



# MICHAEL COLLINS NEWS

**FREE**

NO. 1. VOL. 1.]

MICHAEL COLLINS CENTRE CASTLEVIEW

[AUGUST 22, 2016

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## THE LAST KNOWN PHOTOGRAPH, TAKEN OF MICHAEL COLLINS IN CLONAKILTY.

The date on the back of the original of this photograph is June 16th 1922, which was the date of the general election, in which Michael Collins won a big majority in the South Cork Constituency. Collins (centre) is seen in the back garden of number 42 Pearse street. On the left is Patrick D (Carbery) Mehigan, Sportman, Journalist and Broadcaster. He was the first to broadcast a field game in Europe on August 29th 1926. it was the All-Ireland hurling Semi-final between Galway and Kilkenny. On the right is J C O'Sullivan Nationalist, Councilor and Entrepreneur

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## EDITOR



Thank you for picking up 'Michael Collins News'. I have decided to launch this free historical magazine in the centenary year of the 1916 rebellion. 'Michael Collins News' will carry articles mainly, but not exclusively, dealing with the period of history encompassing Michael Collins' public life. This period covers World War One, The 1916 rebellion, The War of Independence, The Truce, The Treaty and The Civil War. I hope that the publication will help to inspire interest among visitors and local people alike in our momentous historical events, the anniversaries of which we will be commemorating between now and 2023. I also hope that the magazine will encourage people to visit the numerous sites connected with this period in West Cork. We are blessed with many fine Museums and Interpretive Centres, which explore the story of our revolutionary period and other history.

I hope to publish at least one, possibly two issues annually over the next few years, so I am looking for historians and writers to contribute articles for future issues. I intend to include a letter to the editor section in the next issue, so if anybody has any views on subjects covered by this magazine, I would like to hear from you. I want to thank all the writers who contributed articles for this, the first issue of Michael Collins News, as well as all the businesses that took out advertisements. Without your financial support the launch of this new magazine would not have been possible. It is wonderful to see that many of these local businesses, which had associations with Michael Collins, are still in business one hundred years later.

**Tim Crowley,**

Michael Collins Centre, Castlevew.  
michaelcollinscentre@gmail.com

## Acknowledgments

I would also thank the following for their assistance, Malcolm Rose and Louis Whyte.

Last and by no means least,  
Niamh Crowley, Assistant Editor for all her help with proof-reading, e-mails, phone calls and generally being at hand for many other tasks.

*I wish to thank the following  
for the use of their photographs.*

**Sam's Cross 1965 – Kevin O'Crowley**

Thanks to Véronique Crombé for allowing the inclusion of her water colour painting of Woodfield.

**Front Cover – Jerome O'Sullivan**

**Frongoch, Prison Camp – Véronique Crombé**

**James Cahalane Shop – Sheehy Family**

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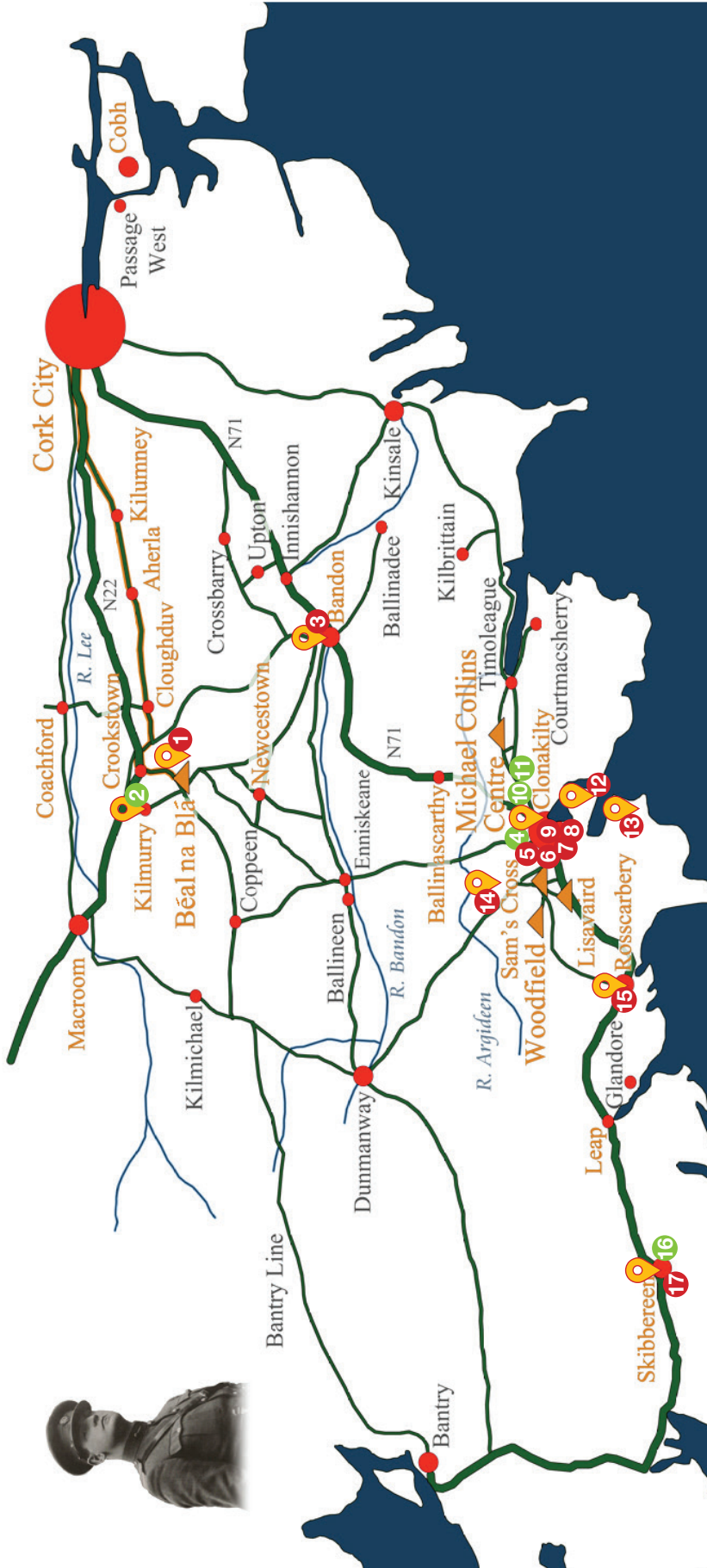
**MICHAEL COLLINS TOUR**

Tim Crowley of the Michael Collins Centre, Castlevew has been conducting Michael Collins Tours since 1997. The Tour in the visitor's own car or coach, visits the following sites associated with Michael Collins. Birthplace at Woodfield, Sam's Cross, Clonakilty Town, Lisavaird Village, St Mary's Cemetery Clonakilty and Béal na Blá ambush site.

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## WEST CORK MICHAEL COLLINS COUNTRY



### ▲ Woodfield ▲ Sam's Cross ▲ Lisavaird ▲ Béal na Blá ▲ Michael Collins Centre

- |                                       |                                      |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Michael Collins Gift Shop and Cafe | 7. O'Donovans Hotel                  | 13. Dunmore House Hotel               |
| 2. <b>Kilmurphy Museum</b>            | 8. An Sugan Restaurant               | 14. The Four Alls Bar                 |
| 3. Munster Arms Hotel                 | 9. Quality and Leisure Hotel         | 15. The Celtic Ross                   |
| 4. <b>Michael Collins House</b>       | 10. <b>Model Railway Village</b>     | 16. <b>Skibbereen Heritage Centre</b> |
| 5. Fernhill House Hotel               | 11. <b>West Cork Regional Museum</b> | 17. The Eldon Hotel                   |
| 6. The Emmet Hotel                    | 12. Inchydoney Lodge and Spa         |                                       |



# IN FRON-GOCH IN 2016

Véronique Crombé 

**Irish history has been part of my life since my first encounter with an Irishman called Michael Collins in 2000. I had been wanting to visit Fron-goch for years and it is, for me, no coincidence that a welcome twist of fate allowed me to go there; of all times, in July of this centenary year, 2016!**

The Welch village of Fron-goch lies a few miles North-West of Bala. On the 9th of June 1916, the first batch of Irish rebels captured after the Rising arrived at the local disused distillery that had been converted into a camp for German prisoners at the outbreak of WW1. By the end of the month, the two sections of the camp —North, which was a collection of wooden huts and South, based in the old distillery—housed about 1850 Irish prisoners. Among them Michael Collins, ready to make the best of the situation, knowing the fight that was still to come.

Through my Dublin fellow Irish Volunteers, I had a contact in Fron-goch and at the entrance to the village, was Alwyn, waiting for me!

The Irish prisoners were brought to Fron-goch by rail, from various English prisons and landed at the station, which



*Former Railway Station At Frongoch, Now A Dwelling House*

is one of the few buildings still visible. It has been converted into a house now, which was not lived in at the time of my visit, but the structures still portrayed its original purpose.

“prisoners  
had named  
the lanes Pearse  
Street and Connolly  
Street.

A narrow road runs along what was the limit between the South and North camps. The local school stands on the site of South Camp and on this centenary year, the pupils did their bit in the commemorations. On one of the buildings' walls, a nice (if slightly inaccurate) ceramic plaque highlights the

major events and characters of The Rising and The War of Independence. One of the officers' houses, now a private home, is still standing nearby. Further down was, at the time, a vegetable garden. Beyond is the river, where the camp's medical officer, unable to bear the pressure he was put under by the British authorities, took his own life. Close-by lies the field, nicknamed Croke Park, where the prisoners used to play Gaelic football. Earlier this year, a commemorative re-enactment of a match was held there.

Nothing remains of the wooden huts of North Camp, where the prisoners had named the lanes Pearse Street and Connolly Street.

By the roadside, further up the A4212 to Trawsfynydd,



overlooking the former camp, is the memorial; a big boulder with a plaque, unveiled in 2002. Beside it is a very well made map of the area, highlighting the major locations. At the time of my visit, tricolor wreaths, an Easter lily and a few notes were there, showing that the spirit of the 1916 University of Revolution is still alive and well.

While we were at the memorial, Alwyn showed me a reproduction of a drawing that I already knew, made by Cathal Mc Dowell, who was among the prisoners. It shows some of the North camp huts and in the background, the silhouette of an easily recognisable mountain. That very same mountain I was facing, across the road! And suddenly, Fron-goch came so alive around me.



*Cathal McDowell's drawing of north camp At Frongoch. With the same hill in The background, as it looks today,*

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### MICHAEL COLLINS LAST VISIT TO CLONAKILTY

by Maria Young and Tim Crowley. 

On the morning of August 22nd 1922, Michael Collins left Cork City heading west for what would be his last tour. The purpose of the visit was not only to meet his officers and survey the situation on the ground, but it was also a show of confidence in the pro treaty National Army and the progress they were making against the IRA. The Civil War was not yet over. The towns in the area had only recently been occupied by the pro treaty forces and much of the countryside was still under anti treaty control.

The first recorded sighting of Michael Collins' convoy that day approaching Clonakilty was at a place called Bandon Mountain on the old coach road, between Bandon and Ballinascorthy. In the townland of Farran a local farming family, the Condons, were making hay in a field when they saw the convoy pass. Emmet Dalton, Collins' officer with him in the Leyland Eight, later recalled

“Michael Collins created a sensation in Clonakilty. Crowds greeted him as soon as news spread that he was back in his hometown.

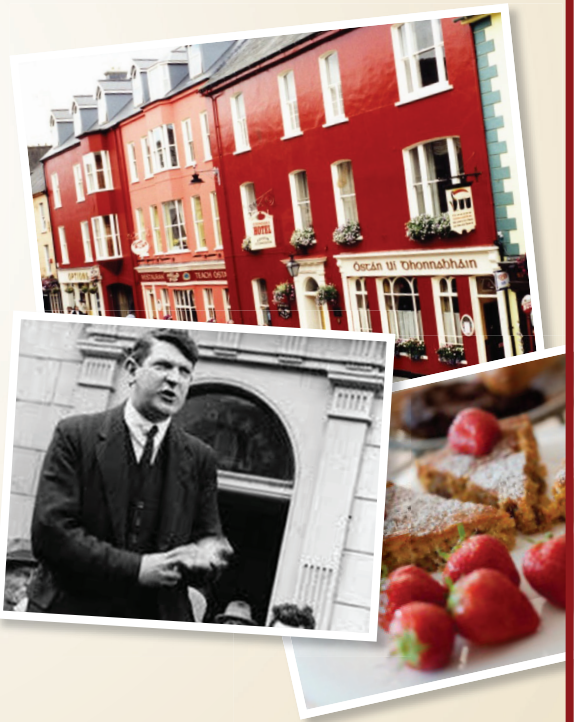
that on this part of the journey, as they neared his home place; Collins began to speak about his friends, his family and what the place meant to him. They passed through the village of Ballinascorthy and two miles from Clonakilty, were forced to stop because of felled trees that blocked the road. Michael Collins joined his men with hatchet in hand and threw himself vigorously into the task of chopping trees. Closer to Clonakilty, they encountered yet another obstacle and this time, Collins instructed the escort to turnaround, directing them up a boreen he knew well.

They rejoined the main road opposite the old workhouse, which earlier had been used as a barracks. The building, like many other barracks in the area, had been burned by retreating IRA.

When they arrived in Clonakilty, they pulled up next to the 1798 monument in Astna Square. There, Collins got out of the car and went to see his old friend James Cahalane, who ran a hardware shop on Astna Street. John Collins,



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who worked with James Cahalane, often spoke of seeing Michael Collins walking into the shop. After a chat, Collins returned to the car and the convoy proceeded up the town, stopping at O'Donovan's Hotel, which was used at that time as an army post. Most of the soldiers went in for food but Michael Collins and some of his officers went to the home of his cousin, Maurice Collins, for lunch. Local lore has it that some of the soldiers in the escort mistook the women wearing the famous Clonakilty hooded cloaks for a curious order of nuns, causing much laughter.

Michael Collins created a sensation in Clonakilty, just as he had in June, a few months earlier, while campaigning for the general election. Crowds greeted him as soon as news spread that he was back in his hometown.

The convoy left Clonakilty and headed further west, stopping at Rosscarbery before arriving in Skibbereen, where Collins met his officers, this time at the Eldon Hotel. Following this meeting, the convoy turned around and headed east for the return journey. They arrived back in Clonakilty town a short while after six o' clock, having visited Sam's Cross where Collins met his brother Johnny for the last time. Johnny mentioned that two of his daughters were in



*James Cahalane's hardware shop on Asna Street Clonakilty, Michael Collins visited there on the 22nd of August 1922. Tom Sheehy later bought the business and opened his first shop there in 1949.*

Clonakilty town getting fitted for uniforms and were visiting O'Crowley's house at 25 Pearse Street. Collins had great affection for his nephews and nieces and decided to surprise them. He arrived at O'Crowley's and walked into the house, lifted ten-year old Kitty up in the air and was about to kiss her on the cheek when she called out that she was too old to be kissed! It was her last memory of her uncle.

The last known sighting of Collins in Clonakilty was in McCarthy's paper shop at the corner of Pearse Street and Rossa Street. Mary O' Donovan from Shannonvale, the shop assistant, and Mary Collins from Darrara, both recognised him. He bought some of the papers and bid them "good evening". The convoy then pulled away towards the last leg of what was to become his final journey.

# THE FOUR ALLS BAR

*The Big Fellas Local*

The four alls bar sam's cross is located just off the N71 between clonakilty and rossscarbery. It is most famous for being associated with Irelands most famous rebel leader, Michael Collins and is where the "big fella" had his last pint.

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# Máire Ní Shíthe (1867 - 1955)

## 'Dul Amú' - 'The Gaelic Authoress'

*Drámadóir-Aistritheoir-Scribhnoir/*  
**Dramatist-Translator-Writer**

Traolach Ó Donnabháin 

According to her birth certificate, Máire Ní Shíthe (Sheehy) was born on the 16th November 1867 at Ballymacowen, Kilnagross near Clonakilty in West Cork.

Her father was Tim Sheehy, a dairyman, from Ballintemple, near Clonakilty & her mother,

Ann Deasy, from Lehenagh, Barryroe, between Timoleague & Clonakilty. Máire was a native Irish speaker. Her mother's people came from Barryroe. Irish was widely spoken in that area to the early 1900's.

She attended national school at Darrara, near Ballintemple & later on, the Convent of Mercy in Clonakilty.

Like many another household during that period, Máire's family were evicted. They were living at Ashgrove near Clonakilty, at least from 1901 to 1911.

Máire married Denis O'Leary (O'Leary Buadhach) from Bantry on June 17th 1915 in

Timoleague. They were given a farm by the Irish Land Commission at Ardmore, Timoleague. Later on they sold this farm & bought another at Ballynamona near Courtmacsherry.

Her husband died in 1949 & Máire herself on July 13th 1955. She is buried in the Abbey in Timoleague.



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*Príomh-imeachtaí a Saoil 'is a Saothair:*

*Bhí saol fada torthúil, intleachtúil is liteartha ag Máire Ní Shíthe, a mhair idir 1867 agus 1955*

*'Dul Amú' an t-ainm cleite a roghnaigh sí di féin.*

*Tréimhse shuimiúil thabachtach in ath-bheochan na Gaeilge a bhí ann agus ghlac sí páirt mhór san ath-bheochan sin.*

*- Dob í Máire Ní Shíthe duine de na chéad scríbhneoirí agus drámadóirí ban Gaeilge i ndiaidh 1882.*

*- Ghlac sí páirt ina dráma féin – 'Beart Nótaí' i mBéal Feirste i 1902.*

The chief events in her Life & Times:

Máire Ní Shíthe, who lived from 1867 to 1955, had a long, fruitful, intellectual & literary life.

'Dul Amú' – 'Going Astray' was the pen name she selected for herself. It was a very interesting, important period in the revival of the Irish Language & she took a large part in that revival.

- Máire Ní Shíthe was one of the first female writers & dramatists in Irish after 1882.

- She acted in her own drama 'Beart Nótaí' in Belfast in 1902



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- *Bhuaigh sí an chéad duais ag an an Oireachtas i 1901 le 'Suipéar Dhiarmada Mhic Pháidín.'*

- *Scriobh Pádraig Mac Piarais chuici á mealladh chun a thuilleadh scéalta a scríobh dá nuachtán náisiúnta - 'An Claidheamh Soluis.'*

- *D'aistrigh sí an dráma 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme' le dramadóir mór na Fraince, Moliere, go Gaeilge, faoin dteideal 'An Geochach Duine Uasail.'*

- *D'aistrigh sí scéalta ón nGearmáinis go Gaeilge, a foilíodh sa 'Chlaidheamh Soluis' agus in 'Irisleabhar na Gaeilge.'*

- *Ceapadh 'Dul Amú' mar eagarthóir Gaeilge ar an nuachtán 'The Cork Sun' i 1903.*

- *Mhúin sí ranganna comhrá Gaeilge i ndúthaigh Chloch na gCoillte ó thús na 1920í.*

- She won first prize for her drama 'Suipéar Dhiarmada Mhic Pháidín' at the Oireachtas in 1901.

- Pádraig Pearse often wrote to entice her to contribute further articles to his national newspaper – 'An Claidheamh Soluis'.

- She translated the drama 'Le Bourgeoise Gentlehomme' by the acclaimed French dramatist Moliere to Irish under the title 'An Geochach Duine Uasail'.

- She translated stories from German to Irish, which were published in 'An Claidheamh Soluis' and 'Irisleabhar na Gaeilge'.

- 'Dul Amú' was appointed Irish editor of the newspaper 'The Cork Sun' in 1903.

- She taught conversational Irish classes in the Clonakilty District from the early 1920's.

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### **'Banlaoch i measc na nGael'**

#### **In Remembrance of Máire Ní Shíthe:**

Máire Ní Shíthe was brought to public awareness in an article by Brenda Ní Riordáin in the journal 'Comhar' of Conradh na Gaeilge in 1993. Brenda's grand-father Labhrás Ó Ceocháin, was Máire's first cousin. I met Brenda on a few occasions from the early 2000's & we both felt it was essential to honour this local Gaelic Heroine. This year, with the Nation celebrating the Centenary of the 1916 Rising & the close association between Máire

& Pádraig Pearse, it was decided to take the opportunity to remember her life & times, in a fitting manner.

Brenda identified her unmarked grave in Timoleague Abbey & the Clonakilty Branches of Conradh na Gaeilge & Cumann Seanchais, will re-furbish the grave & erect a suitable monument in her memory.

The commemorative events will take place in Sept. 2016, 61 years after her burial in 1955.



# The Lyre Company Irish Volunteers 1916

By Tim Crowley 

While most of the action in the 1916 rebellion took place in Dublin, a small company of Irish Volunteers from a place called Lyre, just north of Clonakilty, also played their part in the Easter Rising. Between four and five o'clock on Easter Sunday morning, the 23rd of April 1916, nineteen members of the Lyre Company, under the command of Jim Walsh, gathered at Knockea Crossroads near Lyre. Their mission was to march to Inchigeela, via Dunmanway, to collect some of the consignment of rifles which Roger Casement had sent over from Germany on board the ship "Aud". On that frosty morning most of the volunteers were on foot. A few had bicycles and Jim Walsh brought along his horse and cart. On board the cart were one or two rifles, shot guns and some croppy pikes. The Volunteers had Mass in Dunmanway, which was said by Cannon Magner. He was later shot during the War of Independence, on the 15th of December 1920, by a member of the Auxiliaries, Sergeant Vernon Hart.

**“On the journey to England they discovered that they had been put in the hold with coffins containing the remains of British Soldiers**

With the addition of the Dunmanway Volunteers, the Lyre Company set off for Inchigeela, a village on the River Lee. One of the Dunmanway men, Michael McCarthy played the Bagpipes along the way. He would later be one of three IRA men, members of Tom Barry's Flying column, who were shot dead during Kilmichael Ambush on the 28th of November 1920. The Volunteers arrived at Inchigeela before 3pm and were addressed by Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney. They informed the men that the British Navy had arrested the arms ship, "Aud", off the coast of Kerry and that the arms weren't coming in. It was the early hours of Easter Monday morning before the Volunteers got home to the Lyre area, shortly before the 1916 Rebellion began in Dublin.

On the 5th of May, eight members of the Lyre

Volunteers were arrested by the RIC with a detachment of the Connaught Rangers. The prisoners were initially taken to Cork Jail and later they were moved to Richmond Barracks, Dublin. On two days during their stay in Richmond Barracks, they heard the volleys that killed the 1916 leaders, a short distance away in Kilmanham Gaol. On the 12th of May, the prisoners were loaded onto a cattle boat at the North Wall. While on the journey to England they discovered that they had been put in the hold with coffins containing the remains of British Soldiers, who had been killed in the Easter Rebellion in Dublin. The Lyre Volunteers, with other prisoners, were then

taken from Holyhead on trains to Wakefield prison, Yorkshire, and were later moved to Frongoch prison camp in Wales. Some of the Lyre Volunteers were held in loft number three in Frongoch, among a group of two hundred and fifty prisoners, which included Michael Collins.

We can now only speculate as to what would have happened if the arms shipment from "Aud",

containing twenty thousand rifles, a million rounds of ammunition and ten machine guns, had been landed. Would there have been military action in Cork and Kerry? Would the British authorities have stopped the rebellion in the south in six days, as they did in Dublin? Would the rebels have taken to the hills and reverted to guerrilla warfare? At the very least we wouldn't be saying now that the action in the 1916 Rebellion was largely confined to the Dublin area. It is likely that the Lyre Volunteers would have been caught up in the action.

After 1916, the members of the Lyre Company continued drilling, organising and fund raising. At Christmas 1917, the Lyre Volunteers organised a fund raising concert in the Steam Engine shed of the Company O/C, Jim Walsh, at Knockea.

## MICHAEL COLLINS NEWS

Michael Collins attended the concert and the following are the first few lines of an anti-conscription recitation which he performed on the makeshift stage that night:

*'You have donned the red of England,*

*You are England's creature now. And the cursed brand of serfdom has its mark upon your brow. From this moment I disown you,*

*You have spurned your name and race You have sold your Irish birthright in the bargain of disgrace.'*

Later Jim Walsh became the first O/C of the Clonakilty Battalion of the IRA during the War Of Independence.

He was arrested by the British and held for a while in the workhouse in Clonakilty. On the 16th of April 1921, Jim was taken to Michael Collins' family home at Woodfield and with some of the neighbours was forced at gunpoint to burn the Collins dwelling house and farm buildings. John Cullinane, a Lyre Volunteer, became a member of Tom Barry's flying Column. Sean O'Donovan, another Lyre 1916 veteran, married Kathleen Boland, the sister of Harry Boland and became a Fianna Fáil Senator. Like many communities and families, some members of the Lyre Company took opposite sides in the Civil War after the signing of the Treaty.



*New 1916 memorial at Knockea Bridge, honouring the Lyre Company of the Irish Volunteers. Erected and unveiled by the relatives of the Lyre Volunteers on April 24th 2016.*

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# THE LEYLAND EIGHT TOURING CAR

By Tim Crowley 

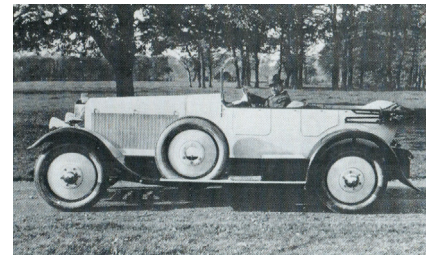
The touring car Michael Collins travelled in on his final Journey was a Leyland Eight or Leyland Thomas. It was known as the Leyland Eight because it had eight cylinders in the engine. It was also known as the Leyland Thomas because the Welsh automobile pioneer John Godfrey Parry Thomas designed the car. The Leyland Eight was launched at the London Motor Show of 1920 and was given the name "Lion of Olympia". Only eighteen were ever made and they had a price tag of two thousand pounds.

There are two photographs taken of Michael Collins in the Leyland on the day he was shot. One photograph shows him getting into the car outside the Eldon hotel in Skibbereen. The other depicts him sitting in the back left hand side of the car as it pulls away from the front of Lee's hotel in Bandon, in a cloud of exhaust fumes. It is believed that that photograph was taken within an hour of Collins' death.

Later, as the Leyland, which was the third vehicle in the convoy, rounded the bend at Béal Na Blá, bullets shattered the windscreen of the car. The side panels on Michael Collins' left were also hit. Emmet Dalton, next to Collins in the back seat, shouted to the driver "drive like hell"; but Collins tapped the driver on the shoulder and said "No, stop and we'll fight them". Within fifteen minutes Michael Collins was shot dead while fighting out on the road.

The body of Michael Collins left Béal Na Blá that evening propped up against the shoulder of Emmet Dalton in the back seat. When the convoy came to the village of Kilmoney, a blown up railway bridge blocked its path. They were forced to drive through the fields alongside the road to continue on their journey to Cork City. As the convoy was driving up a slope in the dark, the engine of the Leyland stopped and wouldn't restart. The troop lorry, with the armoured car,

had gone ahead and the soldiers were afraid to call them back in case they would get stuck in the wet grass. The body was then lifted on the shoulders of four soldiers



*The Leyland Eight Touring Car*

for hundreds of yards through the fields, until they eventually reached the troop lorry. The body of Michael Collins was placed in the lorry for the rest of the journey back to Cork.

When soldiers were sent back to the field near Kilmoney the following day to recover the Leyland, they discovered that items had been removed from the car during the night. The time clock from the dash was missing, that can be seen today in Collins Barracks Museum in Cork City. A small derringer type revolver, holster and a pinchers also removed from the car that night, are on display today in the West Cork Regional Museum in Clonakilty.

It is believed that the Leyland was later sent back to England, where it may have been scrapped. However another theory suggests that the car was sent out to Africa, where it was used by a big game hunter. It is said that he would go out at night hunting with a spotlight mounted on the back of the touring car. The final destination of Michael Collins' iconic car is still a mystery.



*A replica of the Leyland Eight Touring Car, currently being built. It will be on display with the Armoured Car and Crossley Tender at the Michael Collins Centre Castleview in 2017.*

# A PERSPECTIVE FROM ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

By Bill Matthews 

**Growing up in the Boston area, I thought everyone was Irish Catholic. My mother came from County Cavan and my father is second generation from West Cork. I never thought very deeply about my ethnic roots. It was what it was, so to speak. However, two events in my life gave me pause to consider who I am.**

I was a young combat soldier in Vietnam in 1968. Then in the 1990', for whatever reason, I started to read about the Irish fight for freedom. In thinking about the men and women of 1916, Michael Collins and the IRA in 1919 fighting to remove the foreigner from Ireland; I, of course, realized that I was the foreigner in Vietnam and that the Viet Cong were fighting for their own self-determination. In effect, I was a member of the "Crown forces".

Since 1980, I have been a professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts. As a university professor, I became relatively proficient at research and lecturing. It's what we do. I used my research skills to dig deeply into and learn about the 1914-1923 period in 20th century Irish history. As a small attempt to promote Irish history in America, for the last 20 years, I have given numerous lectures on the Irish fight for freedom to Irish American organizations all over New England and even had the temerity to give a lecture in Michael Collins hometown of Clonakilty!

Through years of research about this period of Irish history, I have come to have a deep



*Bill Matthews and his horse "General Collins".*

feeling for and appreciation of the Irish men and women who gave their lives for the principle of freedom and self-determination. I wondered if I lived in that period or in Belfast in the latter part of the 20th century, would I have had the courage to join the fight for freedom? I have retired from full time faculty teaching and devote much of my time to riding my horse ("General Collins") and lecturing on Irish history. It is, for me, a labor of love.



# HANNAH MURPHY

By Kevin Murphy 

Hannah Murphy (nee O'Regan), my mother, was born in Cross St., Rosscarbery on 23rd June 1911, the youngest of a family of seven. She attended the local Convent of Mercy School where she acquired a love for the Irish language, music and singing. She lived through the very turbulent years of The War of Independence and The Civil War which followed. She had many stories to tell of atrocities committed locally where the Black and Tans were most active. The family home was situated directly across from the old R.I.C. Barracks and she had vivid memories of the capture of that Barracks on 30th / 31st.

March 1921 by Tom Barry and his Flying Column. The following day was fair day in Ross. A grenade exploded killing two local men and injuring many others. My mother had a clear recollection of looking at the deceased as they were carried away.

My mother was always so proud of the fact she saw Michael Collins on the day he was killed in Béal na Bláth, August 22nd 1922. When she was going up the town to buy bread in Bateman's Bakery she saw Michael, "this tall stately man", getting out of the Leyland Eight and walking across to The Carbery Arms Hotel to visit the O'Neills, who were family friends. After leaving



*Mrs Hannah Murphy  
(1911 to 2015)*

the hotel, Michael called in to the Mc Donald home next door to sympathize with them on the death of Jerome, who, a short time previously, had been killed by the Irregulars.

Hannah immigrated to London in the early 1930's where she met my dad, James Murphy. They married in June 1940 and, because of World War 2, decided

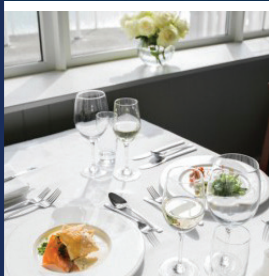


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## MICHAEL COLLINS NEWS

to return to Ross. They reared four children in beautiful, tranquil and peaceful Rosscarbery.

My mother was a real extrovert and never missed any social occasion, particularly where singing and music were involved. She was always willing to share her experiences and stories with others and to give interviews, of which there were many, when requested. She enjoyed excellent health and fended for herself up to the age of 98 in her own home in Cross St. After that, she did get some home help but celebrated her 100th birthday in style at home where she remained until February 2013. Then she went into Clonakilty Community Hospital, where she received the best of care and attention. Luckily, she retained her senses and her singing ability right up to the end. Indeed, she sang with

us on Christmas Day, six days before she died peacefully on December 31st 2015.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh sí.

**In 2012 Maria Young and Tim Crowley had the privilege of interviewing Hannah Murphy at her home in Rosscarbery. This is what she said about the day she saw Michael Collins.**

*"I was going up the street to the bakers for bread, and I was nearing the hotel, the Carbery Arms hotel, and the market house in the middle of the square. This tender drove up and stopped beside the market house. And this tall stately man in uniform got out of the car and strode across the street. He was going into the hotel and we crossed paths and I stopped to let him pass me in. I thought he'd put his hand on my head and say 'Thanks child.' But*

*he was so busy. He was going in to see his mother's friend. And the poor man... that was his last day on earth.*

Maria Young: Can you describe what he looked like to us? Did you get a good look at him?

*Oh I did! Sure we just passed closely. He was a splendid man! Tall stately, and business like, you know. But I was disappointed that he didn't [thank me]. But I had the honour of meeting him anyway! I had been listening to them at home discussing, you know, all the politics of the time, you know. Discussing Michael and the ambushes and all that. And I knew all about it, even though I was but eleven years, I was listening and I had it in my mind. And I knew him, of course, pictures in the paper and that. He was a splendid man, tall stately man. Lovely looking."*



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# THE BATTLE OF CROSSBARRY

By Tom Crowley 

Recently, I was conducting some research in relation to a neighbour of mine, Con Daly, who was killed in Crossbarry ambush. After reading about thirty online witness statements of the men that were there and all available books on the subject, it became clear that Crossbarry was more than just an ambush. It was a prolonged battle. It involved a large number of men, with six separate incidents where gunfire was exchanged, over a period of 5-6 hours and over approx. six square miles. Crossbarry Ambush occurred on 19th March 1921 during the height of the War of Independence. West Cork at that time was a very dangerous place. The British military, after many killings and ambushes, were tense and effectively confined to barracks; only venturing outside, cautiously, in large numbers and armed to the teeth. They were up against the highly mobile IRA flying columns that had the support of most of the civilian population, which had suffered years of exploitation. The best survival policy was to keep your head down and your mouth shut.

The West Cork flying column was mobilized on Saturday 12th March 1921, a few miles west of Castletown Kenneigh. This was the largest column assembled (104 men). After a failed ambush attempt on St Patricks day in Shippool, the column moved to billets in Crossbarry

“ He came down the stairs, guns blazing, and shot the leading British officer

Charlie Hurley, Commanding Officer of the 3rd West Cork Brigade, was staying in Forde's in Ballymurphy, a couple of miles north of Crossbarry. He was recovering from a gunshot wound to the face and a sprained ankle as a result of Upton train ambush. The British, possibly acting on information received from an informer, planned to raid the Ballymurphy area, as they believed that the IRA Brigade HQ and arms dumps were located there.

At approx. 2.30am on 19th March, the British sent large raiding parties from Cork,

Bandon and possibly Kinsale to encircle all farmhouses in the Ballymurphy area and arranged to rendezvous later in Crossbarry. I.R.A scouts heard Crossley tenders approaching and alerted the Column officers billeted in O'Leary's. Tom Barry, realizing the danger of a possible encirclement, immediately ordered the setup of an ambush; the plan being to take out one of the encircling forces and then retreat in that direction.

The Column of 104 men was broken up into seven sections with 14 men in each. Sections 1-5 were spread out from Harrold's and Beazley's farmhouses, protestant dwellings which were forcibly taken, to the bend on the road west of Crossbarry. Two more sections (6&7) were assigned to protecting the rear and west flank. They buried two electrically detonated mines in the road: one in front of Harold's and the other on the bend on the road near Crossbarry. The plan was to blow up the leading lorry, if it came from the west or the east. **(The positions of these seven sections are marked precisely on the accompanying map)**

**Action 1:** At around 7am, the Hampshire regiment raided Forde's house in Ballymurphy, where the injured Charlie Hurley was sleeping. He came down the stairs, guns blazing, and shot the leading British officer, who would have died if he hadn't been wearing a steel plate on his chest. Charlie then rushed out the back door but was shot in the head as he did so. Once these shots were heard by Liam Deasy and Tom Barry, the Column officers, they decided to move all their men up closer to Ballymurphy to assist Charlie Hurley. However just as they were about to issue orders to do so, the first of eight Crossley tenders came around the bend from the west. Lieutenant Towers (20) was in charge of the convoy,

“Lieutenant Towers was shot in the Jaw but managed to shoot off a flare to signal for reinforcements

which was to rendezvous in Crossbarry to pick up the Bandon raiding party. These Crossleys had a skeleton crew, except for the last lorry, which had an escort of soldiers. In the aftermath of Kilmichael ambush, the procedure for advancement of this type of convoy was to send out flank and vanguards

on foot to probe any dangers. However once Lieutenant Towers knew he was in sight of Crossbarry, he called in the guards.

**Action 2:** The leading Crossley stopped outside Beazley's after seeing one of the volunteers. Sections 1-3 opened fire on the first three Crossleys at point blank range and most of the British casualties occurred there. Lieutenant Towers was shot in the Jaw but managed to shoot off a flare to signal for reinforcements. While the fighting took place, Flor Begley played martial tunes on his bagpipes in Harold's farmyard.

**Action 3:** Next Tom Kelleher's section (6) came under attack from soldiers coming from Ballymurphy, attracted by the flare. He put two men in the castle ruins (11) with orders to shoot the leading officer. Captain Hotblack stood up on a ditch to encourage his soldiers and was shot by the I.R.A men in the castle. This action stopped the British advance.

**Action 4:** All sections except sections 4&5 retreated to the high ground at Skeheenahine hill and from there had a great view of the surrounding countryside. They could see a large company of British at Hartnett's farm, under the command of Major A.E Percival, which was advancing towards sections 4&5. Liam Deasy ordered sixty men to fire three rounds of independent fire at 1200

yards. This action temporarily halted Percival's advance.

**Action 5:** Denis Lordan's section (5) was in a very exposed position. They were surrounded and under fire from British converging on the area. There was also a report of reinforcements coming off the train at Kinsale Junction, a little east of Crossbarry. It was rumoured that passengers going on to Bandon had a full view of the battle. Three of Lordan's men were killed and one was seriously injured. While trying to retrieve the explosive plunger from the dead Scottie Monahan, Denis Lordan set off the mine buried in the road. Under the cover of the massive explosion, sections 4&5 were able to retreat to Skeheenahine hill. From there, they retreated to Raheen hill about 2 miles northwest; the only escape route open to them.

**Action 6:** At approx midday near Raheen hill, the retreating I.R.A saw a group of Auxiliaries. Tom Barry ordered three men to engage them. They took up positions behind a ditch and opened fire. The Auxiliaries retreated and the battle was over.

The Column decided to retreat to Gurranereagh about 20 miles west, proceeding to march there via a quiet route. They arrived at billets around 2.30 am.

The official death toll on the Volunteers side was four

- Charlie Hurley (29)
- Jerh O Leary



- Con Daly (21)
- Peter (Scottie) Monahan

The official death toll on the British side was eleven.

- Private Stanley Steward (25)
- Private William Wilkins (24)
- Private Joseph Crafer (21)
- Private Sidney Cawley (20)
- Acting Sergeant Edward Watts (27)
- Private Cyril Martin (25)
- Private William Gray (19)
- Private Harold Baker (20)
- 2nd Lieutenant Geoffrey Hotblack (21).
- Constable Arthur

Kenward RIC (21)

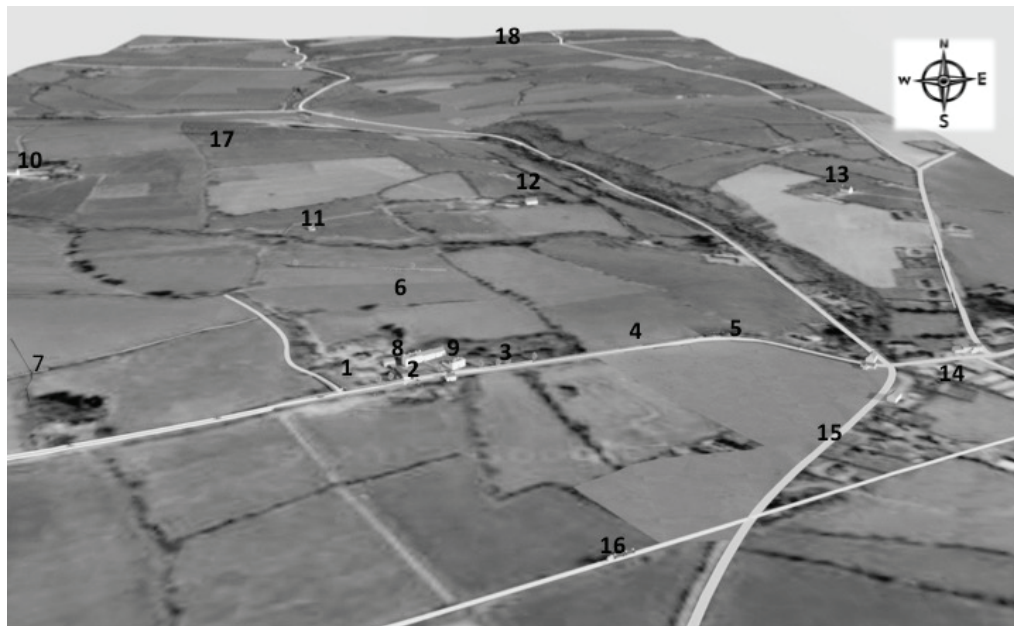
- 2nd Lieutenant Francis Towers (20) died 2 years later from wounds received.

Crossbarry is generally accepted as a victory for the I.R.A and possibly one of the events that led to the Truce in July of that year. There are varying accounts of how many British were involved ranging from 150 to 1200+ and exaggerated casualties on both sides. My opinion, and it's only an opinion, is that there were a few hundred British involved in the initial operation at Ballymurphy but once that flare went up, there were British and RIC coming from everywhere. The I.R.A had luck on their side that faithful day. If Lieutenant Towers had kept his vanguard out till they reached Crossbarry they would have

came across the column, the Crossleys would have waited back for reinforcements and the column would probably have been annihilated. Had Denis Lordan not accidentally set off the mine, which failed to explode earlier, his section would have been wiped out. Had the reinforcing Auxiliaries coming from Macroom not mistakenly gone to Kilbarry, 12 miles away, and arrived earlier; they would have cut off the columns retreat to the north west.

After the Civil war the tendency was to selectively forget certain aspects of the past. Perhaps, nearly 100 years on, it is time to revisit it and learn from it.

If you have any information on the events around Crossbarry, I would love to hear from you. Email: [tom@crowleycarbon.com](mailto:tom@crowleycarbon.com)



**Crossbarry Key:**

1-7 IRA sections  
8 Harrold's farm

10 O'Leary's farm  
11 Ballyhandle castle ruins  
12 O Driscolls' farm

14 Crossbarry  
15 Dunkeareen Rd  
16 West Cork railway

18 Forde' farm

*Map of Crossbarry Ambush Site*

# MICHAEL COLLINS' ROLE IN THE 1916 RISING

By Tim Crowley 

**Michael James Collins was born into a strong nationalist family at Woodfield near Clonakilty in 1890. He received his education at the national schools in Lisavaird village and Clonakilty. He immigrated to London to work in the Post Office in July 1906. Collins spent nine and a half years working and living in London. During that time he joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Volunteers.**

On the 15th of January 1916, to avoid conscription into the British army to fight in World War One, Collins returned to Ireland. In Dublin he got a job as financial adviser to Count Plunkett and a part time job with accountancy firm 'Craig Gardiner'. Before the 1916 Rising: Collins, then a Captain in the Irish Volunteers, became aide- de -camp to one of the leaders, Joseph Mary Plunkett, son of Count Plunkett. Joseph Plunkett was ill having under gone surgery on his throat for tuberculosis. Collins booked him into the Metropole Hotel on Good Friday to be close to the General Post Office.

Michael Collins was present at pivotal moments during the 1916 Rising; including when Padraig Pearse, James Connolly and Joseph Plunkett held their last meeting in Liberty Hall on Easter Monday, before leading their men to take over the GPO. In the GPO, while securing the building, Collins found two tierces of porter in the staff canteen. He ordered the stout be spilt, saying: "They said we were drunk in '98,

we won't be drunk this time". Michael Collins' role in the GPO was mainly as an administrative officer. By Friday of Easter week, the Post Office was in flames after heavy British shelling.

During the evacuation, Collins led a group of Volunteers across bullet swept streets. For a while the rebels couldn't go forward on to Moore Street or turn right

 **Michael Collins**  
located a van and organised a group of Volunteers to push it across the entrance to Moore Lane.

on to Moore Lane, without being mown down by British machine gun fire. Michael Collins located a van and organised a group of Volunteers to push it across the entrance to Moore Lane. The van protected the rebels from

the gunfire and they advanced onto Moore Street, where they tunnelled through the walls of houses trying to find an escape route. They finally got to number 16 Moore Street and could go no further. It was there Padraig Pearse later made the decision to surrender.

After the surrender Collins and the other rebel prisoners were forced to march down O'Connell Street, past the smouldering ruins of the GPO, over which the Irish flag was still flying. They were held over night in the grounds of the Rotunda hospital, in cramped conditions. It was there Collins witnessed the elderly Leader Thomas Clarke being stripped and humiliated by British officer Captain Lee Wilson. Collins later ordered the assassination of Wilson in Wexford, where he served as an RIC officer during the War of Independence.

Collins, with most of the other prisoners, was next moved to Richmond Barracks in Inchicore, where detectives from the Dublin Metropolitan Police screened the men to find the ringleaders.



Fourteen of the leaders were later court-martialled and executed. Some prisoners had death sentences later commuted to life imprisonment and more were condemned to penal servitude in British prisons. Michael Collins was initially put into a group destined to receive harsher punishment, but without being noticed he casually walked across the room to another group, who were to receive easier treatment. It was the first of many escapes for him.

On 1st of May 1916, Collins was shipped to Stafford Detention Barracks in England, where the prisoners were kept in solitary confinement for the first three weeks. It was there the men heard about the executions of Pearse, Connolly and the others in Dublin. It was there also that

Collins heard of the death of his friend Sean Hurley, who had been killed on the last day of The Rising. Sean, from Drinagh in County Cork, was the only Cork man to die fighting in Dublin and had been a friend of Michael Collins since they went to school

“ Collins was looked upon as being among the hardliners

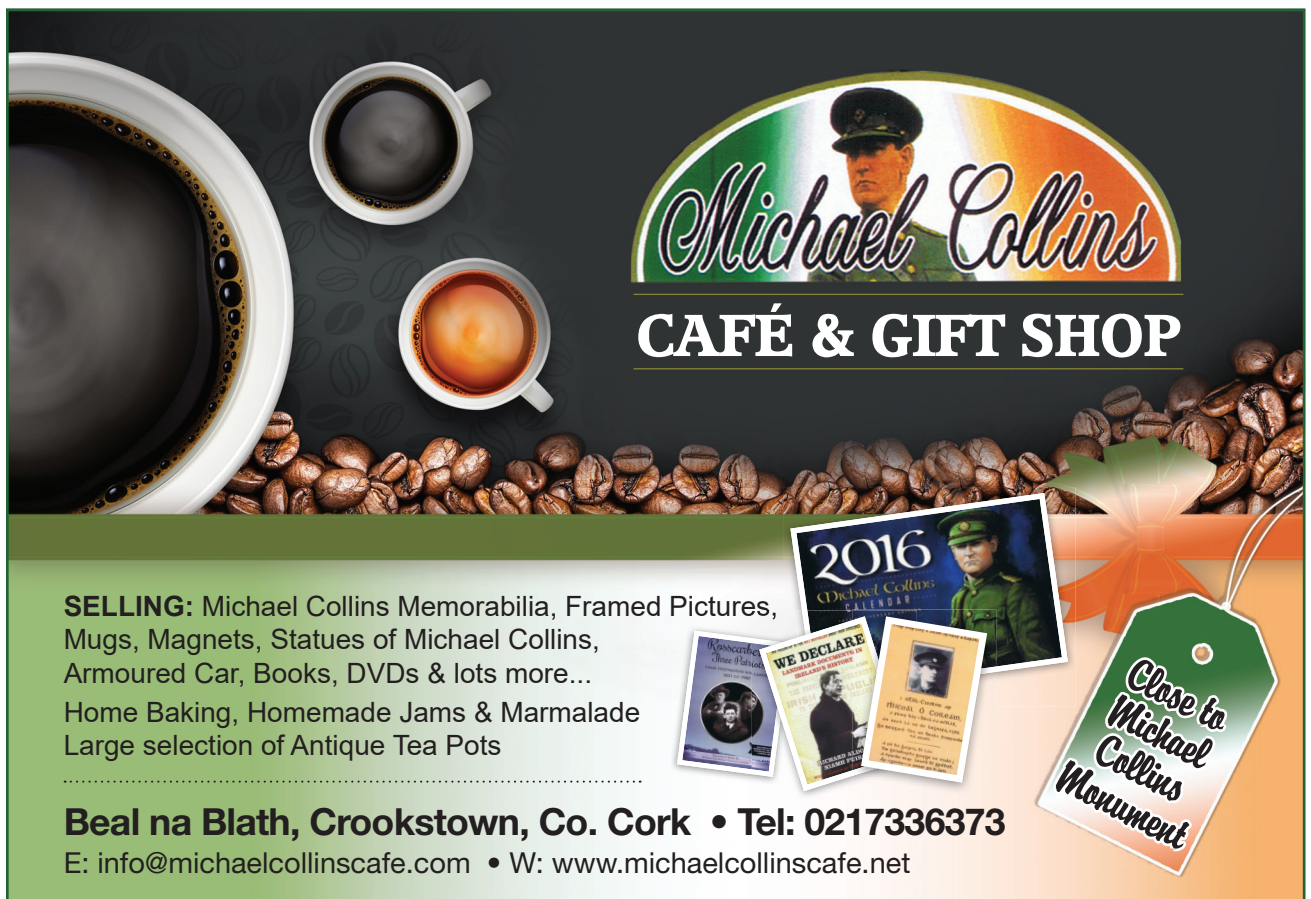
together in Clonakilty.

By the end of June, the Irish prisoners in Stafford were told that they were being moved to an Internment Camp in North Wales, located at Frongoch near the Town of Bala. While the British

began releasing prisoners from Frongoch in July; Collins was looked upon as being among the hardliners, so he wasn't released until just before Christmas 1916.

On returning to Clonakilty, one of the first things Michael Collins had to do was attend a wake. His maternal grandmother, Johanna O'Brien, had just died.

Collins learned a lot of serious lessons in 1916. He became resolute in his belief that under his influence never again would an Irish rebel army fight British Forces in conventional warfare. Guerrilla tactics would be used both in the country areas and in urban centres. Michael Collins also appreciated that good intelligence was essential if success was to be achieved in any conflict. Later he would become the master in that game.



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# MICHAEL COLLINS: *A Musical Drama*

By Maria Young 



*Poster of Michael Collins Musical*

In 2005, Cork City was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture. To mark this, Cork Opera House commissioned Bryan Flynn to write a musical. When Bryan Flynn told me the subject of the musical would be Michael Collins, I was both thrilled and apprehensive. Thrilled, because it was an Irish theme in a genre not at all Irish; excited at such a bold choice, but equally, I was apprehensive at what I presumed the response would be. 'A musical about Michael Collins! Are you out of your mind?'

Bryan read every book he could lay his hands on about the great hero. He later said in an interview that the stuff of Collins' life was material made for a musical. You couldn't get a more exciting plot. It had everything, some would say too much for one work; rebellion, imprisonment, war, love, civil war, betrayal and death.

There is a certain amount of prejudice towards musical theatre in this country but once you experience the sheer, inimitable, raw power of a classic musical: Nothing else compares. I have seen countless plays, films and documentaries about Michael Collins but none had evoked in me the emotions which I felt during that musical drama. Nothing has ever transported me back to that time so compellingly.

It took some effort to persuade the powers that be to financially support this venture. There was serious reluctance. Some thought a musical might be downright disrespectful and guaranteed to flop. A song and dance show about Ireland's great hero wasn't a runner and money sunk. Perception is a challenge in this environment, but Bryan Flynn kept pushing. Finally, there was a weeklong workshop with a large cast, musicians and tracks, culminating in two public performances on the stage of Cork Opera House.

I was a production manager at the time, and money was very tight. I ended up stage managing, procuring props, recording, blocking, on top of producing so I was in and out of rehearsals a lot. Finally one afternoon towards the end of rehearsals I got to sit down and watch the piece in full. Evening sunlight streamed in the window as I witnessed that beautiful soaring trio of exquisite harmonies



“ I was reduced to silence at that first full run and I will never forget the impact it had on me and the cast in that small room.

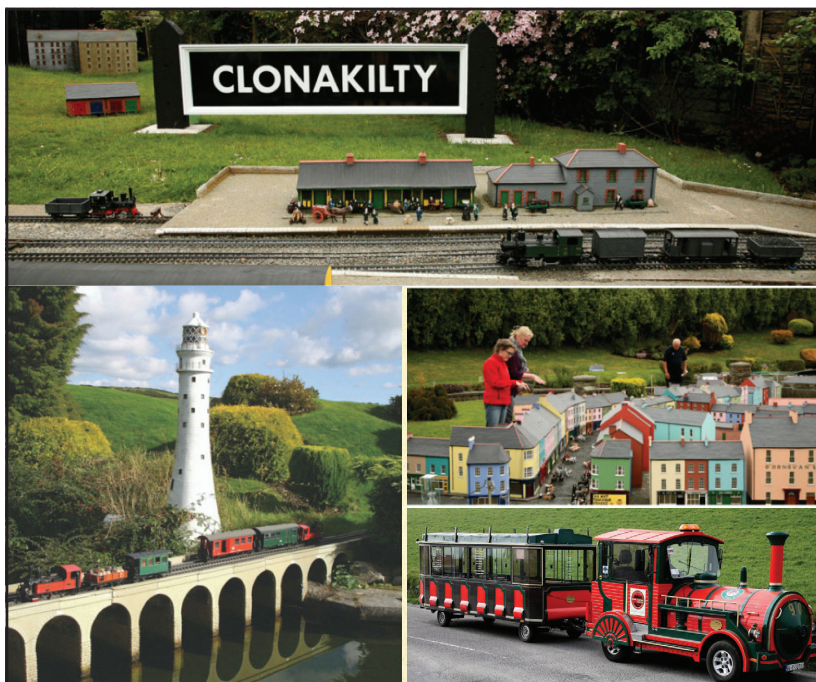
between Harry Boland, Kitty Kieran and Collins; the rousing complex cross rhythms of the male chorus singing of the hardships of Frongoch, with Collins' voice soaring high above them; the staccato clipped rhythms of De Valera, the crushing exposition and looming dark tragedy of civil war. I was reduced to silence at that first full run and I will never forget the impact it had on me and the cast in that small room.

It continued when we moved to the big stage. How could I ever forget Collins' poignant appeal in the Dail, played downstage in the Theatre Royal in Waterford to a rapt audience, invoking the fife and drum ballads of the past? We were right there with him in that moment

of history and how we wanted him to succeed! Move to the unfolding civil war and crowds filling the stage as the two protagonists floated on moving platforms in a complex fugue. Then the shocking inevitable build up to a death we all hoped could somehow be miraculously averted. The dreaded ambush could not be avoided and, with all the shock inherent in that one single shot accompanied by music, it broke the heart.

The piece was a terrific success. In all its performances across Ireland it never failed to get multiple standing ovations. It touched on something profound in the Irish psyche. It had an epic feel and vision, an eclectic musical sound that did sublime justice to the story of Michael Collins. It will live long in the memories of those of us lucky to have been involved in it.

Bryan Flynn was still working on his musical at the time of his death at the age of forty-two in May 2014. It was his life's passion. May he Rest in Peace.



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# THE TRAGEDY OF ROGER CASEMENT

By Michael Galvin 

The great tragedy of Roger Casement was that in his idealistic love for his country and a burning desire for its self-determination, he fell between three stools: i.e. Britain, Germany, and Ireland. Initially a firm believer in the civilizing benefits of the Empire, he was a hardworking, conscientious, and enthusiastic high-ranking servant of the Crown. He was also decorated for his humanitarian efforts in Africa and South America, where he exposed unspeakable barbarities perpetrated on native innocents. Very soon he became thoroughly disillusioned with the Foreign Office; which, for reasons of realpolitik, dumbed down his revelations. Outraged and disgusted, Casement offered up his knighthood and experienced a profound metamorphosis, whereby he identified Ireland's plight with the colonial people's he sought to protect.

With the onset of the Great War, he decided the time was right to assist in and effect an insurrection and saw his principal role as the provision of arms and funds abroad. The British betrayal of his humanitarian endeavours, and her failure to effect Home Rule for all Ireland, left a bitter taste in his mouth, so that from 1915 onward he would be her sworn enemy.

The second stumbling stool in the tragic equation was Germany;

appropriately in the circumstances, the enemy of his enemy. He thus viewed Germany as the catalyst through which his goal could be opportunistically achieved, i.e. the provision of arms and possibly direct military intervention. Indeed, much of this chimed well enough with German interests in the early stages of the war. The brutish German Kaiser Wilhelm II cared little for Irish nationalist aspirations and even less for Casement, but was eager

“ Ireland could become a tiny, distracting, but strategic sideshow in the great European theatre of war

to foment trouble between the Irish Volunteers and the Ulster Volunteer Force in the Home Rule crisis, in an attempt to tie up British troops in Ireland. All the better too if this might lead to insular civil war with perhaps a modicum of German military intervention for good measure. In that way



*Roger Casement*

thousands of British troops would be diverted from the Front.

As with France and Spain in times past, Ireland could become a tiny, distracting, but strategic sideshow in the great European theatre of war. It took Casement some time to see through this wily Teutonic ruse. Casement's attempts to recruit the so-called 'Irish Brigade' from Irish prisoners of war in Germany proved abortive. He sought three thousand, he got just under fifty. An arms shipment he did eventually procure, but the quality of these was quite suspect and they were never going to be landed anyway due to the efficacy of British naval intelligence. That, together with a torrid journey in the U20 submarine, as well as the onset of malaria, and Casement's luck was fast running out.

If Casement's experience of the British and Germans was unfortunate, it was little better with the fractious nationalism of his fellow countrymen. He despised John Redmond as



a traitor for sending tens of thousands of young men to their deaths and, like many others, he became disillusioned with the Irish Parliamentary Party and its Home Rule aspirations, which he regarded as pure smoke and mirrors. So much for Redmond and his party.

Like Eoin McNeill, Chief of Staff of the Irish Volunteers, Casement rightly believed that insurrection was pointless if it had not a militarily realistic chance of success. It was Patrick Pearse and the IRB that rendered this rationale irrelevant, thus leading to paralysing confusion with catastrophic results. Lack of meaningful German military intervention, a reality that was dawning on Casement as Holy Week progressed, convinced him that an insurrection was pointless.

With this in mind he elected to return quickly to Dublin to press for a cancellation. The outbreak of hostilities on Easter Monday compounded Casement's plight

“No way would high treason by a Knight of the Realm in the midst of war against a mortal enemy escape the hangman's noose.

and sealed his fate even further. Ill-luck even dogged his landing on the Kerry coast as the Volunteers botched the rendezvous attempt, as well as the golden chance of springing him from the RIC

barracks.

His subsequent trial was an open and shut case. No way would high treason by a Knight of the Realm in the midst of war against a mortal enemy escape the hangman's noose. The much-debated Black Diaries, whatever their authenticity, were totally irrelevant.

Patriotic, courageous, idealistic with a certain boyish naïveté, and a Pearsonian martyrological streak; the great tragedy of Roger Casement ended in the quicklime of Pentonville prison yard.

Yet it seems his heroic spirit still haunts the island of Ireland from his native Murlough Bay to the Kerry coast; and his name will always occupy a special place deep in the Irish psyche.

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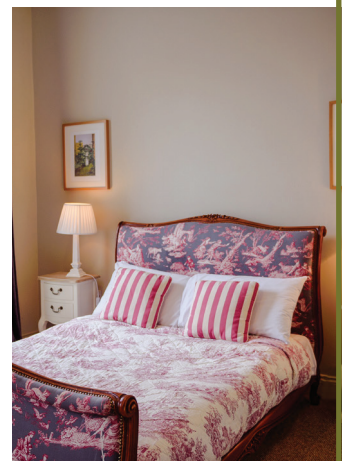
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# DIARMUID (JEREMIAH) O'DONOVAN ROSSA

By Traolach Ó Donnabháin 

Diarmuid O'Donovan Rosa was born at 'Sunny Rock' near Rosscarbery on September 4th 1831. The name 'Rossa' derives from the Rossmore/Kilmeen area near Clonakilty, where his Branch of the O'Donovan Clan had settled after 1178. Rossa's ancestors were evicted by Cromwell in the 1640's and their lands were granted to planted English landlords. In the 1790's, following numerous evictions in the Rossmore area, the entire family moved to the Rosscarbery area, where they farmed as tenants at 'Sunny Rock' and established a linen industry in the town itself.

The tenant farmers had to sell their animals and crops annually to pay exorbitant rents to landlords, many of whom were in exile. These farmers were almost exclusively dependent on the potato crop for their existence. When a disease hit the crop in successive years from 1845, they were decimated from the resulting famine. Between 1845 and 1850, the national population declined from some eight million to five million as a result of starvation, disease and emigration.

Rossa's father, Donchadha, died as a result of Famine disease. Subsequently, his mother and family were evicted from their home. In early 1848, his uncle in the USA forwarded the passage for the family to immigrate to Philadelphia. Rossa alone remained behind. The famine and subsequent fever hit the population of West Cork hard. Some nine thousand bodies were buried in a single 'Famine plot' in Abbeystrewery, Skibbereen. Rossa helped bury many neighbours around Rosscarbery. Those memories nurtured a hatred for the British and landlords throughout his life.

He moved to Skibbereen, where he worked in Downing's shop and invested heavily in history books. In 1853, he married Nanno Egar. In the following year he rented out Downing's shop where he opened his



*Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa*

own hardware store.

In 1856, with some other youths, he founded the 'Phoenix National and Literary Society' whose long-term aim was to free Ireland by force of arms. He was jailed in 1857 for a year without trial, after which his business was boycotted and subsequently failed. When James Stephens founded the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in Dublin in 1858, Rossa immediately joined the organisation.

His wife, Nanno died the following year, leaving four young sons. The eldest was only 5 years old. He married Eileen Buckley in 1861. She, unfortunately, died in childbirth two years later, leaving another son.

In 1863, James Stephens invited Rossa to Dublin to manage the newspaper 'The Irish People'. He travelled all over Ireland and much of Britain organizing the IRB.

Rossa married for a third time in 1864. Mary Jane Irwin from Clonakilty was eighteen years of age when she married him. He was fifteen years her senior. They had thirteen children together, six of whom died in childbirth. Of the eighteen children born to Rossa and his three wives, only one, a son, is buried in Ireland.



The remainder are buried in New York.

Unknown to Rossa, the British had a spy, Pierce Nagle, in the 'Irish People'. Rossa was consequently arrested and charged with plotting against the Government. He defended himself in court, but was found guilty and was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was subjected to some brutal, inhumane treatment in Pentonville, Portland and Chatam prisons in England.

In 1869, he was elected as an MP to the British House of Commons for Tipperary, but was rejected because of his prisoner status.

In 1870, following an inquiry into inhumane treatment in prisons, he and some others were pardoned, provided they did not return to Ireland. He and four others, known as the 'Cuba 5', immigrated to New York. Mary and his family travelled with him. They settled in Staten Island, where he became more involved than ever in the Fenian movement. He was elected Chief Executive of the Fenian Brotherhood in 1877. He published his book 'Prison Life' in 1874 and 'Rossas Collections (1838-1898)' later on. He was made an official American citizen in 1878.

He founded his own newspaper, 'The United Irishman', which he used to propose a 'dynamite' campaign to drive the British out of Ireland. He raised some \$43,000 to this end. Between 1881 and 1885, bombs exploded in various locations in Britain, including the House of Commons, Tower of London and a military barracks in Salford. Rossa was blamed and the British sought his extradition, which was refused on the basis of his American citizenship. In 1885, he was shot in the street by a female British spy named Yseult Dudley. Fortunately, he survived and spent the remainder of his life travelling throughout the USA, promoting the Fenian stance against the British occupation of Ireland. He was recognised as the international voice for Irish freedom.

He returned to Ireland on more than one occasion. In 1893, James Connolly invited him to give lectures throughout the country. In 1904, he unveiled a memorial to the 'Manchester Martyrs' in Skibbereen, having been invited by the local 'Young Ireland'

Movement.

Rossa's health began to fail in 1911 and he died on June 29th 1915 at his home in New Brighton. Mary continued to care for him, a troublesome patient at times, till the end. The Republican Movement, realizing the benefits of the publicity a large funeral would generate, shipped his body back to Ireland; where, following a lying in state, he was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery on August 1st 1915. Massive crowds lined the streets. The future leaders of the 1916 Rising made up the Funeral Committee and Pádraig Pearse gave the inspirational graveside oration.

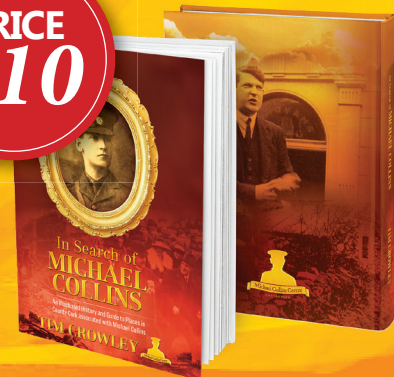
Monuments, memorial gardens, streets, bridges and GAA Clubs throughout the country, north and south, have been named in Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's honour. In 2015, the centenary of his death, numerous commemorative events were held locally, nationally and in the USA, to celebrate his life.

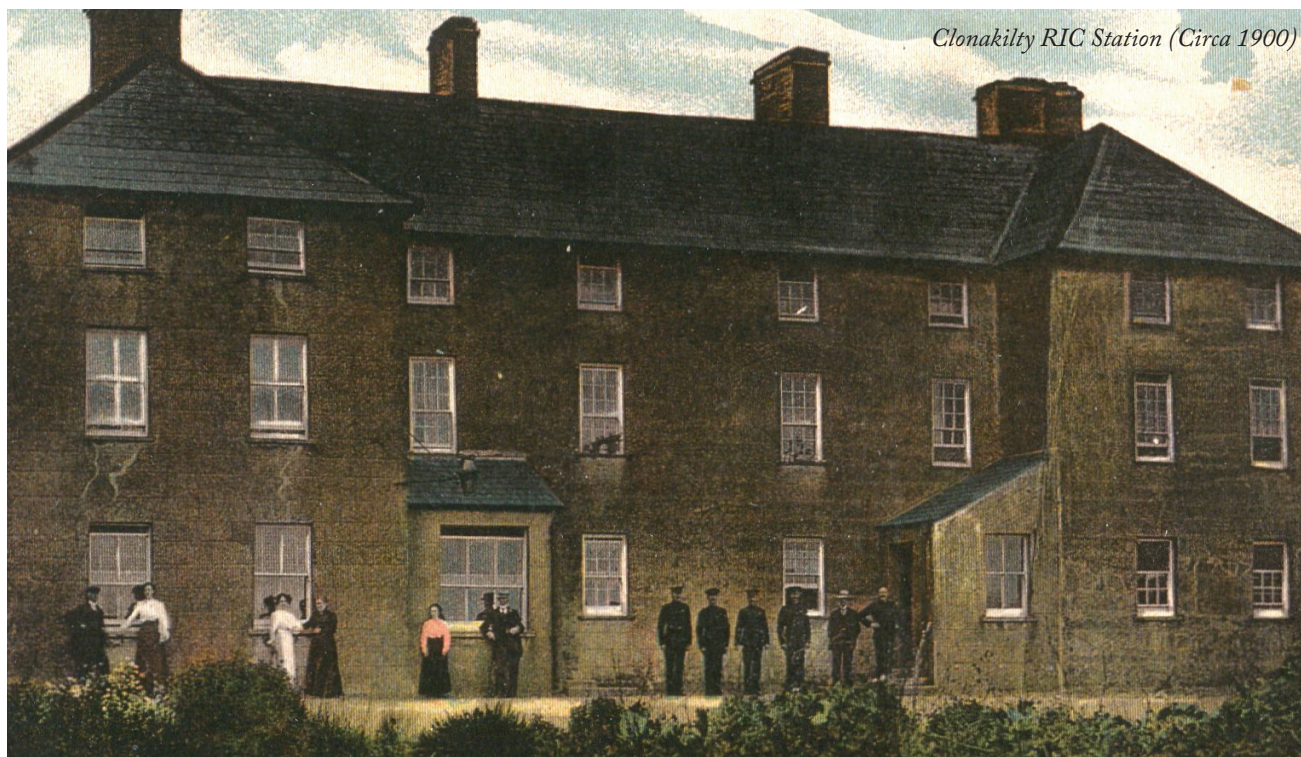
“The famine hit the population of West Cork hard. Some nine thousand bodies were buried in a single 'Famine plot

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# THE RIC DISTRICT OF CLONAKILTY

By Diarmuid Kingston 

The headquarters and main barracks of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in Clonakilty District was located at the upper end of McCurtain Street, formerly known as Barrack Hill, at the north-eastern end of Clonakilty town. It was strategically well situated and commanded a view over the town and surrounding countryside extending to the coast at Ring and Inchydoney. It was built in the 1780s on what appears to have been the site of an existing military barracks. Regiments of the Westmeath Militia and Caithness Legion were garrisoned there in 1798. On the 19th of June of that year, they claimed victory over the United Irishmen, led by Tadhg Ó Donovan Asna, in the

Battle of the Big Cross which took place near Shannonvale. The building was modernised in 1926, being reduced from three to two storeys and is at present the headquarters of the Clonakilty District of An Garda Síochána.

At the beginning of the War of Independence, in January 1919, the Clonakilty District had six barracks and a total complement of forty officers and men. The barracks were located at Clonakilty, Rosscarbery, Dunmanway, Timoleague, Courtmacsherry and Milltown. In 1920 there was a decrease of nine members, with thirty-one officers and constables being returned. The closure of both Courtmacsherry and Milltown

barracks accounted for this reduction. The downward trend in RIC numbers was reversed in the January 1921 returns, when there was an increase of twelve constables, thus bringing the complement up to forty-three. This increase was due to the introduction of the Temporary Constables, commonly referred to as Black and Tans. They were a hurriedly assembled force used to augment the depleted ranks of the RIC and almost all recruits were former soldiers who had served in the Great War.

Clonakilty Barracks held the greatest number of officers and men of the six barracks in the district. In charge of Clonakilty Barracks on the 1st January 1920 was District Inspector



Henry Connor, Head Constable Henry Downs, as well as four sergeants and six constables. Each rural barracks in the district had a Sergeant or an Assistant Sergeant and between three and five Constables. There was a sub-station in the village of Butlerstown which is not mentioned

in the yearly returns.

“A co-ordinated attempt to burn down all rural RIC barracks countrywide was made by the IRA during the spring and summer months of 1920

This was a rented dwelling house at the south-western end of the village and was a compact free-standing two-storied building, in keeping with police force regulations for such premises. It was manned by two RIC members from the Courtmacsherry station and opened for a number of hours each day,

three days of the week. It was closed down permanently in the summer of 1920. Before the turn of the century, there had been a residential RIC barracks on the outskirts of Ardfield village. This was in Ballyluck House but the lease was discontinued when the nearby Milltown Barracks was upgraded.

The RIC barracks at Ballygurteen, which was in the Clonakilty District, was closed prior to 1919 but had recorded three members in the 1918 returns: an assistant sergeant and two constables. Up to 1919, Dunmanway had held District status but, in the reorganisation of the districts in that year, was incorporated into the Clonakilty District.

A co-ordinated attempt to burn down all rural RIC barracks countrywide was made by the IRA during the spring and summer months of 1920. The barracks at Milltown, Timoleague and Courtmacsherry had been evacuated prior to this. The empty buildings were subsequently burned and levelled to the ground by local IRA units. This left just three functioning barracks in



*Original cast iron, Royal Irish Constabulary, police station shield and set of RIC handcuffs (Michael Collins Centre, Castlevue, Collection)*

the district; namely, Clonakilty, Rosscarbery and Dunmanway. With the burning of Rosscarbery Barracks on the night of 31st March 1921 by the Flying Column of the Third Cork Brigade, under the leadership of Commandant Tom Barry; Clonakilty and Dunmanway remained the only functioning RIC barracks in the district up until the truce. In January 1922, it was agreed to disband the RIC and replace it with two new police forces; The Civic Guard in the Free State, which later became An Garda Síochána, and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in Northern Ireland.


# THE NEWCESTOWN AMBUSH

By Sean Crowley 

On the night of the 10th of October 1920, men from the Cork No.3 Brigade I.R.A arrived in Newcestown after a failed ambush attempt on the Dunmanway-Ballineen road, where the expected convoy of British troops had not arrived. The group dispersed, taking food in different houses in the area. The commander of the brigade, Sean Hales, accompanied by Jim O' Mahoney, made their way into the village. They had just reached a public house when they were forced to flee, narrowly escaping members of the 1st Battalion Essex Regiment, who had arrived suddenly to conduct a search of the premises, as it was suspected of being an IRA 'haunt'. There they reportedly terrorised the barman and the customers for thirty minutes.

The battalion consisted of twenty men who were lead by three officers; Major A.E Percival, Lt Robertson and Lt Richardson. The British were travelling in two Crossley Lorries. Their search of the public house gave Sean Hales the time he needed to alert and

re-assemble the members of his brigade, who were quickly mobilised. The men took up position behind a fence near the village along a distance of a hundred yards. Soon after the auxiliaries left the village for

 **Lt. Richardson, among the deceased, was present when Tom Hales, brother of Sean Hales, and Pat Harte were brutally tortured**

Castletown, where they were to conduct further searches, they were engaged by the 3rd Brigade. The troops sprang from their vehicles and began returning fire. The fighting lasted thirty minutes under the cover of darkness, which prevented either side from knowing whether they had suffered casualties.

In the aftermath of the ambush it was discovered that Lt Robertson and Lt Richardson had been killed and that

four other British Soldiers had been wounded. The IRA had no casualties. Notably, Lt. Richardson, among the deceased, was one of six officers present in Bandon Barracks when Tom Hales, brother of Sean Hales, and Pat Harte were brutally tortured in July 1920.

The ambush itself proved particularly significant, as three members of the 1st Battalion Essex Brigade were decorated as a result of their part in the action. Major A.E Percival was awarded the OBE and CSM for his gallantry. Sergeant Harry Benton was awarded the MBE and Private Wootton was awarded the Medal of the British Empire. These were amongst the first instances of British soldiers being awarded for their bravery in the Anglo-Irish War of 1919 to 1921. Winston Churchill, who was Secretary of State at the time, emphasized the importance of their achievements, stating "Why because they are shot down by Irish rebels and not by Mesopotamian rebels, should they be excluded from consideration."



# THE TANGLED STRANDS OF EARLY 20TH CENTURY IRISH HISTORY

By Mary O'Leary 

**The shadow of World War One loomed large over the revolutionary period, 1916-1923, in Ireland. Tom Barry, leader of the West Cork Flying Column, Emmet Dalton who was accompanying Michael Collins the day he was killed at Béal na Blá and Denis O'Neill, who was one of the Anti-Treaty ambush party on that fateful day, all had served with the British forces. In various ways, these men used the knowledge they had gained in the army against the force in which they had served.**

It is well documented that many of those men who served and hoped for no more than to come home to Ireland and take up the threads of their previous lives, did not fare well in the new reality; while those who were killed in action were mourned in private and faded from memory.

Courtmacsherry and Barryroe History Group have identified seventy-six men from the parish who survived service in the WWI and another twenty-nine who were killed in action.

Looking at the family circumstances of these men, they enlisted for mainly economic reasons. Being a coastal parish, eighty of the one hundred and five men served in the naval services, and many of them had actually enlisted in the years preceding the outbreak of war. Most came from subsistence labouring, fishing and farming families. The armed forces offered employment for the men and, very importantly, financial security for their families. Unexpectedly, the horrors of war soon came very close to those left at home in West Cork.

Patrick Keohane, Antarctic explorer and Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy, was recalled to active service on the outbreak

of war, 4 August, 1914. He left behind in Courtmacsherry, Ivy, his wife of four months, and a few miles away in Lislea, his parents and sister. He was assigned to training new recruits in Devonport, near Plymouth and could never have anticipated that his sixty-two year old father, Tim, would actually play a more active part in the consequences of war than he would.

It was Timothy Keohane who, when acting as part-time coast watcher for the British authorities on the Seven Heads, saw the Lusitania sink on 5th May 1915. It was he who raised the alarm and acted as Coxswain of the Courtmacsherry Lifeboat, Kezia Gwilt. The crew heroically rowed for three and a half hours to the site of the atrocity; where, for as long as they had strength, they pulled on board the bodies of the dead.

Patrick Keohane came back to Courtmacsherry after the war was over. In the new reality of the Irish independence movement, the Antarctic hero felt unwelcome. With his wife and child, he left Courtmacsherry and lived the rest of his life in England.

Meanwhile, as a result of the Lusitania tragedy, the Royal National Lifeboat

**“ Patrick Keohane, Antarctic explorer and Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy, was recalled to active service on the outbreak of war**

Institution (RNLI) had a telephone installed in the cottage occupied by his father, Timothy, to aid the speedy communication of distress messages. The records of Courtmacsherry Lifeboat Station note that on 25th June 1921 the telephone was removed from the Coxswain's home by armed men. The IRA deliberately removed the telephone, the sole purpose of which was to help save lives in an emergency. Was it because they objected to the inclusion of 'Royal' in the title of the Lifeboat Institution or because they thought Timothy Keohane was a threat to their organisation, because of his previous service as a coast watcher for the British government?

May 1916, just a year after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, was a particularly tragic month for the people of the parish.

John Moloney left Barry's Cove to join the Munster Fusiliers in 1915. As he was only sixteen years old, he lied about his age. He was one of a family of seven born to Jeremiah and Mary Moloney. His sister was only a month old when he left home. On 22nd May 1916, aged seventeen, he was killed in action on the Western Front.

The Battle of Jutland took place on 31st May 1916. When telegrams came to the local post office, it was the priest from Barryroe, Fr. Joseph O'Sullivan, who went to Lehina to break the news to William and Ellen Brickley. Their sons David and James had been killed when the HMS Defence was reduced to a fireball during the battle. He then went to the house next door, to William and Kate Falvey to tell them that their son, John, had also been lost on the same ship.

The grim task of breaking the news did not end there. In Courtmacsherry, John and Julia Courtney learned their son David had been killed. William and Norah Kidney also discovered that their son Arthur had died. Thomas Henry Reynolds, son of a



*The new World War One Memorial at Lislevane Cemetery*

former Coastguard who had served in Courtmacsherry, was the sixth local victim of the battle.

This black day for this close-knit community came soon after the executions of the 1916 leaders in Dublin. The immediacy of the deaths of these local men may have taken precedence over events in Dublin, but only in the short term. The national consciousness was undergoing a seismic shift.

Perhaps, of the twenty-nine men who died, the case of John Sheehy epitomises most how family loyalties had changed and how these men were forgotten. John, son of Timothy Sheehy of Ballintemple (Lackenduv) and Honoria (Ann) Deasy of Lehina, had a sister Mary (Minnie) and brothers Timothy and Maurice. John immigrated to England and was listed in Surrey in the 1901 Census. He enlisted as a Private in the Labour Corps of the Royal



Engineers at the outbreak of WWI. He died on the Western Front on 15th February 1918.

Meanwhile, his sister Minnie was now known as Máire Ní tSithe and his brother Maurice as Muiris. They had become enthusiastic advocates of the Irish language. Máire spent time in Dublin and shared living accommodation with Sinéad Ní Fhlannagáin, later to be wife of Eamonn De Valera. Máire wrote under the pen name 'Dul Amú' and translated Moliere from French into Irish for the Abbey Theatre.

Máire returned to Cork and lived with her brother Muiris at Ard Mór, Timoleague and later at Cullenagh, Courtmacsherry. Her achievements were recognised and remembered while John's existence was erased from the collective local memory. They did not fit the new narrative of his siblings Máire and Muiris. Without a chance Facebook link, the Courtmacsherry

and Barryroe History Group still would not know anything about John Sheehy's background. Several close relatives resident in the locality, who were unaware of their connection to him, have now been identified.

Only three of the men who died in service in WWI have graves in their native place. On the 31st May 2016, the centenary of the Battle of Jutland, a memorial, consisting of three standing stones set in an arc, was unveiled in Lislevane Cemetery, dedicated to all twenty-nine men from the parish of Barryroe and Courtmacsherry who died in service in WWI. The arc symbolises the part of the family and community circle that was broken by the death of each of these men. It is good to have, symbolically at least, completed the circle and brought them home.

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# GEARÓID Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN

By Philip O'Regan 

**One of Michael Collins' closest friends and companions during the 1916 Rising and War of Independence period was Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin.**

Gearóid was born in the townland of Coolnagarrane in Skibbereen on 28th January 1891, and was just a few months younger than Collins. The two men came from very similar backgrounds, both from farming stock. This was just one of the many bonds that helped to form and maintain a remarkable friendship during that incredibly turbulent period in Ireland's history.

Gearóid raised the Tricolour over the GPO, on Easter Monday, 24th April 1916, at the beginning of the Rising. It was a glorious honour for the young man from Skibbereen, but Gearóid needs to be remembered for far more than that hugely symbolic gesture. He played a crucial role in the national struggle from 1912 through the War of Independence and civil war, and made a major contribution to the fledgling nation in the very volatile early years of the Irish Free State.

Gearóid's early nationalism centred on the Gaelic Revival and the language movements. He had a great love of his native heritage and customs, in particular the Irish language. He was present at the inaugural meeting of the Irish Volunteers, which was founded in the Rotunda in Parnell Square, Dublin, in November 1913.

It was in the Keating branch of the Gaelic League that Gearóid first met Michael Collins. Collins had moved to London in 1906 where he quickly immersed himself in Irish organisations. When Collins returned to Ireland in January 1916, he stayed in Dublin and joined the Keating branch of the Gaelic League.

Gearóid and Collins fought side by side in the GPO in 1916. Following the surrender, they



*Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin*

were among a large number of prisoners who ended up in Frongoch, a prisoner of war camp in north Wales.

On their release in December 1916, the two men made their way back to West Cork together and spent Christmas with their families.

Throughout the War of Independence Gearóid was one of Collins' inner-circle and they, more often than not, shared the same safe houses in Dublin. By early 1919, Collins was emerging as a clear leader of the Volunteer organisation



and held the posts of Director of Organisation and Adjutant General. As his workload increased he was forced to delegate more and in the late summer of 1919 he handed over the role of Adjutant General to Gearóid. On 19th November 1921 Gearóid was elected to the Supreme Council of the IRB.

Following the Treaty, Gearóid was appointed Adjutant General of the Free State Army, a post he held until he retired in controversial circumstances, following the so-called 'Army Mutiny' incident in 1924.

Gearóid and Collins, as well as sharing many experiences in their public lives, had much in common in their private lives. The two great friends from West Cork were engaged to be married to two sisters, Kitty and Maud Kiernan, from Granard, Co. Longford; in what had been planned as a double wedding on 18th October 1922. However, Collins died in action at Béal na Blá on 22nd August. Gearóid and Maud got married as arranged and Kitty

Kiernan attended the wedding dressed all in black, in mourning for her lost love.

Unlike Collins, whose life was so tragically cut short, Gearóid was to go on to enjoy happier times. He and Maud had four children: three daughters, Sibeal, Ann and Trina, and one son, Gearóid.

Gearóid became a barrister and had a distinguished legal career. He was elected to Dáil Éireann on six occasions and also served a term in Seanad Éireann.

Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin died at his home at St Gerard's, St Kevin's Park, Dartry, Dublin, on Good Friday, 26th March 1948, aged just 57 years. An impressive tribute was paid to him at the military funeral, which made its way Glasnevin Cemetery on Easter Monday, 32 years to the day after he had raised the Tricolour over the GPO. His coffin was covered in the same Tricolour which had draped the coffin of Michael Collins.

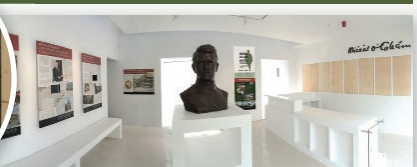
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# WEST CORK REGIONAL MUSEUM

by Michael O'Connell, Curator 

#### **West Cork Regional Museum, Old Methodist School, Western Road, Clonakilty.**

The West Cork Regional Museum was established in 1975 by the Museum Society. The main purpose in setting up the museum was the collection, preservation and display of items relating to the history of the Clonakilty and the surrounding areas. So far, this has been a most successful enterprise and the great work continues under a dedicated and loyal group of members of the Museum Society.

Our first two locations for the museum were at Emmet Square. We opened at Number 8 and then moved to the Carbery Club. In 1979, our present location became available when the Clonakilty Vocational School moved to its present site. We are housed in Clonakilty Methodist School No. 2 which was acquired by the then Vocational Education Committee in 1963 as ancillary space for the main building across the street. It was built in 1887 at a cost of £500, which also included the nearby teacher's residence, to provide additional space for the school that existed in Kent St near the present Methodist Church. The people responsible for this great undertaking were Henry Bateman, The Hill, Clonakilty; Joseph Bennett, Shannonvale and Barnabus Kingston, Beechgrove. Many of our not so young men folk will recall the building being used as a drill and training venue for the Local Defence Force (L.D.F.)

Our exhibitions centre on the main aspects of life and history of the area. The political story begins with The Land War and moves through the various phases including The War of Independence, focusing on the main figures and events. Michael Collins, O'Donovan Rossa and Tom Barry are strongly represented. The exhibition on Collins recalls his life from his birth at Woodfield up to his death. Some wonderful material relating to him is on display; of foremost importance is the jacket and a pincers which were in his Leyland 8 touring car at the time of the ambush, as well as the crucifix which stood at the head of his bed when he was laid out at Shanakiel Hospital. O'



Donovan Rossa is remembered by many personal mementoes including his christening shawl. His third wife Mary Jane Irwin, born at 2 Main Street Clonakilty, is central to this exhibition. For Tom Barry, it is a case of highlighting the many exploits he was involved in through a collection of relevant artefacts. Additional displays centre on Richard (Dick) Barrett, the Cumann na mBan and the Local volunteer movement.

The civic history of Clonakilty is set out in a series of displays: including the original minute book of the Corporation of Clonakilty from 1675 to 1802, the postal history of Clonakilty, a display on Deasy's brewery, Lace and embroidery and other important features in the strong life of Clonakilty. The proud history of the GAA is also recalled.

Being a former National School, a room is set up to recreate a school setting of the 1880's.

Perhaps of most interest, to both young and old, is the room setting out the range of rural crafts and work practices which existed long before the advent of electricity; when man and beast held equal importance in providing for home and family. The women, who had to provide the daily needs of the household, cannot be overlooked. They are represented by a great collection of items which were necessary for the functioning of the home.

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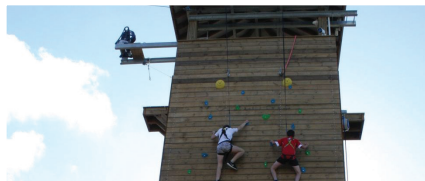
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*Dear granny,  
this is the best  
hotel ever.  
We saw a cool  
movie and now  
we are going to  
the kids buffet!*

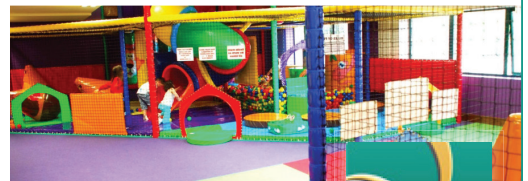
*Love Tom and  
Lisa xxx*



*The playground is great!*



*Me and Tom on the climbing wall!!*



*They have a playzone!*

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## LIAM NEESON August 22nd 2002.

Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking... Oscar Wilde once wrote 'It is tragic how few people ever possess their souls before they die.' 'Nothing is more rare, in any man' says Emerson 'than an act of his own.' Michael Collins was most definitely one of those few. From his early days as a boy here in Clonakilty, until the day he died, he was always his own man. In these days of corporate shenanigans, where the 'buck' is continuously being passed; in Collins' day, the 'buck' seemed to stop with him. He is my hero. He still inspires me. Two years ago, I was recovering from a near fatal motorbike accident. Lying in a New York hospital bed, I'd often ask myself 'what would Mick do?' The answer was always the same. 'You were told to do one hour of physical therapy!! You will do two, and be thankful for it!!' Forgive me, I'm an actor: I had to do something! It worked, and because of Dr Michael Collins, I am able to stand before you today. I want to congratulate all of you who worked so hard to make this Michael Collins Celebration Week such a success. If my



*This speech was delivered by actor Liam Neeson, on the occasion of the unveiling of the Michael Collins Statue at Emmet Square, Clonakilty on 22nd August 2002.*

presence here in any way helps to keep alive his memory, then I am doubly honoured. To the National Michael Collins Memorial Project Team: Thank you! Thank you all!





*Major General Sean Collins Powell, nephew of Michael Collins speaking at the unveiling of the Michael Collins Memorial at Sam's Cross at Easter 1965. To the left of the podium is Jim O'Keeffe, Chairman of the committee, Tom Barry who unveiled the Sam's Cross Monument. Mons. Barrett, between the railings sits Tom Hales. Also pictured Hannie Collins, sister of Michael Collins, Nancy Collins and Michael White.*



*Michael Collins became famous during the War of Independence riding a bicycle around Dublin organising the war against the British. This photo of Michael Collins was taken in April 1922 at the Pierce Bicycle Factory in co. Wexford. He is posing with one of their new bicycles. The bracket for the lamp in front is a big P which was the symbol of the Pierce bicycle.*



*Birthplace of Michael Collins, Woodfield. Watercolour painting by Véronique Crombé*





Sir Richard Boyle,  
Founder of  
Clonakilty, 1613.



William Ford  
Father of Henry Ford,  
born in Ballinascorthy



Margaret Field, Great  
Grandmother of J.F.K.,  
born near Clonakilty



William Bence  
Jones, Landlord  
during Land war,  
1880

## AROUND CLONAKILTY WE TAKE OUR HISTORY SERIOUSLY

- West Cork Regional Museum, Western Road.
- Michael Collins Birthplace, Woodfield.
- West Cork Model Railway Village.
- Michael Collins Centre, Castlevew.
- Michael Collins House Museum, Emmet Square.



Timothy Deasy,  
US Civil War  
Veteran and Fenian.



Mary Jane Irwin, Wife  
of  
O'Donovan Rossa.



Timothy Warren Anglin,  
Speaker, Canadian  
House of Commons.



Tim Hurley,  
Mill Siege,  
Castlevew, 1886.



Tadhg An Asna,  
1798 leader.



Alfred Elmore,  
Artist.



Liam Neeson in  
Clonakilty, 2002



Famine Scene in  
Clonakilty



Lord Carbery,  
Aviation Pioneer.