, Carrowholly, glutman, seeks retiring allowance having been in charge of watch-house since 1837.
18 sheep from Scotland the property of Messrs. Crawford, Crea and Foy landed.
- 1884 Report of passengers taken on board at a distance of 12 miles from Westport.
- 1892 Report on Inishlyre states that all vessels bound for Westport discharge there.¹⁴
- 1898 Advertisement in local paper–
The Seaside 28 August 1898.
To let by week. . . a number of houses by the sea, commanding a charming view of Clew Bay. . . at Pigeon Point.
. . . a boat will be provided for the accommodation of tenants. Plenty of turf, best spring water, fresh eggs, milk, butter and veg available. A car will visit Pigeon Point twice a week with all kinds of groceries. . .
. . . apply
Ellen Gill, Pigeon Point, Westport.¹⁵
- 1902 John McNamee takes over on death of father.
Rosminey Lodge with 7 days licence is to let.

- 1904 Last foreign vessel discharged at Inishlyre.¹⁶
- 1922 Rosmoney Coastguard station now vacant used as temporary jail in Civil War.
- 1926 Minister of Fisheries attends special meeting in Westport to discuss the establishment of a Fishery School at Rosmoney Coastguard station. Excellent market in Central Europe for fish. Also present among the 'eager energetic fishermen' were Peter McHale, Rosmindle, Thomas Gavin, Kilmeena, John Joyce, Drimgarve. Proposal gets careful consideration but nothing materialises.¹⁷

Other developments in the Kilmeena area include the canals undertaken by the Board of Works which took over from the Board of Navigation in 1832, and the laying of the Railway from Westport to Newport in the 1890s. A by-pass of Westport which would facilitate traffic from the Rosbeg area into Westport as well, was discussed on many occasions by elected representatives. Flushed with a sense of their newly found powers the local councillors debated a roadway through Westport Demesne leading to Carrowholly and drew up many plans, but all came to nought in 1926 when the solicitor for the owner warned of trespass in the local newspaper, which lamented that the wishes of the people were not followed.¹⁸ Somewhat similar controversy raised its head in the 1960s, and once more there was division among the local people on the route the proposed roadways might take. Far from an ideal roadway is the present Golf Club Road!

IV

Seán McDermott it is reliably reported, once told Michael Kilroy that in Fenian times Tiernaur and Kilmeena were the two most active I.R.B. areas in the whole county of Mayo.¹⁹ Be that as it may, the references to Kilmeena people involved in Fenianism are very rare in files in the State Paper Office. Joseph Gibbons (J. J. O'Connor) from Inishlyre is arrested in Athlone in 1867 as a suspected Fenian agent. The authorities are aware that he was in America some three or four years before and in France, and that he was a former student of St. Jarlath's College, Tuam and Maynooth College. He calls himself Captain Crow. Mrs. Higgins of Newport is his sister and Mrs. Rochford, who is also from Inishlyre, is a relative of his. Gibbons is removed to Kilmainham Jail, but because of failing health he is later discharged. However, he is marked down as one to be watched.²⁰

The same year saw the request being sent to Dublin for more troops signed by William Levingston and others.²¹ Evidence is given of the taking of the Fenian oath in Castlebar 'to be true and loyal to the Irish Republic and to levy war against the Queen when required at a moment's warning. . .'. The police also claimed that the left-hand shake was a secret method of introduction among Fenians, when one person placed three fingers of the left hand in the right hand of the person saluted.²²

WANTED

Name Given,	<i>Joseph Gibbons alias O'Connor</i>	Marks on Person
(Parish and County where born)	<i>Westport Co. Mayo</i>	
Trade,	<i>Student</i>	
Education,	<i>Read + write</i>	
Religion,	<i>R.C.</i>	
Age,	<i>25</i>	
Complexion,	<i>pale</i>	
Eyes,	<i>Grey</i>	
Hair,	<i>Wavy</i>	
Height,	<i>5' 11 1/4"</i>	
Make,	<i>Slight</i>	

Joseph Gibbons (J. J. O'Connor).

Richard Quinn, who in 1866 had arrived from New York in Ireland with a green flag and revolver, was arrested and lodged in Mountjoy. It was said that he was a bootmaker from Newport aged 49 years, 5 ft. 5 ins. in height with grey eyes. He refused to be photographed and was later discharged in August 1867.²³

Gunpowder was missing from Carey's garden in Newport in 1868. The police traced it to Shramore National School at Treenbeg where some of the grains were found in the schoolhouse. The Master, John Flynn and others, long suspected of Fenianism, were arrested but later released for lack of evidence. Martin McFadden aged 20, a fiddler from Newport, was alleged to have asked John Moran aged 35, a Newport shoemaker, to take the Fenian oath. The Rev. Concannon's address in Newport Church was terminated after the intervention of one John O'Donnell.²⁴ No doubt there was plenty of Fenian activity in Newport and Westport (where Anthony Gill is the chief suspect)²⁵ and it can be presumed, pending further study that the strong-hearted republicans from Kilmeena and Fahy were not too far behind. This is definitely the case in the War of Independence.

Land agitation with Davitt and the Land League continued throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century. 1898 saw the

beginnings of the United Irish League led by William O'Brien, M.P. Monster Meetings were held especially in the West. Earlier in 1896 a monster meeting had been held in Kilmeena:

The meeting held at Kilmeena on Sunday was the largest and most enthusiastic witnessed in this county in recent years. Its principal object was to call upon the Government to insert in the Land Bill provisions giving the Congested Districts Board power to purchase compulsorily some of the large grazing tracts which are so numerous in West Mayo, and to distribute them amongst the poor agricultural tenants who at present eke out a miserable existence on patches of bog and mountain. There were large contingents from Newport, Westport, Mallaranny, Clogher, Kilmaclasser, Aughagower, Islandeady, Glenhest, Glenisland, and Tiernaur, while the people of Kilmeena were of course present to a man. There were no less than five bands, the brass band from Newport and the fife and drum bands from Clogher, Kilmaclasser, Mallaranny and Kilmeena. Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. John O'Dowd, Provincial Organiser, I.N.F., arrived shortly before the meeting and were received with great enthusiasm. Dr. Ambrose, M.P., was expected but the death a few days previously of a near relative prevented his attendance. The platform was erected in a field close to the Catholic Church.

On the motion of Mr. P. J. Kelly, Chairman of the Westport Board of Guardians, seconded by Mr. W. Joyce, the Rev. Richard Biggins, Adm. took the chair. There were also present:

Very Rev. Canon Greally, P.P., Newport, Rev. P. McGirr, Adm. Westport, Rev. James Godfrey, C.C. Aughagower, Rev. P. Varden, C.C. Westport, Rev. J. O'Toole, C.C., Newport, Rev. M. Donnellan, C.C. Westport.

Kilmeena Branch, INF: Messrs. Thos. Nolan, PLG; W. Browne, John Duffy, James Brown, Wm. Bourke, P. Keane, P. Geraghty, D. Nolan, R. Joyce, P. Malley, J. Gibbons, T. Gavin, Patk. Gibbons, Patt Nolan, J. Niland, Michl. McHale, W. Walsh, Peter McHale, Michael Joyce, M. Stanton, Patt Joyce, J. Gannon, John Gill, Jas. M. Gill, P. Quinn, Hugh Carolan, John Moran, Owen Feighan, John Nolan, John Malley, Anty Moran, Michael Duffy, Thomas Campbell, Jno Gibbons, Austin Malley, Wm. Fahey, Michael Geraty, Peter Geraty, John Moran, Michael Grady, Michael Flynn, Thos. Higgins, Patrick Mooney, Patt Geraty, James McTigue, Thomas Ware, Pat Malley, Hugh O'Donnell, Bryan Mulloy, Patt Mulloy, Thomas Moran, Thomas Nolan, jnr., James Pain, P. McKay, Thomas Flynn, P. Grady, P. McKay, jnr.

Kilmaclasser Branch, INF: Messrs. William Joyce PLG; John Flannery, PLG, Patrick McHugh, Thomas Mylott, Michael O'Boyle, Thos. O'Boyle, Michael Cusack, Patrick Cusack, Anthony Walsh, Patrick Cain, Martin Walsh, James Ketterick, Michael Fahey, Joe Goggins, James Walsh, Patrick Cawley, Patrick Doogan, Patrick Kilcoyne, Anthony Mulchrone, John O'Boyle, Austin Corcoran, Patt Cusack, Ned Walsh, Pat Cawley, Wm. Cusack, John Kelly, Thomas Sheridan, Thomas Cain, John Cusack, Thos. Gallagher, Thos. Durkan, Willie Cusack, Anthony Jordan, Austin Walsh.

Clogher Branch, INF: Messrs. Michael Grimes, VP, William Joyce, PLG, Patt O'Donnell, Patt Reedy, Patrick Healy, James Kelly, Peter McGowan, Pat Kelly, Thomas Gavin, Bartley Mallen, Michael Kelly, Michael Printy, John O'Brien, John Hanley, John Moran, John Geraty, Edward Higgins, Pat Geraty, Patrick McNally, Martin Geraty, John Murray, Michael Moore, Edward Hastings, John Ryan, James Malley, William Joyce, Peter Joyce, Peter M'Gowan, Thomas M. Joyce, Patt M'Grave, Thomas Gibbons, Austin Gibbons, James Mackey, jnr., P. Geighan, P. McGowan, Andrew Waters, P. Gravin, T. Corcoran, John Conway, Michael Conway, Thomas Cooney, Michael Callaghan, Thomas O'Donnell. John O'Donnell, Hon. Sec. spoke. . . There were few amongst them who had not the experience of attending at the railway stations and witnessing the drainage, (for so he might term it) of their people away to foreign countries – going away in hundreds and thousands from the land that gave them birth, and cattle and sheep roaming here at home. It was a system that should be put down (hear, hear). They had met for the purpose of calling attention to one place in particular. They were aware of course of that the Cultrain farm – A Voice – There is one here too (applause). Mr. O'Donnell (continuing) said, in Kilmeena and Kilmaclasser there were many grazing farms, but there was one in particular that had to be fought out (hear, hear). The people want the land, they were prepared to give a fair price for it and why not get it?

The Rev. J. O'Toole, C.C., Newport, who was received with loud cheers said he was glad to see that the people of Westport were falling into line with their neighbours of Newport and Kilmeena. The people standing together and keeping within the constitution can break the power of landlordism in West Mayo. (A voice – And of the grabbers too). He advised the people to be united and determined in the struggle for their rights.²⁶

In May 1898 the Central Committee of the U.I.L. met in the League Rooms Westport to plan the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of 1798. Present from Kilmaclasser were Patrick Cusack, James Cusack, Michael Mulchrone, Thomas Mylotte, William Cusack and Michael Kelly and from Kilmeena M. Carolan and Michael Flynn.²⁷

Later in August a giant meeting was held opposite the Railway Hotel, Westport. After Willaim O'Brien spoke the gathering was addressed by Fr. J. O'Toole, P.P. Kilmeena, during which address he thanked sincerely those who had generously contributed to save '200 of the people of Kilmeena who were starving'. 'The people' he told his audience, 'are all driven into the bogs and poor land, whereas grabbers from Connemara and other parts, large graziers, have come in and taken the land which the people ought to have'.

His speech was warmly applauded.²⁸ Maude Gonne attended and spoke at a U.I.L. meeting in Castlebar. There to hear her from Kilmeena were Pat, Keane, Jas. Browne, T. Gavin, P. Moran, P. Gibbons, P. McHale, P. Joyce, P. Cleary, M. Keane, P. Tuohey, M. Fahey, M.

Cannon, P. Gibbons and M. Fahey.²⁹ Kilmaclasser set up its own branch in September 1898.³⁰ Earlier great distress had been reported from Kilmaclasser where there were many poor families in a state of starvation. The following were the committee elected under the chairmanship of Fr. O'Toole: John Flannery, PLG, Patrick O'Donnell, Gurteen, Michael Gallagher, Drumilee, John Cawley, Gortnaclasser, Patrick Graven, Drumgoney, P. O'Donnell, Tonnyamon, James Hare, Faheybeg, Patrick McGowen, Clooncannamara, and John Moran. The committee noted that 'all the good lands under grass were feeding the sheep and bullocks of those who made their money on the poor'.³¹ The Congested District Board agreed to construct a new road for Clooncannavan through the village of Ballintleva, hoping the earnings would save many families from destitution.³² Fr. O'Toole reported that he found 'a poor widow woman who had 8 children living on 1 stone of indian meal for a week'.³³

District Council's election 1899 for Kilmeena showed the following result:

Hugh Kelly (UIL)	168
John Malley	154
William Browne	94
Patrick Nolan	56

Mr. John O'Donnell born in Tawneyemon, 1 November 1867, son of Patrick O'Donnell and Bridget Mulloy, past student of Cogaula N.S. became a Member of Parliament in 1900 for South Mayo. Attacked by Healy, John O'Donnell replied in a letter to the *Irish Daily Independent*



Kilmeena Church, Priests' burial ground.

'I was never a candidate for the R.I.C. . . . never rejected. . . gross and malicious falshood'. John O'Donnell's denial in the letter was corroborated by other sources from Westport - Richard Gibbons of the Mall, a landlord, and Dr. A. Johnston, Bridge Street.³⁵

In July 1900 peace seems to have come over the parish with a well attended mission. The wooden altar in Myna Church had been replaced with a marble one and other improvements had been carried out as well. Great credit was given to Fr. O'Toole, the beloved pastor.³⁶ He died on Monday, 9 August 1915, after some years of failing health. Fr. O'Toole had expressed the wish to be buried beneath the shrine of the Blessed Virgin within the church. A recent Church edict forbade such and Archbishop Healy was adamant on the point despite the indignation of the people. After Requiem Mass Fr. O'Toole's remains was interred in the Chapel yard but at night the grave was re-opened, the remains disinterred and re-buried by some of the people inside the chapel as the good priest desired.³⁷

V

Fr. O'Toole's successor, Fr. Conroy, was most sympathetic to the Volunteer movement. The local men were in training long before the coming of the Black and Tans. J. Gibbons was the officer commanding the Kilmeena Company of the Volunteers.³⁸

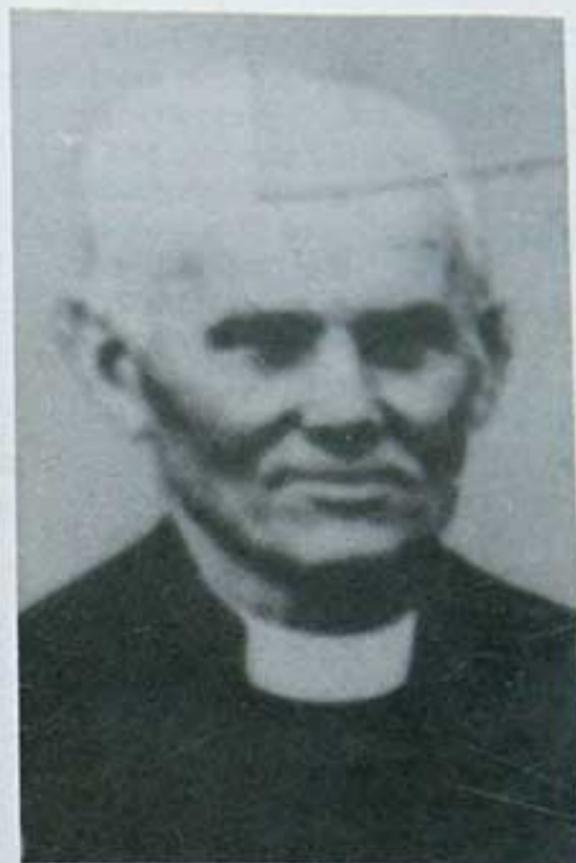
In May 1921 Paddy Doherty, Mick Gallagher, the two Jim Brownes, Vol. Staunton, Vol. Geraghty, Jim Kelly, Vol. O'Malley, Tap Corcoran all of Kilmeena and of the Newport Unit, joined forces with the Westport Unit in Aughagower.³⁹

Sometime before the Kilmeena ambush the Westport A.S.U. took up positions on a sharp bend at Barleyhill to ambush enemy lorries travelling between Westport and Newport. After waiting all day no enemy passed. Then they moved to the Newport area and stayed at Pim's Lodge at Rossbarnagh where they were made welcome by the caretaker there, Mr. M. O'Donnell. However, they failed to locate a notorious Black and Tan Inspector named Fudge who was terrifying the countryside around Newport at the time.⁴⁰

Another section was nicknamed 'The Irish Navy'. The men of this section ferried IRA officers in boats across Clew Bay whenever needed. This was a most dangerous occupation. The principal men involved on the Kilmeena end were the Morans and Burkes of Ross, Barretts and Geraghtys of Drunagh and Pat Quinn, Inniscuttle.⁴¹

On the evening of 18 May 1921, Michael Kilroy, O.C., directed Broddie Malone, O.C. Westport A.S.U., to take a patrol of eight men into Westport and attack any enemy patrols in the town.

Joe Doherty, O.C. Newport A.S.U., was detailed to go into Newport to attack any enemy patrol found there.



Father Conroy, P.P. Kilmeena.

The men of the Westport Patrol were:

Broddie Malone, O.C. Westport Patrol (rifle), John Duffy (rifle), Paddy Duffy (rifle), Tom Heavy (rifle), John Bradley (rifle), James Flaherty (rifle), William Joyce (rifle), Dan Gavin (rifle).

The men of the Newport Patrol were:

Joe Doherty, O.C. (rifle), Michael Gallagher (rifle), Jim Moran (rifle), Jim Browne (Big) (shotgun).

Michael Kilroy took the main body of men to Ballintsleva and awaited a report.

The Westport Patrol entered the town at the Convent and took up positions at the Fairgreen. They learned that a patrol of 18 R.I.C. had proceeded earlier in the direction of Westport Station but apparently, they learned of the presence of the IRA patrol in the town and went into the house of Dr. O'Rourke, Altamont Street. The IRA waited until dawn but the enemy did not return to barracks so reluctantly they withdrew to Sandyhill, half a mile from Westport town.

The Newport Patrol made contact with the enemy and one RIC man was killed.

In the early morning of 19 May, Michael Kilroy moved the Flying Column to Clooneen, Kilmeena, on the Westport/Newport road and took up ambush positions in the hope of enemy movements in the area. With Michael Kilroy, O.C. at Kilmeena were:

Eamon Moane, B. Vice O/C, Westport, (rifle).
 Thomas Ketterick, B.Q/M, Westport, (Peter P. pistol).
 John Gibbons, B. Adj., Westport, (revolver).
 John D. Gibbons, B. Staff, Westport, (shotgun).
 Joe Baker, Westport, (rifle).
 Batty Cryan, Westport, (shotgun).
 Thomas Ainsworth, Westport, (rifle).
 John McDonagh, Westport, (rifle).
 Paddy Lambert, Westport, (shotgun).
 Martin Naughton, Westport, (rifle).
 Michael Staunton, Westport, (rifle).
 John Collins, Westport, (Martini rifle).
 P. Pearse, Westport, (shotgun).
 John Cannon, Westport, (shotgun).
 Patrick Jordan, O.C., Castlebar (rifle).
 John Chamber, Castlebar, (rifle).
 James McEvelly; Castlebar, (rifle).
 Michael Hughes, Castlebar, (rifle, Must.).
 James Hughes, Castlebar, (rifle).
 William McCarthy, Castlebar (rifle).
 Dr. J. A. Madden, Castlebar, (rifle).
 P. J. Cannon, Castlebar, (rifle, Mauser).
 James Swift, Castlebar, (shotgun).
 Thomas O'Donnell, Castlebar, (rifle).
 Thomas Maloney, Castlebar, (shotgun).
 Thomas Nolan, Castlebar, (rifle).
 Patrick O'Boyle, Castlebar, (rifle).
 John Cooney, Castlebar, (shotgun).
 Paddy Ainsworth, Castlebar, (shotgun).
 Jack Connolly, Newport, (rifle).
 Michael Browne, Newport, (shotgun).
 Paddy Molloy, Newport, (shotgun).
 Pat McLoughlin, Newport, (shotgun).
 Larry McGovern, Newport, (rifle).
 Paddy O'Malley, Newport, (rifle).
 Jim Kelly, Newport, (rifle).
 Jim Brown (Red), Newport, (shotgun).
 Pat Staunton, Newport, (shotgun).
 Peter Corcoran, Newport, (shotgun).
 Ned Murray, Newport, (shotgun).

The Column at Kilmeena were forty-one men, including the O.C., and they were armed with 22 rifles, 16 shotguns and three with short arms. At this time three men were engaged on communications, they were: Joe Ring, O.C., Westport Batt. (rifle), Jack Keane, Westport, (rifle), Ned Hogan, Westport, (shotgun).

The Column took up positions at Kilmeena in the early morning and the main position was behind a sod fence some fifty yards from the main road, between the now Memorial Hall and the Cummins's House.

The morning hours dragged on and at 10.00 a.m. a car was signalled approaching from Newport direction but the Newport men recognised it as belonging to Canon McDonald, P.P., Newport, who was attending a round-up station in Kilmeena.

A short time later, two cars were signalled coming from Newport and this time men tensed and took careful aim. The covered cars were filled with people dressed in black and slowly came into the ambush position. Fingers pressed on triggers when, suddenly, someone call 'Don't fire, they are nuns'. The two cars which had a miraculous escape were filled with nuns from Newport and Malranny on their way to attend a nun's funeral in Westport.

Again, men relaxed and the hours passed without incident until about 3.00 p.m. as the men waited for a meal which was being prepared in Cummins's, after which the Column would withdraw towards the Half Parish. Suddenly, there was a shout: 'The Tans are coming', and immediately positions were taken as the first lorry went through the ambush position. A scattered volley met it, but it went its way.

Soon, another lorry came into view and slowed at the approach to the Parochial House. It stopped there just behind Canon McDonald's car. It was several hundred yards from the ambush position. The Column now changed positions and opened fire on the party at the priest's house. The fire was returned and a machine-gun mounted on the bridge blasted the Column position. The exchange of fire continued for some minutes until the occupants of the first lorry which had gone towards Newport pulled up just beyond the railway bridge and came back on foot. Unobserved, they took up positions and mounted a machine gun on Knocknabola road which opened up on the now exposed column positions. In the first few seconds, James McEvelly, Tom O'Donnell, John Collins, Pat Staunton and Paddy Jordan were mortally wounded. Paddy O'Malley, Paddy Molloy, James Swift, John Chambers, John Cannon and Michael Hughes were seriously wounded.

Despite those losses, the men bravely stood their ground and for a time panic reigned among the enemy at the Parochial House. Inspector Donnellan forced in the door where the priests sheltered and accused them of firing on his men.

Fr. T. Killeen, C.C., Malranny and Fr. M. Walsh, C.C. Kilmeena, left the priest's house while the battle still raged and went onto the hill at Clooneen and anointed the dying and wounded. Just as Fr. Killeen anointed T. O'Donnell, J. Collins, and Pat Staunton, all three died.

The O.C. now gave the order to retreat and this the men had to do across the top of Clooneen Hill, hit by rifle and machine gunfire from both sides. A brilliant rearguard action was fought, with every yard of ground

contested, until after some hours the column reached the safety of Aughagowla, carrying the wounded with them, but John Cannon, P. O'Malley and P. Molloy were taken prisoner.

At Aughagowla, the wounded were dressed by Dr. Madden and Nurse Joyce, Clogher, and that night the entire column, again with the wounded, marched to Skirdagh, via Derryloughan, crossing the Newport river at the Weir Bridge. That night the broken but undefeated Column rested in the friendly houses at Skirdagh and during the next few days they nursed their wounded and thought sad thoughts of their dead comrades.⁴²

Sleep gently, sleep brave fearless sons
To God and Ireland true
The martyrs' crown you nobly won;
Undaunted brave fought you.
You left all the earthly hopes and joys
For the cause you loved so well
And fed it with your own hearts' blood
For Eire dear you fell.⁴³

On 23 May, the men woke in Skirdagh to find themselves almost surrounded by the enemy. Early in the fight Vol. Jim Browne of Kilmeena was fatally wounded and died in Castlebar Hospital.⁴⁴ A full account of that ambush and of the ambushes that occurred during the Civil War deserve a more detailed study at some future time.

VI

Modern history of the area would include some of the following:

1926 Westport Golf Club founded.

1927 Compulsory purchase of over 500 acres in Demesne from Lord Sligo.⁴⁵

The last decade has seen the growth of recreational facilities, - Glenans Irish Sailing Centre, Mayo Sailing Club, Westport Rugby club and grounds, Kilmeena GAA Club and grounds, two Community Centres at Kilmeena and Fahy.

Among notable residents in the area this century was the late Paddy Burke from Mucklagh, who was a T.D. for many years in the Co. Dublin area, heading the poll and known affectionately as 'the Bishop'. The ancestors of Progressive Democrats leader, Desmond O'Malley, hailed from Drumhuskert.

The old Golf Clubhouse changed hands and is now known as the 'Grace O'Malley Art Centre' where many artists' works are exhibited throughout the year. Local artists who have passed away include John Casey and Edwin Dunkerly.



Grace O'Malley Art Gallery, former Clubhouse Carrowholly Golf Club.

The parish can boast of many successful people in all walks of life throughout the world. Future articles will give pen pictures of some of the priests, public representatives and sportsmen who hailed from this parish. When viewing the history of this area, it does seem fitting that it was into Rosmoney that the conqueror of the Atlantic, James Cahill, sailed on 14 November 1986, safe and well from his epic voyage in the Ricjak.

Notes

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2. Martin Manning to P. H. Moran, 'Famine Memories' (private collection).
3. Dublin Public Libraries, Archives Division, Mansion House Relief Fund - Local Committee 155, pp 2 and 3.
4. Ibid. p.12.
5. Ibid. p.10.
6. Ibid p.6.
7. Ibid. pp 25, 29.
8. Ibid. Local Committee 819, p.22.

9. Ibid. p.36.
10. Archdiocese of Tuam Archives: John J. Philibin, 'The History of the Parish of Kilmeena', pp 25-84.
11. Ibid. pp 85-105.
12. Representative Church Body Archives, Dublin, p.158.
13. Richard Hoskyn, RN, *The Irish Coast Pilot* (London 1893), pp 403, 404.
14. Westport Customs & Excise Coastguard Books and General Letters (private collection) pp 21, 50, 51, 123. Board's Orders Local No. 1, 67, 73. Port of Westport - No. 13, pp 11, 20, 88, 143, 194, 215, 226, 357.
15. *Mayo News*, 27 August 1898.
16. Port of Westport No. 13 pp 363, 400, 463.
17. *Mayo News*, 28 September 1926, 16 October 1926.
18. *Mayo News*, 21 August 1926, 28 September 1926, 23 October 1926.
19. Michael Moran, 'With Michael Kilroy during Easter Week 1916 & The Years Before' (unpublished), p.14.
20. National Archives, CSO, RP 1867 11248-1740 FP 183-12167/8.
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23. Ibid. CSO RP 1867 14946-1744.
24. Ibid. Fenian Files 2429R, 2500R.
25. Ibid. CSO RP 1867 10899-1740.
26. *Mayo News*, 9 May 1896, p.2.
27. Ibid., 14 May 1898.
28. Ibid., 13 August 1898.
29. Ibid., 3 September 1898.
30. Ibid., 10 September 1898, 5 February 1898, p.5.
31. Ibid., 22 January 1898.
32. Ibid., 29 January 1898.
33. Ibid., 29 January 1898.
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35. National Archives S.P.O. CBS 22823/S.
36. *Mayo News*, 28 July 1900.
37. Ibid., 14 August 1915.
38. Paddy Duffy, 'The 1916-1921 Troubles' (unpublished), p.17.
39. Ibid. p.23.
40. Anthony Lavelle 'West Mayo's Fighting Story' *Western People*, 21 March 1967.
41. Jim O'Donnell, 'Diary of an Irish Volunteer 1898-1924' (unpublished), p.5.
42. *West Mayo Brigade 1921-1971* (FNT Westport) pp 5-9.
43. *Mayo News*.
44. General Michael Kilroy, 'Active Service Unit Operations', p.38.
45. *Mayo News*, April 1927 and 14 May 1927.

JARLATH DUFFY: Native of Aughagower, living in Carrowholly, graduate of U.C.D. Principal Vocational School, Westport for past eleven years. Founder member and Chairperson, Westport Historical Society. Editor *Cathair na Mart*, 1981-4, Co-Editor *Fair Fingal*, 1975.

Appendix I

Church of Ireland Clergymen

(Extracted from Canon J. B. Leslie, D.Lit., *Tuam, Biographical Succession List*, 1938).

- 1628 John Goldsmith, Vicar. Rector Burrishoole and Vicar Turlough and Oghavale.
- 1766 Alex Clendening.
- 1799 Thomas Grace, Vicar Aughavale, Aughagower, Kilmaclasser, Kilgeever and Murrisk.
- 1836 Pounden.
- 1847 W. Leady.
- 1855 John Cather.
- 1866 Samuel Hemphill 1892.
- 1892 J. O. Hannay (d. Feb. 1, 1950).
- 1913 Joseph White.
- 1925 John Fabey.
- 1928 John Robinson.

Curates

- 1820 T. Morris.
- 1820/1 E. Wade.
- c.1820 T. Walker.
- 1826 E. Hardman.
- 1826 R. Irwin. Travers-Jones (Ayle).
- 1830 R. Parkinson.
G. Gildea.
James Whilte.
D. E. Blake (Ayle, 1831-1832).
Giles Eyre res. 1836, Kilmina.
- 1832 Crawford.
- 1834 Charles Porter.
- 1835 Charles Hargrove, res. 1835 Plymouth Brother.
- 1836 T. Ring, J. M. Wilde, Francis Kinhead.
- 1837 E. Barton.
- 1843 Theo de la C. Carroll.
- 1834 Thomas McClatchie.
- 1846 Thomas Moran.
- 1850 Robert G. Eccles.
- 1852 Henry Crofton, George McClelland, Henry Maclean.

- 1853 Patrick Foley.
 1854 Richard Goodwin.
 1857 John Steele.
 1860 Nicholas Foster.
 Nesbitt, Coffey, Keane.
 1889 E. Baker.
 1892 Charles S. Graham.
 1895 John C. McDonnell.
 1897 Frederick Dobbin.
 1900-4 C.S. Collins.
 1904-8 D. N. Dudley.
 1908 J. H. Staunton.
 1908 A. E. Thompson.
 1914 F. W. E. Wagner.
- Kilmaclasser**
 1457 Dermot Y'Lamyn.
 Malachy O'Lamyn.
 Thomas O Lachtnayn.
 1459 Cornelius O Cullayn.
 1558 John O'Donayll.
 1591 Thomas O Hubain and Thateus O Hubain.
 1615 Thomas O Martyn.
 John Crone O Kaoly.
 1634 Thomas Crowther, Eaglish, Cancevane, Breaghwy, Islandedin and
 Kilmaclasser.
 (In 1662 Kilmaclasser parish was united with the Westport Union).
- Kilmeena**
 1463 Matthew O Flachartayd.
 1558 Ludovicus O Grada.
 1591 Lawrence O Grada.
 1626 Francis Smith.
 1627 Richard Pecke.
 1628 John Bremigham.
 1662 Matthew Mathews.
 1664 Richard Woodins.
 (There is no separate list for Kilmeena between these dates).
 1830 C. Hargrove.
 1836 Giles Eyre.
 1878 Robert Gildea.

APPENDIX II

Kilmeena Memorial Committee

Formed on May 10th, 1925.

President: PAT FEEHAN. Treasurer: JOHN GERAGHTY.
 Secretary: MARTIN GIBBONS.

Committee:
 MICHAEL McHALE, JAMES RYDER,
 JAMES GERAGHTY, MARTIN McHALE.

RECEIPTS

	£	s	d
Per Jack McNanamon, New York	30	15	0
Per James Browne, Chicago	36	15	0
Per Hugh O'Malley, Philadelphia	20	0	0
Per Austin Golden, Cleveland	11	9	0
Per William Mulryan	5	0	0
Rev. Michael Conroy, P.P.	5	0	0
Thomas McHugh, Tuam	3	0	0
Myles Staunton, Westport	2	0	0
Ross House, Kilmeena	2	0	0
Martin O'Donnell	1	0	0
Rev. Michael Walsh, C.C.	1	0	0
John O'Grady, Westport	0	10	0
Thomas Mullarkey, New York	1	0	0
Martin Berry, Moyna	0	10	0
Dance in Granary, 13th May, 1925	7	11	0
Dance in Granary 6th June, 1926	4	6	0
Dance in Moyna School, 1st January, 1927	10	0	0
Dance in Moyna School, 26th December, 1927	7	0	0
Dance in Granary, 3rd June, 1928	5	0	4
Dance in Granary, 8th April, 1930	6	0	4
Dance in Moyna School, []th January, 1933	8	13	0
Martin Gibbons	0	5	0
Michael McHale	0	5	0
James Ryder	0	5	0
Pat Browne	0	5	0
Joe Moore	0	5	0
Martin Manning	0	5	0
John Cannon	0	5	0
Pat Joyce	0	5	0

ROSSOW

John Conroy	0	10	0
Mike Walsh	0	2	0
Phelim McManamon	0	3	0
Hugh Feehan	0	4	0

SHANDRIM

Pat McLaughlin	0	2	0
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Kilmeena Memorial Committee at the unveiling in Kilmeena graveyard 1926.
 Left to Right: John Staunton, Drumgarve; Michael McHale, Rosmindle; James (Birdie) Ryder, Carrowholly; Tommy O'Malley, Conrea; Jim Geraghty, Drunnagh; Martin Mortimer, Cross; Martin McHale, Rosmindle; Michael Kilroy, Newport; John Joyce, Mucklagh; Ted Gibbons, Knockaniska; Pat Feehan, Rossow, Newport.

Austin Gavin.....	0	1	0
John O'Malley.....	0	3	0
Mrs. O'Toole.....	0	2	6
John O'Toole.....	0	2	6

KNOCKNABOLA

Mrs. Duffy.....	0	4	0
Paddy McKay.....	0	4	0
John Mulloy.....	0	2	6
Miss Katie Moran.....	0	3	0
Thomas O'Grady.....	0	5	0
John O'Flynn.....	0	3	6

CUSHALOGURT

Mike Grady.....	0	2	6
Patrick Lynn.....	0	4	0
Thomas Geraghty.....	0	4	0
Davy Mulcrone.....	0	3	6
Mike Quinn.....	0	4	0
Michael Geraghty.....	0	4	0
Petie Bourke.....	0	2	6
John Barrett.....	0	2	6

ROSS

John Moran.....	0	3	0
William Bourke.....	0	3	0
Martin Geraghty.....	0	2	6
Willie Sammon.....	0	2	6

ROSSDUANE

Edward Walsh.....	0	2	6
Pakie Corcoran.....	0	3	0
Patrick Kelly.....	0	2	0
Patrick Gibbons.....	0	2	6
Paddy O'Flynn.....	0	3	0

CLOONEEN

Mrs. McGrane.....	0	5	0
Michael Cummins.....	0	2	6
Michael O'Grady.....	0	5	0
John O'Grady.....	0	3	0
Bernard Moran.....	0	5	0
Michael Lavelle.....	0	3	0

CARRABEG

Michael Staunton.....	0	5	0
P. H. Moran.....	0	5	0
John Duffy.....	0	2	6
Andrew Mulloy.....	0	2	6
John Geraghty.....	0	4	0

DERRYNARAW

Pat Reidy.....	0	2	6
Edward Geraghty.....	0	2	6
Patrick Walsh (T.).....	0	2	0
Mrs. Gannon.....	0	4	0
Mrs. McGreal.....	0	1	0

ROSSCAHILL

Michael Moran.....	0	2	0
Henry McGill.....	0	2	0
Michael Gibbons.....	0	1	6
Eddie O'Malley.....	0	2	6
John O'Malley.....	0	2	0

CLAGGAN

Thomas Nolan.....	0	5	0
D. Nolan.....	0	5	0
Peter O'Malley.....	0	2	6
John Keane.....	0	2	6
Michael Murray.....	0	2	0

BUCKFIELD

Dan O'Malley.....	0	3	0
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GORTAWARLA

Owen Walsh	0	5	6
Dick Keane	0	5	0
Total	£180	8	10

EXPENDITURE

	£	s	d
Thomas McHugh	160	0	0
Money Orders	0	5	4
Mike Gibbons (Cars)	2	3	0
John Kilroy	2	0	0
Pat Cannon (Gravel)	2	0	0
Castlebar Band Expenses	2	4	0
Flag and Veil	0	7	9
Martin Mortimer (lab.)	1	10	0
Martin Gibbons (lab.)	1	5	0
Michael McHale	1	0	0
Martin McHale	0	10	0
Patrick J. Doris ("Mayo News")	1	16	0
Mrs. Walsh	1	2	0
Anniversary Mass, May, 1932	1	0	0
Austie Moran (Gravel)	0	6	0
Anniversary Mass, May, 1933	1	0	0
Printing	0	15	0
Total Expenditure	£179	4	1

Balance in Treasurer's hands £1 4 9
 MARTIN GIBBONS, Secretary to Memorial Committee.



A PROFILE OF BERNARD BURKE (1789-1861)

by Shane McGuire

Introduction

The years 1800-1860 were eventful ones in Irish history. 1800 saw Ireland and England united politically and economically by the Act of Union. In 1829, after many years of frustration Catholic emancipation was granted.

The relief of having obtained religious freedom was over-shadowed by the disastrous famine of 1845-1850. The election of 1857 was noteworthy in Mayo as it marked the last major involvement of priests in politics. One man, Bernard Burke, witnessed all these events and indeed he took an active part in some of them.

The Early Years, 1789-1821

Bernard Burke was born in Clifden in 1789. On deciding to become a priest he followed the normal educational route to the priesthood. Firstly he studied in St. Jarlath's College Tuam, under the tutelage of Rev. Dr. Dillon, president of the college. Having completed his studies in Tuam he went to Maynooth, where he was ordained a priest in 1813.

Burke's first appointment was as curate to the parish of Tuam, where he appeared to have been quite successful in administering to the flock. He devoted much of his energies to restoring the church in Tuam which was in a chronic state of disrepair, so that by 1816 he had put a new roof on the old chapel.

In 1821 Burke was removed to Westport as administrator. He was to remain in Westport until his death in 1861. The appointment of Burke as administrator to Westport at such a relatively young age must be seen in the context of his relationship with Dr. Oliver Kelly the then archbishop of Tuam. Oliver Kelly was appointed vicar general of the diocese in 1809, on the death of Archbishop Dillon. Subsequently Dr. Kelly was appointed archbishop of Tuam, but due to the captivity of the Pope by Napoleon the appointment was not confirmed until 1814. In the interim Kelly administered in the parish of Westport where he immediately commenced the building of a church, which the parish so badly needed. The foundation stone was laid in 1813 but it was Bernard Burke who completed the work in the 1820s.

Appointment to Westport and Relationship with Dr. Kelly, 1821-1834

The years 1821-1834 were ones of increased status and honour for Bernard Burke. Due to his close personal friendship with Dr. Kelly, Burke had many titles and privileges bestowed on him. In 1834 when Kelly died, Dean Burke was recognised as one of the most powerful clerics in the diocese. Burke's position was underscored by his selection as one of the

three candidates whose names would be sent to the office of Propaganda in Rome for recommendation to be nominated as archbishop of Tuam.

The first record of Kelly's generosity towards Burke is contained in a letter dated 23 July 1833 from Oliver Kelly to Archbishop Cullen.¹ Kelly states he wished to:

resign the said parish of Westport with its appurtenances in favour of my vicar general² the Rev. Bernard Burke, provided the Holy Father do permit me to take in exchange the parish of Kilmeena, now in the possession of the said Bernard Burke.³

Kelly adds, this exchange would:

afford my vicar general a great facility in assisting me to govern this diocese, in as much as it will place him in a more conspicuous place, more central and where the clergy can with more ease, have access to him personally, or address him by letter, Westport being a post town, whereas in Kilmeena his present parish there is no post office.

Kelly goes on to describe Kilmeena as 'an obscure parish and an inconvenient place for my clergy to have recourse to their vicar general'.

In the same letter Kelly points out that the dean of the diocese the Rev. Boetius Egan⁴ had died and he was now recommending Burke's appointment as dean of the diocese. In addition, Kelly also obtained for Burke his appointment for life as parish priest of Westport. This latter appointment appears to have only come to light when Kelly's personal effects were being examined on his death in April 1834, as Burke did not disclose his appointment as parish priest of Westport for life, though by now his appointment as dean of the diocese was known to all. He was formally instituted as dean, in the chapel of the Propaganda in Rome in 1835. The securing of the parish of Westport for Burke was itself an extraordinary manifestation of the bond of friendship that existed between him and Kelly. However, Kelly was to make even more extraordinary requests to Rome aimed at increasing Burke's prestige in the diocese.

Due to failing health Kelly set out in the autumn of 1833 for Rome. As the journey necessitated his absence from the diocese for a considerable period of time, Kelly wrote to Cullen on 5 October 1833 requesting that he:

obtain the permission of the Holy Father that I may for the sake of my health absent myself from my diocese for twelve months, with powers to Mr. Burke my Vicar General to exercise the Extraordinary Faculties delegated to me by the Holy See.⁵

This indeed was an extraordinary request to make. If granted, it would confer on Burke the powers of an archbishop, while he still remained an administrator. Yet, despite the nature of the request, Cullen wrote to Kelly on 8 December 1833, informing him that the Pope had given him permission to be absent from the diocese for a year, and though he [the Pope] did not know if it were customary in such cases to authorise the Vicar General to exercise the extraordinary faculties which the Archbishop



Portrait of Rev. Bernard Burke in Convent of Mercy, Westport.

enjoyed in Ireland, the answer of the Propaganda had been favourable. Enclosed with the letter were documents confirming Burke's new powers.⁶

Despite moving to Rome, Oliver Kelly's health was failing rapidly and on 18 April 1834 Archbishop Oliver Kelly died near Rome. He was buried in Rome despite efforts by Burke and others to have his remains brought back to Ireland. The death of Dr. Kelly marked the end of Burke's rapid rise in ecclesiastical circles. On 13 May John Nolan was elected Vicar Capitular of Tuam. He in turn set June 4 as the day for the selection of three candidates whose names would be sent to the office of Propaganda in Rome, and one of whom would be the next archbishop of Tuam.

The 1834 Election of the Archbishop of Tuam

At the outset Burke realised he would not be the only candidate seeking to become the next archbishop of Tuam. Indeed he could expect strong opposition in his attempts to become archbishop. It was well known that the bishops of the province were favourably disposed towards MacHale's nomination; so too were many of the Tuam clergy. Bernard Burke could count on a substantial number of diocesan priests to back up his claim. MacHale's position was strengthened by the death of Peter Waldron Bishop of Killala on 20 May 1834. MacHale had been appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Killala in 1825 and on the death of Peter Waldron he became bishop of Killala. As bishop of Killala MacHale was privy to the thinking among the other bishops of the province, and when it became clear that Bernard Burke was emerging as the only credible candidate for archbishop in opposition to MacHale, he wasted no time in pointing out the faults of his opponent to Rome.

On 21 May 1834 MacHale wrote to Dr. Cullen to inform him of the 'pretensions' of Bernard Burke, MacHale had some justifiable fears about Bernard Burke's ambitions, as rumour abounded that Dr. Kelly in his dying days, had sought to have Burke appointed his coadjutor bishop 'without reference to the rescript of the sacred congregation'. MacHale goes on to belittle Burke's academic qualifications - 'in the College of Maynooth he was many degrees below the least literary honour'. The kernel of MacHale's protestations is contained in the following statement:

yet without any extraordinary capacity for business he rose though comparatively young to the highest appointments of Dean and Vicar General and was entrusted in the Archbishop's absence with the management of the entire diocess [*sic*]. It was this succession of favours which excited the suspicions of the clergy, least when in Rome the Archbishop should endeavour to procure his nomination [i.e. Burke as coadjutor].⁷

MacHale recounts the intrigue that surrounded the appointment of a vicar capitular. Bernard Burke was apparently a candidate for the post and received the support of four priests. All the rest according to MacHale

opposed Burke's pretensions. Eventually Patrick Nolan, Parish Priest of Balla, was nominated as vicar capitular.

On 4 June the clergy of Tuam selected three names to be forwarded to the office of Propaganda in Rome for consideration as the next Archbishop of Tuam. Very Rev. Bernard Burke, John MacHale and John V. Nolan were selected. Dean Burke received one more vote than John MacHale and Nolan was trailing badly in third position. By now it was a straight fight between MacHale and Burke for appointment as the next archbishop of Tuam. MacHale was galvanized into action by the prospect of Burke becoming the successor to Dr. Kelly. On 6 June he wrote a letter to Cullen in Rome which is remarkable for its harsh treatment of Burke, and it talks of the dire consequences which would befall the diocese should Burke become archbishop.

I should think a greater misfortune could not befall the Irish Church than the appointment of an individual who from profound ignorance is utterly disqualified not only for such an eminent dignity, but for any situation that requires a knowledge of theology or canon law.⁸

In support of his damning indictments of Burke, MacHale points out that Kelly did not propose him for appointment to the bishopric of Galway, and when Burke's name was casually mentioned 'all rejected the idea of thinking of such an ignorant man for the episcopacy'. In the event, John MacHale was appointed archbishop of Tuam by the Pope, thereby affirming the bishops' choice for the position. Bernard Burke was defeated. Being perceived as 'a government man' had done little to help his chances. MacHale had won the first round of the battle. Within one year from MacHale's appointment as archbishop, he and Burke were at odds over a situation which I call the Kilmeena Affair.

The Kilmeena Affair

Shortly after his installation as archbishop, MacHale decided to visit Westport. As befitting a clash between MacHale and Burke there are two conflicting accounts of what happened. The first account states that MacHale visited the parish in 1835 and was welcomed by Dean Burke 'whom he had recently transferred to Kilmeena, only to be presented with the papal brief with his appointment as Parish Priest of Westport by the Dean'.⁹

The second account states that MacHale went to Westport in 1834 but that 'within twelve months, however, there was a misunderstanding with Dean Bernard Burke of Westport', whom Dr. Kelly had appointed parish priest of Westport for his [Burke's] lifetime. 'MacHale, unaware of the Papal brief of Burke's title, appointed him to Kilmeena'.¹⁰

Whilst there is acknowledged confusion over the date of MacHale's visit, there is agreement as to MacHale's effort to get Burke transferred to Kilmeena. Despite this, MacHale allowed Burke to appeal to Rome over

his threatened transfer, and he acknowledges the legitimacy of Burke's claim to Westport in a letter to Cullen on 11 March 1835:

It was only then necessary to wait for the answer of the Cardinal Prefect while in the supposition of the parish [Westport] having already made over to him must have been a matter of form rather than of doubt requiring a decision.¹¹

For his own reasons Burke was not happy with MacHale's actions, so he wrote to Rome, this time directly to the Pope. MacHale, though 'very reluctantly', wrote to His Holiness explaining the affair, laying stress on the injury that would be done to the diocese, by the transfer of the mensal parish from a town to a place where the bishop could not occasionally reside, i.e. Kilmeena. MacHale suggested that the matter might be resolved:

by appointing Burke parish priest of Kilmeena and receiving out of it the same revenues which the bishop usually got out of Westport, with an understanding to which I will be obliged that he would administer Westport during his life but paying me what he received out of Kilmeena, whilst his independence and revenues would be undiminished.¹²

The upshot of all this was that MacHale received the parish of Kilmeena, and Burke's appointment as parish priest of Westport for life was upheld. In a letter to Cullen dated 10 May 1835 MacHale stated that this arrangement 'gave me full and entire satisfaction'.¹³

Burke had his first notable victory over MacHale. He was the last parish priest of Westport. After his death the parish reverted to its mensal status, a situation which continues to the present day.

Attitudes towards the National School System

In 1831 the National School System was established in Ireland. The system was to be state supported and open to children of all denominations. MacHale opposed the system of National Schools in his diocese and he advocated the setting up of denominational schools. Though MacHale's opposition to the National System was lukewarm at first, as the years progressed he became more vehement in his opposition. 'He wanted denominational education as the most suited to Irish needs and distrusted any system of mixed education'.¹⁴

Dean Burke was also aware of the need to provide education for Catholic children. Due to MacHale's opposition to the National School System there was no place to send the Catholic children of Westport for their education. To remedy this problem Dean Burke was endeavouring to obtain funds from the National School Board to aid the establishment of a school in Westport. However, MacHale would have none of it and the matter was dropped.

In 1841 the Dean applied to Mother McAuley, foundress of the Sisters



Dean Bernard Burke's house, which has until recently been occupied by the Gallagher family.

of Mercy, to establish a house in Westport, and in September 1842 three sisters were sent from Carlow under Sr. Mary Paul Cullen. Initially the sisters resided in the Dean's house, which he vacated to accommodate the nuns while the convent was under construction. Dean Burke wrote to Lord Altamont in December 1841 seeking to lease a plot of land for the convent. Lord Altamont's reply is illuminating, as it shows the warm personal relationship that existed between Burke and himself. In a subsequent letter dated 24 December 1841, Altamont reversed his earlier decision not to make land available for the building of a nunnery, and confirmed that land on Altamont Street, Westport, was available for leasing for the purpose of building a convent.

Dean Burke set about fund-raising for the new convent and he collected £3,000 throughout England and Ireland. He contributed £200 out of his own funds. By 1843 the convent was occupied and the schools were constructed in 1845. Though Burke had overcome MacHale's opposition to the National School System by inviting the Sisters of Mercy to Westport, there still remained a problem of educating boys of the parish. In a letter to Kirby on 29 December 1851 Burke admits that the parish is 'very deficient in point of education. It strikes me forceful that the very first point of defence would be the establishment of a branch of the Christian Brothers in this town'.¹⁵

In spite of his appeals to Kirby it was not until 1865 that the Christian Brothers came to Westport.



Convent of Mercy, Westport.

Like MacHale, Burke was aware of the advantages education could confer on young people. In many respects Burke was doing exactly what MacHale wanted him to do, by establishing denominational education in Westport. Burke did so out of concern over the effects that proselytising was having in the parish, rather than from a dislike of the Stanley School System. Burke still held the opinion, that MacHale's total opposition to the National School System resulted in the Catholics of the diocese being illiterate and ignorant, and more susceptible to proselytising influence. He was convinced that MacHale should show some degree of toleration of the National Schools, in order that the Catholics might be educated and proselytising be contained.

In view of the wide support among the Hierarchy, Burke was keen to support the National School System and he undoubtedly found it hard to comprehend MacHale's almost hysterical opposition to the system. As events up to 1853 unfolded, it is evident that Burke, though he had grave misgivings, followed MacHale's line on the issue against his better instincts.

The 1857 Mayo Election

The election of 1857 provided MacHale and Burke with another opportunity to display the deep-seated antagonism they felt towards each other. There were three names on the ballot paper in the 1857 election for the Mayo constituency. George Henry Moore was known as the 'popular'

candidate and hailed from Moore Hall near Ballinrobe. He was the acknowledged leader of the Independent Opposition Party, whose number now had been reduced to about 15 M.P.s in all. Because of his position as leader he had to canvass in constituencies for other candidates, and as a consequence devoted little time to his own base in Mayo. Moore received open support from MacHale and most of the clergy. The second candidate was none other than George Gore Ouseley Higgins, often called the 'unpopular' candidate as a result of his volte-face in January of 1853. Higgins was well rewarded for his defection, receiving the 'patronage of the county' for his efforts. The patronage of the county gave Higgins power to appoint every public official in the county, from Sheriff to the Postmaster.¹⁶ Higgins was a long-standing friend of Bernard Burke, he was a Catholic and had three sisters, Mercy nuns, one of whom was stationed in Westport. Dean Burke publicly endorsed Higgins's candidature.

The third candidate, was a Captain Roger W. H. Palmer of Keenagh near Crossmolina, Co. Mayo. Captain Palmer's main claim to fame was his distinguished conduct in the Crimean War. He received the support of the bigger landlords and of the Mayo Tory newspaper, *The Mayo Constitution*, though his political views were known to be moderate. At the outset, one could not give Palmer, a Tory, a chance of winning a seat, as Mayo had constantly rejected Tories. In addition to this, Palmer was a Protestant. However, events were not normal in 1857. On 23 March the Mayo priests met in Castlebar and passed resolutions implying that Moore should receive 'The strenuous and cordial support of the clergy and people' that the people 'should repudiate the pretensions of Colonel Ouseley Higgins'.¹⁷ A few days later on 29 March the bishops of Achonry, Killala and Galway, and MacHale, resolved that the energies of the people should be directed towards 'the rejection of Mr. Ouseley Higgins who has been unfaithful and to the return of Mr. Moore'.¹⁸ In urging the people to reject Higgins the clergy were de facto assuring Palmer a seat in parliament as only three candidates went forward on nomination day.

Nomination day was fixed for Friday 3 April and polling day for Monday 6 April. Moore was duly elected as M.P. for Mayo. Palmer was elected to the House of Commons as the second M.P. for Mayo. The final result of the election was: Moore 1189 votes, Palmer 1238 votes, and Higgins 1041 votes.

Did all of this happen as a result of the Burke-MacHale conflict? To give a straight 'yes' or 'no' answer would, I believe, be too simplistic and would be a denial of the influence the clergy played in the election. There can be no doubt that MacHale and Burke supported their respective candidates out of a deep sense of commitment to their views and out of personal friendship. The spectacle of two prominent clergymen openly supporting opposing candidates in an election was, however, very damaging to the reputation of the Church in Ireland.

Pastoral Initiatives in Westport

Although the conflict between MacHale and Burke lasted many years, Burke did not neglect his pastoral duties. On being appointed Administrator of Westport in 1821, Burke set about completing the building of the church in Westport which Dr. Kelly had begun in 1813. In addition, over the next ten years he built new churches at Lecanvey and Drummin, both outlying areas of the parish. In 1824 Burke built a large schoolhouse at Castlebar Street, Westport, capable of holding six hundred children. Burke also realised the need to have full-time and dedicated staff looking after the educational needs of the Catholic children, and as a consequence he invited the Sisters of Mercy to set up residence in his house which he temporarily vacated pending the building of the convent.

On their arrival in Westport, the Sisters of Mercy set up a school and by November 1842 they had four hundred pupils attending. They also visited the sick and destitute of the town. During the famine years they provided meals to about five hundred children each day by means of a grant from the British Association, following a visit to Westport by their agent, Count Strzelecki. They administered to all who were struck down by the fever and also in the newly opened work-house at Cathair na Mart.¹⁹

During the famine years the Catholic clergy worked hand in hand with the clergy of the Established Church. Both Bernard Burke and the Rev. Patrick Pouden²⁰ sought to relieve distress caused by the famine. Both gentlemen were members of the Westport Relief Committee.

Having survived the effects of the famine, the threat posed by proselytising loomed large in the parish and its environs. In a letter to Dr. Kirby on 28 December 1851, Burke stated that 'We have got a new Protestant Rector²¹ who appears determined to carry the Catholic Citadel by assault'. Burke sees 'The very first part of defence against proselytising would be the establishment of the Christian Brothers in the town',²² and he urges Dr. Kirby to use all his influence to try and get two Christian Brothers sent to the town. In a subsequent letter to Dr. Kirby dated 19 October 1853, Burke points out the dangers to Catholics living in Westport as it had always been considered a very Protestant town.²³ Despite the strong presence of Protestants in the town Sr. Mary Cullen, Mother Superior of the Convent of Mercy, Westport, informed Kirby by letter on 12 October 1854:

that a great many of the poor diverted during the years of the famine came back to the Catholic Church most penitent and were reconciled to the church. Some Protestants too were recovered. The schools were well attended considering the extreme poverty of the greater number of pupils.²⁴

Burke did not neglect the spiritual welfare of the people of Westport. In June 1854 the first mission ever held in the town was conducted by Very



The Old C.B.S. School, Castlebar Street.

Rev. Fr. Rionolfi and Rev. Fr. Villas of the Order of Charity. A second mission was conducted which began on the first Sunday of Lent in 1858 and lasted three weeks. Dean Burke speaks of 'The most happy and glorious mission . . . carried on by the four dear and truly Jesuit Fathers, Messrs Haly, Kyan, Fortescue and Roanan, who most assuredly did their duty well'. Burke further adds that the Jesuits 'Battered the enemy [Protestantism] and I cannot possibly give you any idea of the intensity of the religious and pious feelings of the people'. Additionally, Burke again requests Kirby to use his influence to obtain some Christian Brothers for Westport.²⁵

By the end of 1858 Burke had accomplished most of his pastoral objectives. The faith of his flock was strong, the worst effects of the famine and disease had passed and the proselytising in the parish had failed. The children were receiving a Catholic education, and there was a strong prospect that the Christian Brothers would send someone to the town in the near future, to look after the education of Catholic boys.

The Final Years and Death of Bernard Burke

Although hostilities between Burke and MacHale had effectively ceased after the 1857 election, Burke, in a letter to Kirby on 11 June 1860 complains of a long persecution by MacHale. He further states that he often asked MacHale to allow him to resign the parish of Westport.²⁶

Finally MacHale accepted Burke's resignation when he visited Westport on 31 May 1860.

Having resigned the parish of Westport, Burke set out for warmer climates. However, his health was failing and on 20 July 1861, he died at Rhyll, North Wales, where he had gone a few weeks previously. Though he was interred at Rhyll, his remains were exhumed and returned to Westport where they were laid to rest beneath the High Altar of St. Mary's Church. They were disinterred during the reconstruction of the present church in 1959, and are now buried at the base of the last pillar on the left hand side of the present church. There is also a memorial to the Dean in the sacristy of the present church, which was erected by his friend Colonel Ouseley Higgins. On Burke's death, Westport reverted to its former state as a mensal parish while Kilmeena was restored to a full parish in its own right.²⁷

Notes

1. Cullen Papers, 91. Dr. Cullen was later to become Cardinal.
2. There is no indication when Bernard Burke was appointed Vicar General.
3. It appears that as well as being administrator of Westport, Bernard Burke was also Parish Priest of Kilmeena.
4. Parish Priest of Dunmore from 1802-33.
5. Cullen Papers, 114.
6. New Cullen Papers, 6.1.
7. Cullen Papers, 155.
8. Cullen Papers, 160.
9. Ó Flanagan and O'Connell, 'The Parish of Oughaval (Westport)', *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 135 (1986).
10. John Lyons, 'John MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam', *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 41 (1984).
11. Cullen Papers, 188.
12. Cullen Papers, 188.
13. Cullen Papers, 199.
14. Dalton, *History of the Archdiocese of Tuam*, Vol. 1, p. 13.
15. Kirby Papers, 965. Dr. Kirby was Rector of the Irish College Rome.
16. He made his own father Captain Fitzgerald Higgins High Sheriff.
17. Rev. Jarlath Waldron, 'The 1857 Mayo Election', in Bernard O'Hara (ed.), *Mayo* (Galway 1982), p. 109.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
19. Now an Urban Council housing scheme. See also Ó Flanagan and O'Connell, *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 6.
20. The Rector.
21. Rev. Pouden died as a result of a fever contracted when working with the poor in Westport during the famine years.

22. Kirby Papers, 75.
23. *Ibid.*, 1293.
24. *Ibid.*, 1438.
25. *Ibid.*, 1286, 1585.
26. *Ibid.*, 2653.
27. This article is based on an unpublished B.A. thesis presented by Shane McGuire at St. Patrick's College Maynooth in 1986.

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TOGHER PATRICK by Brian Mannion

Togher Patrick was an ancient roadway linking Balla, Ballintober, Aghagower and Croagh Patrick. We can assume the areas adjacent to it would have branch roads or pathways linking with it. As regards width and usage, we can only guess. The word togher or tóchar means a causeway. This would mean that parts of it would be raised or paved. We do know that drainage as we know it today did not exist in those days. This would mean that lands which today are high and dry would be waterlogged or a morass. One can assume that the togher was more than a beaten path and that some manual work went into its establishment. We do know that at the time the country was heavily wooded and there would be much scrub land. The clearing of trees, scrub and stones would go hand in hand with the raising of wet impassable sections.

H. T. Knox, in his *History of the County of Mayo*, the first edition of which appeared in 1908, states that Togher Patrick can be traced from Croagh Patrick to near Balla. He must have been referring to sightings – the subject of this article, and local traditional information.

Although this roadway extended from Ballintober to near Balla, in this article I propose to deal with the sections that survived between Ballintober and Croagh Patrick. Also for the benefit of the reader I think it is necessary to give a brief history of the parish of Aghagower.

Notes on the History of Aghagower

Aghagower means the field of the Spring. In his journey to the west St. Patrick travelled from Ballintober to Triangle to Rahins and from Rahins to Aghagower. He remained for some time in Aghagower as a guest of the Chieftain whose name was Sinach.

Sinach was baptised by St. Patrick and was consecrated a bishop. Sinach had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy Oengus was ordained a priest by St. Patrick and the girl became a nun and founded a convent in Aghagower. When St. Patrick left Aghagower, Sinach and his son were put in charge of the established church. When St. Patrick spent the forty days of Lent on Croagh Patrick, he spent Easter Sunday with Bishop Sinach at Aghagower.

Aghagower was not only a Patrician Church, it was also an episcopal church and exercised pre-eminence and jurisdiction over all the churches in Umhall, which is roughly the baronies of Murrisk and Burrishoole today. To such a church native chiefs were generous.

Aghagower was for a long time the see of a bishop and owned much land and property. The lands owned by the church in Aghagower became the subject of a dispute between Armagh and Tuam. The dispute was settled by Rome in favour of Tuam in 1216.

In the year 1230 Richard de Burgo encamped with his men in Aghagower. In 1247 MacGeraghty, the Airchinnech¹ of Aghagower was killed by O'Connor and the following year 1248 English settlers plundered all Umhall including Aghagower.

Aghagower has always been connected with Croagh Patrick. A Papal Letter dated 1440 shows the Pope giving two years' indulgence to pilgrims visiting Croagh Patrick and giving alms to repair the church on the summit. It also stipulated that the offerings given by pilgrims to Croagh Patrick be used for the upkeep of the Parish Church in Aghagower.

When the monasteries were suppressed all church properties were given to Sir Richard Bingham, President of Connacht. He was the most hated ruler of his time and his deeds of cruelty were condemned even by his own class. A case in point was the hanging of the three hostage children. This he ordered to be done while he sat comfortably at supper. The children aged 7, 9 and 14 were given as pledges.²

In the eighteenth century a Browne family came into possession of Aghagower Church lands. This Browne was a forebearer of the present Marquess of Sligo.

The Togher

I will now return to the Togher. Notwithstanding the fact that people were living in Ireland for six and a half thousand years, it was still the age of crannóg and fort when St. Patrick arrived and for years after. However, the Celtic system of laws was well established, and where good land existed the chieftains had set up their headquarters. History tells us that Aghagower, Triangle, Ballintober and Rahins were headquarters of chieftains. The local belief is that St. Patrick made more than one visit to Aghagower. Also that it was on his last visit that he climbed Croagh Patrick. This belief tallies with local belief in Kilbannon which I will refer to later.

It is not possible to say if the pilgrimage began with St. Patrick but one can safely assume that he would not have gone up alone, and that during his stay on the summit a regular stream of visitors would join him in prayer.

There is scant information about Aghagower from St. Patrick's time until the coming of the Normans. The earliest record we have of an organised pilgrimage is 1113. The Airchinnech of Ard Patrick was burned by lightning on Cruach Padraig (*Annals of Lough Cé*). It seems to be the same event which is recorded in the *Chronicum Scotorum*, Rolls Series, for the year 1106 – 'a thunderbolt fell on Cruachan Aigle on the night of the festival of St. Patrick and destroyed 30 of the fasting people there'. We may take it that the two accounts refer to the one event. Very often these reports were compiled many years after the event took place.

Today we have skeptics who for reasons perhaps best known to themselves regard much of Patrician lore as a fairytale. That towards the

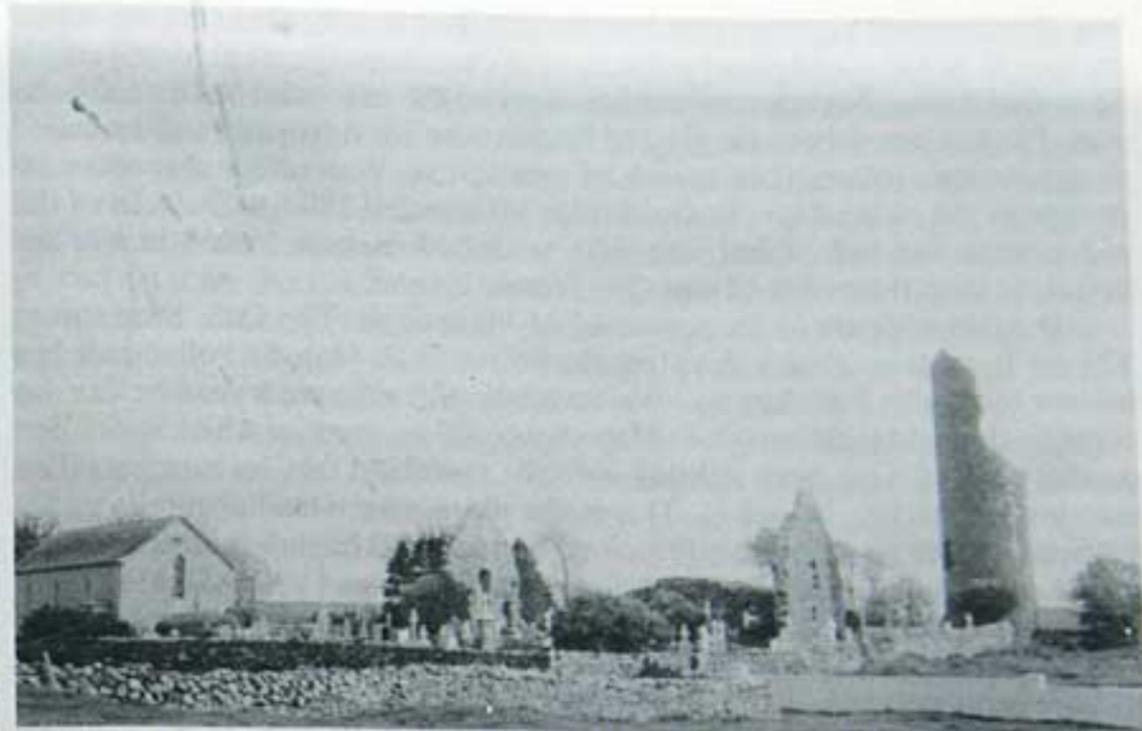
end of his life St. Patrick made a pilgrimage from his headquarters in Armagh to Croagh Patrick, I firmly believe. In this I have more than local tradition to convince me. The parish where I was born, Kilconly, includes the half parish of Kilbannon i.e. The Church of Benin (Benignus). This Benin was a favourite disciple of St. Patrick and succeeded St. Patrick as bishop of Armagh. Kilbannon was for hundreds of years a church of great importance having an abbey and round tower and owning large tracts of land. Being the home of The O'Connor Don, meant it had great political influence. When O'Connor Don moved to Tuam, Kilbannon declined in importance so that today it is no longer the parish church. The same is true of Aghagower, it declined as the new town of Westport began to grow. It is however today the Parish Church.

On the Tuam side of Kilbannon townland boundary there is a monument known locally as 'St. Patrick's knees'. The local tradition is that St. Patrick, on his journey from Armagh to Croagh Patrick, on reaching Benin's territory, knelt and gave thanks that he had safely arrived and that no grass ever grew on the ground where his knees touched. I saw those knee tracks some forty years ago and there was no grass and they were clearly defined. The enclosure is today completely scrub-covered as my picture shows. That two traditions in areas so far apart should tally in such detail, leaves me in no doubt that St. Patrick towards the end of his life made the journey from Armagh to The Reek and visited the established churches along the way.

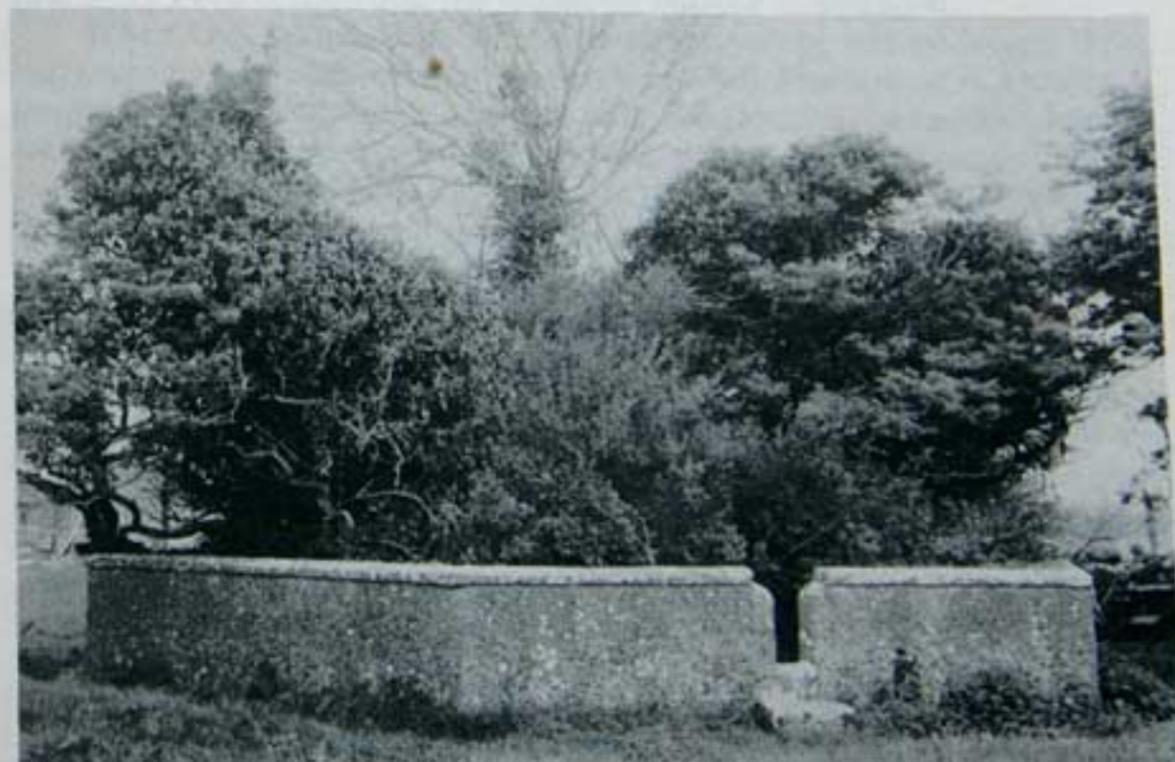
Before giving details of the surviving sections of this ancient roadway, I must pay tribute to the Ordnance Survey, without whose maps and records this article could not be produced. Next I must make it clear to the reader that I have refrained from recording anything that there was a possible doubt about. This I have done because of the re-structuring of land and alterations and re-alignment of roads. I found on checking old maps against current editions, that there are many such changes, often small ones, which are more confusing than major ones.

Indeed for the purposes of history, the imaginary filling in of such detail detracts from its authenticity. What is important historically is that those surviving sections are preserved if possible and that at least a record is kept of them for future generations. That's what is important, for where else in Ireland can you find an undisturbed road once travelled by our Patron Saint?

I will now give details of the surviving sections of this ancient road. I will first give what current O.S. maps show, and then deal with sections which no longer exist on the ground but were defined on the ground and recorded on earlier O.S. Maps. These maps referred to as Griffith Maps are available for inspection at the Valuation Office in Dublin and other places. Leaving Ballintober shown Site I on folded map A the first sighting is in the townland of Derrynacanna. It is shown on current O.S. Map and is approximately 290 m and ends at a large stone, Clogh Patrick (see map site



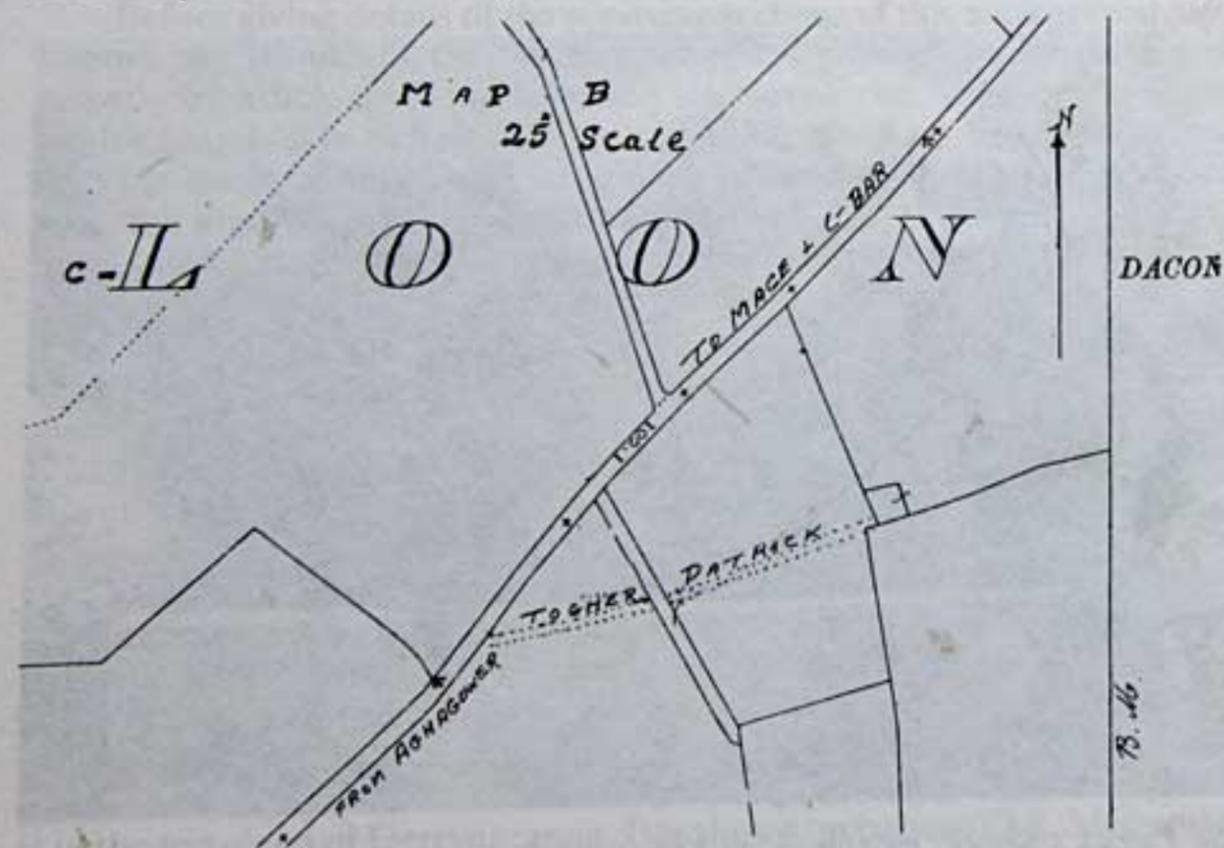
Kilbannon Catholic Church and ruins of Abbey and Round Tower.



"St. Patrick's Knees" monument at Kilbannon.

No. 2). The next sighting is in the townland of Ballyburke; it is shown on current O.S. Map and runs by the ancient church and graveyard of Temple Seán na Glasha. No information has come to me as to who Seán na Glasha was. He was possibly some kind of hermit who lived frugally and travelled along streams (clashes) in search of watercress. Watercress was eaten by people in the olden days. In Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village', he tells of the old woman the last of her line 'She wretched matron forced in age for bread, to strip the brook of mantling cresses spread'.

It again appears in the townland of Mahanagh. The O.S. Map shows 320 m. It runs by a very deep pit shown on O.S. Map as Pollalahan but known locally as Pollalummy. We travel $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile westward before we come to the next sighting; O.S. Map shows 400 m, most of which is defined on the ground. Our next sighting is in the townland of Cloondacon ('The meadow of the two hounds'). This is the place where tradition tells us St. Patrick was set upon by two ferocious hounds and he subdued them by a stroke of his hand. This is well defined on the ground yet O.S. Map does not record it (See Map B). This omission I will explain when I am dealing with earlier maps. The next sightings are in the townland of Aghagower and are well defined. They are 105 m and 195 m respectively. The next map-recorded sighting is in the townland of Ballyballinaun. It is no longer defined on the ground as it was bulldozed away by the landowner some thirty years ago. The next sighting is in the townland of Boheh shown on O.S. Map and is 195 m long and ends at Owenwee townland boundary.



Map B.

Between this and the last sighting there are two important monuments, and while today the maps do not show the Toger linking them it can be assumed that it did so. The large standing stone in the townland of Lanmbre is known and shown on O.S. Map as Cloch Patrick. The second monument in the townland of Boheh is known and shown on O.S. Map as St. Patrick's Chair. This is a large rock outcrop and is of pagan origin. It has much of its surface covered by circles and has a preservation notice placed on it by the Board of Works. I will give further information on this monument when dealing with earlier maps. The final map-recorded sighting is the Pilgrims Path in use today. It extends from Croagh Patrick summit eastward towards the townland of Owenwee for 1.25 miles.

I will deal with those sections of the togher which are no longer recorded on current O.S. Maps. For any person interested in local history those maps are most interesting. Where green fertile pastures are today, large villages once stood. To mention just two Knockroosky (Shanvalley) and Cloondacon.

To get back to my subject, the first important difference between old and new maps occurs at Tobberrooan-Mace South boundary. At that place old maps record an extra 90 metres which end at a place locally known as Mace Gardens.

From observations I have made, I have noticed that if the original togher is today the site of a public road or laneway it is not recorded on any map as part of the togher. This is the case in Cloondacon where, when the first survey was carried out, the togher served as a village road.

When O.S. Maps were being revised the village was no longer there and seemingly no one was there to supply any information on it. However, the story of the two hounds has been preserved locally and the townland is, when translated into English, The Meadow of the Two Hounds. The 80 metres of the togher in this townland is the best preserved of all sections. This is so because it served as a village road up to 150 years ago (approx.). Also when adjacent land was being reclaimed over 30 years ago, the owner insisted on preserving the togher.

This well-preserved section touches the Mace-Aghagower road quite close to Richard Bullimore's house at the top of Cloondacon hill and is visible from the road. From this point on, it continued across the road and is defined all the way to Aghagower a distance of 0.6 miles; current maps show only 105 metres though the greater portion can be traced on the ground. Leaving Aghagower it extends almost a mile eastward. Part of it is a present-day laneway. The old map recording of this section ends near the Lankill Garrew road junction in Bertie Bourke's land. From this point on to the summit of Croagh Patrick, old and new maps do not differ.

In conclusion we can state with conviction that the togher was in St. Patrick's time a recognised road, and that long after it was superseded by better road systems, the pilgrims to Croagh Patrick still travelled along it. Also that Aghagower was the starting point. History records that in 1351

Hugh O'Rourke was taken prisoner in the vicinity of Dooncastle by the McPhilbin, who was chieftain and had a castle there. This is further evidence that Aghagower was the starting point of the Croagh Patrick pilgrimage at that time. Until quite recent times the people from Curveagh and surrounding areas made the pilgrimage on foot travelling along the togher at Bohem and from there to Croagh Patrick via Owenwee, crossing two rivers en route. I'm indebted to Patrick Lally of Corveagh for this information who as a teenager with companions made such a pilgrimage.

This concludes my article on Toghher Patrick. It is possible the reading of this may result in some person or persons recalling some local information which is not included here. If such should be the case, the Westport Historical Society would be glad to hear from them.

Notes

1. A church steward, representative of bishop.
2. When a chieftain surrendered in battle, compensation by way of cows, money or produce was demanded if he were to be allowed to rule. Hence the pledges. They were usually sons or nephews of the pledgers.

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TOGHER PATRICK MAP A

Scale One Inch to One Mile



SITE No.	TOWNLAND	O.S. MAP No.	REMARKS
1	BALLINTOBER	(6") 89 121 1E	BALLINTOBER ABBEY
2	DERRYNACANNA	" " " 15	LARGE STONE CROSS AT SITE
3	BELLABURKE	" " " 9-10	SMALL TEMPLE SEEN NE GLASSIN W. TOW
4	MAHANASH	" " " 9	
5	TOBERROAN	" 88 " 16	
6	CHODDACON	" " " 154	SEE MAP B
7	AGHAGOWER	" " " 15	
BCD	AGHAGOWER TOWNLAND	" " " 16-15	TOTAL LENGTH BY STRAIGHT LINE 200 METRES OR CURRENT MAP
8	LANMORE	" 98 " 2	
9	BOHEM	" 97 " 4	
E	CROAGH PATRICK	" 87 " 121 1E	
EE		" 87 " " "	SMALL TOWER PATRICK ON CURRENT MAP IS IDENTICAL ALTHOUGH NOT

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CHURCH AND STATE IN MODERN IRELAND:
THE MAYO COUNTY LIBRARIAN CASE, 1930-1932

by Gerard Moran

Throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the hitherto privileged position of the Protestant community was coming increasingly under threat from the growing challenge of Irish Catholic nationalists. The Protestant supremacy within the community had been eroded as a result of the rise in nationalism and the growing dominance of Catholics in the local political, social and economic structures of the country. They had achieved this through their increasing control of Poor Law unions, the county councils and the parliamentary representation to Westminster. While the union with Britain remained, Protestants had felt at ease, but with the formation of the Irish Free State fears within the Protestant community became evident. Many Protestants feared that Catholics would utilise the upsurge in nationalist sentiment to settle old scores against their former adversaries. In many ways the southern Unionists felt threatened, having been abandoned by their Northern co-religionists. They had previously provided the leadership in the fight against Home Rule and the expected Catholic backlash which was feared would ensue. The anxiety which troubled them did appear to be justified by the attacks on the religious minority during the 1919-1921 troubles, when many Protestants were forced, through intimidation, to leave the country. Such attacks were particularly prevalent in those areas where Protestants constituted only a small minority of the population such as in West Cork and Ballinasloe. The apparent religious animosity was such, that in October 1922 the Roman Catholic hierarchy was obliged to issue a letter condemning the attacks on the property of Church of Ireland members.¹

Despite the attempts to reconcile members of the religious minority within the nascent state, the population structure was such, with its overwhelming Catholic majority, that a Catholic ethos was virtually inevitable. The new state would have a clear Catholic identity and it was this aspect which most worried members of the religious minorities. Indeed, the upsurge in Catholic activity in the nineteenth century, as with the Home Rule movement in the 1870s, sent fears through the Protestant community, for it was perceived that Catholics in an Irish parliament would establish an ascendancy which would persecute Protestants.² They feared for their positions, privileges and religion within the new state. The kernel of their anxiety centred on their previous steadfast loyalty to the Crown and how the new administration, with its overt Catholic and nationalist structure, would interpret this. From an early stage attempts were made to allay Protestant fears, initially through the provisions of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, which guaranteed their position. In a further attempt to aid the assimilation of Protestants into the new state, the

Archbishop of Dublin, John Gregg, who emerged as one of the principal leaders of the minority community, pledged the loyalty of the Church of Ireland members to the Free State in a public statement on 11 December 1920.³ When the new state came into being, he exhorted his people to accept the regime and to cease clinging to a way of life which had clearly disappeared forever. Nevertheless, it was bound to prove difficult for such a body to accept their former adversaries as equal partners and therefore, it was not surprising that the religious minority would feel apprehensive about their future in the new state.

While there is no doubting the Catholic conservatism and thrust of the Cumann na nGaedheal administration under William T. Cosgrave, this trend must be viewed under the overall context including their attempts to facilitate the Protestant minority. Gradually the sympathetic and special treatment proffered to them, did help to overcome the fears which had been built up. Without doubt, a concerted attempt was made by a mainly Catholic government to make them 'part and parcel of this nation'.⁴ Lord Glenavy, a Protestant and a staunch Unionist, was appointed the first chairman of the Seanad by W. T. Cosgrave as a conciliatory gesture. Among those nominated to the Seanad was the leading whiskey distiller, Andrew Jameson, an influential Protestant. Indeed the extent to which they were being accommodated within the new state is evident through the election of 14 non-Catholic T.D.s to the Dáil in 1923, a number which stood at 13 in 1927.⁵ However, on close examination of those returned, it becomes clear that most of them had been returned as nationalists of one form or other and not because of their religious beliefs.

Not surprisingly, the Protestant minority remained cautious despite their continued prosperity and the magnanimity of the Cosgrave regime. The Catholic ethos within the country became increasingly clear with the passing of time and this manifested itself in divorce, censorship and education legislation which was clearly at variance with the principles of Protestantism. During the nineteenth century the primary role of the Catholic Church in political and educational affairs was one of leadership. Therefore, it was to be expected that the Protestants would anticipate a major attempt on the government's part to appease them. They took it for granted that their values and principles would be incorporated, as a matter of course, into the ethos of the new state. From the outset a strong and overt Catholic presence was distinctly manifest in all aspects of the state's affairs.

From 1922 onwards the Catholic Church began to exercise its own strong influence on many strands of Irish life. It involved itself closely in educational and censorship issues and made its presence very strongly felt in other areas of social and political life. The Church had been openly critical of the Protestant Ascendancy classes in the days before independence. Now it did not take long before the religious minority began to feel that the process of meritocracy had produced a new Ascendancy.

Indeed the accommodating policy of the Cumann na nGaedheal government appeared to be at variance with the general opinion in the country, and the anxiety was compounded by the general fear that this official attitude might change, especially if public opinion altered. These anxieties were not without foundation, especially from the Republicans. DeValera had after all described Irish Unionism in 1918 as part of a foreign garrison who would have to integrate into the new Ireland.⁶

The jealous attitude towards Protestants was not surprising as Ireland was a nation in which religious distinctions and prejudices exercised a dominating influence. In the 1920s Irish Protestantism found itself in contention with the problems of the nationalist myth, expressed in three main areas – Republicanism, Catholicism and Gaelicism. In each of these facets the clear presence of Catholicism was present. One area where discord was to be in sharp evidence was that of the university issue. Republicans held Trinity College and all it stood for in complete distaste. For Catholics it had been the Protestant pivot of the drive to diminish and destroy the Catholic presence in Ireland and as such would surely continue. The Gaelic dimension of Protestant fears had its roots in the newly elevated and essentially crucial role that the Irish language was assuming in the development of the Free State.

With the passing of time it became increasingly more difficult for the religious minority to envisage a Protestant identity which was also in reality Irish.⁷ The Cumann na nGaedheal government itself, despite its overt Catholic principles, did not give them any cause for alarm. While it remained in power, the Protestant community felt itself cloaked in a degree of security, a point which was never lost by the southern Protestant media at election time. They were comfortable with a party whose clear Catholic principles, although evident, were at least prepared to accommodate positively the anxieties of Protestants. This was felt to be preferable to the Republican opposition whose clear manifestations of nationalism, with its uncompromising Catholic ethos, were clearly anathema to the minority. Indeed the growing nationalism which expressed itself among their Catholic fellow-countrymen, clearly augured an increasing undercurrent of isolation for the Protestants. This threat was becoming manifest through the three main strands of nationalism.

The first occasion on which this fragile co-existence threatened to fracture was in 1930 with the appointment of a Protestant to the position of Mayo County Librarian. Social legislation had been enacted prior to this which was clearly Catholic in its structure. Although much of it ran contrary to Protestant principles, no overtly direct consequences against individuals of the minority faith had resulted. However, in Mayo an issue erupted which caused the minority, for the first time, to feel the detrimental effects of the power of the majority. Events took a turn for the worst and eventually resulted in the dissolution of Mayo County Council. While the problem has recently been described as a relatively minor issue,⁸

it cannot be denied that it unearthed the fundamental fear which pervaded the Protestant community. At the same time it indicated the Catholic antipathy to the religious minority.

I

A conflict had arisen in Mayo over the library service in February 1930, when the County Librarian, Miss Bridget Redmond, resigned, apparently because of continuous disagreements with the County Secretary. The problem was compounded by the subsequent resignation of the County Library Committee. This sub-committee looked after all library affairs for Mayo County Council and resigned after the local authority had appointed a librarian, Mr. Hamrock, in a temporary capacity. The strong Catholic dominance of Irish life was evident in the composition of the committee as it comprised six Catholic clergymen, one Christian Brother, one Protestant Rector as well as five laymen, and was chaired by the Catholic Bishop of Killala, Dr. Naughton. On tendering its resignation, the committee maintained that the county council had not consulted it about the appointment.⁹ They were clearly influenced by the comments of Miss Redmond. The Library Committee was not to meet again for ten months, but when it did it was to become embroiled in a long and bitter argument. This time the adversary was not the County Council but central government itself. The bone of contention was the appointment of a Miss Dunbar-Harrison as librarian.

Letitia Elizabeth Eileen Dunbar-Harrison was born in 1906, the adopted daughter of John Walter Harrison of Palmerston Road, Dublin. She entered Trinity College, Dublin in 1924, graduating with a B.A. (Mod.) degree in French and Spanish in 1928. She then spent six months with the County Dublin Library Committee and nine months with the Rathmines Public Library.¹⁰ This experience entitled her to apply for the position of County Librarian. After graduating from Trinity, she commenced Irish classes, but at the time of her appointment as Mayo librarian she remained 'incompetent' in the language. The nationalist triad – Republicanism, Catholicism and Gaelicism – now expressed itself against her appointment and in the centre of this conflict lay the Local Appointments Commission.

Throughout the period 1893 to 1921 when Irish local government was under British control, favouritism regarding employment within the public sector was widespread. This trend did not go unnoticed amongst the Founding Fathers of the state, with Arthur Griffith maintaining that it would be more difficult to end the practice of nepotism regarding public appointments than to secure independence.¹¹ Even in the formative years of the Free State – up to 1926 – there were incessant accusations that favouritism was being used. In order to terminate the practice and ensure equality in public appointments, the Government enacted the Local

Authorities (Officers and Employees) Act 1926. The main feature of the new legislation was that every local authority, prior to making an appointment to a local government post, would consult the Local Appointments Commission. This was a newly established body and they would be requested to recommend a person for the office. The local authority was then obliged to appoint the person recommended to them by the Commission.¹²

While there were criticisms of the Appointments Commission, mainly concerning its procedure, it was generally accepted by all sections of society as a genuine endeavour to ensure that public appointments would from there on, be fair and just. However, as the Commissioners were not elected and were answerable only to the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, it was inevitable that they would soon engage the wrath of certain sections of society. There were many public representatives, especially members of Fianna Fáil, who felt that the Local Appointments Commission had been given a mandate which left local authorities with little scope in the area of public appointments. DeValera wanted the centralization of such power in Dublin changed to give more power to the local bodies. At the same time the concept of centralization with regard to the library services was seen as a solution of the crux in Mayo.

One of the major objections to the Commission was the autocratic control it exercised in making the appointment. On its recommendation alone, the successful applicant was bound to be installed by the local authority. Fianna Fáil proposed an alternative procedure whereby the names of three candidates would be forwarded by the Commission to the local authority in question, who would then be in a position to select one of them. It was felt that the hands of the local authorities were completely tied under the existing legislation. However, there were those who opposed the Fianna Fáil alternative, fearing it would reintroduce the old-style methods of canvass and influence and that the best candidate could invariably be passed over.¹³

It must be pointed out that the Government's attempts to bring improvements to the Act proved unsuccessful in the long run, due to an apparent lethargic attitude which pervaded most local authorities regarding the Act. A Dáil all-party sub-committee was established in 1928 to inquire and report on the Act. Yet less than half of the 149 elected bodies in the country took the time to express their opinion about the Bill. The lack of opposition was clearly evident by the low number – only 23 – of authorities, who actively opposed the Act in principle.¹⁴ Consequently the workings of the Local Appointments Commission remained unaltered, processing over 100 public appointments by 1930, with little or no objection. For minority groups, such as the Protestant community, the Commission ensured that prejudices and discriminations of any description would not dominate public appointments and that fair play would ensue.

When Miss Redmond resigned her post as Mayo County Librarian,

the Commission advertised the position along with similar positions in four other counties. All the vacancies carried an annual salary of £250 plus expenses. As only two of the applicants had the necessary qualifications in librarianship and Irish, they were appointed to the areas of their first choice, Carlow and Kilkenny. Miss Dunbar-Harrison was fourth in the order of merit; Cavan was her first choice and Mayo her second. As there was a shortage of suitable candidates, those other positions were left unfilled and a second round of interviews held. On this occasion Miss Dunbar-Harrison was not required to be interviewed and she was subsequently appointed to Mayo.¹⁵ Despite the criticisms which afterwards ensued, it cannot be disputed that a competent selection board had convened. It had comprised a university professor, the film censor and three experienced librarians. However the refusal of Mayo County Library Committee to ratify Miss Dunbar-Harrison's appointment, indicated they were utilizing their own criteria for such appointments, for they based their opposition on her incompetence in Irish.

II

The 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State recognised Irish as the national language, but also ratified English as an official language. In addition, it allowed that special provision could be made for districts in which only one language was in general use.¹⁶ In this way, the status of Irish was upgraded, rendering it the main language, while provision was made for English to be a suitable alternative. The latter was clearly intended to appease Protestants, who by and large were only competent in English, as the education system had not incorporated Irish on a large scale prior to 1923.

From an early stage, the Free State government was aware of the shortage of people within the Civil Service who were competent in Irish and who could carry out their duties through the medium of the new official language.¹⁷ It was generally considered that the new state should express its nationalist ethos at every opportunity. It was thus considered by many that a steadfast expression of this nationalism, in the form of an adequate knowledge of Irish was more important than any other qualification for particular state posts. Consequently the Government set up the Gaeltacht Commission, which issued its report in 1926. A major recommendation – which came into effect – was the stipulation, that if a person was appointed who was not competent enough in Irish, he would be given three years in which to study and gain an adequate knowledge of the language. If after three years the appointee failed to reach a desired standard, he or she would be compelled to leave the post.

The Irish language had been on the decline before the famine, but there were many nationalists who looked to the new state to reverse this trend. Although Mayo was regarded as one of the principal Gaeltacht counties, only 32.6 percent of the population were categorised as Irish

speakers in 1926.¹⁸ However major differences were evident within the county itself. Only 20 of the county's 150 electoral divisions could be described as being truly Irish speaking, where over 80 percent of the community regularly spoke Irish. While less than one-third of the Mayo population were Irish speaking, there were still large sections of society, both nationally and regionally, who held fast to the principle that a county librarian in such areas had to be competent in the language. Gaelic nationalists who insisted on classifying Mayo as a Gaeltacht county, added strength to their case by insisting that it was inappropriate to have a person incompetent in Irish as County Librarian. However, under the provisions of the 1928 Gaeltacht Act, Miss Dunbar-Harrison was entitled to take up the appointment and attain an adequate proficiency in the language within three years. Her knowledge of Irish, or rather her lack of it, was one of the major issues in the consequent debate.

The appointment was officially opposed by the Library Committee on 22 November 1930. The reason given and subsequently forwarded to the County Council, was that Miss-Dunbar-Harrison was not competent enough in Irish. Consequently no appointment was made until an alternative candidate – one with an adequate knowledge of Irish – could be found. The leading opponent of Miss Dunbar-Harrison's appointment was Dean D'Alton, who publicly inquired if there were no other candidates available to the Local Appointments Commission with proficiency in Irish. It later transpired that a Catholic, Miss Burke of Longford, who D'Alton claimed had sufficient Irish, had been passed over for the position without any given reason. What D'Alton failed to realise was that Miss Burke was not herself competent in Irish, and if appointed would have also had to avail of the terms of the Gaeltacht Act to reach the desired standard in the language. Indeed she had finished a poor fifth on the panel for the appointment, seventy marks behind Miss Dunbar-Harrison. As has recently been suggested,¹⁹ it would seem more credible that Miss Dunbar-Harrison possessed the better facility to learn Irish than Miss Burke, because of her training as an honours language graduate. In contrast to Miss Burke, Miss Dunbar-Harrison had scored very highly as far as library experience, personality and general education were concerned.²⁰ It must also be pointed out that one of the other successful applicants, Kathleen M. White, who was appointed to Leitrim, was at a similar disadvantage regarding her competency in Irish, but no attempt was ever made at any stage to have her removed from her post. Clearly the Mayo County Library Committee, through the promptings of its clerical members, was prepared to support Miss Burke's candidature on the grounds of her Catholicism and not because of her credentials.

In this way, the use of the Irish language as an appointment criterion raised itself in the Mayo controversy. It became an issue which brought many of the Gaelic nationalists such as Fr. Malachy MacBrennan of Ahascragh, Ballinasloe, and the Gaelic League into the crux. Such

nationalists took the view that the Irish language was being made play a very subservient role at a time when it should be shown as a symbol for all Irishmen.²¹ Throughout the debate, which continued into 1932, no mention was ever made of the fact that Miss Dunbar-Harrison adhered fully to the terms of the Gaeltacht Act and had attempted to learn Irish. Her readiness to learn the language and the acceptance of other candidates as librarians whose Irish was as tenuous, indicate the shallowness of the argument against her appointment on the sole grounds of her inadequacies in Irish. However other reasons for opposing her appointment were by now becoming apparent and here the Trinity factor came into play.

III

In a new state clearly intent on ostentatiously displaying its patriotism, this was a period in which nationalists demanded that all educational establishments and institutions (including the library service) should be utilised to produce a people who would be fully nationalist in their outlook and culture. In this context, the view was propounded that an institute such as Trinity College Dublin, would be incapable of producing professional people who would be attuned to the national and cultural aspirations now required in the new state.

The nationalist contempt for Trinity College had stemmed from Trinity's failure to co-operate with and integrate into the new state. While it did recognize the existence of the new state, its maintenance of such forms of protocol as saluting the Governor-General of the Free State with 'God save the King',²² displayed a certain isolation from the nascent state. Sections of the Irish-Ireland movement (notably *The Leader*) were quick to seize on this failure to contribute to the new cultural well-being of the country. Trinity was classified as representing English values and it was frequently stated that the sooner it was brought to its knees the better.²³ In an era of nationalist revival it was little wonder that Trinity came in for such criticisms. In political circles Trinity's stance was severely criticised. P. J. Ruttledge (Fianna Fáil) said in the Dáil:

Apparently we are the only country in which a certain element in the state, can get up and deliberately sneer at and flout the sentiments of the majority of the people. We had an example of it here in this city when in Trinity College the 'Soldier's Song' was refused to be played.²⁴

It was widely accepted that Trinity was a Protestant institution which had little relevance to the vast majority of Irishmen. By the turn of the century less than seven percent of its students were Catholic. Catholics were antagonistic to it because of remarks by its supporters, such as Judge Webb, who stated 'Their university was founded by Protestants, for Protestants, and in the Protestant interest'.²⁵

At the foundation of the Free State, Trinity was strongly criticized by the Catholic Church and the nationalists because of its former connection

with Britain. The Hierarchy viewed Trinity as the pivot of a regime which had tried to suppress the Catholic Faith. They still retained the fear that this Protestant institution would contaminate their flock. Their detestation was evident in their 1919 pastoral which warned their flock against attending the College. This became known as the Decree of the Plenary Synod of Maynooth in 1927, and it was endorsed by the Holy See. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s the bishops constantly reiterated this warning to the laity. Despite these censures, an independent spirit remained within certain sections of Catholic society, especially in the upper social groups, and it was hardly surprising they were severely reprimanded by the orthodox Catholic media, in particular *the Catholic Bulletin*.²⁶

Animosity towards Trinity was an expression of the ultra-nationalism which had been on the increase since the foundation of the state. From the beginning of the controversy, Miss Dunbar-Harrison's opponents used her Trinity background to launch a savage attack on the university, claiming that the culture in which she had been educated was alien to the people of Mayo. In the words of Br. Kelly at a Mayo Library Committee meeting: 'Her past had not been Irish, and he doubted if her future would be Irish'.²⁷ At a time when enlightened thinking was at a low ebb, it was argued that coming from such an unIrish institution she was bound to bring 'English' views with her to Mayo.

Although the general opinion of the elected representatives of County Mayo was very much anti-Trinity, supporters of the university were to be found in the county-people who held a more enlightened opinion on the affair. At a library committee meeting Dr. McBride, a graduate of the Royal University and a brother of the executed 1916 leader, Major John McBride, defended Trinity College. He defended it as one of the foremost educational institutions of the world and one of which the Irish people should be proud. It must be noted that McBride was one of the few Mayomen to display actively his opposition to the Catholic ethos that was expressing itself in the country. Such an attitude from a person so closely related to a patriot who had actually died for the Irish Republican cause, was unusual, but it did indicate the broad-minded attitude of some people and their despair at the new direction the new state was taking. McBride in a letter to the Cabinet said he would involve himself in another fight for Irish independence, 'a freedom from the tyranny of the middle ages'.²⁸

However such support was rare among the public representatives in Mayo. Generally they were quick to denounce Trinity, and their views were disseminated and augmented by those newspapers, which held the view that a Protestant graduate of the pro-British Trinity College was not exactly a fit person for the position of librarian in any county in Ireland. In the seething ferment of fervent nationalism, little or no account was taken of the educational standards of the college. But the cultural and republican aspects of nationalism merely clouded the issue; it was the religious dimension, the element of Catholicism, which lay at the heart of the case.

In the 1920s there were many sections of the Catholic majority who were not prepared to show religious toleration. Many felt that the Ascendency was over-represented in the higher positions of the Free State. The Catholic Action movement, for example, wanted more favourable prospects for Catholics in Ireland and sought to ensure that Protestant influence would be minimal. Its objective was to bring Catholic principles to bear on every public question, whether religious, moral, social or economic. It was claimed that Catholics had fought Protestant sowers in the past and they would not allow the pagan followers of the devil to succeed. While Protestants were aware of such opponents, the exertions of the Cosgrave administrations allayed their fears. With the opposition politicians showing a disregard for the policy of Protestant appeasement, however, the minority began to feel uneasy. While Protestants were a small minority, they were at least well represented among the professional classes, especially among solicitors, dentists, doctors and civil servants. The Catholic Action movement thus felt that the Cosgrave administration was attempting to cushion an already comfortable Protestant community. This widespread Catholic resentment of Irish Protestantism had a sharper impetus in Mayo in the light of the recent history of the county. It must be remembered that Mayo had experienced the full weight of the proselytizing campaigns of the nineteenth century. Twenty-one proselytizing societies had existed in Ireland in the 1850s. Those societies in Achill and Partry were amongst the most controversial in the country.²⁹ In the 1870s and 1880s instances of proselytizing had recurred – this time in Ballina. In a society where such instances were still within living memory, it was not surprising that the Protestant threat was felt to be so real.

When the Dunbar-Harrison appointment came before the Library Committee in October, 1930, the members refused to ratify the appointment recommended to them. Dean D'Alton attacked the appointment, stating that it was an attempt to inaugurate a Protestant Ascendency in Mayo.³⁰ With the exception of McBride, D'Alton was supported by all the other Catholic members of the committee. McBride, in supporting the appointment, said that her rejection was a case of sectarianism, and he felt that suitable people, regardless of their religion, should be appointed on merit.

When it became known that the Library Committee had refused to ratify the appointment of Miss Dunbar-Harrison, the charge of sectarianism was at once made. The anti-Dunbar-Harrison group retorted by claiming that the charge of bigotry was unfair. They felt that a situation existed in which the wishes of the county's representatives were being disregarded by the central government. The Catholic faction made no attempt to deny that their opposition to the appointment was purely on religious grounds. Protestant fears, allayed in the 1920s, were once more coming to the fore, and the sentiments of Canon Chamberlain of

Kingstown typified their anxiety: '... We have a signal vindication of the feeling of nervous apprehension on the part of Protestants that in the State they could be penalised because of their religion'.³¹

The Catholic professional classes supported the government with regard to Miss Dunbar-Harrison's appointment. On the other hand, the opponents of the appointment were led initially by the clergy and then by the parliamentary opposition, chiefly Fianna Fáil. Clergy like Canon Fallon of Castlebar alleged that their opposition was not sectarian in motives, but in his case this can be dismissed by reference to his letter to the *Irish Independent* in which he stated:

If the Catholic peasantry of Mayo are not permitted to avail themselves of the Carnegie Library grant, except on condition of putting a young Protestant lady in charge of their library, then I think I am safe in saying they will have nothing to say to the Carnegie grant. They have made greater sacrifices in the past.³²

When the issue came before Mayo County Council on 6 December it was evident that the sectarian dimension would be all-important. The leaders of Fianna Fáil on the council, Richard Walsh and P. J. Rutledge, reiterated the view of their party leader, Éamon De Valéra, that there was no sectarian motive behind their opposition to the appointment. De Valéra never considered, even during the 1919-21 war, that religion was an important factor in the Irish question. He maintained it only came into prominence when England and the Irish Ascendency felt threatened. Fianna Fáil maintained that their objection was limited to Miss Dunbar-Harrison's incompetence in Irish and the fact that she was a graduate of Trinity College. However, the sentiments of another Fianna Fáil councillor, John T. Morahan, illustrated a different attitude prevalent among sections of the rank and file of the party. His was one which represented the general Catholic feeling in the country:

At the risk of being expelled from the Fianna Fáil party, he would vote against Miss Dunbar on the grounds of her religion, as he was an Irishman and a Catholic. . .³³

Throughout his speech he constantly referred to Miss Dunbar-Harrison's Protestant Faith and maintained that in his opinion the issue was sectarian.

The debate on the religious question continued into 1931, even after Mayo County Council had been dissolved because of the issue. Miss Dunbar-Harrison was by this stage County Librarian. Protestants were now being portrayed as having no important attributes to give to the country, or to the county. They were a race that could not, and would not, appreciate the ideals of a Catholic people. While many objected to Protestants, using the pretext of culture and nationalism there were those, like John T. Morahan, who was honest or naive enough to show that their opposition was because of religious principles. It would appear that the parliamentary opposition was taking its lead from the clergy. The clergy on

the Library Committee initiated the programme which the politicians followed.

The position in which many politicians, within the Cumann na nGaedheal party, found themselves regarding their loyalty to their Church or the doctrines of the Constitution, which as public representatives they were obliged to uphold, caused much anxiety. The issue became more divisive with both sides deeply entrenched and with little likelihood of immediate resolution. Some of the ministers indicated that they were considering the question of resigning from public life, in an effort to force a showdown. Indeed Cosgrave and Desmond Fitzgerald were included among the latter.³⁴

As far as the clergy and Fianna Fáil were concerned the question centred round whether a librarian was an educator involved in the education system. If this was so, they should share the religious adherence of the majority of the inhabitants. However a strict Censorship Board was in existence, with clerical participation, and it ensured that no literature entered the country which would be damaging to the Faith and morals of Catholics. Thus in any case Miss Dunbar-Harrison, as Mayo County Librarian, would have no influence on the library stock, and she would be powerless to select books which were contrary to Catholic doctrine and mores.

Throughout the period that Miss Dunbar-Harrison was Mayo County Librarian (1930-2), her opponents continued their campaign. In his Lenten Pastoral of 1931 the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. Gilmartin, highly praised the Mayo representatives who had opposed the appointment, and added that the library service should be under the control of a Catholic librarian.³⁵ Despite the contacts that took place behind the scenes, Gilmartin was not reluctant to declare in public his feelings on the issue. This action certainly strained Church-State relations, although the officials in Tuam did ensure that the pastorals of the Bishops of Achonry and Killala did not contain any direct references to the librarian case.

The Cabinet correspondence indicates the extent to which central government was concerned by the affair and Cosgrave did attempt to seek a solution to the whole impasse. This was prompted by the fear that the local issue would produce a knock-on effect, with disastrous national consequences for Church-State relations. What the correspondence does reveal, is a major chasm between the two groups on the issue. Although the Cosgrave administration publicly put on a bold face, and appeared to adopt a hard-line approach, it was at the same time attempting, however unsuccessfully, to patch up this major split with the Hierarchy. The entrenched position of the bishops locally, was evident from their insistence the only resolution of the problem was for Miss Dunbar-Harrison to be provided with alternative employment.³⁶ Despite the numerous meetings which took place, it was evident from the bishops' attitude that they wished the Catholic faith to have a special role within the

institutions of the state.

In an effort to overcome the critical state of noncompromise, the Government was prepared to concede many issues to the bishops. It accepted the idea of putting in a centralized library service and abolishing the county system.³⁷ By doing this the whole role of the county librarian would be minimized and the threat of religious bias would be greatly curtailed, as censorship and the distribution of suitable books would henceforth be in the hands of the Dublin authorities. In this it must be suggested that a fear existed about local authorities having power, however limited. In a period when differing ideologies and religions were viewed with suspicion, the role of bodies such as the Censorship Board, in the protection of morals, was regarded as sufficient. What the affair reveals is the way by which pressure and influence could be brought to bear on local public appointments, with religious criteria overshadowing qualifications and suitability in ranking importance.

In the Dáil, Fianna Fáil showed that they supported the Church on the issue. Richard Walsh stated that they would not apologise for being Catholic or for taking a Catholic attitude on the question. This was reaffirmed by the party leader, De Valéra, when he said that Protestants were only entitled to positions according to their numbers.³⁸ If this policy was carried out Protestants would be excluded from certain positions in the state, a view which was at variance with Government policy. The attitude of the party was surprising as it looked consciously to Tone for inspiration. In this respect it might have been expected to rally to the support of Miss Dunbar-Harrison, and to champion the right of a Protestant to a position in the public service regardless of any consideration of his or her religious background.³⁹ While the nationalist and religious dimensions of the case had attracted country-wide attention, the immediate effects of the controversy were felt in Mayo. Mayo County Council had after all been dissolved because of its opposition to Miss Dunbar-Harrison's appointment.

V

The decision of Mayo County Council to support the Library Committee in refusing to appoint Miss Dunbar-Harrison, had led to open conflict within central government. In an attempt to defuse the situation, the Department of Local Government and Public Health decided to give Mayo County Council one last opportunity to appoint the librarian, as otherwise it was faced with having to dissolve the authority. At a specially convened meeting at the end of December, the County Council refused to alter their decision, although on this occasion six members voted for the appointment. Eleven Cumann na nGaedheal councillors, evidently aware of the outcome, and still prepared to oppose the appointment but not prepared to break with their party, stayed away from the meeting, so the

appointment was once more defeated by 21 votes to 6. Some of the Cumann na nGaedheal councillors only reluctantly supported the Government on the issue, expressing reservations about the party's electoral prospects in the county as a result of the crux.⁴⁰ All fifteen Fianna Fáil councillors voted against the appointment and were joined by three Cumann na nGaedheal members. Those who changed sides and voted for the appointment, indicated they were unaware at the earlier meeting of the nominee's lack of Irish qualifications. Just as the Irish question was used to oppose her nomination, it was now being utilized by councillors as an escape. Others felt that the people of Mayo were indifferent to the religious question and that the censorship laws were adequate to deal with offensive literature.

The continued support of Mayo County Council for the Library Committee brought it into direct conflict with the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, Richard Mulcahy. Mulcahy decided to hold an inquiry headed by a Local Government Board Inspector, Mr. McLysaght into the activities of the council. McLysaght eventually reported that the financial affairs of the Council were satisfactory, but the Authority was found guilty of failing to appoint Miss Dunbar-Harrison.⁴¹ Consequently the Council was abolished on 1 January 1931, and its affairs came under the control of a paid commissioner, Thomas Bartley, whose first duty was to appoint Miss Dunbar-Harrison as County Librarian.

The conflict with Mayo County Council was just one of the many difficulties which confronted the Government concerning local authorities, between 1927 and 1930. Between 1898 and 1923 the British authorities never had cause to resort to the abolition of any local authority. Under section 72 of the Local Government Act 1923, the Minister for Local Government was empowered to abolish any local authority if he saw fit. Between 1925 and 1930 the councils in Dublin, Wexford and Mayo were abolished. Mayo was not alone in feeling aggrieved. The Council received support from the County Councils in Leitrim, Carlow, Laois and South Tipperary, as well as from Mayo exiles abroad.⁴² Although the county councillors had been relieved of their duties, they displayed a militant attitude, and did hold two further meetings, in January and May, 1931. Of the twenty-one councillors associated with these meetings three were Cumann na nGaedheal members. Through this action the councillors were refusing to acknowledge their suppression by the central authority and were indicating their rebellious resolve to carry on the fight.

What had been at first a question of competency in Irish with regard to a local appointment, had now been elevated to a delicate political and Church-State relations issue. Most of the sub-committees of Mayo County Council supported the action of the parent body in refusing to recognise the abolition of the council. While the commissioner appointed new committees, these were never attended by a quorum of members, with the result that he himself had to conduct most of the business on his own. This

would suggest that the clergy viewed their participation on these committees as a means of protecting the religious interest of their flock, and not as was expected of them, to watch over the interests of the whole community. Indeed there would appear to have been a concerted campaign to dissuade any priests in the county from acting on the commissioner's committees. Archbishop Gilmartin did go so far as to inform Cosgrave that the bishops were not prepared to ask the clergy to do so.⁴³ Another note in the Cabinet files indicates that priests who were anxious and willing to act on these committees had been prevented from doing so. The clerical boycott of committees became so acute that the commissioner was forced to appoint himself as one-man Finance, Mental Hospital and Agriculture Committees for the county; and because the Education Committee refused to function, the Vocational Education Act (1930) did not come into operation in Mayo until 1932.

VI

In the closing months of 1931 there was increasing speculation that a general election was imminent, coupled with the rumour that Miss Dunbar-Harrison was to be transferred to the position of librarian in the Department of Defence in Dublin – a move which did take place in February 1932. Between 1923 and 1927 the influential members of the Mayo clergy had always supported the Government at election time. During the 1932 election campaign the clergy were conspicuous by their absence from the Cumann na nGaedheal platforms. The Government's determination to install Miss Dunbar-Harrison as Mayo librarian had cost them the support of the clergy, and this may have been a factor in the subsequent decline in the Cumann na nGaedheal party's position in Mayo.

The conflict did not end with the transfer of Miss Dunbar-Harrison to Dublin, primarily because Mayo County Council was not restored as a council. In April 1932 the new Fianna Fáil government restored Mayo County Council, along with five urban councils which had been abolished by the Cosgrave administration. When the council was restored most of the sub-committees resumed their former duties. The library service, once more enjoying the full backing of the clergy, was quickly reactivated. The clergy had played an important role in organizing the local library committees, and in many instances they administered the local library centre.⁴⁴

When the headlong confrontation came to a resolution in 1932, the Church once more spearheaded the campaign to expand the library service. In 1931 only five library centres had remained open in the county, all independent of the clergy. However with the resolution of the crisis in 1932, the local centres began to reopen. By November 1933, 127 centres were functioning, chiefly under clerical control.⁴⁵

There is little doubt that the Dunbar-Harrison affair was the result of the intensification of Irish nationalism in the 1920s. It was the government

which relented on the Dunbar-Harrison case, thus allowing the bishops and clergy a victory. Their climbdown in this respect can no doubt be attributed to the impending general election, and although they had campaigned throughout the affair on the point of equality for the different religious groups, failure had in effect been admitted by their action in appointing Miss Dunbar-Harrison to an alternative post, well out of the public eye. However it must be stressed that it was carried out with the acquiescence of Miss Dunbar-Harrison who, no doubt, realised the gravity of the situation and the extent to which library service in the county was suffering. Throughout the crisis Miss Dunbar-Harrison carried out her work with a diligence that went unnoticed. Against the odds she kept a skeletal library service in operation, much to the admiration of the small number of people who continued to use it.

While the government to all intents and purposes had backed down on the issue, perhaps the greatest loser in the whole affair was the Protestant community. During the previous decade major advances had been made to allay their suspicions. The minority community had been actively encouraged to play a more important political role in the state's affairs, in an effort to assimilate them into the new state. However it now appeared they could not be sure of fair representation in a state where the Catholic ethos had a dominant position. The case showed up the cracks in the fragile security of Protestants in the state. The Cumann na nGaedheal surrender on the issue did however allow the party to save face on two fronts. It was able to salvage some pride within Mayo, where the party had been internally torn apart by divisions. Furthermore the central administration was permitted to escape from a Church-State conflict, which it had never been fully committed to from the beginning. Nevertheless the Dunbar-Harrison case continued to remain a controversial issue in the folk-memory of Mayo people.

Notes

1. Henry E. Patton, *Fifty years of Disestablishment* (Dublin 1922), pp 308-9.
2. N.L.I. MS 8045, W. J. O'Neill Daunt Papers, dated 24 April 1874.
3. George Seaver, *John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg, Archbishop* (Dublin 1963), pp 119-26.
4. Patrick Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience, A Historical Survey* (Dublin 1985), p.234.
5. J. H. Whyte, 'Political life in the South' in Michael Hurley (ed.), *Irish Anglicanism, 1869-1969* (Dublin, 1970).
6. John Bowman, *DeValera and the Ulster Question, 1917-1973* (Oxford 1982), pp 32, 36. He stated that they were either English or Irish, but they could not have dual allegiance.
7. J. White, *Minority Report: The Protestant Community in the Irish Republic* (Dublin 1975), p.96. This identity of Britishness was seen during the 1914-1918 war when a higher proportion of Irish Protestants joined the British Army than did their Catholic fellow-countrymen.

8. D. Keogh, *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish Politics, 1919-1939* (Cambridge 1985), p.166.
9. *Dáil Debates*, xxxix, 17 Jun. (1931), p.538. Miss Redmond stated Hamrock was incompetent for the position having previously only performed general office duties at the library headquarters in Castlebar.
10. *Connacht Telegraph*, 10 Jan. (1931), p.5. As the allowed age limit for the position was 25 years, Miss Dunbar-Harrison was allowed apply for the post by virtue of the 15 months library experience she had acquired.
11. Letter from a Dublin T.D., *Irish Independent*, 8 January (1931), p.9. Indeed some members of the Hierarchy, such as Archbishop Harty of Cashel, supported the government's endeavours to put an end to political jobbery. See Keogh, op. cit., p.170.
12. *Public Statutes of the Oireachtas, Local Authorities (Officers and Employees) Act, 1926*, p.517.
13. *Western People*, 7 November. (1931), p.6.
14. *Connaught Telegraph*, 7 November (1931), p.6.
15. *Dáil Debates*, xxxix, pp 494, 513-4.
16. *Dáil Éireann, Standing Orders, 1923*, Article 4, p.87.
17. This can be seen in the evidence before the Gaeltacht Commission of 1926, see Minutes and Report of *Coimisiún na Gaeltachta*, no. 91, p.29.
18. *ibid.*, p.82.
19. Keogh, op. cit., p.167.
20. S.P.O., Cabinet Papers, S2547A, 1930-1931.
21. *Irish Independent*, 8 December (1930), p. 11. MacBrennan was one of the leading activists to have Irish made compulsory for matriculation in the National University of Ireland. Conradh na Gaeilge opposed the appointment, and were opposed to the provision which allowed all persons who were incompetent in Irish three years to gain a working knowledge of the language. S.P.O. Cabinet Papers, S2547A 1930-1931.
22. *The Catholic Standard*, 6 December (1930), p.10.
23. *The Leader*, 7 March (1931), p.126.
24. *Dáil Debates*, xxxix, p.440.
25. William Walsh, *The Irish University Question: The Catholic Case* (Dublin 1897), p.249.
26. *The Catholic Bulletin*, March (1931), pp 222-3; S.P.O., Cabinet Papers, 1931, S2547C.
27. *Ibid.*, December (1931), pp 10-11.
28. S.P.O., Cabinet Papers, 1930-1, S2547A.
29. Jeremiah Newman, *The State of Ireland* (Dublin 1977), p.31. In his correspondence with the Cabinet, Archbishop Gilmartin was quick to point out the question of proselytism, S.P.O., Cabinet Papers, 1931-2, S2547B. For accounts of proselytism in nineteenth century Mayo see, Moran, G.P., *The Mayo Evictions of 1860: The story of Fr. Patrick Lavelle and the 'war' in Partry*, (Westport 1986); Bowen, D. *Souperism, Myth or Reality* (Cork 1970), pp 88-106.
30. *Western People*, 6 December (1930), p.3.
31. *Irish Times*, 3 December (1930), p.4.
32. *Irish Independent*, 10 December (1930), p.10. This was also the view of Chancellor Hegarty of Killala, See Keogh, op. cit., p.166.

33. *Connaught Telegraph*, 13 December (1930), p.6.
34. S.P.O. Cabinet Papers, 1930-1, S2547A, Keogh, op. cit, p.173. Desmond Fitzgerald in his notes went on to state: 'In no circumstances am I prepared to embark on a course at variance with the declared instructions of the Church'. Keogh argues that this ploy by Cosgrave was an attempt to bring about a solution to the problem.
35. *Catholic Standard*, 21 February (1931), p.13.
36. S.P.O. Cabinet Papers, 1931-2, S2547B, letter dated, 6 March (1931).
37. J. White, op. cit., p.101.
38. *Dáil Debates*, xxxix, 17 June (1931), p.432. S.P.O. Cabinet Papers, 1930-1, S2547A.
39. J. H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1970* (Dublin 1971), pp 44-5.
40. S.P.O., Cabinet Papers, 1930-1, S2547A, Letter from Seán Ruane to Cosgrave, dated 14 December (1930). Ruane was a County Councillor and went so far as to state that there was talk of organising a Catholic Centre Party, something which did not materialise.
41. *Western People*, 10 December (1930), p.7.
42. *Mayo News*, 27 June, 1 August (1931), p.5.
43. S.P.O. Cabinet Papers, 1931-2, S2547B, Letter from Archbishop Gilmartin to Cosgrave, date 9 August. (1931).
44. Miss B. Redmond, 'In the middle of County Mayo', in the *Capuchin Annual*, 1932, pp 167-70. This article deals with the endeavours of Miss Redmond to establish the library service in Mayo.
45. *Western People*, 4 November (1933), p.4.

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EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION IN THE MAYO GAELTACHT 1904-1922

by Thomas A. O'Donoghue

Introduction

In 1904 a bilingual programme was sanctioned by the Commissioners of National Education for use in Irish-speaking districts. Up to 1900 the only educational rules regarding the Irish language were the rule of 1879 permitting the teaching of Irish as an extra subject outside school hours, and the rule of 1883 allowing the use of Irish to facilitate the teaching of English in Irish-speaking districts. With the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893, discussion on the status of the Irish language began in earnest. In 1904 it was successful in having a bilingual programme sanctioned for use during school hours in Irish-speaking districts.

The programme contained an outline of targets to be pursued by way of reading, writing and spelling in Irish and English from First standard up to and including Seventh standard. It also made provision for the employment of Irish as the sole medium of instruction for junior standards i.e. First standard to Third standard. The major characteristic of the programme was that Irish was to be offered along with English as a subject to be studied in its own right. There were also notes on the use of both languages in the teaching of the other subjects on the programme. At the end of one's schooling one was expected to be numerate and literate in both languages.¹

In 1906 there were only eighteen bilingual schools in the country. By 1907 there were 43 such schools and in 1908 the full complement of bilingual schools throughout the country was 110. The distribution of these schools throughout the various Irish-speaking counties was as follows:

Table 1
No. of Bilingual Schools in each county in 1908.

County	No. of Bilingual Schools
Donegal	55
Mayo	8
Galway	18
Clare	1
Kerry	20
Cork	6
Waterford	2
TOTAL	110

Source: Appendix to the Seventy-Fourth Report of the Commissioners of National Education (Ireland) for 1907-8, p.258.

The rest of this paper is concerned with the experience associated with the introduction of the programme throughout the Mayo Gaeltacht.

(i) The General Language Background

The number of Irish-speakers in County Mayo, as in all other counties, decreased steadily after 1851. While 87.7 per cent of the county was Irish-speaking in 1851, only 75.9 per cent was Irish-speaking in 1891.² Even more striking is the decrease in monoglot Irish-speakers. These declined from 8,510 in 1851 to 1,766 in 1891.

The geographical distribution of these Irish-speakers is shown in Table 2, while the map in Table 3, based on the definition of the official Fíor-Gaeltacht in 1926, gives a representation to the major Irish-speaking areas in the county in relation to each other. This shows that the major Irish-speaking areas in the county in 1926, as in 1911, were in the Bangor-Erris area in the north-west, the Achill-Corraun district in the west, and the Tourmakeady district on the shore of Lough Mask. In 1911, there was also a small Irish-speaking area comprised of fourteen District Electoral Divisions on the eastern shore of Lough Conn.

(ii) The introduction of the bilingual programme into north-west Mayo.

By 1911 the census returns for Irish-speakers for this area according to District Electoral Divisions³ were as in Table 4. This area is very extensive and in the extreme west it is known as the Mullet of Mayo. Much of it has the disadvantage of possessing a poor soil cover.

The bilingual programme was slow in being introduced in County Mayo and in 1912 it was being taught in only 19 schools. By 1920 there were still only 24 bilingual schools in the county. The extent to which this was poor progress can be gauged from the fact that 13 of these bilingual schools were in the north-west of the county. The location of the bilingual schools in the latter area is shown in Table 5. Presumably the reason why it was not introduced into the other schools in the area is that the teachers in question had been teaching in them prior to 1904, and had continued to teach in them throughout the lifespan of the programme. Such teachers were not required, on humanitarian grounds, to teach the programme.

There are at least two cases which indicate that the National Board can hardly be faulted for the poor progress in the introduction of the bilingual programme in this part of County Mayo. The first such case relates to the school of Doolough. On 29 March 1912 the Board received a letter from the parish priest of Bangor-Erris inquiring as to why a junior assistant mistress (J.A.M.) in the school had not received her salary.⁴ This lady had been working in the school since 1 May 1903 but J.A.M.s were not, unlike teachers appointed before 1904, excused from teaching the programme. The bilingual programme was introduced into the school on 1 July 1906. On a number of occasions the visiting inspector had advised the

J.A.M. in question to attend an Irish college and qualify for a bilingual certificate. However, when by January 1913 she still had not got such a certificate, the Board informed the parish priest as manager of the school that the teacher's salary would be withdrawn from 31 March 1913. The proposal was implemented on the latter date and a new assistant possessing a bilingual certificate was appointed.

The second case was that of an assistant appointed to the school at Carrowteige. On 26 November 1915 the Board wrote to the parish priest as manager of the school inquiring as to the teacher's qualifications to teach the bilingual programme.⁵ In his reply the parish priest stated that the teacher in question had no such qualification but he could not get another assistant due to the remoteness of the area. A supporting letter was forwarded from the Board's inspector, a Mr. Dale.⁶ The parish priest undertook to ensure that the teacher would improve her knowledge of Irish and take out a certificate of qualification without delay. The Board agreed that the teacher could be recognised provisionally but that the programme could not be discontinued. When by 1919 she still had not secured a bilingual teacher's certificate the manager asked that an exception be made due to the difficulty in getting a replacement. In order to illustrate his difficulty he stated:

I appointed two teachers to Poulathomais which is a more attractive school, within the last two months, and they left after a day or two.⁷

Nevertheless, the Board dispensed with the services of the female teacher at Carrowteige in 1921, when an inspector found that her proficiency could not be regarded as good enough to justify her permanent appointment in a bilingual school.

The Gaelic League acted as a watch-dog to ensure that the Board did not turn a blind eye to its own regulations. On 19 June 1907, Fionán MacColum of the Coisde Gnótha of the League wrote to the Board inquiring as to the position of the teachers in the school in relation to the teaching of the programme.⁸ Initially the Board ignored this request. Eventually, however, an inspection was carried out on 14 June 1910 and it was found that the principal could not speak, read or write Irish. The assistant could speak Irish fluently, could read it fairly well and could write the language, but her knowledge of formal grammar was considered unsatisfactory. However, no recommendations were made as the teachers had been in the school before the introduction of the programme.

Notwithstanding this, pressure was kept up by the League. A petition signed by 28 parents was forwarded to the Board asking that the principal be transferred elsewhere and an Irish-speaking teacher be appointed in his stead.⁹ The Sligo Branch of the INTO, to which the principal belonged, then became involved in the matter. Apparently he had been threatened by the Board with withdrawal of salary if he did not get a bilingual certificate. The INTO steward acting on the principal's behalf stated the latter was appointed in Doohoma on 1 April 1906,¹⁰ having been

teaching in a smaller school in the parish since February 1897. Doohoma was not a bilingual school when he was appointed although permission had been granted for such a school. On 31 October 1911 the Board sent Inspector D. Mangan to inspect the school and he reported as follows:

I found that 75 per cent of the pupils could speak Irish fluently and correctly; that from 80 to 90 per cent of them understood it. . . all of the pupils spoke English. Some of them did not appear to understand it as clearly as they did Irish.¹¹

As a result of this inspection the manager moved the principal to another school in order to settle the matter. This incident illustrates that while the Board adopted a humanitarian attitude when designing regulations to accommodate non Irish-speaking teachers who had been appointed to Irish-speaking areas prior to the introduction of the bilingual programme, it was not prepared to bend the rules to accommodate teachers appointed after its introduction.

The League also sought the introduction of the programme in Kilmore National School, but the Board's inspector found that while the children knew Irish they appeared to be more fluent at English.¹² Accordingly, the Board refused to sanction the introduction of the programme here.

The League was active in other ways in bringing pressure to bear on teachers in the area. In September 1906 it was reported that the Belmullet Branch of the INTO found it necessary to pass a resolution expressing their strong disapproval of Mr. Fitzhenry, Gaelic League organiser, in publishing reports on the schools in the area and the place of Irish in them.¹³ Neither did the inspectors escape attention. J. S. Cussen, senior inspector of County Mayo, wrote as follows to the commissioners on 10 August 1912:

Paragraphs have been appearing in the Mayo News, saying I was antagonistic to Irish, and that measures must be taken to bring me under control.¹⁴

He went on to say that he believed that the Gaelic League was behind this activity.

The teachers of the area also condemned Dr. Douglas Hyde's statement on 2 October 1911, in his capacity as President of the Gaelic League, that every schoolmaster and schoolmistress who could not teach the three Rs in Irish should be either exchanged at once or pensioned off.¹⁵ A number of other branches around the country also took this action. However, the resistance was more to the bullying action of the League than to the promotion of the language. Colm Ó Gaora, who was Gaelic League organiser in the area at the time, spoke highly of many of the teachers in the area and the work they were doing for the teaching of Irish and for bilingual teaching.¹⁶ He also spoke highly of some of the clergy.¹⁷

The Hierarchy also supported bilingual education and they passed a statute to this effect at the Provincial Synod of Tuam in 1908.¹⁸ The Bishop of Killala was active in promoting the teaching of Irish in his diocese from

the beginning of the century, and in 1903 he instituted what became known as the Killala Scheme.¹⁹ The essential feature of his scheme consisted in the joint action of all the managers of the diocese under the sanction and with the active co-operative of the Bishop. Every teacher in the diocese was required by his manager to teach Irish, and in order that the teachers might qualify themselves to teach the language efficiently, they were required to attend a course of training at an appropriate centre. Eight years later, in 1911, the Bishop of Killala organised church gate collections for the Irish language fund of the Gaelic League.²⁰

Such activity, however, by no means made an impression on all the people of the area. Ó Gaora stated that the people of Ballycroy and Geesala were very much against the preservation of the spoken language,²¹ while an INTO group which visited Doohoma in 1912 was given a statement signed by 80 parents, stating that they wanted Irish taught as an extra subject in school but in no other capacity, as they were a migratory people and their children would need great proficiency in English.²² The fact that what they sought for their children could, according to the Board, be best achieved through bilingual education was either not explained to them or else was not explained convincingly. It is interesting to note that the resistance in African countries to colonial education policy had similarities. Education was seen in African countries as one source of social mobility. As Naabinga Sithole has put it in his *African Nationalism*:

. . . to us education meant reading books, writing and talking English, and doing arithmetic. . . We wanted to learn the book until it remained in our heads, to speak English until we could speak it through our noses.²³

It would be hard to refute the suggestion that the same could be said for most of the Irish-speaking districts in Ireland.

(iii) The Introduction of the Bilingual Programme throughout the rest of County Mayo

The progress made in the introduction of the bilingual programme throughout the rest of County Mayo was even poorer than that made in the north-west. The smallest of these areas was that lying immediately to the east of Lough Conn and just south of Killala Bay. The D.E.D.s in this area in which over 50 per cent of the population were registered as Irish-speakers in 1911 are shown in Table 6. On 28 August 1912 Pádraig Ó Dálaigh of the Coisde Gnótha of the Gaelic League, wrote to the Board asking why the bilingual programme was not being taught in this area. He made particular reference to the school at Pontoon.²⁴ The Board carried out an inspection of the area on 8 October 1912 and came to the conclusion that Irish was not known sufficiently well by the majority of the pupils to warrant the introduction of the bilingual programme into the school. A further inspection carried out on 30 December 1912, revealed that of the 35

pupils present, only two had a knowledge of Irish outside of what they had learned at school.

Whatever the truth about the latter finding there appears to have been little sympathy for the preservation of the Irish language in the area. Séamus Fenton who was an inspector in the area at the time, stated:

The force against the revival of Irish as a spoken language was amazingly strong – one in almost every household no matter which speech was there.²⁵

In 1909, the League made a similar observation:

Charlestown, Kilmovee, Bohola, and Killasser have also taken a back seat. There is little enthusiasm for Irish in those parishes outside the schools.²⁶

They noted also that the League was not popular in Attymass and Straide.

The bilingual programme was also introduced on Achill Island and the Corraun Peninsula. This area was also strongly Irish-speaking. The D.E.D.s in the area in which over 50 per cent of the population were registered as Irish-speakers are shown in Table 7. In terms of agricultural potential the area is similar to the north-west.

For such an extensive Irish-speaking area the programme made very poor progress indeed. In all, it was only introduced into four schools. Two of these were on Achill Island, namely, Saulia or Gob an Choire N.S., and Bunnacurry N.S. It was also introduced into the school on Achillbeg Island. The only mainland school in which it was introduced in this area was Corraun N.S. The main reason for the poor progress appears to have been that the teachers in most of the schools were appointed prior to the introduction of the programme, and continued in the schools throughout its lifespan. The Gaelic League attempted to bring pressure to bear on the Board in relation to the matter but to no avail. For example, on 28 August 1912, Pádraig Ó Dálaigh of the Coisde Gnótha of the League, wrote to the Board asking why the programme was not being taught at Bunnacurry Girls' School on Achill Island.²⁷ When the inspector visited the area he found that 80 per cent of the pupils had a home knowledge of Irish, and that it was quite obviously their first language.²⁸ The principal had no oral or written competence in Irish and the J.A.M. was not much better, but because they had both been appointed prior to the sanctioning of the programme by the National Board, nothing could be done about the matter.

The local branch of the Gaelic League also does not appear to have been able to change this situation. Yet they seem to have been a very active branch after their establishment in 1909.²⁹ In 1911 the Achill Irish School was established at Dooagh, and in 1913 they wrote to the Westport Union requesting that Irish-speaking medical officers be appointed in the area.³⁰ Mr. T. Moran, principal of Saulia N.S. in giving evidence to the Commission on the Gaeltacht in 1925, stated that the priests in his area

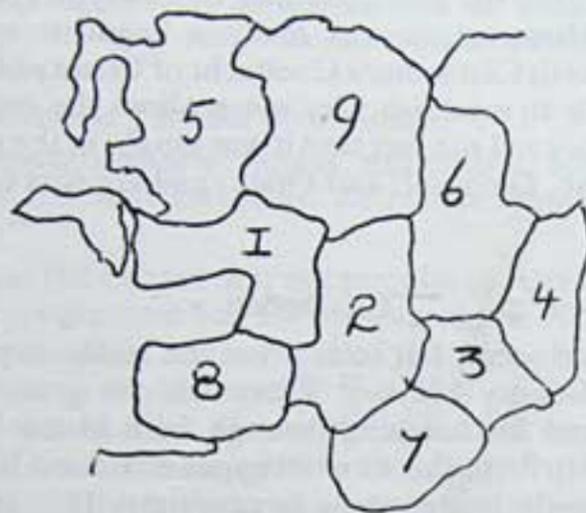
generally favoured Irish and gave sermons in Irish at Mass as well as saying prayers in the language.³¹ However, on the whole, the bilingual programme made very poor progress here.

The fourth area in County Mayo in which the bilingual programme was introduced was the Tourmakeady district on the Mayo-Galway border. When examined within the strict confines of Conty Mayo this was a very small Gaeltacht. However, it was really a linguistic and geographical projection of the north Connemara Gaeltacht of County Galway. It has not been found possible to establish very much about the introduction of the programme here, beyond the fact that it was taught in the schools at Derry, Treenlaur, Killitiane, Glensaul, and Finny, and appears to have been very successful.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems fair to say that the bilingual programme made poor progress in County Mayo.³² There was no great demand for the teaching of Irish and for teaching through Irish in the Mayo Gaeltacht. One is inclined to attribute this to what appears to have been a strong anti-Irish language attitude in the areas in question. This attitude may have developed as a result of the custom whereby some or all of the men of many of the families spent a great portion of each year away from their homes as migratory labourers in the east of Ireland, or Scotland or England. Many of them returned with a smattering of English, thus diluting Irish monolingualism and establishing in the minds of the people the association of English with prosperity. Another factor was the number of non-Irish speaking teachers in the Mayo Gaeltacht. Unlike the experience in Gaeltachts in other counties, there was not a tradition of Irish-speaking teachers returning to their native places to teach. Finally, it must be kept in mind that the purpose of the bilingual programme was very badly explained in the area. The general perception appears to have been that the programme was designed to teach Irish and to make pupils literate in Irish only. Thus, it is not difficult to see why parents were opposed to the introduction of the programme. English was one of the few marketable skills which the Gaeltacht person was likely to possess if he emigrated. English was the language of social advancement and the language of schooling favoured by parents for their children. The Board and the Gaelic League failed to explain properly to the people that instead of inhibiting the acquisition of English the bilingual programme would have, in fact, facilitated it.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF IRISH-SPEAKERS IN
COUNTY MAYO FOR 1851 AND 1891.



BARONY	1851		1891	
	IRISH SPEAKERS	IRISH ONLY	IRISH SPEAKERS	IRISH ONLY
1. Burrishoole	16,516	4,654	9,523	612
2. Carra	23,041	3,943	12,228	229
3. Claremorris	11,618	1,881	6,938	71
4. Costello	21,310	5,309	18,513	113
5. Erris	17,216	8,510	12,530	1,766
6. Gallen	25,847	6,289	19,070	362
7. Kilmaine	20,333	10,425	12,897	743
8. Murrisk	16,094	1,548	5,703	43
9. Tirawley	28,103	7,084	12,963	295
TOTAL	180,078	49,643	110,365	4,234

Source: Brian O'Cuiv, *Irish Dialects and Irish-Speaking Districts* (Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971), p.92.

TABLE 3
FÍOR-GAELTACHT AREAS IN COUNTY MAYO IN 1926



Source: Royal Irish Academy, *Atlas of Ireland* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1979), p.87.

TABLE 4
 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF IRISH-SPEAKERS IN
 NORTH-WEST MAYO IN 1911

D.E.D.	NO. OF IRISH-SPEAKERS	PERCENTAGE
1. Binghamstown S.	1,328	86.5
2. Binghamstown N.	913	65.3
3. Belmullet	1,359	59.4
4. Glencastle	763	83.5
5. Rath Mill	1,697	85.9
6. Knockadaff	590	88.5
7. Knockalowen	1,459	83.9
8. Muings	565	83.8
9. Goolamore	421	81.1
10. Ballycroy N.	572	73.1
11. Bangor	310	59.6
12. Glenamoy	351	79.2
13. Muingwabo	614	81.3
14. Barrosky	267	69.9
15. Sheskin	188	75.8
16. Gleanco	184	65.0
17. Beldergmore	395	71.4
18. Kilfian W.	346	56.6
19. Ballycastle	842	70.6
20. Lackan N.	1,186	80.8
21. Lackan S.	1,010	67.8

Source: *Coimisiún na Gaeltachta Report, Accompanying Maps.*

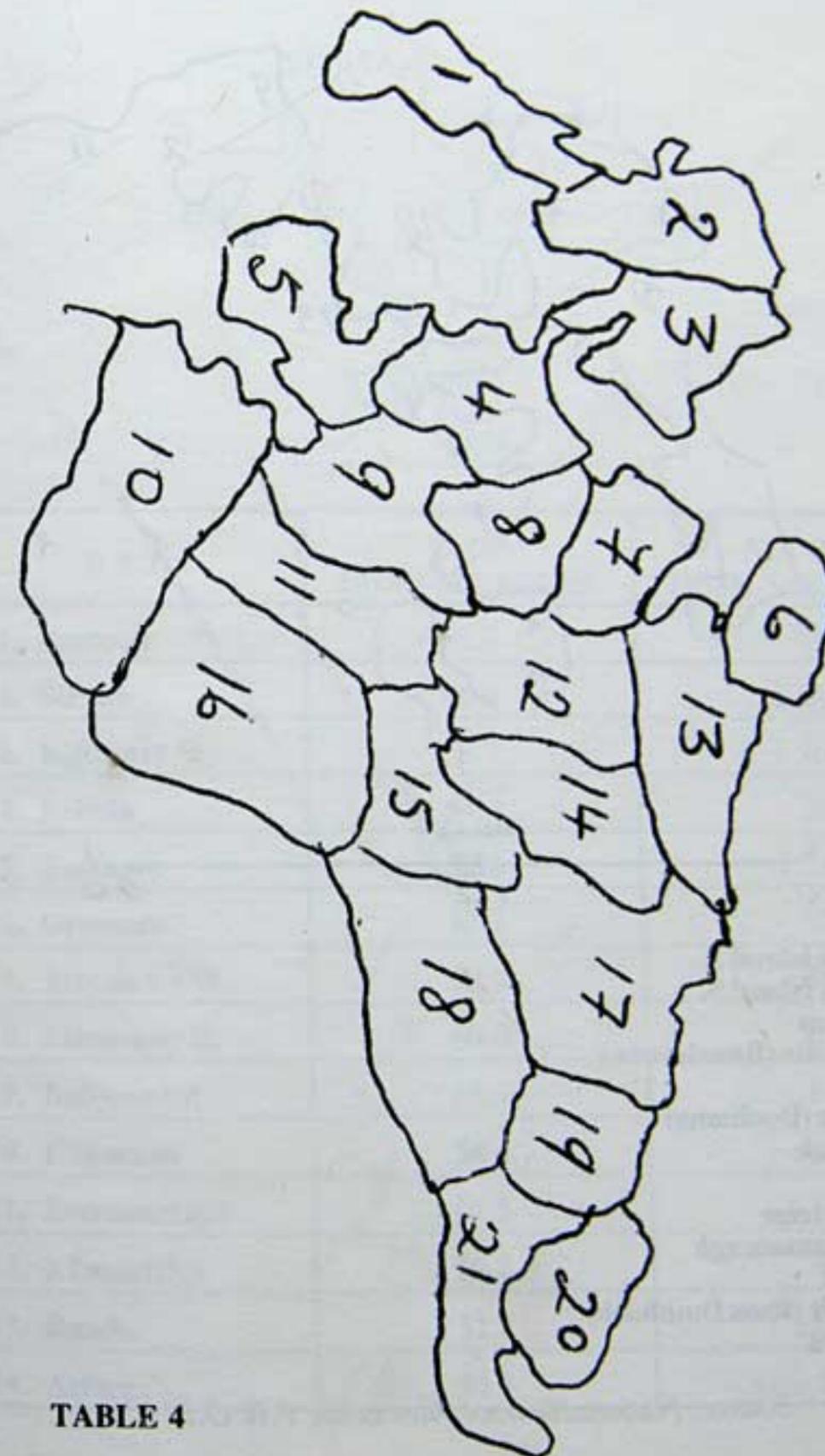
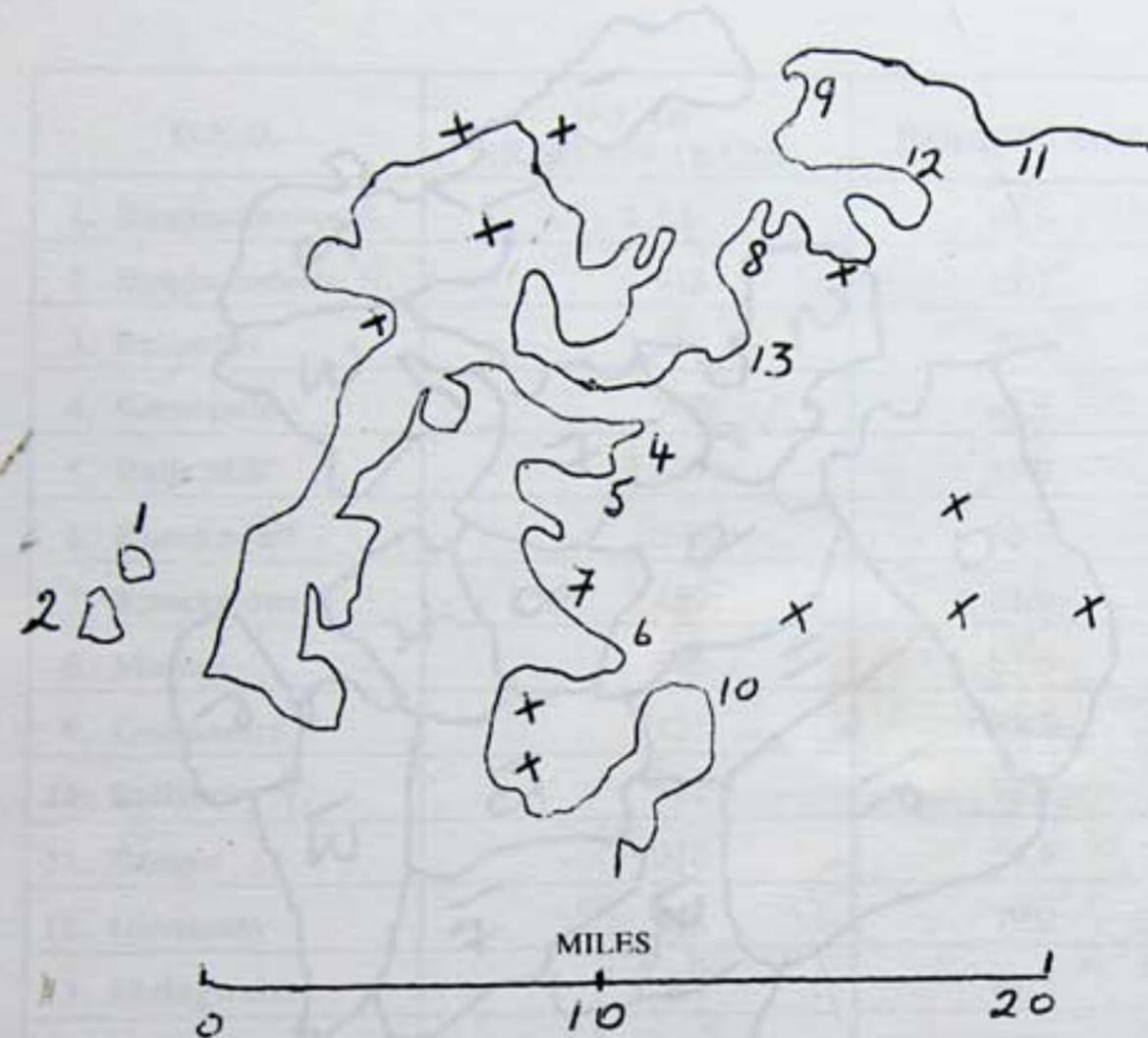


TABLE 4

TABLE 5

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH-WEST MAYO GAELTACHT:
BILINGUAL SCHOOLS ARE NUMBERED



1. Iniskea Island N.
2. Iniskea Island S.
3. Aghleam
4. Glencastle (Bunahowen)
5. Shrah
6. Geesala (Doohoma)
7. Doolough
8. Inver
9. Carrowteige
10. Shrahnamanragh
11. Belderg
12. Rossport (Ross Dumhach)
13. Barnatra

Source: National School Files in the P.R.O.I.

TABLE 6

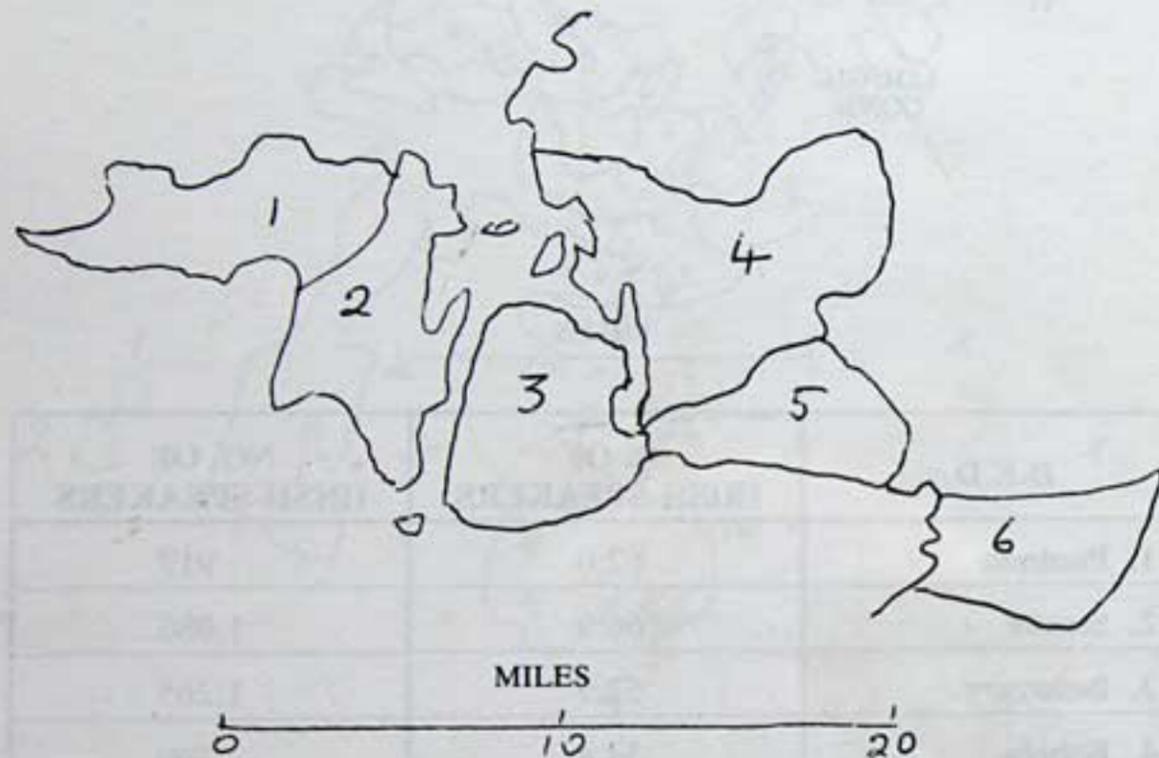
NUMBER OF IRISH SPEAKERS IN EAST MAYO
IN D.E.D.s WITH OVER 50 PER CENT IRISH-SPEAKERS IN 1911



D.E.D.	% OF IRISH-SPEAKERS	NO. OF IRISH-SPEAKERS
1. Pontoon	62.0	917
2. Strade	66.9	1,086
3. Bellavary	52.7	1,265
4. Bohola	54.4	390
5. Toomore	52.3	1,297
6. Grameen	52.2	575
7. Attymassy W.	50.0	388
8. Attymassy E.	60.0	632
9. Ballymount	63.3	911
10. Kilgarvan	54.4	966
11. Breencorragh	64.5	363
12. Kilmacteige	58.0	494
13. Banda	52.2	1,041
14. Aclare	54.8	502

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF IRISH SPEAKERS IN D.E.D.s IN THE ACHILL AREA
WHERE OVER 50 PER CENT WERE IRISH-SPEAKERS IN 1911



D.E.D.	% OF IRISH-SPEAKERS	NO. OF IRISH-SPEAKERS
1. Slievemore	56.0	1,083
2. Dooega	83.3	1,606
3. Corraun	87.4	1,448
4. Ballycroy S.	73.1	572
5. Newport W.	50.6	750
6. Derryloughan	52.9	483

Notes

1. *Report of the Department of Education for the School Year 1924-25 and the Financial and Administrative Year 1924-25-26* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1926), p.29.
2. Brian Ó Cuiv, *Irish Dialects and Irish-speaking Districts* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971), p.92.
3. Henceforth referred to as D.E.D.s
4. P.R.O.I., National School Records., Ed.9, File 23363.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., File 22049.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., File 24726.
13. *Irish School Weekly*, 15 September 1906, p.524.
14. P.R.O.I., National School Records, Ed.9, file 24726.
15. *Irish School Weekly*, 10 February 1912.
16. Colm Ó Gaora, *Mise* (Baile Átha Cliath, An Gúm, 1943), p.85.
17. Ibid.
18. See *Connaught Telegraph*, 2 October 1909.
19. See *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 12 Deireadh Fómhair, 1903.
20. See Colm Ó Gaora, *Mise*, p.88.
21. Ibid.
22. *Irish School Weekly*, 10 February 1912.
23. Quoted in I. Goodson and S. Ball, *Defining the curriculum* (Basingstokes, The Falmer Press, 1984), p.138.
24. P.R.O.I., National School Records, Ed.9, File 24726.
25. Séamus Fenton, *It All Happened* (Dublin, Gill and Son, 1948), p.170.
26. *Connaught Telegraph*, 10 April 1909.
27. P.R.O.I., National School Records, Ed.9, File 24726.
28. Ibid.
29. See the *Connaught Telegraph*, 13 November 1909 and *Irish School Weekly*, 7 June 1913.
30. *Connaught Telegraph*, 7 June 1913.
31. *Coimisiún na Gaeltachta Report* (Dublin, Stationery Office, 1926), evidence of Mr. F. Moran, Saulia N.S., Co. Mayo, n.d., n.p.
32. I have dealt with the experience in all of the counties in Thomas A. O'Donoghue, 'An analysis of the origin, development and implementation of the bilingual programme of instruction 1906-1922', (unpublished M.A. Thesis. University College Dublin, 1986). I am indebted to Nollaig Ó Gadhra of Galway Regional Technical college for leads and encouragement in the preparation of the sections on County Galway and County Mayo in my thesis.

THOMAS A. O'DONOGHUE, M.A., M. Ed., Secondary Teacher, is preparing for a Ph.D. Degree on the Irish Language in U.C.D. He has contributed to *Studies in Education* and *Essays on Waterford* (to be published in 1988).

THE WIDOW SAMMON'S FIGHT FOR HER HOLDING

by Jarlath Duffy

On 26 February 1881 in St. Patrick's Church, Aughagower, Bridget Conway from Luckaun and John Sammon from Carrowkennedy were joined in matrimony before witnesses Patrick Malone and Mary Malley. They were blessed with eight children – Sarah (born 1882), Mary (1884), Michael (1885), Bridget (1886), Pat (1887), John (1889), Thomas (1891) and Hubert (1894).¹ John Sammon died shortly after Hubert was born and so the poor widow was left on her own with eight small children from the age of fourteen down. All the family resources were spent on the illness of the provider. The annual rent was not paid; arrears mounted up.

The records of the Marquess of Sligo show that Hugh Salmon was granted a 21 years' lease for a holding in Carrowkennedy Grove in the year 1786 for a yearly rent of £3. In the same records the holding is described in 1814 as 2 acres with bog and mountain bulked. The records show members of the Sammon family residing there down through the century.²

In the year 1896 Peter Scahill was a herd for the local landlord in Cordarragh. Francis Mulholland, the landlord's bailiff, on his marriage was settled in the holding worked by Peter Scahill. Mrs. Sammon now over 2 years in arrears with her rent was evicted and Scahill was placed in her holding at Carrowkennedy.

The local newspaper reports a sorrowful sight before Christmas 1896



Ruins of widow Sammon's house

... 'Her little furniture and other effects are still scattered about the place ... The poor family will probably spend the Christmas in the workhouse ...³ But her neighbours were good. Opposite her farm was a school. She took refuge in a room intended for the school-mistress who had preferred living with her people, and the room was standing empty.

But the Widow Sammon, although of small stature, thin and inclined to stoop, was made of stern stuff. No landgrabber would rest in peace while she drew breath. Again and again she is before the Petty Sessions for abusive language and injury to property now in the possession of Scahill. After the court case in December 1897 at which she was reported to have already been in prison five times, she was fined. But further help was on her side in the persons of William O'Brien and Mr. Harrington, M.P. and a great demonstration took place in Westport. Scahill was hooted through the streets and had to have police protection.

After the trial Mrs. Sammon was borne on a brake headed by the Newport Brass Band and the Kilmaclassar Fife and Drum Band through the streets of the town, followed by an enormous concourse of people who cheered vociferously ... At the Octagon stirring speeches were delivered by Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Harrington.

Earlier Mr. & Mrs. O'Brien had visited the makeshift home of Mrs. Sammon. 'Around the hearth where smouldered a turf fire eight children sat closely to one another; they looked at us with anxious eyes ... The children had nothing but the bare ground to lie on ...

The sight of the eldest child, a girl of twelve or thirteen, acting as father and mother of the lonely little household, lighting the fire, boiling the stirabout, dressing, washing and nursing the little group of brothers and sisters that hung about her, was inexpressibly touching ...'

William O'Brien wrote to the *Freeman's Journal* and launched a campaign to evoke public sympathy. The Archbishop of Cashel forwarded a cheque for £5 detesting 'the ignoble trade of the landgrabber'. Subscriptions flowed in from as far away as Australia. Mrs. Sammon on coming out of jail found her home now contained two beds and in a hired field from a neighbour grazed a cow.⁵

In August 1898 the widow was once more summoned by Peter Scahill and his daughter Mary. James Scahill, Peter's son, gave evidence that he saw the widow pulling up their potato stalks. John Moran of Knappabeg, who was working on the Carrowkennedy School gave evidence to the effect that Scahill's potato field was in his full view all the day in question and Mrs. Sammon 'was not in the potatoes nor could she be unknown to him ...' John Moran admitted he was a member of the newly-formed United Irish League. The local Sergeant gave evidence that 'the widow had called the Scahills landgrabbers, sheep stealers, black-legs and other improper names'. Mrs. Sammon told the court that Mary Scahill at her cabin door sang filthy songs ... and said the house was for the Scahills, the shanty for the Sammons. Margaret O'Malley although pressed by the

Magistrates would not repeat the bad language used by Scahill which scandalised the children going to school. The widow was once more sent to jail.⁶

At a meeting of the United Irish League held in Aughagower, O'Brien commented on the treatment meted out to the widow. She had become a local if not a national heroine.⁷ On her release on 22 October later that year she was met by a large number of the townspeople of Castlebar and the local band, and accompanied to the railway station with an enthusiastic send-off. By the middle of November she was back in prison, this time for breaking one of Scahill's windows worth ten shillings (fifty pence). Defying the court she promised to break all the windows on her coming out of jail.⁸

From the beginning of his tenancy Scahill enjoyed the protection of at least three policemen for whom a special barracks, in fact an iron hut, had been built in Gannon's field (against their wishes) some yards from the disputed holding, and between that holding and the room now occupied by the widow and her family.

In April 1899 the widow was accused of knocking down a wall. Scahill in evidence said he once had land at Teevenish. Mrs. Sammon in an outburst shouted 'to hell with all the grabbers and all ye orangemen too,' the last remark addressed to the magistrates. Her sentence was three months' hard labour.

Mr. John O'Donnell, following the President of the West Mayo Executive of the United Irish League at a meeting in Keelogue, spoke of the courage of the widow 'who was now doing her 12th term of imprisonment'. The people cheered loudly. However, it was Scahill's turn now to receive a month's sentence for assaulting John Sammon, aged 9, son of the widow. A meeting of the United Irish League held at Westport promised 'Peter a warm reception . . . with paraffin . . .'⁹

April 1900 saw the widow again back in Castlebar Jail. Her potatoes were sown by her neighbours who were making such a noble stand to watch her little homestead. She was out and back again by September having called Scahill an 'ugly looking thing'. Her eldest daughter was now gone to America. The widow received a three months' sentence. There were signs that Scahill was getting tired of the continual warfare but his wife scolded him when he hinted at a surrender. The Westport Board of Guardians meeting in January 1901 noted the widow's children were getting relief.¹⁰ Again there were what was described as 'lively proceedings' in the court in early March. The widow received a two months' sentence for unlawfully assaulting Scahill at Cushlough Chapel. Local tradition tells that she used her hatpin to good effect although Scahill was between two policemen during the Mass. In a letter to the local paper John Hastings of Cushlough reported that a band of sturdy Nationalists, numbering about 30, gathered on the potato garden of the brave widow and planted her potatoes.¹¹ So the saga goes on. Peter Scahill dies and his widow and family hang on. With the passing of the various Land Acts at the end of the nineteenth and

the beginning of the twentieth century, some of the land agitation died down and the United Irish League which had its strength in the County of Mayo in particular faded away. But the widow was not forgotten. The *Mayo News* of 20 April 1920 reported under the heading 'Raids in Cushlough' as follows:

On the night of the 15th inst. or early on the morning of the 16th a party of masked and armed men raided the house of Mrs. Scahill, Carrowkennedy to dispossess her of the lands she holds up to the present and which were grabbed from Mrs. Sammon some 25 years ago. The raiders were about to evict the Scahills who promised faithfully they would give up possession the next day, consequently the raiders withdrew without interfering with anything. 'Tis estimated that about 20 men took part in the raid. As a result of the raid the Scahills are leaving some of these days and Mrs. Sammon has received official notification from the Congested Districts Board of her reinstatement forthwith.

It also carried the following under the heading 'Policemen's Raids: On last Friday police raided the house of Patrick Tunney, D.C. Cushlough, also the house of Thomas Hastings, D.C.C. and the house of Patk. Hastings, Roghaun'.

The names of some of the group from H Company Aughagower IRA who on local initiative placed the widow Sammon back in her home from which she had been evicted were John Duffy, Captain, John Hastings, Patrick Heraty (Claddy), Charlie Hughes, John O'Malley, Roghaun, Owen O'Malley and the widow's own son Hubie. The operation was carried out smoothly and probably to the relief of the Scahill family who lived in fear and dread in the disputed home. Maybe they received some peace in their new home in Sheaffrey.

Our last picture of the widow is in keeping with the life she led protecting her family and home:

On a day that will long be remembered, June 2 (1921) the men of the West Mayo Brigade rested in Claddy. In the early afternoon of that day the sentries reported three enemy lorries held up at Carrowkennedy by a trench cut in the road. Having made local men fill the trench with turf the enemy crossed and proceeded towards Leenane.

The O.C. immediately moved the Column towards Carrowkennedy, determined to ambush the enemy on his return from Leenane. Before an ambush site could be selected the enemy lorries were seen returning a few hundred yards away. The men of the Column did not hesitate – they rushed to the fences and took up positions. As the leading lorry came opposite the position, fire was opened and the lorry stopped, its driver dead. The time was 3 a.m. and during that long June day the fight raged. The enemy brought a Lewis machinegun into action but it was quickly silenced and the gunners dead. Some of the enemy occupied a house by the roadside and continued the fight from there.¹³ During the battle the widow Sammon's



Captain John Duffy

house was to the rear of the Column's position and the bullets tore through the thatch. After the battle the widow was found unhurt sitting by her fire smoking her clay pipe! Her family spread throughout the world – Africa, New York, Scotland and nearer home. Her last son died two years ago. She passed away in 1929, and is buried among the Sammon dead on the left side of the pathway leading up to Cushlough Church. There is no monument to mark her grave. May this article be her monument, so that the generations to come will know of the small widow from Carrowkennedy with the stout heart, who carved a niche for herself and her family in the local history annals of this area.

Notes

1. Aughagower Church Records
2. Marquess of Sligo Rent Rolls – Westport Historical Society Teamwork Project
3. *Mayo News* 1896 (19 December)
4. *Ibid.* 1897 (11 December)
5. Mrs. William O'Brien, *Under Croagh Patrick*, pp 140, 142.
6. *Mayo News* 1893 (13 August)
7. *Ibid.* 1898 (July)
8. *Ibid.* 1898 (22 October, 12 November)
9. *Ibid.* 1900 (15 April, 3 June, 22 July)
10. *Ibid.* 1900 (3 June, 14 July, 22 September)
11. *Ibid.* 1901 (12 January, 16 February, 9 March, 14 April)
12. *Ibid.* 1901 (November)
13. *West Mayo Brigade 1921-1971* (FNT Westport), page 11.

EXTRADITION
A Political and Historical Parallel
by Patrick Shanley

It has been well said that he who does not read history is condemned to relive it. The past illuminates the present as well as forming it, as surely as what we are experiencing and doing now will be studied later in the efforts of future generations to disentangle their problems. And what we are seeing now in Ireland was seen before, a little over a hundred years ago, a hundred and thirty four to be exact, when the mighty power we now know as the United States of America was struggling with a problem of extradition, in that case the extradition of slaves from the North to the South. In their newspapers, then as now with us, illustrations were appearing showing men loaded with manacles being delivered under the protection of the armed forces of the State across the Mason Dixon line – the dividing line, north of which slavery was considered illegal – to the South where in the fifteen States slavery was legal.

And the Supreme Court of the United States of America like us was in difficulties with its Constitution, being occupied with a case called the Dred Scott case which turned upon an interpretation of the Missouri Compromise reached as early as 1820 and which in a rough practical way dealt with the problem of slavery on the basis of the status quo at that time. The Mason Dixon line mentioned above was the outcome of this compromise. In practice it meant that below the line slavery was a way of life; above the line which corresponds with the Northern States, not so.

But by 1850 the Compromise was breaking down. A war had been fought against Mexico and the great territories of modern Texas, California and Florida had been annexed by the United States of America, but in dividing them and organizing them as separate States, the question arose in how much of these territories the influence of the South and slavery was to prevail and where the principles of the North and no slavery. The Missouri Compromise as hitherto interpreted cramped Southern aspirations, and in practice began to be ignored by the Southerners in settling with their slaves in these territories and also indeed in some of the old where the Compromise had until then been accepted.

A case was contrived, the Dred Scott case, to test the exact meaning of the Missouri Compromise among other things and whether it was in accordance with the American Constitution which governed the relationship between the various States.

The decision reached by the Court split the nation and was the prelude to one of the most terrible civil wars in history which lasted approximately four years; caused millions of casualties because of the war-related sickness and plague, incalculable economic loss and divisions which have never truly healed. To explain why this should be so it is necessary to examine the historical development of the United States from the conclusion of the

successful war of independence against England.

It was this war that had originally brought these separate States to form the embryonic United States of America, and produced the original constitution which as well as setting out the aims and principles of the association, also defined the relations between the different States to ensure that each State retained all of its own laws and customs except in so far as the association limited them for the common good. But once the common danger was past, interests of the various States which might have clashed but were kept in abeyance during that time, began again to assert themselves.

The great States of the North such as New England Massachusetts were of Puritan origin and much nearer to the Cromwellian Republican system that for a period had ruled in England; the Southern States and above all Virginia were akin to the Anglican Church and class system normal to England. The old South was a place of great plantations largely worked by slaves whose owners had an outlook very similar to the landed class of England where many of their families had come from. Even many of the place names were of English origin. The chief export – cotton – went there, as at that time England was the world manufacturing centre for such goods. This export, with tobacco, required a free trade system, whereas the North which was developing as an industrial system, required protective tariffs directed against manufactured goods from England, very often goods which the South required in exchange for its exports to that country.

And the two societies differed in other ways. Whereas the North was growing in population by immigration from all the oppressed people of Europe, including our own particularly during the great Famine of 1848 and after, the South was a much more closed society based as mentioned on the static plantation with largely slave workers as against the free enterprise system of the North. People coming from Europe to seek work in the United States could find little place in the South, and their whole cast of mind was antagonistic to the Southern system of great landowners which reminded them of the conditions they had fled from. And further, peasant farmers fleeing from Europe had some chance in the North in taking up a similar life there with their own plots of land, but how could they possibly fit into the closed plantation system of the South?

These differences were further aggravated by the acts of many in the North who so genuinely disliked the whole concept of slavery as a degradation of the human spirit, that they were prepared to campaign in the press against the South as its home, and even by money and active influence encourage slaves to escape from the South to the North. They organised an escape route which went by the name of 'the underground railway' to get slaves across the 'line', and in this were assisted by many people in the South who, while loyal to the South, considered slavery an evil they must do everything to end.

Such were relations across that uneasy border at the time when a law was introduced in the North which threw the State behind the compulsory return of escaped slaves back to slavery, instead of as before winking an eye at the escapes. This was called the Fugitive Slaves Act and was an effort by the Government to appease the South. Until the passage of this law, it was accepted that if a slave escaped across the line or was brought across by a family with whom he or she was a servant, that slave became free. In other words residence in free territory confirmed freedom.

A slave called Dred Scott and his family had accompanied their master, an army doctor, into free territory but later returned with their master to slave territory. After the doctor's death the slave sought his freedom, but on appeal his suit was disallowed. A series of appeals was then continued to get the case before the Supreme Court of America, to test whether or not as a result of developments since the Mexican War the Missouri Compromise had in effect been repealed, and whether in fact that Compromise had ever been constitutional. The Supreme Court ruled that slaves were property; that it was unconstitutional to deprive a man of his property and that any owner once he located an escaped slave, no matter where, and established his claim in the courts, could have his property delivered to him. Thus the sight of men loaded with manacles being delivered back to their owners by armed guards from the North; a sight that the Northern people could not stomach.

This was one effect of the judgement, but there was another more far-reaching in its effect. America before the slavery issue began to dominate politics, had two parties – the Whigs and the Democrats. As the slavery agitation developed, another party began to appear called the Republican (which is the ancestor of the present Republican Party). This consisted mainly of those who were dissatisfied with the attitudes of the two main parties on the slavery issue, and gathered adherents from both the other parties. Lincoln, the future great president had for instance been originally a Whig, and early in his career had represented that party in Congress, but when the Republican Party was formed he found it more congenial to his views on the slavery question and joined it.

The Democratic Party was strong North and South, and while these two wings remained united, that party had no difficulty in gaining control in both houses, Senate and Representative, and had in fact given the last two presidents to the country, Pierce and following him Buchanan in 1856. But the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott Case split that party. The Northern wing could not accept the Court's interpretation and split with the Southern. The result was that four candidates stood in 1860, one for the Northern Democrats, one for the Southern Democrats, one for the Whig Party and Lincoln for the Republicans.

The Court decision was a main issue all through the campaign in newspapers and pamphlet form. Lincoln won on a split vote, and was in fact a minority President. The South saw his election as a victory for those

whom it considered its enemies and seceded.

The Civil War had begun.

PATRICK SHANLEY, B.A., now living in Westport, was a consultant in the Trimbole Extradition Case. He was the first secretary and a founder member of the Central Branch of Fine Gael, and a former member of the National Executive of Fine Gael.

WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Proceedings 1 December 1986 – 30 November 1987.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society took place in the Vocational School, Westport, on Monday, 18 May 1987 at 8.00 p.m. After the meeting a reception was held, in the course of which the material gathered by the members of the Teamwork Project over the past two years was presented to the Society. This material constitutes an invaluable archive for students of local history.

The highlight of the year was the Second School of History 'The Armada' held in the Railway Hotel, Westport on 27, 28 and 29 March. The school consisted of lectures, exhibitions, a tour of sites of Armada wrecks off the coast of Mayo and the annual dinner of the Westport Historical Society. The school was organised by Colette Purcell, History School Secretary, Dr. Sheila O'Malley-Mulloy, Vice President of Westport Historical Society and Jarlath Duffy, Chairperson of Westport Historical Society.

The following is a list of the lectures:

- 27th March 'Armada Guns and Tactics'
 Dr. Colin Martin, University of St. Andrews, Scotland.
 'The Galleass Girona'
 L. N. W. Flanagan, Keeper of Antiquities, Ulster Museum.



The Dyra family, Mullaun, Newport, with the late Bronze Age hoard which they discovered on their farm at Kilbride in February 1987.

- 28th March 'The Trinidad Valencera'
 Dr. Colin Martin.
 'Armada Treasure'
 L. W. Flanagan.
 'Irishmen in the Armada' Micheline Kerney Walsh,
 author of *Hugh O'Neill after Kinsale* and editor of
Spanish Knights of Irish origin.
 'The Armada in Folk Tradition', Dr. Patricia Lysaght,
 Dept. of Irish Folklore, U.C.D., author of *The Banshee*.

- 28th March An exhibition of Armada Treasures by courtesy of L. W. Flanagan and the Ulster Museum was held in the Railway Hotel, Westport, in conjunction with the Armada Weekend. Our own Teamwork Project members put on an exhibition of their work and Éamonn De Búrca of Castlebar mounted an exhibition of his rare books.

Other Lectures held during the Year were:

- 6th December 'Post Famine Seasonal Migration' by Gerard Moran, M.A.
 30th January 'Land Valuation in Post Famine Mayo' by Sarah Ward Perkins.
 27th February 'The Hidden Archaeology of Co. Mayo' by Victor Buckley, O.P.W.

On Monday, October 5, the Chairperson of our Society attended a reception in Newport House, hosted by the Director of the National Museum of Ireland. On this occasion Mr. Pádraig Flynn, T.D., Minister for the Environment, announced the recent acquisition by the Museum of a Late Bronze Age hoard from Kilbride, Newport. There will be an article devoted to this find in *Cathair na Mart*, No. 8.

Book Launchings during the Year:

- 5th December 1986 The Helm, Westport Quay – Vol. 6 of *Cathair na Mart* was launched, the leading article of which was the 'Clew Bay Disaster' by Kieran Clarke, and memories of that occasion were powerfully evoked by Martin Patten of Saulia, Achill and Michael Gallagher of Corraun who were guests of honour for the occasion. Other islanders present were Anna Hawkshaw of Islandmore, Seán and Joe Jeffers of Inishgort, and Westport Quay was represented by Messrs. Jack Murphy and Arthur McEvoy

and members of the McBride family. It was to the yard of the Helm that the bodies of the disaster victims were brought and laid out.

The Journal was sponsored by Cróaghpatrick Co-Operative Agricultural Society, represented by Mr. John Mayock.

December
1986

'A Various Country' Essays in Mayo History 1500-1900, edited by Raymond Gillespie and Gerard Moran, published by F.N.T. Westport and consisting of the papers given at our First History School in March, 1986.

Outings during the Year were as follows:

28th June
1987

Ballyhaunis and District, led by Bernard Flynn, President Ballyhaunis Heritage Society. We visited Bracklaghboy Ogham stone, Greenwood Wedge Tombs, Altore Wedge Tombs, double forecourt cairns at Cappagh, Urlaur Abbey and the Augustinian Abbey at Ballyhaunis.

30th August
1987

Cuan agus Insí Modh, led by John Mulloy, member. Tour of the island sites of Clew Bay ending in Newport.

4th October
1987

Thomond - Peter Flanagan, Vice-Chairperson of Westport Historical Society led a full day trip of the Thomond area, including Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, Craggaunowen, the Heritage Centre at Corofin, Kilfenora and the Aillewee Caves.



**An Appreciation
SIR TERENCE GARVEY**

Sir Terence Garvey, M.A., the distinguished diplomat, born in Dublin in 1915, died on his 71st birthday in December 1986. A member of the Murrisk Abbey family which has been connected with the area for four hundred years, he served as British ambassador in Peking, Belgrade and Moscow. Author of *Bones of Contention, an enquiry into east-west relations*, he retired to the Thallabaun, Louisburgh, area in 1975. It has been truly said of him: 'He was a man who was always dedicated to what he was doing, always thoughtful, always sensitive, always determined, always an example to the rest of us. At home and at work, his was a tremendous life'.



**An Appreciation
VERY REVEREND P. J. GULLANE**

Very Rev. P. J. Gullane died at Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath, in May 1987. A native of Newcastle, Athenry, where he was born in 1911, he was ordained in 1937, and at the time of his death was within one month of celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his Ordination. Retired Parish Priest of Moore, near Ballinasloe, he had been Chaplain at St. Lucy's Convent, Newport, since 1982. He had served as curate in Westport from 1954 to 1962 and in Kilmeena from 1969 to 1974. He was closely involved with the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association and was keenly interested in local history. In 1986 he produced a booklet on the Parish of Kilmeena. A deeply religious man he was a lover of people and of the world around him.



OWEN HUGHES – AN APPRECIATION

'Nobel and Lenin Peace Prize winner, Mr. Sean MacBride, S.C. (son of Major John MacBride of Westport Quay, one of the executed leaders of the 1916 Rising) read the following tribute at the funeral of the late Mr. Owen Hughes, Westport.:

Our friend, Owen Hughes, was a man of many talents whose public life was marked by a deep sense of nationalism and innovativeness which required great perseverance and some ingenuity. And yet his character and his life were rooted in the soil of his native Mayo – he identified with it and was conscious that he had been formed by it. He saw himself as a man of the soil rather than a city man and knew what land meant to his long-dispossessed people. That great impetus which characterised his personality and his actions resulted from his both natural and conscious emphasis on his rural background in the West of Ireland. Out of this simplicity grew a strength which formed the monument we knew as Owen Hughes. It gave him his belief and his self-respect and furnished him with the power to transform inherent conviction into political reality.

In the world of today, which stresses the spirit of regionalism, Owen Hughes has found his niche. He always said that no one could be truly international who was not first a good national. He imparted to us all a sense of regional and national identity which was tainted by the all-too-frequent under-cutting of the man who only sees himself in the mirror of others and finds himself inferior. But neither was his image of his own or his country's destiny flawed by the extreme unrealism of the dislocated ideologist, and his colourful character projected his local policies onto the national and international stage.

I am not here however, to list his successes, rather to praise the spirit of Owen and to remind us that he will always be with us. We should keep our dead with us and remember that men like Owen, whose word was his deed, give us support and real hope. Remembering too, that he would not want a mere copy, a cheap facsimile, let us face the problems confronting our people just now, imbued with that national spirit of the combined originality and tradition which characterised Owen Hughes'.

(Mayo News, 15 April 1987)

OWEN HUGHES - AN APPRECIATION

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