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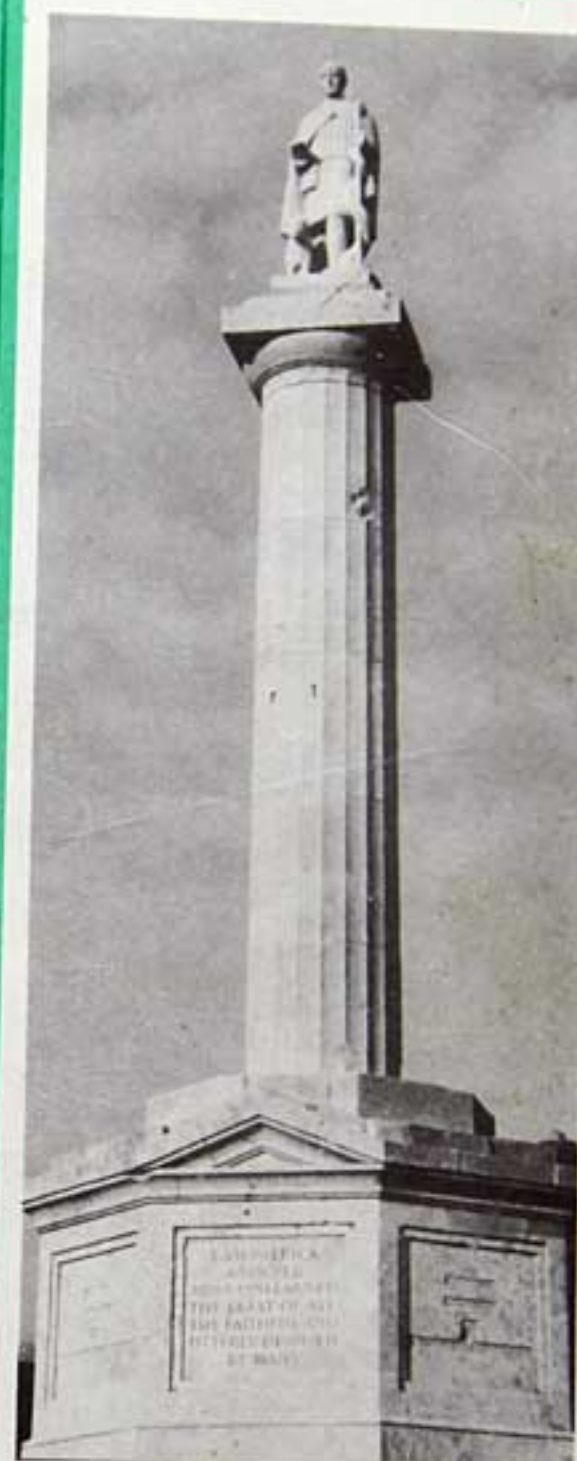
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The geology of this 16 sq. km (6½ sq. miles) landscape lends itself ideally to the *fulachta fiadh* era – the Bronze Age. The primary needs of these people for cooking in this manner were (a) a water supply close to ground level; (b) sandstone; (c) wood and (d) of course meat, fish, wild fowl and eggs. This landscape 4 km x 4 km (2½ miles x 2½ miles) provided these requirements. An abundance of meandering streams flows from south to north between drumlins, ridges and hillocks of good sandstone land. A band of sandstone, schist and gneiss 4 km (2½ miles) wide, runs from west to east through the centre of the parish. This 4 km x 4 km (2½ miles x 2½ miles) area is geologically and geographically isolated by definite boundaries (Fig. II). To its south the Clydagh river divides it from the Turlough limestone land. To its west are the Cloonkesh, Garraghill and Ross West rock outcrops and peatlands. To its north are Cunnagher north, Crillaun and Lough Cullen granite outcrops and peatlands. To its east is Derryvulcaun bog and the Toomore river. In the centre of this landscape are two loughs, Derryhick Lough and Levallinree Lough with its three crannógs.² There are many wetland and peatland areas in this landscape with evidence of ancient forests.



Fig. II: Geology of Turlough Parish.

After six months of intensive systematic fieldwalking of each townland from October 1986 to March 1987 by the author, 130 *fulachta fiadh* were recorded. Mayo until this time appeared to have only two examples of these, at Dooras townland near Balla³ and another near Ballina⁴. This heavy concentration of cooking sites in Turlough created a new awareness in archaeological circles. These sites were thought at first only to occur in the south of the country. There are approximately 200 of these sites recorded in Mayo to date. They are in Turlough, Castlebar⁵; Killasser, Swinford; Barnacogue, Swinford; Carrountober Eighter, Manulla; Derryhillagh, Crossmolina; Knockmore, Ballina; Knockatemple, Ballyvary⁶; Haggfield, Charlestown; Cogaula, Westport and Belcarra, Castlebar⁷.

THE COOKING EXPERIMENT

National Archaeology Day, Saturday 24 September 1988 presented an appropriate opportunity to carry out, for the first time in Mayo this fascinating piece of experimental archaeology. Following the early Irish literary records⁸ a suitable site was chosen for the experiment in the townland of Lack West, in the parish of Turlough. It was a peatland site 4 metres from a stream where the water table was close to ground level. A 15.2 cm (6") sq. x 61 cm (2 ft.) deep test hole was first dug on the site. It filled up to 45.7 cm (18") deep with water overnight, leaving 15.2 cm (6") free of water between ground level and water level. A tank was then made of rough 170 mm x 25 mm (7" x 1") white deal wooden boards. They were butted and nailed together to allow natural seepage between the boards when it was placed in the ground. This tank is called the 'trough'. The internal dimensions of this trough were 96.5 cm (3' 2") long by 76.6 cm



The wooden tank or 'trough' used in the Bronze Age cooking experiment.
(Photographs by Christy Lawless).



The trough placed in the ground for the experiment.

(2' 5") wide by 77.5 cm (2' 6½") high. It had the capacity of 550.8 l (121 gls.) of water when filled. This volume of water is in keeping with archaeologically excavated cooking sites – between 100-200 gallons of water.⁹

A pit was then dug on the selected site and the trough was placed into it. Moss



Red hot stones being dropped into the trough.



Water boiling in the trough.

was then packed around the trough; this had a filtering effect on the water entering the trough. The water steadily seeped into the trough taking 5 hours to reach the water level of the stream 4m away. The water reached a depth of 72.4 cm (28½") in the trough; this amounted to 514.7 l (113.2 gls.).



Wrapping the meat in straw for the cooking experiment.



The straw-wrapped joint of meat being put into the cooking trough

A large hearth of flagstones was laid down. It extended 4m x 2m around the east side of the trough in a half-moon shape. Advantage was taken of the prevailing winds blowing from the south or west directions. By placing the hearth on the east side, it reduced the chances of the smoke making it unpleasant to work at the trough during cooking.



The cooked meat unwrapped.

Sixty stones were specially selected for the purpose of boiling the water. These stones were a selection of sandstone, schist, gneiss and quartz. They varied in size from 15.2 cm (6") to 20.3 cm (8") in diameter. Before the fire was lit 25 of these stones were placed 12½ cm (5") apart on the hearth. Turf and logs were placed between the stones. Five fires were then lit on the top of this layer of stones. A further 25 stones were placed at random through the turf and timber on this very large fire. After one hour the fire was well established, and an ample supply of red hot stones was available to boil the water. Twenty five of these stones were taken from the fire with a shovel and placed in the trough. They were added to the water in quick succession and it took 25 minutes to bring the water to boiling point. After the hot stones were placed in the water, a boiling sound could be heard as the water circulated around in the trough.

Two joints of meat were used in the experiment – a 900 g (2 lbs.) and a 2.725 kg (6 lbs.) leg of lamb. The joints were wrapped separately in unthrashed oats and tied with straw ropes (sugáns). The two wrapped joints were placed in the trough of boiling water on the opposite side to the fire. They were suspended by a straw rope from a stick placed across the trough. A stone had to be attached to each parcel of meat to keep them submerged just below the water level. Once the water was brought back to boiling point by adding four red hot stones, it only took one hot stone every 10-15 minutes to maintain the heat of the water at boiling point. These stones were placed in different areas of the trough to maintain a uniform temperature of the water in the trough. During the last thirty minutes of the cooking, stones were taken out of the trough to make place for hot stones. The recommended cooking time for lamb was applied – 20 minutes to the 1 lb. and 20 minutes over, but with tests carried out at intervals on the 2 lbs. joint, it



Grass-covered horseshoe shaped mound Fulacht Fiadh at Lack East, Turlough, Co. Mayo.

was discovered that it took 30 minutes to the lb. and 30 minutes over for well cooked-to-the-bone meat. Tests also revealed that the side of the joint nearest the side of the trough was not as well cooked as the other side. This problem was rectified with the 6 lbs. joint, by turning it in the trough half way through its cooking time. The 6 lbs. joint was taken from the trough after 3½ hours. When it was unwrapped from the straw it was perfectly clean, it had a good colour, good odour, it was very moist, succulent and very tasty.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The heaviest concentration of these cooking sites throughout the country is found in areas where the underlying rock in the landscape is sandstone, schist and gneiss. This stone proved to be the most suitable for boiling water. Limestone proved to be unsuitable for heating, due to it turning to lime when exposed to extreme heat for a long period. One limestone used in the experiment when heated and placed in the trough produced a black oily scum on top of the water, and turned the water a milky colour. The sandstone had a purifying effect on the water.

Cooking sites are not confined to boggy land – they are also found in sandy soil close to meandering streams. A test was carried out in a sandy soil area close to a stream at Lack East townland, as an experiment on this type of site. It proved that by placing the trough in the ground 3 metres from the stream, and then building a dam 3 metres downstream, the required water level in the trough could be acquired over a period of four hours through natural seepage in the ground. In both the peatland and sandy soil sites, when the water in the trough reached the water level of the surrounding ground, there was no circulation of water in or out of the trough. This made it possible to maintain the required heat in the trough.

By placing the hearth on the east side of the trough for the experiment, it eliminated the unpleasantness of working in the smoke from the fire while attending to the cooking. Of the 200 cooking sites discovered in Co. Mayo there is no evidence to suggest that the hearth was placed on the east side of the trough. They are found to be on all sides.

Prior to the experiment, tests were carried out on the quickest way to heat 25 gallons of water using red hot stones. This test was carried out in a barrel. Small stones approximately 7.6 cm (3") to 10.2 cm (4") in diameter were heated and placed in the water at 5 minute intervals. This proved ineffective and time consuming. Larger stones 15.2 cm (6") to 20.3 cm (8") in diameter were then used in fresh cold water. Four stones were first placed in the water in quick succession. After five minutes 3 more stones were dropped in. The 25 gallons of water were brought to the boil in 12 minutes. This was to be the most effective method to boil the water. In the cooking experiment 25 red hot stones were dropped into the trough in quick succession – 514.7 l (113.5 gallons) came to the boil in 25 minutes.

The question is often asked, how many times can the same stone be reheated and

used? If a stone is heating in the fire for a long period it will fragment. If a red hot stone is dropped into cold water to bring it to the boil it will shatter. It is only when a red hot stone is placed in boiling water that the stone will not shatter. This stone can be taken out, reheated, and may withstand a second and third time in boiling water.

A shovel was used for convenience to take the hot stones from the fire and drop them into the trough. A 1.83m (6') piece of forked ash (a *gabhlán*) was also used to manoeuvre the stones out of the fire and into the trough. The *gabhlán* would possibly have been one of the tools used in the Bronze Age.

The mounds of burnt stone and charcoal that survive today known as *fulachta fiadh* came about as a result of the same trough being used many times. Before the next cooking could take place, the trough would have to be cleaned out of all the shattered stones, approximately one barrowful. They were thrown out to one side and the two ends of the trough which eventually formed a horseshoe-shaped mound.

The *fulacht fiadh* may also have served as a method of boiling water. The need for hot or boiling water in the Bronze Age was, we are sure, as great as it is today if only for personal hygiene. The water in the trough was still warm 24 hours after the cooking had taken place, and it would have taken little – a small fire with a few stones – to have the water boiling again.

The expertise achieved by the authors in this experiment was put to further use on two other occasions:

On 6 July 1989 the experiment was demonstrated for a group of seventy primary school teachers in conjunction with an archaeology course organised by the Castlebar branch of the I.N.T.O.

Also on 7 August 1990, it was carried out on the occasion of the Siamsa Sráide '90 festival in Swinford, Co. Mayo. Two cookings were carried out in each session. Three six pound joints of lamb were cooked following the same procedure as in the original experiment. This was the first time a *fulacht fiadh* cooking was associated with a festival.

The numbers of *fulachta fiadh* discovered in the townlands of Turlough are as follows: Ballyart 2; Ballygarraiff 4; Ballyguinn 3; Boyogonnell 1; Capparanny 4; Carrowkeel 1; Carrowmaccloughlin 2; Cashel Lower 10; Cashel Upper 11; Cloghadockan 7; Cloonnagleragh 9; Cloontubbrid 1; Cunnagher North 5; Cunnagher South 11; Derryhick 5; Fisherhill 1; Lack East 12; Lack West 10; Levallinree 17; Parke 9; Ross East 1; Shinnagh 4.

NOTES

- (a) V. M. Buckley and Christy Lawless, *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1987), pp 32-36.
(b) V. M. Buckley and Christy Lawless, *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 8, No. (1988) pp 23-25.

2. Christy Lawless, Ragnall O'Floinn, Mike Baillie, David Brown, *Cathair na Mart* Vol. 9, No.1 (1989) pp 21-25.
3. Ó Riordáin, *Antiquities of the Irish Countryside*, (1953), p 44.
4. O'Kelly, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 84 (1954), p 151.
5. V. M. Buckley and Christy Lawless, *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1987), pp 32-36.
6. Mary O'Brien, *Keellogues, A Parish Story* (1989), p 70.
7. *An Archaeological Survey of the Belcarra Area, Co. Mayo*, Vols. 1 and 2, A Fás/Belcarra Community Co-Op. Project.
8. (a) *Cormac's Glossary*, (Ed.) Stokes (1868), p 69.
(b) Keating, *Forus Feasa ar Éirinn*, (Ed.) Dineen, (Irish Texts Society 1908), ii, pp 328-9.
9. V. M. Buckley, 'Curraghtarsna', *Current Archaeology*, 98 (1985).

Christy Lawless, a native of Turlough, Castlebar, works with Mayo County Library Service. He is a well known local archaeologist who has discovered and recorded hundreds of previously unknown archaeological sites in Co. Mayo. He also conducted the first experimental *fulachta fiadh* cooking in Co. Mayo.

The Outer Islands of Clew Bay:

A Study (Island More, Knockycahillaun, Rabbit Island and Quinsheen Island), Part 1

By Honor Sisk

(This article consists of the first portion of a thesis submitted for B.A. Moderatorship, Department of Geography, Trinity College, Dublin, 1990.)

INTRODUCTION

Island More, Knockycahillaun, Rabbit Island and Quinsheen Island are four small islands situated in Clew Bay, Co. Mayo and are part of a remarkable archipelago of over seventy islands in this bay. Many travellers in the past have commented on the beauty of this archipelago, but little is known about the once thriving communities that inhabited these islands in the past. Although the communities of the larger islands off the west coast of Ireland have been extensively investigated, these islands in Clew Bay have been ignored. (Fig. 1).

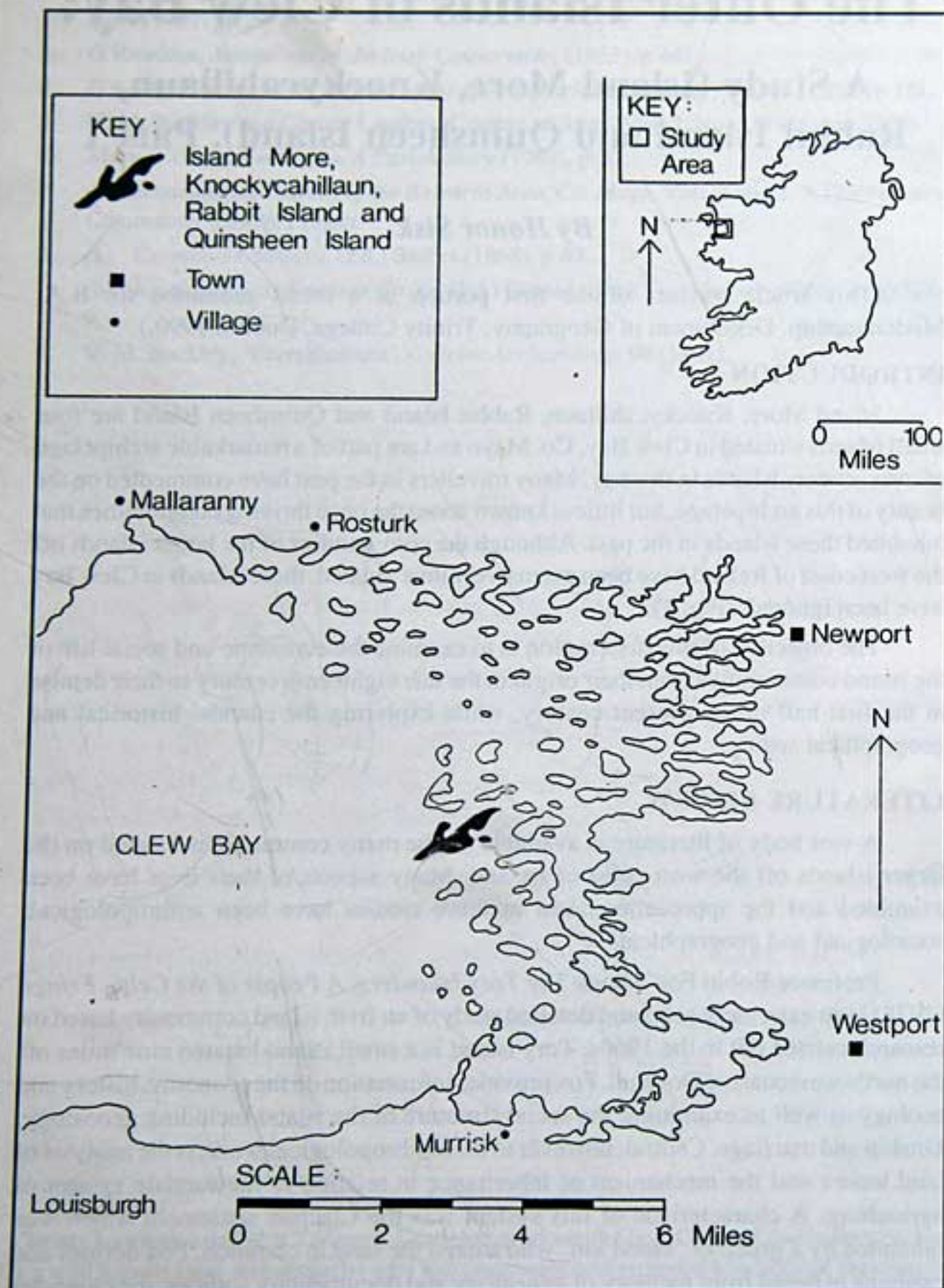
The objective of this dissertation is to examine the economic and social life of the island communities from their origin in the late eighteenth century to their demise in the first half of the present century, while exploring the islands' historical and geographical setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A vast body of literature is available on the many communities located on the larger islands off the west coast of Ireland. Many aspects of their lives have been examined and the approaches taken in these studies have been anthropological, sociological and geographical.

Professor Robin Fox's book *The Tory Islanders: A People of the Celtic Fringe* (1978) is an extremely solid and detailed study of an Irish island community based on research carried out in the 1960s. Tory island is a small island located nine miles off the north-west coast of Donegal. Fox provides information on the economy, history and ecology as well as examining the social structure of the island including genealogy, kinship and marriage. Central, however to this anthropological work, is the analysis of land tenure and the mechanism of inheritance in relation to the rundale system of agriculture. A characteristic of this system was the Clachan settlement which was inhabited by a group of 'blood kin' who shared the land in common. Fox defines and explains in detail from memory of genealogy and documentary sources, the character and operation of this 'blood kin' with the mechanism of land inheritance.

Fig. 1 LOCATION OF STUDY AREA



Source: O.S. 1968

The effects of progress and the outside world on the island community are also examined by Fox. Without migrant earnings and government subsidies, the island could not survive. It is this dependence and involvement with the outside world that has threatened the longevity of the community, and Fox concludes that if they 'could be left to their subsistence and ignored, they could survive' (Fox, 1978: 192).

F.H.A. Aalen and Hugh Brady's book *Gola: The Life and Last days of an Island Community* (1969) is a clear and penetrating account of the community of Gola, a small isolated island, lying two miles off the west coast of Donegal. The central theme of the study is the decline of the community. The authors examine the economic, social and psychological reasons for the rapid decline in the population in the twentieth century. They feel that this decline was caused by the delay of progress and innovations in reaching Co. Donegal. The stability of the population in the post-famine period compared with the process of population decline experienced elsewhere in Ireland, is also examined and explained. Mr. Aalen examines the historical and social geography of the island, in which he considers Gola in relation to the wider Rosses - Gweedore region of which it is a part. He investigates the rundale system of agriculture that existed on Gola, the development of fishing as an important economic activity and analyses in detail the settlement patterns and house types found on the island. Migration patterns are also examined.

Mr. Brody uses this information as a background for his sociological analysis of the community's motivations and attitudes of the wider world based on first-hand observation and conversations. His analysis also takes account of the links still maintained with the island by those who have moved away.

Much has been written of and about the Blasket Islands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To the nineteenth century English traveller, the islands and their inhabitants represented everything that was savage and primitive about the native Irish. Contemporary writers like Peig Sayers and Tomás Ó Criomhthain, natives of the islands, have produced accounts of the activities of the inhabitants and details of island life with warmth and humanity (Sayers, 1973: Ó Criomhthain, 1937).

Joan and Ray Stagle's book *The Blasket Islands: Next Parish America* (1980) examines the known history of the islands, the genealogies of its principal families, the building of its harbour, the settlement, its houses and field systems, therefore providing a factual background to the stories related by the older generation of Islanders to the authors. In this anthropological study, they have examined and researched areas that had been little explored before.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the traditional ways and activities of the people could no longer sustain life on the islands. From the 1930s, the population decline was dramatic on the islands due to the steady emigration of the young people. The school closed also in the 1940s and as the old people died island houses, one by one, were closed up and fell into disuse. The remaining population of twenty two was rehoused by the Land Commission in Dunquin and in 1953, the evacuation of the islands took

place. However, since the eclipse of this community, the settled islanders on the mainland have retained their link with the Great Blasket as they continue to visit and work on the island.

This account by the Stagles of the demise of this island community echoes what has happened to other isolated rural and island communities on the west coast of Ireland.

Only a limited number of island studies have been reviewed and those chosen illustrate the variety of approaches that may be taken and the many aspects of island life that can be examined. Much more literature is available (Messinger, 1959; Mould, 1972; McNally, 1973, for example) but it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss it all in detail.

Methodology

In undertaking this dissertation, documentary and literary sources were of vital importance to the researcher. No research has been carried out on any of the many islands in Clew Bay although Clare island, situated at the mouth of the bay has been extremely well documented on many aspects of island life.

The islands of Clew Bay are however mentioned briefly in many of the 'tours' of Ireland undertaken by many foreign visitors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (for example Barrow, 1836; Thackeray, 1843). This literary source was invaluable due to the detailed descriptions of places visited and lives explored. Parliamentary papers including Bills and Reports of Commissions and select sub-committees were also a primary source of information covering the whole of the nineteenth century. These papers and reports were a marvellous source of information on a whole range of items which concerned them. For example the *First Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of the Irish Fisheries* (Vol XXII, 1837) provides an extremely detailed picture of the fishing activities of the island people in the first half of the nineteenth century. Other papers provide only general descriptions of the area, for example a *Report to the Piers and Roads Commission in Mayo and Galway under the Relief of Distress Act (Ireland)* 1886 (1889 Vol LX; 949), which provides a description of agriculture, fishing, dwellings and the standard of education of the people in the area. Many other Parliamentary papers were examined by the researcher and will be listed in the bibliography provided at the end of this dissertation.

The statistical survey of Co. Mayo was also important and was compiled by James M'Parlan in 1801 under the direction of the Royal Dublin Society (M'Parlan, 1802). M'Parlan describes the Barony of Burrishoole, in which Island More is included with statistics of the area.

The Land Commission was set up in 1881. Its function was to fix judicial rents and the 1881 Act had only limited land purchase provisions. However the 1923 Act introduced the system of compulsory acquisition of land on a general basis. The Inspectors' Reports of the Commission are the most valuable sources and have

descriptions of estates and holdings. A surveyor's report is a record of the structure of land holding on the various estates. However, the researcher was unable to gain access to these reports for the estate of the Marquess of Sligo (Island More included) because they were not readily available. The researcher was however able to obtain a Schedule of Tenancies for the islands which records the sitting tenants on the estate at the time the estate was purchased. Description of rents, rateable valuation of land and buildings and tenure are included and accompanied by a reference map.

Congested Districts Boards Records cover the period from its foundation by the 1891 Land Act to its dissolution under the Act of 1923. The Annual Reports of the Congested Districts Board contain detailed accounts of the many activities of the Board in the area under study, and were therefore a valuable pool of information for the researcher. The most detailed pictures of life are contained in the Baseline Reports of local inspectors, which document in minute detail the difficult subsistence lifestyle of the western seaboard in the late nineteenth century.

Islanders' personal documents were also acquired and so the information collected from the Land Commission, Congested Districts Board and personal documents allowed the researcher to build up a detailed picture of the structure of holdings and the structure of agriculture on the islands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Population statistics were obtained by the researcher from the censuses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at ten year intervals on the changing population figures of the islands under study. The first census examined was the 1841 and the last the 1979 census. This information allowed the researcher to examine and trace the change and decline of the island communities in comparison to the rest of Co. Mayo and Ireland. Information on the number of males and females was obtained also from the censuses to enable the researcher to examine differing patterns of stability or instability in the sex ratio of the island population.

Other studies of islands off the west coast of Ireland were also examined and some of these were discussed in the literature review. These studies aided the researcher's understanding of the complexities of island life in the western seaboard. Other documentary and literary sources are listed in the bibliography at the end of this article.

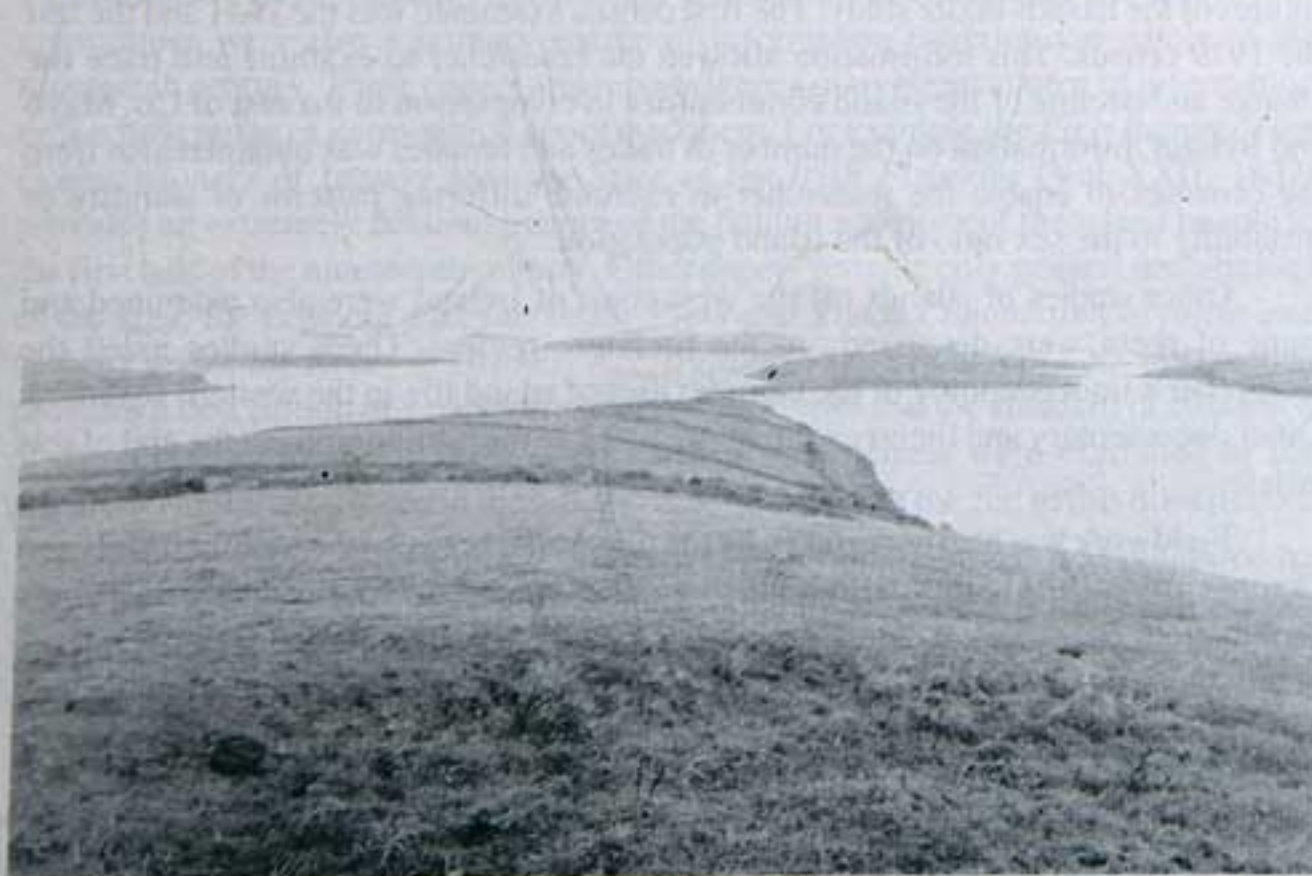
Fieldwork was also undertaken by the researcher between the months of July and October 1989. During this period, the researcher visited the four islands under study on numerous occasions. A detailed exploration of the islands was carried out. Evidence of settlement pattern was recorded and an analysis of the island's vernacular architecture was undertaken. Any visible remains of the agricultural activities of the islanders, in the form of old fields, cultivation ridges and field boundaries were also noted. Other topographical and physical features were also recorded. This field work helped the researcher to gain an insight into the conditions on the islands during the Summer and Autumn seasons and also to collect valuable information.

A standard ethnographic research technique was also employed. Semi-structured interviews were held with surviving islanders, who now live in various parts of Ireland. A relatively structured interview schedule was drafted covering topics and activities about which the researcher wished to obtain information. This schedule was not used during the interviews themselves but was employed as a check at the end to ensure all the topics had been covered. This form of interviewing was utilised as a method of data collection because a wide range of responses may be stimulated from the interviewee and due to its flexibility, the direction of the interview can be pursued or changed relatively easily by the interviewer. All the interviews held were taped as the researcher found that this was the best method available of retaining and retrieving information collected.

The information provided the researcher with a clear and detailed description of the economic and social activities of the island community from the beginning of the twentieth century until its eclipse in the 1950s.

Physical Setting

Island More, Knockycahillaun, Rabbit Island and Quinsheen Island are four small islands situated in the middle of Clew Bay, two miles west of the mainland (Fig. 2). Although some of the most outer islands in the bay, they are surrounded on the north, south and east by other islands and cannot therefore be understood in isolation (Plate 1). The problems that the island community faced from its origin in the late eighteenth century to its demise in the late 1950s were related to developments on the



Knockycahillaun; Freaghillaun and Clynish to the right; Derrinish to the left.



Croagh Patrick with Inishgort, Cullen Beg and Cullenmore in foreground (from right to left).

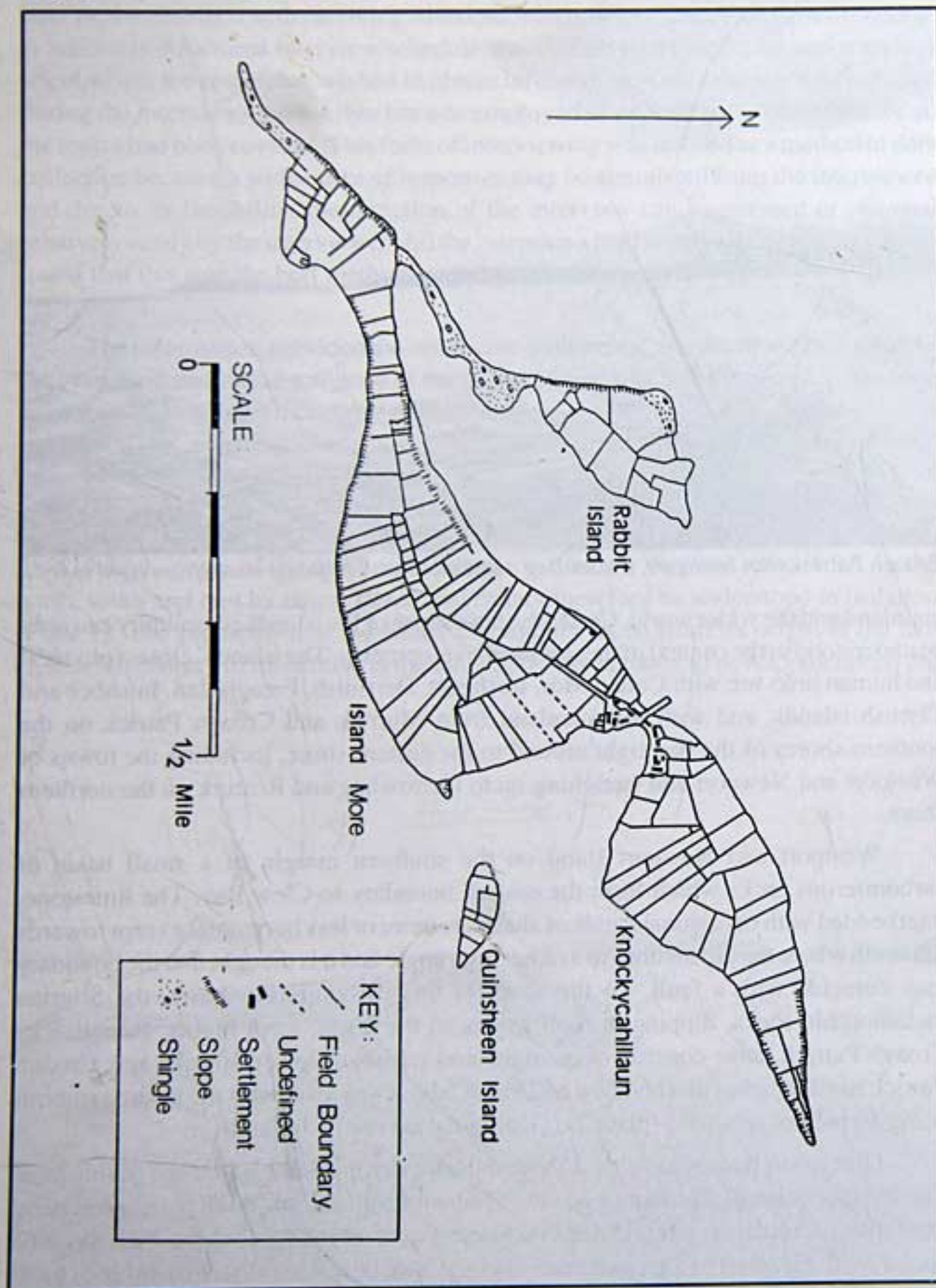
mainland and the wider world. Certainly, the eclipse of the islands community can only be understood in the context of these wider developments. The islands' closest physical and human links are with Collan Mór, Inishgort, Derrinish, Freaghillaun, Inishbee and Clynish islands, and with the mainland from Murrisk and Croagh Patrick on the southern shores of the bay right around to the eastern shore, including the towns of Westport and Newport and stretching on to Carrowbeg and Rosturk on the northern shore.

Westport and Newport stand on the southern margin of a small basin of carboniferous rocks which form the eastern boundary to Clew Bay. The limestone, interbedded with occasional bands of shales, is more or less horizontal except towards the south where the dip inclines to a rather high angle and it is thought that the boundary may coincide with a fault. To the south of this carboniferous basin, the Silurian metamorphic rocks, dipping at high angles to the north, form higher ground. The Croagh Patrick range consists of quartzite and schists of lower Silurian age. Croagh Patrick itself, reaches an elevation of 2510 ft. above sea level with the peaked summit being formed of quartzite (plate 2) (Geological survey of Ireland).

Glaciation has moulded and shaped the topography and landscape of this area. The last glaciation of this district was the Midlandian glaciation. After the main general glaciation, temperate interglacial conditions were present. Climate then became cooler, with the onset of a second general glaciation, but no important build-up of local ice took place. The western margin of the Irish ice sheet advanced to the east flank of the Nephin Beg and Murrisk highlands and glaciers protruded along the main lowland

Fig 2.

THE OUTER ISLANDS OF CLEW BAY



Source: O.S. 1920

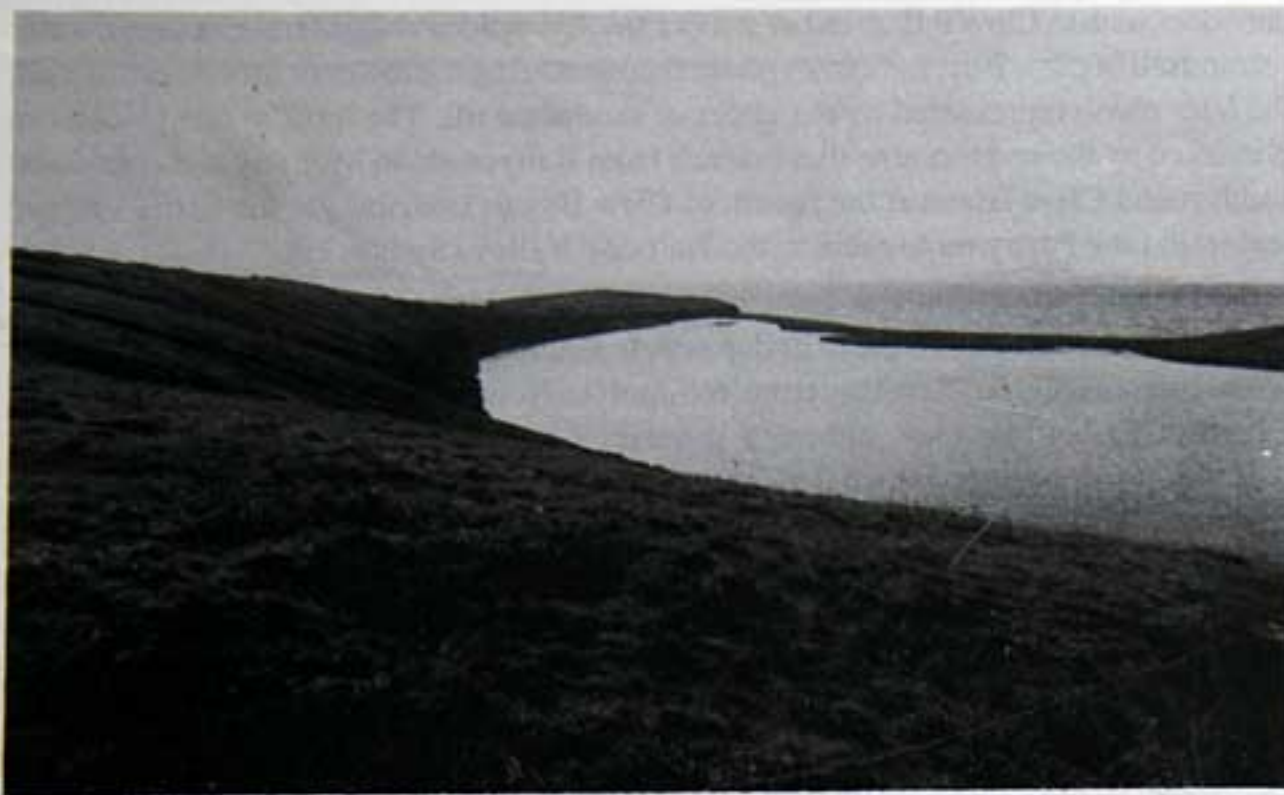
corridors such as Clew Bay and the Erriff valley. Two phases of general glaciation were recognised in Clew Bay; the earlier phase represented by the lower or limestone till, and the later phase represented by the upper or sandstone till. The limit of this glaciation is marked by the end moraine that extends from Ballycastle to Mulrany and continues south round Clare Island at the mouth of Clew Bay to Louisburgh, the Erriff Valley, and round the Partry mountains to the Nafooe Valley (Synge, 19).

Drumlin formation was associated with the active readvance of this ice and so the surface topography of the drift deposits is mainly in drumlin form, stretching in a broad belt adjacent to Clew Bay from Westport to Newport in the north, and extending inland. This boulder clay, although it varies somewhat in thickness, is relatively uniform in composition which depends chiefly on the underlying rock limestone. The constituent limestone boulders are well rounded and striated (due to ice action) and are embedded in a still, coarse, angular matrix, again primarily of limestone. The drumlins do not vary greatly in height, being around 100 feet to 120 feet. Their long axes, sometimes about one mile in length, trend from east to west and are aligned parallel to the direction of the ice-flow (Geological Survey of Ireland).

The islands in Clew Bay are identical in construction to the drumlins on the mainland; boulder clay resting on a limestone base. These islands are known as 'drowned' drumlins due to a partial submergence, which has also given rise to a much inundated coastline, whose form is controlled by the drumlin topography. Knockycahillaun is the most elevated of the islands under study, reaching a height of 119 feet (plate 3). The islands in the bay vary in size owing to the different intensity



Islandmore 'village' with Knockycahillaun in background.



Islandmore and Rabbit Island, with Clare Island on the horizon.

of weathering and erosion in different parts of the bay. Island More has an area of 78 acres, Knockycahillaun 35 acres, Rabbit island 17 acres and Quinsheen less than 1 acre (Plates 4 and 5). Many of the most westerly of the drumlins have been entirely or largely removed by the sea. Rabbit island in particular has felt the erosive force of the waves. From comparing the 1838 edition of the Ordnance Survey map with later editions, it is evident on all the four islands except Quinsheen.

The eastern faces of the islands in the bay slope gently to sea level and are surrounded by shallow waters with accumulating silts. Because of this a series of complex spits and tombolas have been constructed between the islands which in the past have allowed islanders to reach each other at low tide.

Climate

Lying on the Atlantic seaboard, the islands of Clew Bay are under the dominating influence of the westerlies which are responsible for the comparatively heavy rainfall in the area. No precise statistical information is available about the climatic conditions experienced on these islands. However information is available from the Belmullet, Mulrany and Claremorris weather stations. Newport is the closest weather station to the islands and information on the air temperature, duration of bright sunshine and amount and duration of rainfall is available from this station.

Mean monthly rainfall varies in this area from 160mm, experienced in the months of December and January, to 65mm in the month of June. Most rain falls between the months of August and January and the amount that falls is reflected in the

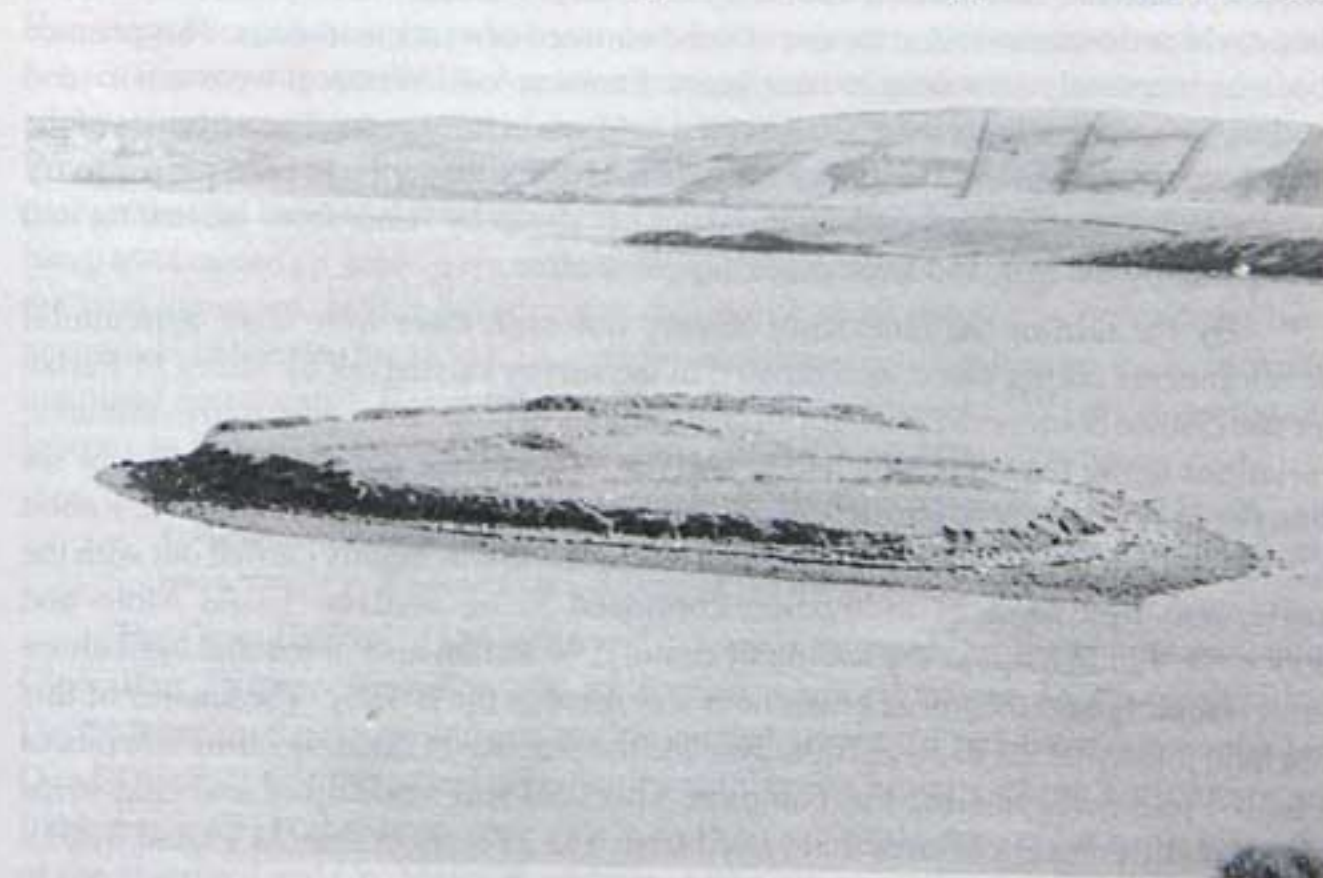
predominance of pastureland. Also during the months of August and September so much rain can fall that the islanders more often referred to the 'saving' of the hay and harvest rather than the 'gathering' of it. The relationship between mean monthly temperatures and rainfall is what one would expect in a west maritime climate; the highest temperatures occur in the month of lowest rainfall – June. The islands therefore experience mild damp conditions. The air temperature shows little variation throughout the year, the January average being 43° and June 58.2°F. The ocean's modifying effect on the climate limits sea level frost to the period between early December and the middle of March (Meteorological Service).

The predominant winds are the westerlies and exposure to these winds has caused the dwarfing of the island vegetation. Their presence is indicated by the blighting of buds on the west-facing sides of the bushes on the islands. This shearing is most marked on the western side of the island which has no protection from the prevailing winds.

Winds are strongest in winter and influenced the activities of the islands' community in the past. Winter winds could prevent communication between the islands and the mainland for several days at a time. Therefore, communication, fishing and farming were all directly affected by the climate.

AGRICULTURE

Until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, nothing specific is known about the agriculture of the islands of Clew Bay and the surrounding mainland, apart from



Quinsheen, with Cullen and mainland in the background.

what is known of conditions along the western seaboard of Ireland generally. In Britain at this time considerable agricultural progress associated with land enclosure was being made which continued through the nineteenth century. In Ireland however, primitive methods of agriculture and ancient forms of social organisation continued to survive in many areas, especially in the remote western counties of Kerry, Mayo and Donegal. Land was held by joint tenure or rundale which was the Irish system of openfield agriculture. The characteristics of this system was the sub-division of scattered plots among co-heirs, a nucleated settlement pattern known as a 'Clachan' and the co-operation implicit in the openfield system. Rundale however as a system of agriculture was opposed by landlords and governments, because while it prevailed agricultural improvements were almost impossible. By the middle of the nineteenth century, rundale had almost disappeared but in Co. Mayo in 1845, the Devon Commission reported that, 'It remained the predominant form of land tenure' (Report of the Devon Commission, 1845).

Agricultural activity was first noted on the islands of Clew Bay by Pococke in his *Tour of Ireland in 1752*:

'The sea gains on them [the islands] and some are almost divided into two; there are fine stones on the shore around them . . . They are islands covered with pasturage and some with corn.' (Stokes, 1891: 96) By 1796, the islands of the bay were densely populated and were sown with oats and potatoes, or grazed by cattle (Young 1776).

Island More and Quinsheen were owned at this time by Lord Altamont and Knockycahillaun and Rabbit Island by Sir Neal O'Donel. Lord Altamont was an improver and recommended the use of dried seaweed or wrack as manure. This practice became extremely prevalent in later years. Farms around Westport were subdivided and let at excessive rents which had trebled in Mayo in forty years. The activities of the land holders were primitive and crude, and acts of Parliament had been passed to try to stop the peasants from pulling the wool off sheep by hand, from harrowing and ploughing by the tail, and from plucking geese alive every year. (Young, 1776).

By the turn of the nineteenth century however, there were some agricultural developments taking place, as indicated in the survey carried out by James M'Parlan for the Dublin Society (M'Parlan 1802). Rotations in crops were practised in this area, variations being between oats, barley and flax. There were not more than five or six ploughs in the Barony of Burrishoole in which Island More, Knockycahillaun, Rabbit Island and Quinsheen island were located. Cultivation was mainly carried out with the spade, and this form of cultivation continued to be used on Island More and Knockycahillaun even in the twentieth century. M'Parlan also noted that agriculture was expanding and that most of the land was tilled in the Barony. The tenants of this area held jointly farms of 30 to 100 acres, and the practice of dividing farms into pieces of land 4 to 8 acres in size, was common. This land was made up of scattered strips located in different enclosures that varied from 4 to 20 acres in size (M'Parlan, 1802). Common manures used were sea-weed, black mud, dung, sand and lime. The islands

of Clew Bay, due to their formation, had large supplies of lime available for fertilizing the soil. Field boundaries at this time were very inadequate. Hedges were entirely absent and if there was no supply of stones for walls to be built, a few sods were thrown on a ridge the size of a potato furrow (M'Parlan, 1802).

Until 1800, leases were very short in this area, about 21 years. However, by 1811, they had lengthened to the duration of one life on Island More (Lord Sligo Rent Roll, 1811). This improvement was due to the fact that the Lord Sligo at this time (Island More and Quinsheen Island within his jurisdiction) was a caring landlord: 'Lord Sligo's farms are in a good state of cultivation, and the land productive. The late lord was said to be a humane and liberal landlord; he gave long leases at moderate rents, and the result is obvious.' (Barrow, 1835: 178-9).

In the *Ordnance Survey field Name Books* (1838), a description of the islands is given by John O'Donovan. At this time all the islands were cultivated, with Quinsheen Island producing corn and flax; Rabbit Island, potatoes, corn and flax; Knockycahillaun, the same and Island More potatoes, corn, flax and barley. All the islands possessed lime mineral and were let at will for the yearly rent of £2 per acre. These crops were rotated, and flax at this time was an important crop to the islanders as it supplied the inhabitants with a cash income and was also used for clothing. Potatoes were grown for the inhabitants' consumption while oats and barley were used to pay the rent (Inglis, 1834).

James A. Tuke remarked in 1847, that the soil and climate of Connaught was particularly suitable for the growing of flax (Tuke, 1847). Because of this and the fact that flax was grown in the area and used in cottage industry, Lord Altamont of Westport House encouraged the linen industry and trade in the late eighteenth century. Mills and houses for weaving were built. A market gradually developed and so linen provided an adequate and constant source of income (Young 1776). However, the heyday of Westport's linen industry was in the 1820s and after this period a decay set in, due to the fact that the industrial revolution produced machine-made goods against which the hand-spun materials could not compete. With this industry on the decline pressure on the land increased, as this industry was the source of all the extras beyond the bare necessities of life (Inglis, 1834). The condition of the agriculturalists on the islands and mainland deteriorated. Henry Inglis (1834) visited the market at Westport during his journey in Ireland and noted the poverty the people were experiencing:

Much evidence of the poverty of the surrounding country, in the small value of articles brought to market, and the great distance which they are carried. I know of three, two, and even one egg, being brought to Westport from a distance of two miles (Inglis, 1834).

The Great Famine of 1845, '46 and '47 was a further blow to the peasants of the Clew Bay district. Starvation and epidemics wrecked havoc on the population. Dependence on the potato and emigration caused the area to be severely depopulated. Due to the fact that the island community at this time practised both agriculture and fishing as well as other economic activities, their survival rate was far superior to that of the mainland and Co. Mayo as a whole. Although agriculture suffered a temporary

set-back, however, due to the subsequent enlargement of holdings, the incomes of the island community left behind gradually increased. Their dependence on the land also increased due to the reduced population, as the four islands were able to support the remaining inhabitants without having to rely on fishing for survival. However this dependence and orientation to the land caused the island community severe problems in the seventh decade of the nineteenth century. Famine again broke out on the islands and the mainland due to the failure of the potato crop causing severe distress for the population. The Kilmeena Relief Fund Committee was unable to help because it was without funds, as most of the inhabitants of the parish of Kilmeena were on relief at this time. Gunboats were sent with meal for the island people but did not supply them. Because of this the inhabitants came to the mainland searching for food but were often disappointed (Mansion House Relief Fund Local Committee, 1880).

After this period of famine, however, the inhabitants of Island More and Knockycahillaun were able to expand their holdings even further. Agriculture was now, in the late nineteenth century, the dominant economic activity of the islanders, with fishing firmly relegated to a purely subsistence activity.

From interviews, Land Commission Records and Congested District Board Reports, it is possible to obtain a clear picture of farming on the islands from the turn of the century until the communities' demise in the 1950s. Although there is no written record of rundale having existed on Island More, Knockycahillaun, Rabbit Island and Quinsheen Island, it is evident from settlement patterns, farming practices and division of holdings, that this system of agriculture was practised there in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The settlement pattern associated with the rundale system of agriculture was a nucleated pattern with no ordered plan to the houses. Therefore, the community huddled together, dependent on one another and the co-operative practices of the community. This nucleated settlement pattern was found on the islands of Island More and Knockycahillaun, although most of the houses are now in ruins. The co-operative aspect of rundale was prevalent within this community in the twentieth century. Pigs were kept on the island by every family. However, the killing of each pig was staggered so that two pigs were never killed at the same time. When a pig was killed, although the family kept the major part of the meat for themselves, the rest was shared out between the other families on the islands. Therefore by staggering the killings, every family had meat right through the year. Fish when caught were also given to the other families on the islands. Also when hay was being 'saved' all the island men would assist each other to carry out this task.

Rundale is an 'infield' and 'outfield' system. The 'infield' or the most productive land attached to the Clachan is cultivated, whereas the 'outfield' or the remainder of the land is used in common for rough grazing. In the case of Island More and Knockycahillaun, the land closest to the cluster of settlement was cultivated for potatoes, turnips, parsnips, cabbage and other vegetables in this century. Little gardens



Island Field boundaries.

were made with high walls to protect the vegetables from the force of the prevailing winds. Oats and rye were sown and harvested as close as possible to the settlement also. Rye was only grown in the early part of this century, when thatched roofs were still in use as it was used in the thatching of houses. Even the hay meadows were located close to the settlements. Cattle and sheep were grazed in fields further away, or else on Quinsheen Island or Rabbit Island. Therefore, this was the 'outfield' and the cultivated land around the settlement was the 'infield', although joint tenancy did not exist anymore on the islands. Although Irish was not spoken on the islands in living memory, many of the fields were known by Irish names. One such field was 'Lag na gCapall' situated on Knockycahillaun which actually included three 'modern' fields. Therefore, at some stage in the island's past, fields were much larger, which would indicate the existence of rundale before the land was consolidated.

The sub-division and the fragmented nature of holdings were characteristics of the rundale system of agriculture. In 1891 the Congested Districts Board was set up to re-arrange, enlarge and improve holdings so that each individual one would be compact, economic and productive. The Board did not take over this area of Co. Mayo until 1909, when the qualifying criteria on which congestion was based was raised from the rateable valuation of £1.10.0 per head to £2.0.0. The Congested District Board purchased the Marquess of Sligo's estate under the 1909 Irish Land Act, in 1920. The M.A.T. O'Donnell estate was purchased seven years earlier under the Irish Land Act (1903) in 1914, and therefore took charge of the few islands at these times. However, unlike the mainland, the holdings on Island More, Knockycahillaun, Rabbit Island and



Well below Mr. Frank Gill's house at Islandmore.

Quinsheen Island were unaltered, but were surveyed and their area and purchase price computed, as they were considered to be already economic and productive. The decline of population had allowed the holdings to be enlarged in the second half of the nineteenth century. The ownership of the land was legally transferred to the tenant purchaser who received an advance representing the purchase price, and which was repayable by annuity, payable in twice yearly instalments. Although the holdings were regarded as being economic and productive, they were scattered over all the islands.

The existing field boundaries on the islands are hedgeless earthen banks varying in height depending on how long ago they were abandoned (Plate 6). Also present is the existence of a track running right through the islands bordered either side by earthen grassy banks. This break was a right of way which ran through most of the islands in Clew Bay, and allowed the inhabitants to bring their cattle or animals to market. Cattle were walked at low tide across to another island and eventually swam if it was necessary. Water was always plentiful on the islands as at least six wells were in existence. The most used well was located below one of the houses (Plate 7). However, at high tide sea water entered the well and contaminated the fresh water. But it only took a day to clean out. No bog existed on any of the islands. Because of this turf was brought to the islands from Achill by hookers. Donkeys were kept on the islands to transport hay and other produce. Although this was the case, no plough existed on the islands at any time in its history. All cultivation was carried out by spade thereby restricting the size of land to be cultivated.

Poultry were extremely important to the islanders as chickens supplied them with eggs and meat. Although seaweed was still collected and used as manure for the land, this activity had declined in the twentieth century due to the reduction of the land cultivated and predominance of pasture in this century.

FISHING

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Ireland did not possess a well developed fishing industry. Why this was the case is very puzzling, due to the congested coastal populations all around Ireland and the wealth of the marine resources available. For the island and coastal population of Clew Bay there was a superabundance of fish to be exploited:

In Clew Bay alone, thirty-three types of fish were to be found, in addition to whelks and lug, scallops, crabs, lobsters, oysters, crawfish and other shellfish, basking sharks, seals and angel sharks, not to mention carrageen moss, seaweed for manure or kelp, samphire and shell-sand (De Courcy Ireland, 1981; 68).

However, it is clear from all the available evidence, that fishing to the coastal peasantry of the western seaboard and therefore the inhabitants of the islands, was confined to small scale inshore operations and was generally a temporary activity.

In the early nineteenth century the inhabitants of Island More and Knockcaghillaun followed the joint occupation of fishermen and agriculturalists. Although the sea was an important resource for them they were basically a land-orientated community, as they were only employed in fishing for three to six months of the year. The herring fishery was the principal one in Clew Bay and for the island people. It commenced in September or October and continued until January. However, this fishery was very uncertain, and in 1801 it was noted by James M'Parlan in his survey of the area, that there had not been a fishery there for two or three years (M'Parlan, 1801).

In the *First Report of the Government Commission of Inquiry into the State of the Irish Fisheries*, Mr. Carter, an officer of the Coastguard and a commander of a Revenue Cutter, had been on duty for seven years between Slyne Head and Achill Head. He stated in his report that there was a summer herring fishery among the islands in Clew Bay which commenced in July and continued until September. This statement helps underline the uncertainty of the herring fishery. This may be the reason why the fishermen on Island More did not prepare their nets and tackle until they were sure that the fish were in among the islands.

Certain signs were looked for that indicated the fish had moved into the bay. In general sea birds were looked for, and at night when the herrings were very numerous there was a luminous appearance on the water. Boats belonging to the island people were sixteen foot long yawls, which cost from £7 to £9 and may have had a lugsail. These sailing vessels were engaged in a carrying trade between the islands when not employed in the herring fisheries. Each boat had three to five herring nets that were made by the fishermen's families using flax, as this was grown on the island at this time (*First Report of the Government Commission of Inquiry into the State of the Irish*



Coastguard watch-tower Islandmore.

Fisheries, 1837). Yawls were extremely unsuitable for fishing operations away from the shore, and because of this the fishermen had to wait for the herrings to come inshore. The unpredictable nature of the principal fishing in this area was the main impediment to the growth of fishing, as it greatly deterred the long term investments necessary for any expansion of activities and the improvement of equipment.

Markets for the herrings were at Newport and Westport. Fish were either sold to dealers or carried by the fishermen in their boats to these towns. Because there were no facilities for curing provided for the fishermen, they had to sell their fish to curers and pedlars who distributed the fish through the interior. Curing houses located on the islands would have greatly benefited the people of the islands in Clew Bay. Most of the herrings, however, were consumed fresh by the inhabitants and the remainder were gutted and salted in barrels for consumption during the winter months.

In Clew Bay at this time there were many natural oyster beds to be found between the islands. There was a large bed between Island More and Rabbit Island, which was an important source of food and livelihood to the inhabitants. Dredging was practised at all times during the year, and the oysters were sold to other islands by the basket containing about four hundred, the price 10d. to 12d. (*First Report of the Government Commission of Inquiry into the State of the Irish Fisheries, 1837*). Although small in size, the oysters were of good quality, and so when not in season, large quantities of them were sent to the oyster beds on the coast of Co. Clare.

Up to fifty boats and two hundred people were thought to be engaged in the oyster

fishery at this time because the beds were open to the public. However, this was thought to have a disastrous effect on the future of the beds and was noted by a coastguard officer:

The proprietors of these islands take no interest in protecting the fishery, which is open to all persons. The consequence is, that for want of proper regulations in protecting the beds from abuse, I understand in a short time, the fishing will be destroyed (*Mr. Bowen, First Report of the Government Commission of Inquiry into the State of the Irish Fisheries, 1837*).

In order to try to protect the bed in Island More from being too often dredged, a coastguard watch-tower was built on the island overlooking the fishery. (Plate 8). A quay was also constructed on the north east end by the Office of Public Works to enable the coastguard officers to land with ease. (Plate 9).

Despite these efforts, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the beds were totally destroyed, causing severe distress for the island people as famine had hit the parish of Kilmeena. By June 1880 the situation was desperate. Father 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 three 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 dredging. Each family used to make over £30 or £40 yearly . . . There are about twenty inhabited islands in the parish with a population over seventy families. They are very poor, destitute and wretched as they also depended much on oyster dredging and fishing. For the past three years they are all deprived of this means of livelihood as the oyster beds were so impoverished that the Board of Fisheries ordered them to be closed (*Mansion House Relief Fund Local Committee, 1880*).



Islandmore, Quay, with Nephin Beg range in the background.

By the turn of this century, the tradition of oyster dredging had completely died out on Island More, and these shellfish were no longer utilised as a food resource by the island community.

A description by Mr. Bowen, a coastguard officer, in 1837 illustrates the wretched nature of the lives led by the inhabitants of Island More and Knockycahillaun at this time:

I have recently visited all the inhabited islands in Clew Bay comprised in my guard, and such appearances of poverty and want of general domestic comforts, I never witnessed in any other part of the country. The people fish only for herrings, and when thus employed, ardent spirits are much used among them. They generally have small holdings and work as labourers whenever they can get employment. The rents of small farms are very unequal; they are from 10s. to £2 an acre (*First Report of the Government Commission of Inquiry into the State of the Irish Fishery, 1837*).

For these island communities, a run of lucrative seasons would bring some prosperity to the islands. However this could be followed by years of depression when the fish did not appear in Clew Bay. During this time, boats and fishing techniques were forgotten. As this happened frequently in the early nineteenth century, fishing became less important as a commercial economic activity. Because of this the communities' chief source of livelihood was the produce of their small holdings and farms, and so by the second half of the nineteenth century the economy of Island More was mainly dependent on agriculture, with fishing firmly relegated to a subsistence activity.

In 1891 the Congested Districts Board was founded. Its main aim was to re-arrange, enlarge and improve holdings so that each individual one would be compact, economic and productive. The Board was also concerned in developing and encouraging fisheries in the congested districts under its care. It had immense success developing the fisheries in Donegal and Galway. In 1891 the Congested Districts Board reported that fishing activities were weak and spasmodic, and that the cash income from fishing throughout Donegal was very slight. Boats used by fishermen were either curraghs or open yawls, both extremely unsuitable for fishing operations away from the shore (Micks, 1925). Due to its wide powers to develop fisheries, the Board undertook extensive operations to put fishing on a firm commercial basis. A market was created for local fish. Curing stations were set up all around the coast and loans were provided for boats and fishing gear (Micks, 1925). Even on the island of Gola, off the coast of Donegal, fishing was encouraged and supported by the Congested Districts Board who provided a stone pier, boats and fishing gear. This intervention by the Board provided the catalyst which changed fishing from being a supplementary activity to becoming the dominant occupation of the island's community in the twentieth century (Aalen and Brody, 1969).

In Co. Mayo, however, the Congested Districts Board did not succeed in developing the fisheries as it had in Co. Donegal. This was because at very few places on the Mayo coast was fishing possible on a commercial scale, and the fishermen, in the Board's opinion, did not have the same sea-going capacity or qualities as those in

Co. Donegal (Micks, 1925). In Clew Bay, however, Murrisk had a fishing population since the early eighteenth century working in small sailing trawlers. Although this industry was still carried out it was in severe decline, again because of the uncertainty of the herring fishery and the lack of suitable boats and gear: 'Since 1872 the fish either deserted the coast or kept in deeper water further from the shore where the fishermen would not follow them for want of suitable gear' (*Congested Districts Board Base Line Reports, District of Louisburgh, 1892*). Although the Board supplied loans and boats to the fishermen at Murrisk, the industry did not develop any further than it had in the nineteenth century.

In the Newport district on the eastern shore of Clew Bay, the board decided not to even try to develop the fishing because of the people's lack of knowledge and expertise.

Their knowledge of fishing, as a rule, only extends two or three miles from the shore and large shoals of fish may possibly come and go again without their being aware of the fish in the bay (*Congested District Board Base Line Reports, District of Newport, 1892*).

Island More was not affected by the Congested Districts Board at this time, because the electoral district of Kilmeena in which Island More was included, was not regarded as a congested district until 1909, when the qualifying criteria on which congestion was based was raised from the rateable valuation of £1.10.0 per head to £2.0.0. By this time the island's community had become totally dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, although supplemented by other economic activities which were a source of cash income.

From interviews with island people, an account was obtained of the communities' fishing activities in this century. Fish was an extremely important food for the islanders. It was used all year round and was their main source of protein. Therefore fishing was a subsistence activity. Mackerel and coal fish were caught during the summer months. Certain areas of the Bay were known to the island people as being excellent places to fish. One such place was between Inish Gort, to the south of Island More, and Island More itself. Mackerel were extremely plentiful here because a very strong current flowed between these islands, and also it was a very deep part of the bay. Coal fish were caught in the rocks off Derrinish Island and both types of fish were caught using hand lines. Herring fishing was undertaken in September and October when the fish came into the bay. Boats and gear were kept in excellent condition, and the nets were repaired well in advance of the herring season. The best herring ground was located north of Derrinish Island, and the boats would set sail in the early evening as the best catches were gathered at night. On the floor of each boat, a layer of nine inch round stones was placed so that a turf fire could be lit in the middle of the boat. On reaching the fishing ground, the nets were put out and the fires attracted the herrings to these nets while keeping the men warm.

All the herrings caught were gutted and salted and kept for winter consumption. In summer fish were caught every day but only sufficient for each household's needs.

If an islandman caught more fish than could be eaten that day, the excess would be distributed among the other households on the island or else thrown away. Lobsters were also caught and eaten but crabs were never consumed. This food resource was never utilised, because of a tragedy which struck the island community in the nineteenth century. Five young islandmen were drowned in a fishing accident but their bodies were unable to be recovered for five days. Because of this, the bodies were marked by crabs, and the islanders refused from that moment on to eat this crustacean.

As an economic activity, fishing had become obsolete in the twentieth century, but however still played an important role in the lives of this island community. Although the decline in the importance of fishing was a common phenomena in small island and coastal communities throughout Ireland, one island community off the coast of Co. Donegal, differed from this trend. On Gola Island, fishing changed from a supplementary activity to a dominant one, so that the use of the land was relegated to second place (Aalen and Brody, 1969). Comparison of the islands may highlight why this development and change did not take place on Island More.

It is difficult to trace in detail why fishing declined to a subsistence activity on this island. However, certain basic factors can be used to explain the non-development of fishing as a dominant economic activity. First, Island More, although limited in land area like Gola Island, was able to support its population in the nineteenth century, due to the continuing decline of its community after the famine, and the fertility of its soils. Gola Island however, was unable to support an increasing population, and so the sea was the only resource from which their needs could be met. Secondly, unlike the people of Gola, the inhabitants of Island More received no support or encouragement in their fishing activities from the Congested Districts Board at the end of this century. This assistance given to Gola was a major help in causing a swing to an economy based on fishing. Finally, although the economy of West Mayo increasingly moved from a subsistence to a commercial pattern like that of West Donegal, fishing did not assume additional prominence as a source of cash income as it did on Gola Island. Instead, other economic activities associated with the sea, were the main sources of cash income for the community on Island More.

OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Although agriculture and fishing were important activities to the island people, other occupations were carried out to generate a cash income. All of these extra activities were related to the sea and underline the importance of this resource to the islanders.

Piloting was practised only by people of the islands. This was a traditional occupation handed down from father to son on three of the islands in Clew Bay – Inish Lyre, Clynish and Island More. This activity developed in importance due to the significance of Westport and Newport as commercial ports in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The principal trade was with Britain especially Glasgow and

Liverpool. Imports through these centuries included coal, raw materials for the soap manufacture, and wines and spirits. Exports comprised potatoes, flour, cattle and linen (from Westport's thriving linen industry). Westport also had a large export trade in grain as Henry D. Inglis discovered in 1834:

Westport possesses a considerable export trade in grain. About 15,000 tons are exported – of which the largest portion is oats; the next barley; and the smallest portion, wheat. There are extensive corn stores on the quay; and the harbour is good and secure (Inglis 1834).

In 1837, Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* stated that Westport exported 1,000 tons of grain annually to Britain. Prior to this her trade was based on supplying the needs of her hinterland. Boats and ships which arrived into Clew Bay, had to be piloted to Westport and Newport due to the complex nature of the channels in Clew Bay. Otway in his *Tour in Connaught* in 1839 discovered the difficulty of navigation in Clew Bay:

We were consigned to a four-oared boat, manned by five steady Englishmen, and thus in a night almost pitchy dark we were to find our way up to Westport, through the intricacies of this bay, beset as it is with its three hundred islands . . . when all at once we struck the ground, and there we remained immovable, in spite of all the exertions of the sailors – and there we were likely to stay, for the tide was falling . . . the men, all English, were not aware of the intricacies of the navigation, and we had got on some shallow bank (Otway, 1839: 311).

Island More had two piloting facilities, one for Westport and the other for Newport. Ships would anchor off Inish Lyre and off Island More and the pilot would sail out to the ship and take over. This was an important source of cash income for the inhabitants of the islands up until the early part of the present century.

In the early nineteenth century the competition between the two ports was very keen and continued until 5 April 1837 when the British Government, under the influence of Peter Howe Browne, Marquess of Sligo, made Westport an 'adopted' port while Newport remained 'unadopted'. This meant that the former could extract a toll, on the basis of tonnage, from any ship entering her harbour, the money thus obtained being spent on harbour maintenance and improvement. A crippling blow for Newport came on 25 January 1851, when Her Majesty's commissioners of the Treasury made Westport the only port between Galway and Ballina legally authorised to accept dutiable goods. However this bonus for the pilots did not last, as Westport only enjoyed this security for nineteen years. In the years 1845, '46 and '47 the famine and the subsequent emigration played havoc with the economy of Westport's hinterland. During these decades the Industrial Revolution in England led to the mechanisation of factories against which industries depending on hand labour could not possibly compete. This mechanisation had disastrous effects on Westport's local linen industry and it eventually petered out, leaving the local population without a cash crop. Finally, the development of the railways dealt a fatal blow to Westport. As the Dublin line advanced step by step across the Midland plain, Westport's sea trade fell away accordingly (Shand, 1884). In 1869 the railway reached Westport, and with the completion of the Limerick-Sligo connection, the whole of Ireland was opened up as

a hinterland to Dublin, and could trade directly with England via that port. Therefore Westport could not withstand such competition (*Shand, 1884*).

In 1843, William Thackeray's description of the activity of the port of Westport, shows the decline in trade felt here even in the middle of the nineteenth century:

There was a long, handsome pier (which, no doubt, remains at this present minute), and one solitary cutter lying alongside it, which may or may not be there now. There were about three boats lying near the cutter, and six sailors, with long shadows, lolling about the pier. As for the warehouses, they are enormous; and might accommodate, I should think, not only the trade of Westport, but of Manchester too. There are huge streets of these houses, ten stories high, with cranes, owners' names, etc., marked Wine Stores, Flour Stores, Bonded Tobacco Warehouses and so forth . . . These dismal mausoleums, as vast as pyramids, are the places where the dead trade of Westport lies buried (*Thackeray, 1843: 91*).

Nevertheless, Westport still functioned as a minor port right up to the early twentieth century as she still imported many of her own necessities, wheat from Australia and California, frozen meat from Australia, coals, groceries and woollens from Glasgow. Although the number of ships coming to Westport and Newport had fallen away in the early twentieth century, there were enough to keep the pilots busy and to provide an important cash supply. There was usually a boat up and down from the port every day.

Due to the gradual development of a silt bed in Westport, ships of a tonnage greater than 700 could never moor by the quays in Westport. These ships would anchor at Island More and their cargo would be unloaded into 100 ton 'lighter' boats owned by the island people. Several trips would be made to Westport before the ship was light enough to be piloted in to the quay at Westport. This 'lighter' activity developed in the



Tony Gill in traditional island boat at Inishgort, 1947 (Courtesy Anna Hawkshaw née Gill).

nineteenth century and continued up until the port's demise, and this was another important source of cash income for the inhabitants of Island More.

The eclipse of Westport as a commercial port came about finally due to developments in the wider context of Ireland and Europe. From 1932 the Irish Government tried to encourage industrial development by legislation and loans. Between 1933 and 1939 there was a decline in imports and exports, due to the deliberate Government policy of trade restriction in the interests of home industries, and due in part to a general decline in world trade (*Freeman, 1950*). With the Second World War following closely on the heels of these economic developments, Westport was no longer active as a commercial port. Therefore piloting and 'lighting' became redundant occupations and so ended a tradition and an important source of cash income.

Boat building was also a traditional activity handed down from father to son. In the nineteenth century the island people had constructed all their own wooden sailing boats, but in the early twentieth century the Kelly family were the only boat builders on the island. However, this craft was passed to the Gill family from the Kellys as they had no children. Josie Gill was an expert boat builder (Plate 10). All the materials needed were imported from the mainland and special wood was brought to make the keel of the boats. This was buried in the ground for three to four years to season as this would prevent it from warping. On the mainland in the past local materials were utilised where possible. Holly was used for the keel as it wears smooth and slides well on beach gravel and a 'whin root' was used for the tiller. In Kerry for example, an entire vessel was sometimes built from bog fir as it had the advantage of impermeability. (*Evans, 1957: 241*).

(To be continued).



Gill family Islandmore c.1940: (back, left to right) Josie, Nora Gill (wife); daughter Joan in the arms of Gerard Gill (Colonel); Gerard's brother Anthony (Dr.) and his father Dr. Tony Gill, Westport; (front, left to right) Dick, Anna, Moya (daughter of Dr. Gill), Una and Tony Gill (Courtesy Anna Hawkshaw née Gill).



Outside Anthony Gill's house Islandmore (now owned by Mr. Frank Gill, Dublin) c.1920: (left to right) Anthony Gill; Dr. Tony Gill, Westport, holding his daughter Moya; Mrs. Tony Gill (née May Mulloy, Shop Street, Westport; (second from right) Winifred Gill (wife of Anthony Gill) (Courtesy Anna Hawkshaw née Gill).

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Acknowledgements

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Inishbiggle –The Edge of Ireland

By Donna Ole Allen

Long ago, according to local legend, a priest by the name of Biggle visited this *inis* – and while here placed a curse upon the frogs. Perhaps their croaking disturbed his meditations or rest. Evidently his words were as effective as those of St. Patrick's regarding snakes in Ireland, for not a frog – nor snake is to be found.

Located in a unique position off County Mayo, between the islands of Annagh and Achill, it is separated to the west from the latter by 450 yards of Bulls Mouth, whose 8-10 knot current makes this the most dangerous spot on the whole Irish coast; and from the former, at low water springs, when the eight foot tide recedes, leaving more than three times that distance of firm, damp sand where by foot and four-wheel drive vehicle access is possible to the mainland.

An area's history is usually greatly affected by geography, and this holds true even today for Inishbiggle. Rather surprisingly, in a country whose early residents were making underground tombs while the Egyptians laboured on their pyramids in 2,000 B.C. the story of this island apparently starts quite late. Only two shepherds' cabins were at either end of the mile and a half of windswept, undulating, turf-covered fields by the opening of the 19th century.

About 1837 the owner of the island, Sir Richard O'Donnell of nearby Newport, was approached by the Rev. Edward Nangle for the Protestant Achill Mission at Dugort to lease the island. Around the same time there were approaches made by the Jesuits, representing a London group who were interested in 'the cultivation of wastelands in Ireland' and 'that Inishbiggle would be the best place to start'. However, as the Achill Mission had contacted him first, Sir Richard O'Donnell acted fairly and a lease was signed for the Mission, followed by a sale about 1852.

During this period occurred the potato blight, subsequent terrible famine and accelerated emigration abroad. It is said that in twenty years the population fell by half. The hunger which swept the country was almost beyond description. In Westport a man collapsed and died, his mouth full of grass. Settlers who came to Inishbiggle, mainly from Ballycroy and Achill, also came to escape the high rents imposed by the large landowners – mostly British and their agents. Their harsh, unfeeling rule, begun under Henry II in the 12th century, was much worse than that which caused the American colonies to declare war in 1775.

Family names heard here in the early years and still present are: O'Malley,

Henry, Sweeney, Nevin, Calvey, Leneghan, Gallagher and Grealis. Many of the newcomers were Protestants. The Achill Mission established about 1870 a school for all the children. The teachers lived in stone cottages, now roofless, on church property at the eastern side, overlooking low Annagh Island and the mainland.

In this area a generous donation of £600 by a lady from Dublin, Ellen Blair, enabled the Mission to construct with local labour, Holy Trinity Church. One man, Patrick Nevin, by quick action saved the life of a fellow worker, the grandfather of Ellen and James Gallagher, when a heavy piece crashed to the ground. Covered by a natural pebble dash, the edifice rises to a high roof with a small tower for a bell and cross. Wrought iron gates open into an archway of aged rhododendrons which leads to the front door. Beyond the vestibule is an old, carved organ from 'Washington, New Jersey, U.S.A.', at the head of an aisle of five rows of wooden pews. The lofty ceiling, white walls, tall windows and altar complete the chapel's simple, effective interior.

Custodians are Ellen and James Gallagher. Services are held for the few remaining Protestants and guests, usually in the summer, whenever a clergyman calls at the island. Through the years, for one reason or another, most members departed for other shores. The population of Inishbiggle at one time reached two hundred or so souls, but currently number about a quarter of that high point.

Disused for some eighty years, the burial ground, encircled by a stone wall and gate, reposes up to and to the west of the original Mission School cottage, on the central ridge which runs the length of Inishbiggle. On a rare, clear, calm day the peaceful expanse of surrounding blue bays and towering, grey-brown mountains is quite spectacular. Then, the entire isle is still – nothing moves – not even a hare hops. It is as if a spell cast upon the whole island has enchanted Inishbiggle from rocky shore to rocky shore.

By 1895 the Catholic children had their first school held at the home of the teacher, Nora O'Malley. As the school was as yet unofficial, the salary was paid by the Bishop of the Killala diocese. A resident, James Henry, (Anglicized Gaelic family of the 1900s), leased a cottage which was converted to a school about 1914. Nestled on the north side of the island facing Black Sod Bay, this served the growing number of children until 1947. A modern, one classroom school, constructed across on the south side, was the cheerful learning centre until closed by the national authorities in 1989. Enrolment had dropped to two, and there were no pre-school children. This decision has just been reversed and the pupils are to be accommodated here again.

The building has continued to be used as a clinic for the bi-monthly visits by Doctors Lineen, King or substitute and lady Doctor O'Leary, who make house calls to the very ill. It serves as a voting centre when required. Every week mass was said by the Rev. Father Patrick Tuffy. From his parish of Ballycroy, he had braved wind and wave, if at all possible, to minister to the Catholic congregation. Those unable to attend are visited at home by means of a trusty motor bike. After ten and a half years, Father Tuffy has been appointed to the parish of Killala as of February, 1990. The new priest

will be Father O'Hora.

The residents of Inishbiggle have felt recently that living standards should be brought up to those on the mainland. A Community Council was formed which has diligently tried to carry out this mandate. The current officers are: Chairman, Thomas Geoghegan; Secretary, Paddy Henry, and Treasurer, Patrick Calvey. Government funds have been granted for the tarring and gravelling of some of the single lane road that encircles most of the island. Electricity poles now crisscross the terrain, testimony to a new era.

Telephones were connected at the close of 1989 to about nine homes. Until then the only phone was a much-used booth outside the post office in the O'Malley residence. There, Mrs. Bridget O'Malley has taken over those duties after the retirement of her husband Patrick. Delivery of the post to the door is made by son Michael on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Her responsibilities also include all weekly government pensions and payments.

A freshwater pipe line broke down after a relatively short service and has not been replaced. Everyone must therefore fetch this vital necessity by bucket from amber stream or loughs dotted around declivities in the rolling landscape. Heating fires are fed by turf, dug from March at various depths, and stored some time, if possible, to dry.

Here and there, embedded in the black turf or peat, are large branches testifying to the trees which once flourished on Inishbiggle. Seven or eight pines put in years ago are a good height. More extensive plantings of young pines are being made. The few wind-breaks are venerable rhododendrons and other evergreen bushes. Bright yellow gorse blossoms bloom bravely in mid-winter along hedge rows in company with a tiny-leaved bush with plump red berries. The odd dandelion, small daisy-like flower, heather and ferns add to the scene in this chilly season. Grasses too are green for grazing beef cattle and donkeys. Sheep have been maintained. Chickens, geese and ducks are kept as are cats and small, collie-like dogs. Frank Sheperd raises greyhounds related to winners in England and the United States. A fox's lair was discovered a few weeks ago.

The Community Council in 1986 caused an extensive study to be made by a Dublin firm of consulting engineers as to how the island might be linked to Achill or the mainland. This is a very serious problem for the inhabitants. The government provides, with charge, a ferry service operated by stalwart Michael O'Malley, and crew, Martin Sweeney who do a really noble job with open curragh and outboard engine. (In the past it was all four strong men could do to row across in good weather.) Crossings back and forth in hazardous currents and frequent high winds are not always possible. The elderly and ill find the often showery, rough passage out of the question even in emergencies. Late in 1989 for the first time a patient was taken out by helicopter to the hospital in Castlebar. Mail deliveries must be suspended at such times – on an average of one third of the year due to the 40 or more gales. After considering several options the study concluded that the most feasible connection would be to Achill via

cable car across Bulls Mouth. Such a system is in use on a smaller island off the south coast. The government has had this under consideration since then.

A word of appreciation and gratitude for the weekly food van service to one's door. Every Tuesday, weather permitting, Dennis O'Donnell loads the curragh with all manner of packaged, tinned and fresh items including meat, vegetables and fruit. Those are stowed in his blue van, left at the island's slipway, and then he tours around – a most welcome sight indeed.

Twice the island has had the distinction of being the subject of programmes for Irish national television. In 1988 the theme was a typical young man, Christy Henry, leaving his home and parents, Paddy and Bridget, for a job in England. In November, 1989 a film was shot of scenes and life as it is lived on Inishbiggle – a touch of the old Ireland.

Map Key

V = Vacant

R-L = Roofless

S = Stone Building

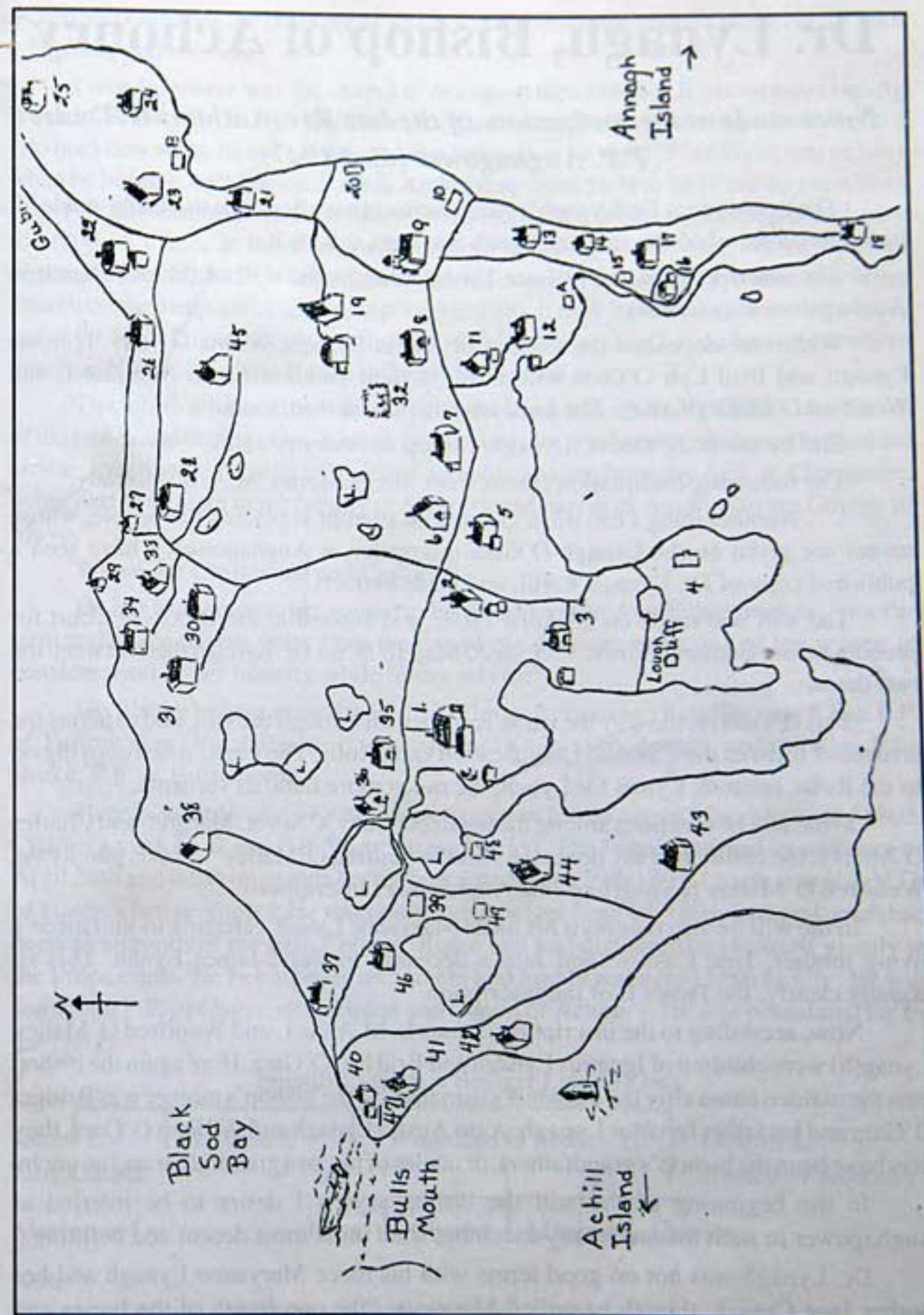
1. Post office – Patrick and Bridget O'Malley, son Michael
2. V
3. Michael and Julia Myres Calvey, son "P. J."
4. R-L, S John Allen
5. Patrick and Ellen Leneghan Calvey
6. Catholic School built in 1947
7. Brian and Jo Henry, rented by John and Donna Allen
8. Built as Achill Mission School, owned by Frank Sheperd
9. Holy Trinity Church
10. R-L, S
11. V, S owned by Brian Henry
12. Terence Nevin
13. V owned and built by John Leneghan
14. John and Mary Leneghan, son Andrew
15. R-L, S owned by John Allen
16. V owned by Patrick Calvey, built by his grandfather O'Malley
17. Patrick and Annie Nevin Calvey, sons Patrick, Christy and Joseph
18. Katie Nevin. Martin Nevin and Peter Nevin
19. Michael and Bridget Calvey Leneghan, sons Michael, Tim, John, Tommy and Anthony
20. R-L, S
21. V owned by widow of Peter, Molly McManamon
22. Ellen Gallagher, James Gallagher
23. V owned (A.) by Mary Calvey McManamon and husband, Frank
24. V, S Frank Sweeney's old house and stable
25. Frank Sweeney
26. Anthony and Celia O'Malley Leneghan
27. V Original Catholic School owned by Paddy Henry
28. Paddy and Bridget Henry, son Christy
29. V owned by Mrs. Sweeney and Michael Leneghan

30. Thomas and Bridget Geoghegan and mother
31. V owned by John McManamon
32. Burial Ground disused
33. Michael Henry built by his grandfather
34. Michael Henry
35. V owned by the late Martin Calvey
36. Brian and Annie Calvey McGowan
37. V
38. Thomas Calvey, John Calvey
39. R-L and stable, owned by the late Michael Grealis
40. V
41. Martin and Kate Sweeney Calvey
42. Annie Calvey
43. V owned by Michael Calvey
44. V owned by John Calvey
45. Michael Leneghan
46. V, R-L
47. V
48. V owned by John Calvey
49. R-L owned by Martin McManamon

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 A Feasibility Study for Údarás na Gaeltachta on *Linking Innishbiggle Island with County Mayo*, 3 June 1986, by Thomas Garland and Partners, Consulting Engineers, Dublin.
Innishbiggle Community Council regarding the feasibility study three years before and petition with signatures.
 RTE (Irish TV) programme and booklet 1988-9, *The Parting – Christy Henry*.

Donna Ohl Allen lives with her husband for several months of the year on Innishbiggle, Achill Sound. She is president of her local historical society in Chester, Ohio, U.S.A



Innishbiggle

Dr. Lynagh, Bishop of Achonry

*Notes made at the instigation of the late Rev. Anthony O'Toole,
P.P. Aughagower (died 1947)*

The trouble over Dr. Lynagh's name seems to have been due to a badly-made 'a' in the Records, when the spelling Lynah was read as Lynch.

The inscription on the O'Gara-Lynagh slab in the wall of the old church in Aughagower is as follows:

Within are deposited the remains of Austin Lynagh, Willm. O'Gara, Ignatius Lynagh and Brid Lyh O'Gara with those of their children Jam^L M Anne L and Wenifred O'Malley Lynag. The Lord have mercy on their souls.

Ere^d by the R. R^d Doc^r C Lynagh, Bishop of Achonry 1806.

The following information comes from Mr. P. Moran, M.A. of Mulrany.

'... Another thing I can do is to make an attempt at placing the people, whose names are given on the Lynagh-O'Gara inscription at Aughagower. I have seen a published copy of Dr. Lynagh's will, and made extracts.

The will was made on 25 April 1808, and entered in the Diocesan Court for probate before Edmund Burton V.G. on 20 May 1808. So Dr. Lynagh died between the two dates.

This (Lynah) is the way the name is spelled all through the will, and explains the erroneous form of the Catholic Qualification Oath Rolls. The clerk, when copying on to the Rolls, mistook Lynah for Lynch, the much more familiar surname.

In the will he mentions among the legatees "Lucy, Charlot, Margret, and Charles O'Malley, the children of my deceased sister Winnifred O'Malley". This is plainly the Wenifred O'Malley (Lynag(h) of the Aughagower inscription.

In the will he also mentions his niece Maryanne Lynah, referring to said niece's living mother, Jane Cusack, and Jane's deceased husband James Lynah. This is, equally clearly, the James L of the inscription.

Now, according to the inscription, James L, M. Anne L and Wenifred O'Malley Lynag(h) were children of Ignatius Lynagh and Brid Lyh O'Gara. Here again the bishop puts the maiden name after the husband's surname. So the bishop's mother was Bridget O'Gara and his father Ignatius Lynagh. As to Austin Lynagh and William O'Gara, they may have been the bishop's grandfathers, or uncles of his, or a grandfather and an uncle.

In the beginning of the will the bishop says: "I desire to be interred at Aughagower in such manner as my executors shall think most decent and befitting."

Dr. Lynagh was not on good terms with his niece Maryanne Lynagh and her mother Jane Cusack, though he willed Maryanne "the one-fourth of the Issues and Profits of my houses, offices and plot on the east side of the chapel of Westport etc."

on certain conditions the breaking of which would entail Maryanne's being cut off with a "shilling and no more".

I wonder where was the chapel of Westport then (1808)? If I remember rightly it was Most Rev. Dr. Kelly, Archbishop of Tuam who first built on the present site, but I do not know when he built it. It may have been when he was P.P. of Westport, or later when he became Archbishop. He was Archbishop from 1809 to 1834 and he must have been P.P. of Westport from 1808, when Dr. Lynagh left it to become Bishop of Achonry till 1809. A glance at the stone over the door should give the date, which I cannot remember, but I think it is later than 1809¹. Of course, there may have been an earlier church on the same site, but I am inclined to think it may have been somewhere more out of the way of those people who hated "idolatrour practices". If we knew first where the church was, we could fix the property to the east of it.

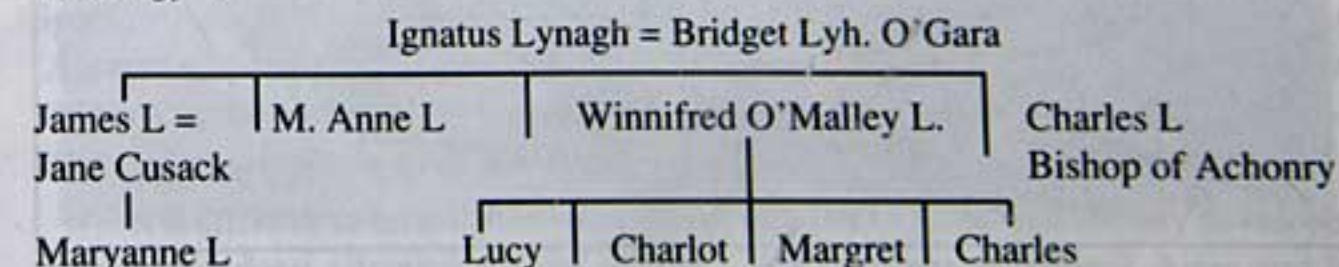
The fourth article of the will is: "I give &c to my niece Lucy O'Malley one-fourth of the Issues and Profits of my houses, offices and plot, as already mentioned in the third article, together with half the Issues and Profits arising from my park in Chrinicane, being part of Collera in the barony of Murrusk and parish of Aughval in the County of Mayo."

Where are Chrinicane and Collera?²

He left four guineas per annum to his housekeeper, Ann Filbin, widow, "for the term and space of five years from the day of my decease, exclusive of her wages, in consideration of her honesty while in my service".

His library he bequeathed to be divided equally between Rev. Thomas Kean, P.P. of Turlow, Rev. Jno. Gibbons (at present his [Kean's] coadjutor), and the Rev. John Burke, P.P. of Burrishoole.

Here is what Brady's *Episcopal Succession* has to say of him: "Achonry 1803. Charles Lynah LLD and P.P. Westport succeeded. The Pope approved in audience of April 28th and the Propaganda decree was dated April 29th 1803. Lynah was also V.G. of Tuam, when promoted. He was consecrated before June 4th 1804. Bishop Lynah had been an alumnus of the Irish College, Rome and had distinguished himself greatly in the Propaganda. He belonged to an ancient and highly respected Irish family. He was sometime P.P. of Castlerea in Elphin and Canon of Achonry. He was postulated for by the clergy".



Note

1. 1813 is the date on the stone at the church. – (Editor).
2. The place-name Collera may be Culoughra



The Centenary of Admiral William Brown, founder of the Argentine Navy, 1957. The bronze bust of Admiral Brown by the Argentine sculptor Julio Cesar Vergottini presented to Ireland by the Asociación Cultural Vuelta de Rocha, Buenos Aires to mark the centenary and now displayed at the Admiral's birthplace, Foxford, Co. Mayo. (Photo courtesy 'The Irish Sword').

Admiral Brown of Argentina

(Part I)

By Tom Walsh

Irish soldiers and sailors have fought under foreign flags for centuries, but the achievements of our seamen are not as well known to the public. History dictated their entry into foreign service under various colours – British, Spanish, Dutch and many another. They confronted England's enemies upon many a blood-red tide, and they fought with Washington and one of them founded his navy – John Barry of Wexford.

In the saga of these salt-water Wild Geese, few if any could rival in fame and renown the deeds of Mayoman William Brown. He achieved much for his adopted homeland in a long and eventful career, and on his death passed into the consciousness of a grateful Argentinian people as one of the father figures of their nationhood.

BEGINNINGS

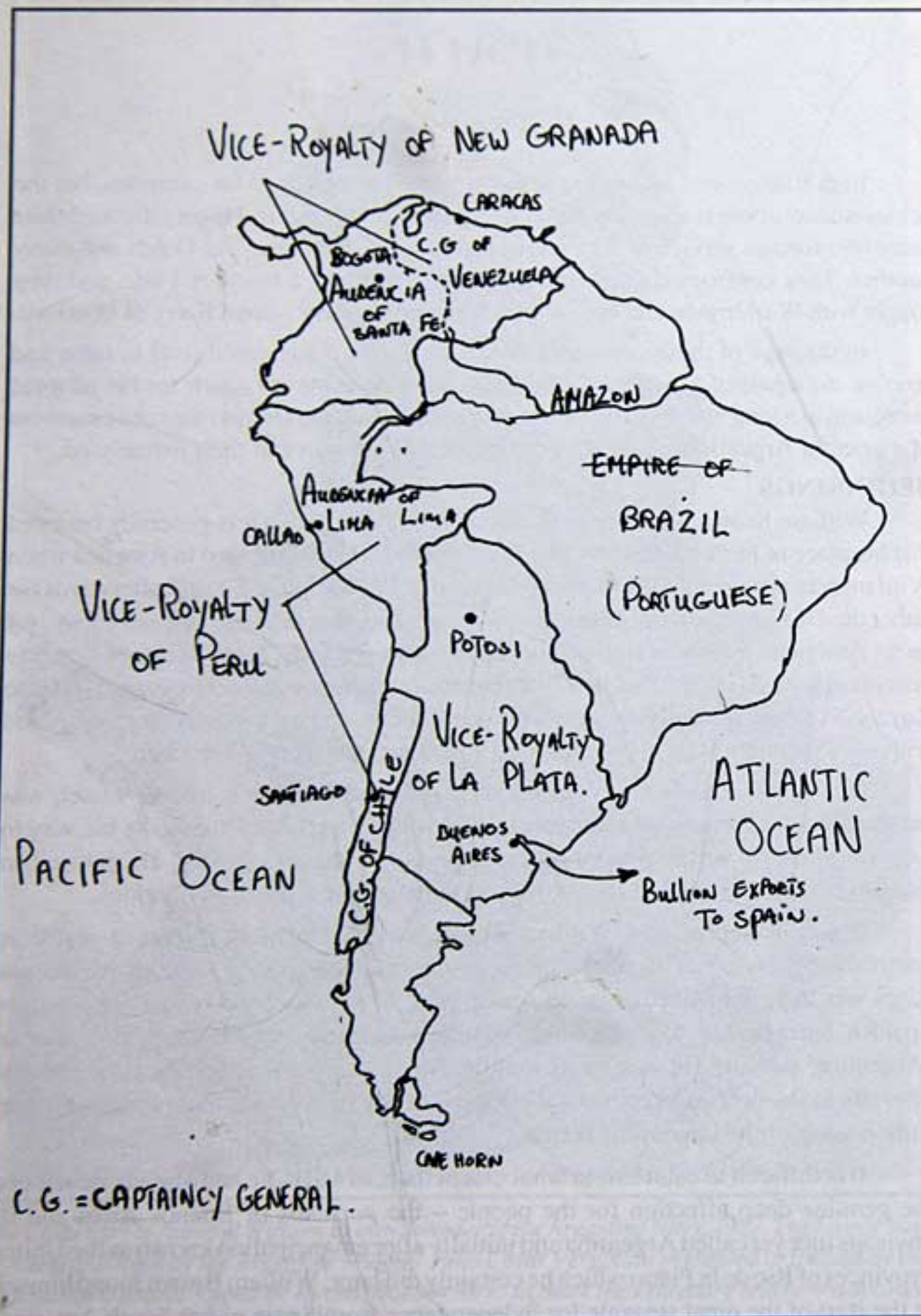
William Brown was born in Foxford on 22 June 1777. (It is generally believed that his place of birth was Providence Road).¹ The family emigrated to America when William was nine years old in 1786 and settled in Philadelphia. Shortly afterwards his father died leaving the family destitute, and it appears that he signed on as a cabin-boy on an American merchant ship and began his sea-faring life. Knowledge of his early years is somewhat scant, but in 1796 he either joined or was press-ganged² into the Royal Navy. Subsequently, however, his years in England were mainly successful, and without doubt improved his seamanship which was to stand to him later.

During the Napoleonic War he commanded an English merchant vessel, was captured by the French and imprisoned in Verdun. He escaped and made his way to London where he was to find employment in the coastguard service. He married an English woman named Elizabeth Chitty in an Anglican Church in London³.

It would appear that William Brown now intended to pursue a maritime commercial career. The original impulse, unquestionably, that brought him to Buenos Aires was to seek his fortune as an ocean-going shipowner, and it was only tactless Spanish harassment of his trading ventures that was later to turn him into an 'Argentine' patriot.⁴ He was aware that the British had well-established commercial interests in the port and capital of the Vice-Royalty of La Plata, but presumably had little inkling of the impending revolt.

It is difficult to establish to what extent then, in 1810, he had already developed the genuine deep affection for the people – the *portenos* of Buenos Aires and its environs (not yet called Argentina and initially after emancipation known as the United Provinces of Rio de la Plata) which he certainly did later. William Brown found himself at the start of the great struggle for independence from Spain of her South American

SPANISH SOUTH AMERICA (late 18th Century)



colonies. Evidence of his arrival in Buenos Aires comes from the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.⁵ The information was given by Señor Don José Nicolás de Jorge, whose father heard it from Brown himself.

The following is a literal translation:

The Irishman William Brown came to Buenos Aires in 1810 in command of a ship bringing a cargo to the English firm of Thomas Jones. He remained in Buenos Aires, whence he made numerous journeys to the colony of Sacramento as a trader. At the beginning of 1813 the ships of Montevideo captured two of his boats bringing cargoes from Sacramento to Buenos Aires. Brown wrote a letter to General Vigodet, governor of Montevideo, requesting him to release the crews for they were innocent people who were doing no more than earning their living. General Vigodet answered him in unsavoury terms, telling him that should Brown fall into his hands he would receive the same treatment. This caused Brown to become so indignant that, having until then remained indifferent to events, he declared himself openly for the patriots. After this he was asked to take the supreme command, which he accepted, of the ships which the government of Buenos Aires was enlisting for the attack of the naval base of Buenos Aires. When Vigodet was made prisoner in Montevideo he was sent aboard Brown's ship, who, despite what happened between them, procured for him what clothes he needed and even lent him 100 crowns in gold for his journey, a sum which Vigodet returned to him as soon as he reached Spain. This conduct was greatly to Brown's credit.

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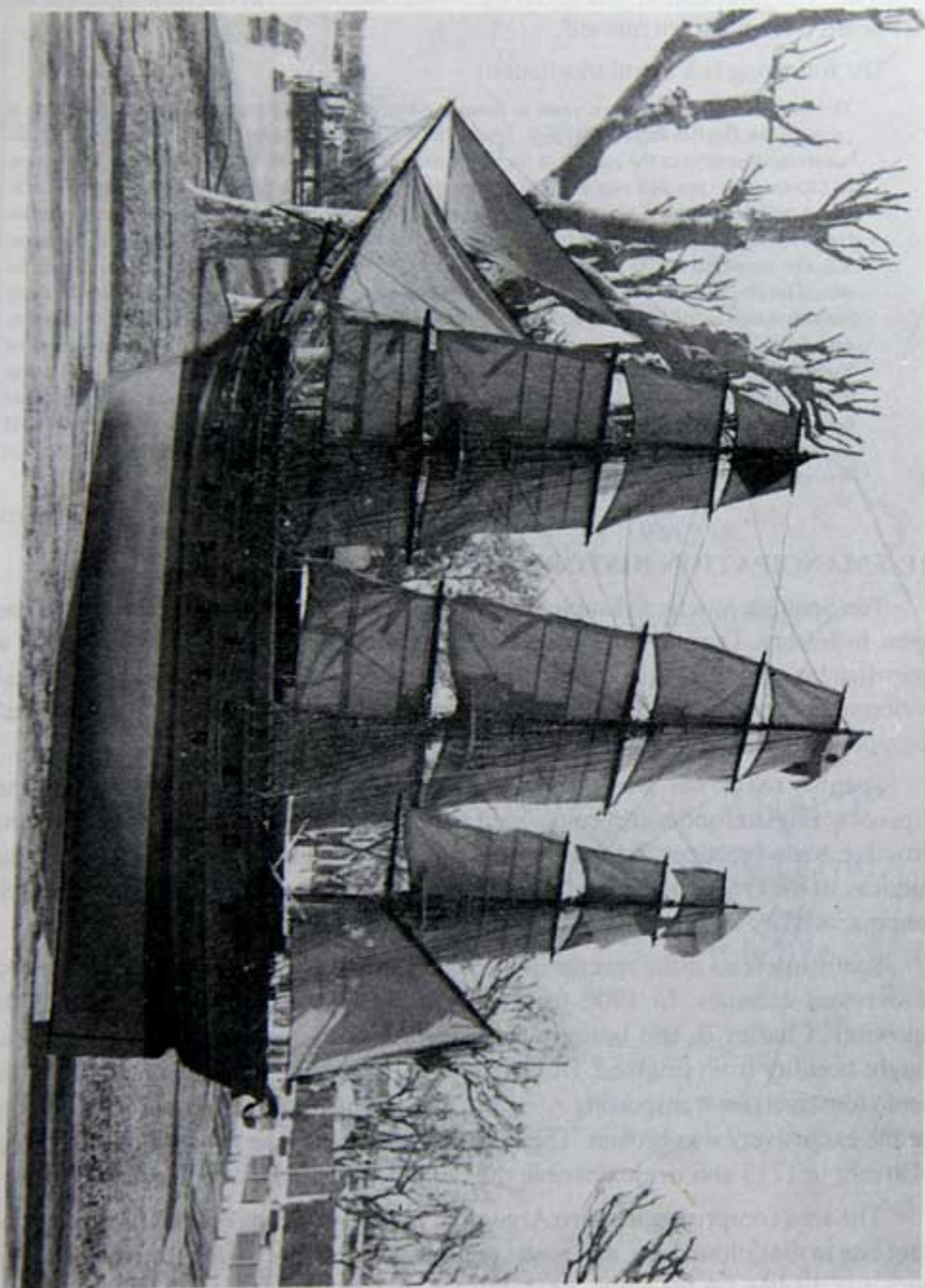
PRE-EMANCIPATION HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Spanish American Empire lasted almost three centuries and was one of the largest in history. Despite its apparent stability and permanence, it was ruled in a somewhat lax and lethargic manner and was never to reach a stage of political development comparable to British North America. There were good historical and geographical reasons for this.

Spanish sea-power was on the wane: it had long ago been challenged and eclipsed by England and had been plagued with piracy. Furthermore, mercantilist and restrictive trade practices, whose purpose was the channelling of the riches of the Americas to the crown of Spain, had almost the opposite effect in that they reduced economic activity and encouraged contraband trade.

Spanish defeats in the seventeenth century certainly retarded the development of her overseas colonies. In 1700 the Bourbon Philip V succeeded the last of the Hapsburgs, Charles II, and brought the empire under French influence, but it also brought hostility from England, Holland and Austria. In 1701 the French gained the asiento (contract) for transporting African slaves to Spanish dominions and the fiction of trade exclusivity was broken. Then the British claimed the asiento after the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 and made possible the rapid development of contraband trade.⁶

The area comprising modern Argentina was of little interest to the Spanish until rather late in the colonial era, and it was regarded as a hostile unproductive backwater. There was disdain for the south, probably for climatic reasons, and although Buenos Aires was founded in 1535 (to be re-established in 1580), it remained a largely forgotten outpost on the Rio de la Plata (River Plate) at the head of the flood-prone



Admiral Brown's Ship. A model of *Hércules*, Brown's flagship at Martín García and Montevideo, 1814, in the Naval Museum, San Isidro, Argentina. (Photo courtesy 'The Irish Sword'.)

Parana delta. It never compared to Lima – Callao or Mexico City in the colonial era. It was as late as 1776 that the Spanish set up a separate Vice-Royalty of La Plata in Buenos Aires with control over most of present day North Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia. Its aim was to oversee the wealth of the River Plate Provinces in general, and the bullion mined from the mountain of silver at Potosí⁷ (now in Bolivia), in particular.

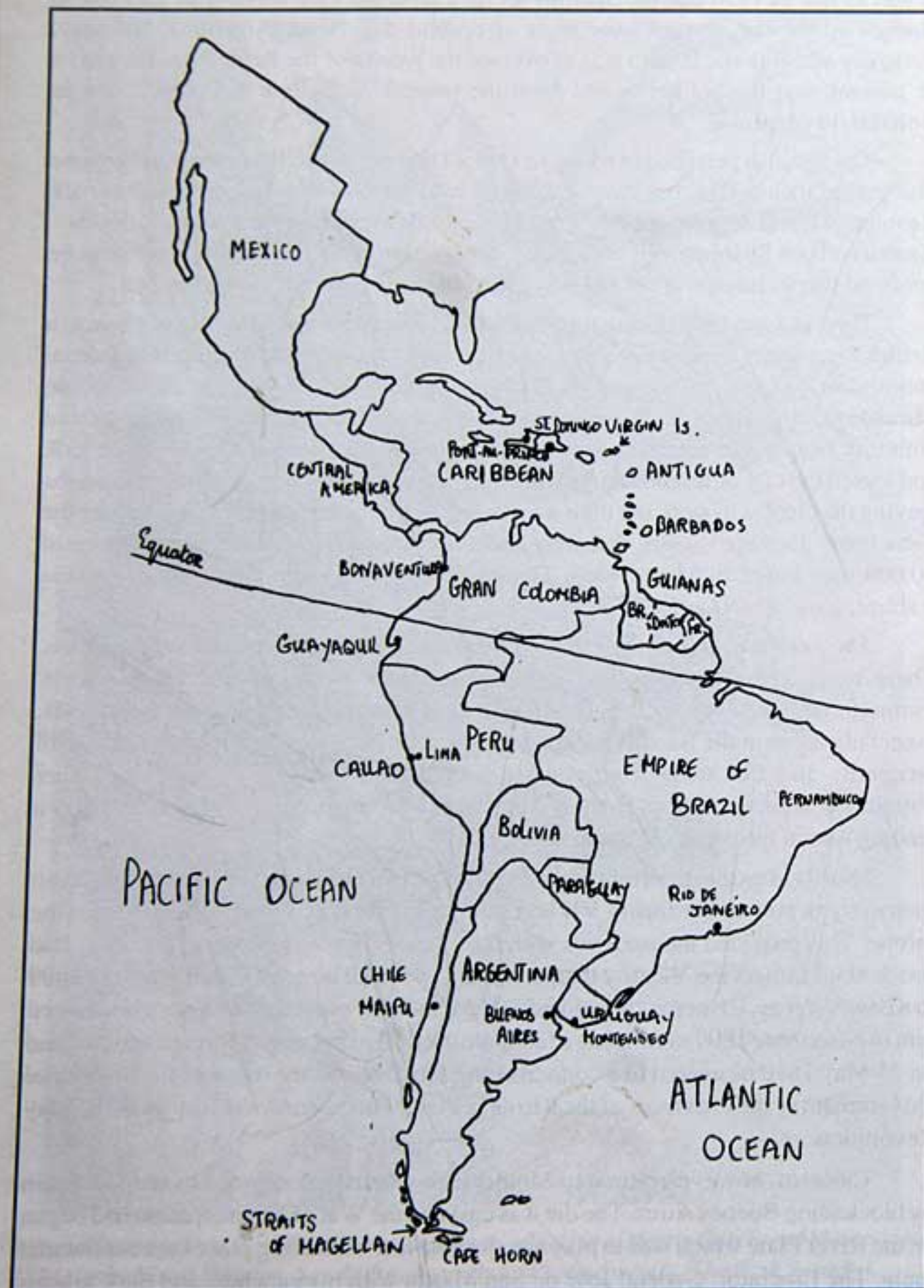
The Spanish persisted in trying to stop all trade between the colony and anyone else except themselves, but the *portenos* were to learn of the American and French Revolutions, and so a republican spirit began to dawn among the creoles (criollos – American born Spanish), not unlike that displayed in New England. It was not to be confined just to Buenos Aires but was found in many parts of South America.

Then in June 1806 during the Napoleonic War, with Spain an ally of France, a British force under Commodore Sir Home Popham,⁸ in command of a naval squadron, and almost certainly influenced by his contacts with the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda (idealist father of South American independence) in London, landed without authority from his government 1,700 men under Colonel Beresford. This force took and looted the city of Buenos Aires while the Spanish Viceroy fled inland to Cordoba leaving the creoles to work out their own defence, which they did by August under the Frenchman Santiago Liniers, defeating also a later second reinforcement expedition of 10,000 men based in Montevideo. The British, meeting with fierce urban guerilla warfare, gave up and left.

The *portenos*, left in the lurch by Spain, had beaten an invader on their own. There was a clear lesson in this and news of their victory spread far and wide. Furthermore, the seven months the British held Montevideo had given the creoles, especially those in the Banda Oriental (east bank of the Uruguay River), a glimpse of prosperity and free trade from contact with British traders. The seeds of future Uruguayan separatism from Buenos Aires were also sown. Montevideo would play a leading role in throwing off Spanish authority.

Shortly after the departure of the British forces, Napoleon overthrew the Spanish monarchy deposing Ferdinand VII and putting his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the throne. This provided the *portenos* with the chance they were waiting for. They had proclaimed Liniers the Viceroy themselves in 1809, but he gave way on 19 July 1809 to a new Viceroy, Cisneros,⁹ appointed in the name of Ferdinand. The *portenos* forced him in November 1809 to concede a fair measure of free trade with foreign nations, and on 25 May 1810 he agreed to a council being formed with the name of the Provincial Government of the Provinces of the Rio de la Plata. This is known to history as the May Revolution.

Cisneros, however, retired to Montevideo where he continued to support Spain by blockading Buenos Aires. The die was cast and the War of Emancipation had begun on the River Plate which was to play a major role in a war taking place on a continental scale. The Liberator, General José de San Martín with his gauchos, and the Chileans



under Bernardo O'Higgins in the South and Simon Bolivar in the North, were the most important figures in this struggle to overthrow the Empire.

WAR OF EMANCIPATION – BIRTH OF A NAVY

William Brown came to Buenos Aires in command of his own ship the *Eloise*¹⁰. He ran aground in her during the Spanish blockade in 1811 and from the proceeds of the salvaged cargo, purchased another ship, the *Industria*, which was later sunk by the Spaniards. It appears he also purchased two more ships from the proceeds of an insurance policy, and later with the help of a small group of Irish, English and Scottish sailors, captured a Spanish warship which he brought in triumph to Buenos Aires. This incident is most certainly a reprisal for the seizure of his two ships and crews by General Vigodet. Brown's exploits attracted the attention of the patriots whose first flotilla was defeated in 1811 by the Spanish. They were not long in calling upon him to build up another one, and on March 1814 gave him command of the navy of the United Provinces with the rank of Navy Lieutenant Colonel.¹¹

A committee was then set up to outfit the patriot navy and discord broke out among the revolutionary factions. Some of them thought it better to further strengthen the army as against the expense of a navy. One of this group was General San Martin who at this time was aiding Chile in her fight for freedom. The reason for this discord was based on the traditional rivalry between the *portenos* of Buenos Aires and the *gauchos* of the surrounding provinces. This rivalry was to be a recurring theme throughout Brown's lifetime, and was to remain so afterwards in the political life of Argentina.

Brown now set himself the task of building up a navy and it was due largely to the military governor of Buenos Aires, General Alvear,¹² that he was able to perform his task. He had an able second in Captain Baxter, and together they build up a force of two corvettes, three brigs, a brigantine, a schooner and a number of smaller ships. They were originally merchant vessels which were adapted and armed. By 8 March 1814 he had three ships ready: his flagship *Hercules*, the *Nancy* and the *Cefiro* under the command of an Irishman John Santiago King.

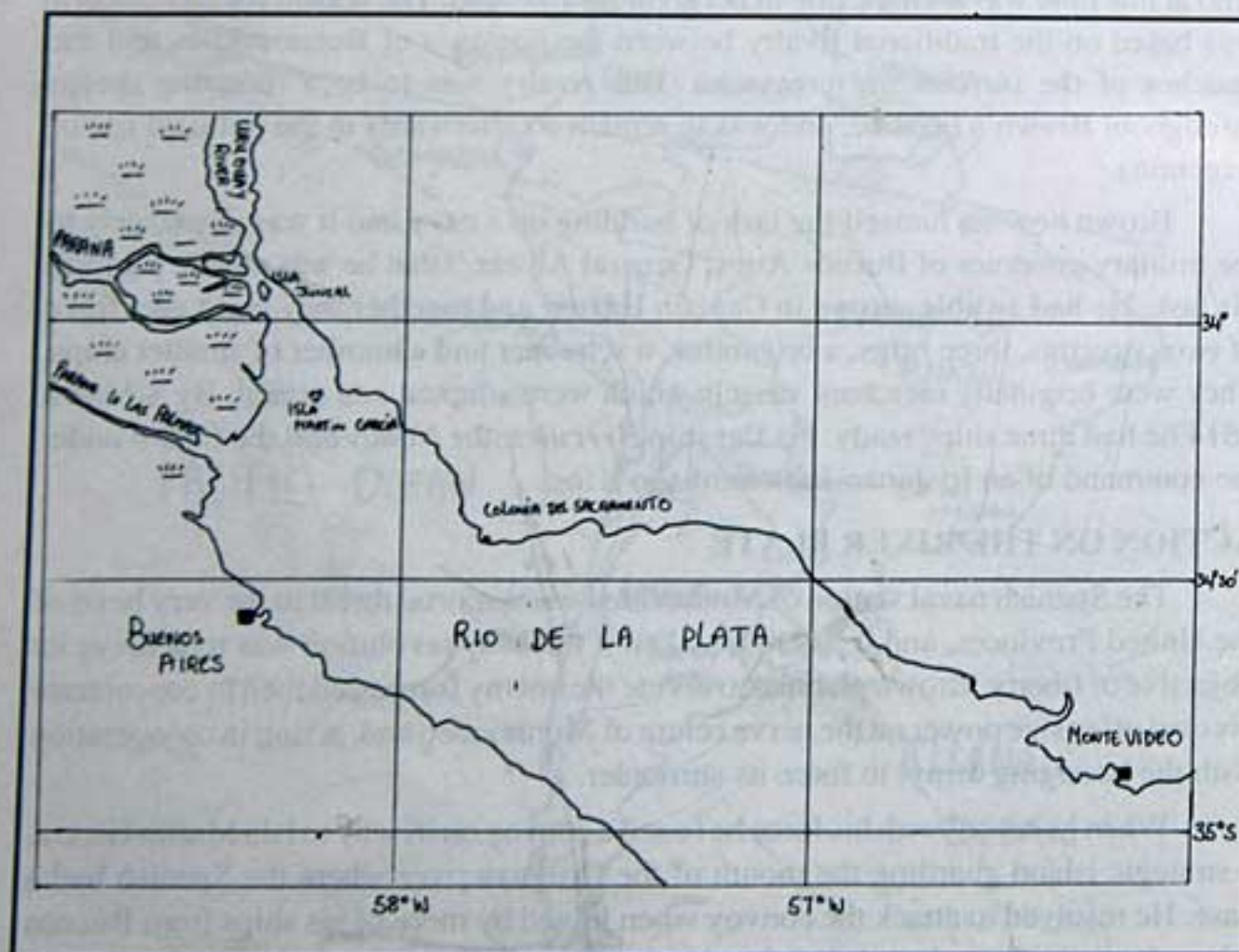
ACTION ON THE RIVER PLATE

The Spanish naval station of Montevideo was a mortal threat to the very heart of the United Provinces, and it had to be taken if the May revolution was to achieve its objective of liberty. Brown planned to divide the enemy forces and then to concentrate his own offensive power on the nerve centre of Montevideo and, acting in co-operation with the besieging army, to force its surrender.

When he set out with his force he found a convoy on its way to Isla Martin Garcia, a strategic island guarding the mouth of the Uruguay river where the Spanish had a base. He resolved to attack the convoy when joined by more of his ships from Buenos Aires. It was still much stronger than his force and had anchored off the island under the protection of a shore battery.

When Brown attacked, the quarter-master of the *Hercules* was killed and his ship ran aground, but he still continued to fire until nightfall. During the night of 15 March the ship floated off with the rising tide, and he now visited all the vessels in his flotilla to plan a landing on the island in the early morning of 16 March. The crews went ashore at 4 a.m., stormed the battery and turned the guns on the enemy fleet. A favourable wind (ultimately more so for Brown) blew most of the Spanish ships clear of the shore battery and up the Uruguay river, but it left *Romarate*,¹³ the Royalist commander, bottled up in Arroyo De La China when Brown captured Isla Martin Garcia. He captured a supply ship which he sent back to Buenos Aires with the request that another ship, the *Belfast*, be sent out to him, and he left some others to guard the mouth of the Uruguay.

Brown had now divided the Spanish fleet, and he sailed for Montevideo to attack the remainder and force it to come out and fight to keep their supply lines open. Captain Sierra¹⁴ with the rest of the divided Royalist forces and commanding 13 ships, came out to fight against Brown's flotilla of 8 ships, but the Irishman lured him into deep water and in a brilliant manoeuvre broke his line and captured 3 vessels. This action took place on the night of 16 March and on the following morning 3 more ships were forced ashore. Thus does history record that Naval Colonel Brown¹⁵ broke the power of Spain at sea, and gave the United Provinces mastery of the River Plate on St. Patrick's Day



Rio de La Plata – River Plate.

1814. While the crew of his ship rejoiced in victory and all his fleet saluted him with canon salvoes, to which were joined those of the besieging army, the hero descended to his cabin to give thanks to God 'for the complete and glorious victory given to the arms of the homeland under his command'.¹⁶

The besieging army under General Alvear a few months later took Montevideo, seizing 18 warships and more than 80 merchant ships. The patriot Commander General San Martin now recognised the great strategic significance of the fall of Montevideo, and the military stores taken equipped his army on his epic march across the Andes to later win independence for Chile by sealing the issue in 1818 at the Battle of Maipu. These two victories effectively ended Spanish control over the southern part of South America and made possible the later liberation of Peru in 1820.

The action of the River Plate was over and the fleet was now disbanded in a dangerous and short-sighted manner, without consideration for the fact that a navy is an indispensable instrument of power – a lesson Buenos Aires would recall to its cost a decade later.

OCEAN VOYAGES

It was now that William Brown displayed his enterprising spirit. He departed the River Plate in the *Hercules* and the brig *Trinidad*, intent on a privateering¹⁷ cruise in the Pacific on the coasts of the Viceroyalties of Peru and New Granada. He rounded Cape Horn and entered the Pacific sailing in company with the sloop *Halcon*, commanded by Bouchard. This campaign upset the Spaniards, who were surprised by the appearance of privateers from Buenos Aires. Documents¹⁸ in Madrid for the years 1815-1820 reveal details of his movements and refer to Brown's ships as insurgent corsairs. Brown attacked and blockaded Callao, the port of Lima, and there he boarded and captured the Spanish frigate *Consecuencia*¹⁹ 27 January 1816. This was put under the command of Bouchard and was later to be renamed *La Argentina* and immortalized in the naval annals of Argentina, because of its deeds of valour in a very long two year voyage over a large part of the oceans of the world. Brown spent over three years on his adventurous cruises and took many prizes. He still held the rank of Naval Colonel with which he had been accredited in the Montevideo campaign.

The following extract is taken from the *Wexford Herald*²¹, Monday, 12 May 1817, page 3:

The following letter communicates a variety of interesting particulars respecting the recent expedition of the Republican Admiral Brown to the coasts of the Pacific, his subsequent arrival in the West Indies, and the seizure and condemnation of his principal vessel there, as lawful prize to the British flag:

"Barbadoes, February 1. – The well-known Brown, Admiral to the Buenos Ayres Government, was some time ago fitted out with a small squadron, to cruise along the western coast of South America, nearly the whole of which still remains faithful to the mother country. Brown, after a variety of adventures, made his appearance at Barbadoes with one ship the *Hercules*, under Portuguese colours – he endeavoured to enter at the Custom-house, in order that he might sell his cargo and get a clearance but the Custom-house would have nothing to do with him. The

Brazen sloop of war being at this time at Barbadoes, and about to proceed to the Commander-in-Chief, at Antigua, Brown requested leave of the Captain (Stirling), to proceed to that port under his convoy.

"This the Captain readily granted; but learning afterwards some suspicious circumstances of Brown, he thought proper, in the course of the voyage, to hold the vessel as detained, and took her in as such to Antigua, where she was tried and ultimately condemned as a lawful prize. She is supposed to be worth nearly one hundred thousand pounds. An appeal has been entered by Brown.

"From Brown's account of his voyage, it appears, that after leaving Buenos Ayres he doubled Cape Horn, and made a great number of captures, to the amount of a million and a half of money. He made descents both at Lima and Guayaquil. At the former place he was made prisoner with a few of his men, and would have been immediately put to death, but for the fortunate circumstance of having a few days before captured a ship with the Governor of Lima on board, in consequence of which a treaty of exchange was entered into, by which Brown's second in command agreed to give up the Governor, with several prizes, and a considerable sum of money, as ransom for Brown.

"In the attack on Guayaquil, he lost one of his squadron, a brig of 16 guns, which grounded, and could not be got off. After extending his cruise as far north as Bonaventura, he shaped his course for Magellan's Straits, in passing through which he lost another of his ships. He had now only 2 ships left, the *Hercules* and *Consequencia*, the latter, which was by far the most valuable of the two, parted company after they had got clear of the Straits, and has not since been heard of. Brown now proceeded onwards to Buenos Ayres, till he spoke a vessel, which informed him that a military force had gone from Rio Janeiro against Buenos Ayres, when he determined to steer for another port, to avoid being captured by the Portuguese squadron. He accordingly put into Pernambuco, but not being able to gain any intelligence there respecting the Portuguese armament, he left it and came to Barbadoes, where he arrived about the 25th of last September.

"Besides this account of Browne's own, several other particulars have come to our knowledge here, to which I think every credit may be attached. After he had received his orders to sail from Buenos Ayres, the ruling party sent down a request that he would delay his departure for a week; but instead of complying with it, he sailed much earlier than he originally intended, being probably impressed with the idea that if he stopped the expedition might be ultimately countermanded. His wife and family, who were living at Buenos Ayres, he had previously taken the precaution to send over into the Portuguese territories. You will recollect that the Government of Buenos Ayres afterwards sent out a squadron into the Pacific Ocean for the express purpose of bringing Brown in, and there seems little doubt that it was in consequence of his being apprized of this, that he passed through the dangerous navigation of the Magellan's Straits, in order to avoid them on his way back.

"It is a fact also that, after accomplishing that arduous task, and when he concluded that there was no further occasion for keeping up his warlike character, he threw his guns into the hold and acquainted the crew that they were no longer to consider themselves in a man of war, but a merchantman, and not to address him as Admiral, but as Captain Brown.

"From all these circumstances, there appears every probability that having amassed considerable wealth under the Republican Government, but being, from its jealousy and unstableness, distrustful of his setting sail from Buenos Ayres, [he] meditated and arranged the plan of not returning to it.

"The *Hercules*, though not built for a man of war, mounted 40 guns, and had a complement of 180 men. Her master (Mr. Chitty) was a relative of Brown's, and had, I believe, been a Midshipman in our Navy. The other two ships were each equal in men and guns to a sloop of war. Brown appears to be an intelligent, shrewd, prudent man, of gentlemanly manners, and likely to make friends wherever he goes. He was much respected, and very popular among his officers and crew.

"I believe the ground on which the *Hercules* has been condemned is a breach of the Navigation Laws. She had no register or clearance from any port. I scarcely think she could be condemned in consequence of being an insurgent vessel, since our Authorities here have constantly refused to interfere in the least between the contending parties. From the best information I can obtain, the Royalist Party appear to have gained a considerable ascendancy. Although the Insurgents had some months since greatly augmented their strength by recruits from St. Domingo and the Virgin Islands, they appear to have been totally defeated under Bolivar – nor do we hear of their having made a stand anywhere in the North for a long time.

"The younger Mina, son of the gallant Spaniard of that name, is now at Port-au-Prince with Petion, who seems extremely friendly to the cause of the Patriots, allowing them to secure whatever supplies they want in his dominions, and even his own people volunteer in their service. Many English as well as French officers have gone over to serve in the Patriot Army."

The above account from the *Wexford Herald* gives us a sympathetic contemporary account of William Brown both as a man and as a seaman. There is little doubt that he could have retired with his family to Europe after his long cruises were over, but he chose instead the hazards of life in his adopted homeland.

'Admiral Brown' became the scourge of the Spanish in the Pacific, Atlantic and Caribbean, but his renown also made him vulnerable to the political in-fighting and jealousy among rival factions in Buenos Aires. The expedition sent after Brown was, of course unsuccessful. His second in command, Bouchard of St. Tropez, returned to Buenos Aires on 18 June 1816 in the *Consequencia* (still not heard of at Barbadoes nearly seven months later). Bouchard was put on trial on various charges but was acquitted, and the following year in the *Consequencia* (originally the Spanish frigate taken by Brown and Bouchard on 27 January 1816 off the Peruvian coast and now rechristened *La Argentina*, first ship of the name²²) he made a daring raid across the Pacific on the Philippines.

Brown retired in late 1819 or early 1820 to settle down with his family in Buenos Aires, but his adopted homeland would once more need his services in 1825 in the war with the Brazilian empire.

(To be continued)

NOTES

1. Bernard O'Hara, *Mayo*, p.258.
2. Bernard Share & William Bolger, *Irish Lives*, p 362. At this time much naval recruitment was done in this way – young men were captured when wandering around a port and forcibly enlisted as crew members for men-of-war.
3. Dr. John De Courcy Ireland (personal communication). A copy of the marriage certificate exists in the Boole Library, U.C.C.
4. Dr. John De Courcy Ireland (personal communication).
5. *The Irish Sword*, Vol. 3, p 19. (Walsh, M. K. 'Unpublished Admiral Brown Documents in Madrid' from *La Colección de Documentos de America* of the Biblioteca Nacional).
6. George Camacho, *Latin America*, p 40.
7. Peter d'A Jones, *Since Columbus*, p 20. Argentina gets its name from the Latin word for silver (Argentum).

8. George Camacho, *Latin America*, p 54.
9. *Irish Lives*, p 362.
10. Bernard O'Hara, *Mayo*, p 258.
11. *Irish Lives*, p 365.
12. *Ibid.*, p 365.
13. *The Irish Sword*, vol. 3, p 5.
14. *Irish Lives*, p 365.
15. *The Irish Sword*, vol.3, p 5.
16. *Ibid.*, p 5.
17. Dr. John De Courcy Ireland (personal communication): 'A privateer (corsair) has to possess a "Letter of marque" from a government authorising him to attack and capture ships of any hostile nation, and the profits of these captures are then divided out in varying but very definitely pre-determined proportions, between the appropriate government and the captain (or owner) and the crew.' Privateers were often guilty of cheating (not declaring all the takings) and it may well have been such an allegation that was later to get Brown into trouble.
18. *The Irish Sword*, Vol.3, pp 17-18, 'Unpublished Admiral Brown Documents in Madrid' from *Los Papeles de Expediciones de India* of the Archives of the Museo Naval).
19. *The Irish Sword*, Vol. 3, p 5.
20. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p 5.
21. *The Irish Sword*, Vol.6, pp 119-21. Brown is referred to here as an Admiral, although his official rank was that of Naval Colonel when he retired after his ocean voyages.
22. *Ibid.*, p 121.

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Acknowledgement

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William Hamilton Maxwell

(1792-1850),

author of *Wild Sports of the West*

By Sheila Mulloy

William Hamilton Maxwell, one of the most popular writers of his day, is now largely unknown, apart from his *Wild Sports of the West* which has always been greatly prized in Co. Mayo where he enjoyed the sporting exploits recounted in the book. A very different work of his, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798*, is still of value to the historian. Although loyalist and unionist to the core, he wrote 'for the moderate of both sections', and condemned the undue severity of those charged with the suppression of the rebellion.¹

Bord at Newry, Co. Down, the son of a merchant, James Maxwell, and a daughter of William Hamilton, he was educated at Dr. Henderson's school and entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1807 at the age of fifteen. Here he established his reputation for wit and conviviality, and 'began that taste which has since marked somewhat of his later life - a craving appetite for adventure of every kind; reading everything save what the College course prescribed, he passed his examinations without study, trusting to his previously acquired knowledge; and at nineteen took his Bachelor's degree; his most distinguished reputation being more familiar to the under graduates than the board.'²

He had always been attracted to the military life, but an aunt from whom he expected to inherit a fortune was strongly opposed to such a move, and threatened to disinherit him if he took this step. So, eventually, he decided to become a minister of the Church of Ireland in accordance with the wishes of his family. He was ordained a deacon at Carlow in 1813, and served as a curate in Clonallon in Co. Down until 1819. Here he became chaplain of the local Masonic Lodge, and enjoyed the company of the army officers of his native Newry.

Maxwell was to be disappointed in his hopes of inheritance, because his aunt's will had not been properly drawn up. However, he rectified this state of affairs to a certain extent in 1817 through his marriage to a wife who brought him money, position and happiness. In 1819 he was appointed to the prebendal stall of Balla in the Cathedral of St. Mary's Tuam.³ In this small Co. Mayo town he had practically no congregation, and was able to immerse himself in gentlemanly pursuits and embark on his career of historical writer and romantic novelist. The Marquess of Sligo befriended him and lent him a shooting lodge at Ballycroy, where his enforced leisure and isolation were to provide him with the opportunity to study the wild life of the area, and to learn at first hand the local legends which held such a fascination for him. According to some



Revd. William Hamilton Maxwell (1762-1850)

authorities the Marquess went further, and provided him with a house rent-free in Balla so that he would have the benefit of a stimulating companion within easy reach of Westport House.⁴

O'Hara; or 1798 was his first published work. This appeared anonymously in 1825 and met with little success. However, his later novels of a military flavour established his reputation and ran into several editions. In fact he can be said to have created the genre. The conservative *Dublin University Magazine*, to which he contributed, states that

in the walk he has chosen, he is unrivalled in the easy portraiture of the Irish gentleman, and particularly where that gentleman is a soldier; in the delineation of that strange mixture of recklessness, and feeling of acuteness, and simplicity of jovial abandonment to pleasure, with a heart bounding in ambition, he has few rivals; but in the graphic description of the more striking vicissitudes of a soldier's life – the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war, he has no equal with him.⁵

His second published work was the *Stories of Waterloo* (1829). This, together with *The Bivouac; or stories of the Peninsular War* (1837), and especially his *Life of Field Marshal His Grace the Duke of Wellington* (1839-41), painted such a vivid picture of the campaigns against the French, that it was readily believed that Maxwell had in fact joined the British army. He came to be identified with a certain Hamilton Maxwell who featured on the Army List of 1813 as having obtained a captaincy in 1812. This error actually crept into the *Dictionary of National Biography* and other notices at the time of his death. However, Lever, who knew him intimately, maintained that Maxwell was never a soldier, and Sir Herbert Maxwell finally laid the error to rest by proving that the Captain Hamilton Maxwell who fought at Waterloo was a member of his own family.⁶

Far from being in the British army, our writer was all this time a country curate in Ireland devouring books of romance and history, and absorbing the details of army life at second hand from his association with the members of the nearby garrison at Newry. When he later transferred to Co. Mayo, this early reading and taste for military company stood him in good stead, and he drew on a near inexhaustible store of anecdotes and characters which had been laid up in his memory. No doubt he also added to that store by making friends with the officers of the garrisons in the area, at Ballinrobe, Castlebar and Westport. His most enduring work of a military nature for the Irish reader is the afore-mentioned *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798* which appeared in 1845. Although it has been illustrated offensively by George Cruikshank, and has been castigated by Dr. Hayes and other nationalist writers, it gives a fair enough view of the rebellion and its aftermath. He draws largely on published sources, but uses Dr. Madden as freely as Musgrave and other loyalist historians, and comes to some well-judged conclusions as to the reasons for the easy defeat of the rebels. In the west there were the strong tensions that existed between the disciplined republican and Godless French, and the untrained God-fearing western peasant. The northern Presbyterian, at first influenced by American and French egalitarian principles, was

soon to be won over by Orange extremism to a fear of domination by his Catholic fellow countrymen. His loyalty was to be further copper-fastened by the wealth engendered by the ship-building and linen industries. In the south the rebellion took a sectarian form. It was a Catholic mob avenging itself on a brutal establishment, and being broken by the trained soldiery. He was to conclude finally that the undue harshness of the military, especially against the western peasants after their abortive rising, was to prove counter-productive in the long run. 'There is no doubt that for one of the disaffected reclaimed by a sense of fear induced by indiscriminating severity, one hundred became malcontent first, and rebels afterwards.'⁷

In all Maxwell published some twenty-two works, most of which ran into several editions, and contributed to leading periodicals. He also edited *The Military and Naval Almanack* for 1840 and 1841, and contributed to a volume on *Sporting* (London 1838) by 'Nimrod' (i.e. Charles James Apperley). Drawn into the literary movements of the time, he was to write several romantic novels which were extremely popular in his day but lack appeal for the modern reader. His special contribution lay in the delineation of the rollicking, feckless Irishman, who was to feature so prominently in the novels of the nineteenth century. He was one of the first to write of the 'mere Irishman', rural or urban, whose life was a constant struggle against starvation, and who lived only for the present hour and the fleeting pleasures that came his way. His superiors, Irish, Anglo-Irish, or English, when not involved with the gentlemanly pleasures of military life at home or abroad, enjoyed the pursuits of their class, which can be summed up as 'hard going' – hunting, fishing and shooting by day, with gambling and drinking by night. This class which held the land without the political power and wealth of their ancestors, found themselves to a large degree marooned on their country estates and had to take their pleasures where they could. Their forebears of the eighteenth century had been members of the Irish Parliament and maintained townhouses in Dublin, but the Act of Union made London the centre of parliamentary and social life, and this was beyond the reach of all but the very wealthy. Even the serious farmers among them found themselves under pressure to educate their children in England, and look for English heiresses for their sons who would maintain them in the style to which they had become accustomed.

Maxwell, while identifying with the gentry, was not unsympathetic to the common Irishry. He enjoyed their company and admired their ingenuity in forcing a subsistence from their inhospitable surroundings, which lie 'under a dark grey cloud, which is evermore discharging itself on the earth, but, like the widow's cruse, is never exhausted.'⁸ Above all, he was attracted by the folklore and customs of the people, and, mercifully, saw fit to relate them without the 'benefit' of an attempted rendering of local pronunciation and figures of speech. The odd Irish language word or phrase written phonetically is acceptable for local colour and is a reminder to the reader that here indeed is a different breed.

Wild Sports of the West shows Maxwell at his best. It was written as early as 1832,

and is his third published work. Written in a light, easy, witty style, it was a publication with all the ingredients for success at the time. Set in an isolated area 'as little known to the multitude as the interior of Australia'⁹, it was in the mainstream of the romantic movement. Its subject matter of fishing and shooting, which were then the principal occupations of gentlemen and would-be gentlemen, was guaranteed a wide readership. Erris was a veritable paradise of unlimited game waiting to be slaughtered by the 'quality' with the willing help of an army of hangers-on. As night fell our sportsmen relaxed before a bright bog-deal fire with their tobacco and decanters, after feasting on the contents of their bags and baskets, and listened to the piper playing to the assembled peasants dancing, drinking and feasting out of doors, with now and then some sad dirge interrupting the proceedings. Then, with the scene set for romantic reverie the house guests would be regaled with a local legend of dark deeds and star-crossed lovers. This book ran to no less than eighteen editions, the latest being in 1973. It is still immensely readable in spite of, or perhaps because, it treats of an Ireland that has changed utterly.

This urbane, gregarious and witty man was welcomed wherever he went. He was 'a fine, dashing-looking, long, well-knit fellow',¹⁰ fond of the good things of life, and totally unsuited to his chosen career of churchman. Although it is authoritatively stated that he was deprived of his living in 1844 because of non-residence¹¹, Francis C. Crossle, writing soon after his death, says that 'an unfortunate escapade, however, into which he was drawn by his innate love of mischief and drollery, obliged him to resign his curacy'. This was at Clonallon where he had been curate for a period of six years from 1813. He further relates that he had to abandon his subsequent curacy at Balla 'in consequence of the discovery of a huge practical joke, which he perpetrated upon his bishop', and that he then went to live at Portrush and there made the acquaintance of Charles Lever who was at that time a doctor in Portstewart.¹² This acquaintanceship is claimed by others to have developed at Clonallon, but a later date is far more likely in view of their respective ages. Lever was also an admirer of the military life and it is said that he was to use many of Maxwell's military anecdotes in his stories. Undoubtedly his writing was greatly influenced by that of his friend.¹³

It is, in fact, quite extraordinary how many details of the private life of such a prominent writer should be so shrouded in mystery even in his lifetime. His supposed career in the army has already been mentioned. Many authorities have also claimed that he spent several years travelling after graduating, when he was in fact discharging his clerical duties at Clonallon. We can only conclude that he did not choose to contradict these false impressions because they lent credence to his stories. Those details of events which he had not personally witnessed, he was able to supply from his reading and his conversations with participants. In his fictional work the details could be supplied by his imagination.

His works were enormously popular and provided a large income, but his lavish style of living put a strain on his finances. He eventually retired to Musselborough near



Maxwell's Leap, an impression by John Mulloy.

Edinburgh, and ended his days in some penury when failing health and a diminution of his creative genius deprived him of additional income. Although his reputation as a military historian and romantic novelist has waned somewhat over the years, he is secure of a place in the history of English literature because of his literary innovations. However, that masterpiece of his, *Wild Sports of the West* – a unique blend of the humorous and the serious, the romantic and the realistic – has never lost its appeal as 'the most popular and graphic description of sport in Ireland ever penned.'¹⁴

Appendix Maxwell's Leap¹⁵

At the foot of Croagh Patrick, on the southern shore of Clew Bay, there is a certain chasm or gulf separating a small island from the mainland, which is pointed out to the visitor as "Maxwell's Leap." It is of course well known that in Mayo dwelt for many years that "erring child of genius" William Maxwell, and in Westport House, the residence of the Marquis of Sligo, his first novel *The Wild Sports of the West*, was written. He was private chaplain to the father of the present lord, whose literary tastes led him to find in the talented clergyman a congenial companion, and as he spent much of his time in this county, the scenes of many of his best tales are laid in it.

Maxwell's history is well known to me, for I am at this present moment acquainted with some of those who have sat and listened while he "set the table in a roar" with his sparkling humour, or melted his hearers to tenderness by that touching pathos that abounds in his works. Nature had cast William Maxwell in his fairest mould, and to a rare and excellent genius, had added many personal graces. His stature was tall, his brow lofty and intellectual, eyes dark, and full of the softness and the fire of his nature. When he spoke his face was illumined, and you had but to glance at its animated features to see traces of the mind which glowed within.

Such was the busy fancy summoned to my mind's eye, as I stood a short time since on the spot from which he took the desperate leap over the hissing sullen water, on to the little isle which bears his name. The shores of Clew Bay are indented on every side with little caves and creeks, miniature harbours, in which the hardy fisherman finds a safe refuge when the clouds begin to descend ominously, veiling the bold summit of the rock (as Croagh Patrick is termed in Mayo) with a thick mist and darkening the waters at its base, but the coast is in other places bold and rugged, the cliffs steep and precipitous, rising abruptly from the sea. The bay is, as all my readers know, who have ever visited the West of Ireland, studded with islands of every shape and size, scattered as if by a careless hand "here and there, and everywhere." Never have I gazed on a more lovely scene than it presented one glorious summer morning, just as the sun was coming forth from his chambers in the east, like a "giant refreshed," bathing sea and sky in a rich flood of crimson and gold, so that the three hundred and sixty-five islands which deck its waters were, indeed, as Sir Walter Scott so beautifully expresses it – "Like emeralds chased in gold."



The scene at 'Maxwell's Leap', Old Head, Westport, Co. Mayo.

It was one of these same 365 islets which preserved Maxwell's life on the occasion to which I allude; preserved it, alas, for a sadder fate, a more melancholy end than even the horrible death he then escaped, for if he had fallen then, in the "noon of his fame," ere the lustre of his genius had been dimmed and spoiled, we would have mourned him as we mourn the warrior who, on the battle plain, dies as a brave man should, sword in hand, rather than in "inglorious ease" "he surfeited ingloriously out of action."

On a stormy day in autumn he, with a gay and noble party, drove along the shores of our most lovely bay, and leaving their carriages rambled to the spot where so many years later I, too, had wandered. It was the side of a steep hill terminating in a lofty and rugged cliff descending abruptly to the ocean, which on this autumn day, broke with tempestuous sound on the rock below. Here the noble company seated themselves on the soft velvety turf, and gazed with delighted eyes on the splendid prospect at their feet, watching the approach of a squall from the open sea. Presently it reached the group, and in its passage swept away down the hill the hat from off the head of a fair young girl who sat next to Maxwell. Obeying a sudden impulse he leaped to his feet, and disregarding the warning of his companions, pushed in pursuit of the flying head gear; but, before he was aware of his danger, he had lost all command over his movements, and as his friends, now breathless and terrified, saw he had disappeared over the precipice, they felt that unless a miracle were worked Maxwell must follow it, and that he would be dashed to atoms in the swelling gulf below. On, on he rushed – it must be to death; for what could save him? and as he reached the brink, surprise was added to their horror; for, raising himself as if for a tremendous effort, he sprang boldly over. A shriek burst from the female portion of the party, while the tears started to the eyes of the men, for he who had been so awfully removed from their gaze was the beloved of all; but as three or four of the most composed of the number, grasping each other's hands to steady their footsteps, were hurriedly approaching the edge of the cliff to look down if they might see even the mangled remains of their companion, a joyous ringing "hurrah" burst on their ears, rising above the roar of the angry ocean, and as they gazed anxiously over, what was their delight to see Maxwell standing safely on a little island to which he had sprung that terrible moment when, gathering all his energies, he determined to leap or die. In his right hand he waved the lost hat for which he had imperilled himself, and which from some freak of the wanton wind had been wafted to his very feet. The width of the gulf was so very great that there was no means of communicating with him until a boat had been sent for, when he was taken off amidst the joyous congratulations of his friends. Alas! poor Maxwell. Standing on the ground your footsteps have hallowed, I have mused over your wondrous talents, your rare gifts, your fascinating conversation, and your winning smile, and as I contrasted the bright dawning of your life, with its clouded and miserable end a pitying tear dimmed my eyes. On a wretched pallet in a garret in Edinburgh lay he who had once been "the observed of all observers," his fine frame emaciated by intemperance, which was, alas! the vice that did "most easily beset him," his beautiful face so wan and shrunken that few would

have recognised in it his Maker's image. Yet, oh, we humbly hope and pray that even in that solemn hour it was not all darkness, and that he saw his Saviour, though with blinded vision, "a light through the gloom," and though his love and hatred have alike perished, and the silent grave now contains him, he must for ever live in the hearts of his gallant and generous countrymen. Yes – of all the many names Ireland has added to the lists of fame few wear a brighter or a sadder lustre, in our eyes, than that of Maxwell. – *Irish Review*.

Notes

1. Preface to fourth edition (1854).
2. *Dublin University Magazine*, XVIII (August 1841), p 223.
3. Henry Cotton, *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae* (Dublin 1849), Vol. III, p 34.
4. *Dublin University Magazine*, XVIII (August 1841), p 224. The well-known episode of 'Maxwell's Leap' must have happened during Maxwell's sojourn in the west of Ireland. This apparently took place at Old Head, near Louisburgh, Co. Mayo. See Appendix.
5. *Ibid.*, p 222.
6. *The Irish Book Lover*, Edited by John S. Crone, Vol. VII, No. 1 (August 1915), p 9. The author would like to thank Miss Elizabeth Parker of Cambridge University for her help with research into this area of Maxwell's life.
7. *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798* (1854), p 328.
8. As quoted in *Wild Sports of the West* (1892), p 23.
9. *Ibid.*, p 5.
10. W. H. Maxwell, *Erin-Go-Bragh; or, Irish Life Pictures* (London 1859), Biographical Sketch by Dr. Maginn, p xii.
11. Henry B. Swanzy, *Succession List of the Diocese of Dromore* (Belfast 1933), p 105.
12. Francis C. Crosle, M.B., *Notes on the Literary History of Newry* (Newry 1897), pp 19-20.
13. Charles James Lever was born in Dublin in 1806. He would, therefore, have been only seven years old when Maxwell was appointed to Clonallon. On the other hand 1844 was too late a date for the beginning of their friendship. They were already old friends when Charles Lever wrote about Maxwell in *Dublin University Magazine*, XVIII (August 1841), if indeed Lever is the author of this eulogy.
14. *The Irish Book Lover*, Vol. VII, No 4 (November 1915), p 61.

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Landlord and Tenant Relations in Ireland, Sir Arthur Guinness and his Estate at Ashford Castle, 1868-1882

By Gerard Moran

Until recently the activities and estate management of Irish landlords has been harshly treated by most Irish historians. The excesses and mass clearances of a number of notable individuals, such as the Marquess of Sligo, Lord Lucan, Sir Roger Palmer, Lord Plunket and others, have tended to distort the overall picture regarding landlord-tenant relations. The activities of a number of their peers have tainted all Irish landlords. The attempts of some landowners to improve the position of their tenants has been generally neglected, in the attempts to classify all landlords as rack-renting, evicting murderers. It is often conveniently overlooked that the Land League leadership in Mayo in the initial stages of that agitation, urged the tenants to pay their rents to those landlords who did not extract an exorbitant rent from them and who treated them in a fair manner. It is only in recent years that historians such as W. E. Vaughan have argued that Irish landlords cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group, and the activities attributed to this class were not the standard practice of all landlords.¹ The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between landlord and tenants on one estate in Mayo and Galway, that of Sir Arthur Guinness of the famous Dublin brewing family.

The Guinness estate consisted of 25,341 acres situated in Dublin, Wicklow, Galway and Mayo. The Galway estate comprised 19,944 acres with 3,266 in Mayo, centred in the parishes of Cong and Clonbur. There were 670 tenants on the estate who paid an annual rental of £12,000. Most of the farms were between 15 and 25 acres and rents ranged from 5/- to 40/- an acre, the holdings in Galway being more expensive. Guinness's father, Sir Benjamin Lee, purchased the first parcel of land at Ashford in 1852 from Lord Oranmore and Browne. Over the following years adjoining estates were purchased which were encumbered or owned by absentees. Upon the death of his father in 1868 Sir Arthur inherited the estate.² Guinness was regarded by his peers and his nationalist adversaries as an improving landlord, expending large amounts of money on drainage, pier construction, cottage construction, afforestation and other tasks, which improved the circumstances of his tenants. About 400 labourers and artisans were directly employed by him, being paid from 8/- to 10/- per week. Compared with tenants and labourers in other regions of the west of Ireland, few of the tenants had to migrate annually in search of work.³ Many of these were employed in the extension and maintenance of Ashford House, the landlord's residence which afterwards became known as Ashford Castle. This was built during the mid-eighteenth century by the Oranmore and Browne family.

During times of major distress Guinness was renowned for his charity to his tenants, as in 1879 when £3,000 was provided for the purchase of meal. He prided himself on looking after his tenants and induced the poorer ones to decline aid from the relief committees.⁴ This had the effect of making his tenants more dependent on him and he was able to exercise more control over them during periods of agitation. Not alone was Sir Arthur's benevolence not confined to the Cong-Clonbur region, but it extended to the whole south Mayo – north Galway region. It was his intention to open the region to tourism and with this in mind he maintained a steamer service on Lough Corrib, between Cong and Galway. He was also one of the leading proponents of the plans to establish a railway line from Claremorris to Ballinrobe, investing over £10,000 in the company.⁵

While many improvements were carried out on the estate, there were a number of tenants who severely criticised these developments in the Cong area. These became most vocal during the Land League agitation when all landlords were categorised as being bad. It was maintained that Guinness had pulled down houses in the town, such as that area between the Old Quay Road bridge and the road to the chapel, when carrying out his developments. It was also alleged that Guinness had ended the thriving mill industry in the town which ground the tenants' corn. One of these mills was then used to provide Ashford House and its fountains with water.

Although Guinness was not a resident landlord, the negative aspects associated with absentee landowners were not evident as on other properties in Mayo. On those



Ashford House, seat of Sir Arthur Guinness, Bart. (Wynne Collection).

properties where the landlord was an absentee, the day-to-day running of the estate was left in the hands of a paid professional land agent. Often these individuals did not have the best interests of their employers at heart, and this frequently resulted in poor landlord-tenant relations.⁶ Nearly half of the total land of Mayo was controlled by ten landowners, nine of whom were non-resident. Even though Guinness did not reside on his estate, he nevertheless developed good relations with his tenants by his annual visits to his estate and through his agent, William Burke of Loughry.

The extent of the tranquil relations between the landlord and his tenants was most evident during the landlord's stay at Ashford House. As Guinness was a Conservative M.P. for Dublin City, his parliamentary duties kept him away from his estate for most of the year. Nevertheless when Guinness and his wife travelled to Cong they were usually met by the tenantry in Ballinrobe, and the young men would pull the carriage from there to Cong. Upon their arrival at Cong, the party was greeted with bonfires and a general address in which all of the principal local dignitaries participated. The evidence of this close relationship can be noted in January 1877 when Guinness returned to Cong after having spent three months in France recovering from a serious illness. The tenants provided him with a rousing reception, coming out to meet him in the most inclement of weathers.⁷ Further proof of Guinness's special relationship with his tenants was evident at the 1872 Galway by-election contest, when he allowed those tenants who had the franchise a free vote in the contest. This was in contrast with most other Galway landowners who endeavoured to dictate to their tenants how they should vote. Being a former Conservative MP and a landlord, it would have been expected in the climate of the day that Guinness would have provided some indication as to how his tenants should cast their vote. On the polling day he accompanied his voters to Oughterard to vote.

Guinness also pursued a more conciliatory approach towards his tenants regarding religious affairs. As the majority of his tenants were Catholics, he ensured that he had a good rapport with most of their priests. This was important in nineteenth century Ireland as the clergy often ensured the preservation of social order in their parishes. Very often the civil courts and the landlords handed over local disputes to the parish priest for arbitration, as it was more likely that he could secure a more amicable settlement. This policy on the Guinness estate was in sharp contrast with many of his peers, such as Mr. St. George in Headford, who often pursued an aggressive and sometimes confrontational approach to the Catholic clergy. Guinness was prepared to provide the local clergy with the financial support for their churches and schools at Cross, Curraghnamsa and Clonbur. In doing this he gained the support of the local clergy, and they in turn tended to keep a check on the local population to ensure that no acts of aggression were perpetrated against the landlord. The most notable of these was Fr. Patrick Lavelle, who was appointed parish priest of Cong in October 1869. Lavelle had gained the reputation of being an uncompromising opponent of landlordism after his dealings with Lord Plunket and other landowners in Partry.⁸ Within two years of his arrival in Cong, Lavelle had become a regular visitor to Ashford House and had



Ashford House, view from hall door. (Wynne Collection).

mellowed in his attitude to Irish landlords. This can be attributed to Guinness's influence. Sir Arthur was responsible for providing him with a parochial house, Lavelle having to reside with one of his parishioners after his arrival in Cong. He also provided Lavelle with a 13 acre grazing farm at Caherduff in 1871, and it was widely believed that Sir Arthur had paid many of Lavelle's debts incurred in his litigations against the Partry landlords in 1869. It was thus not surprising that many nationalists who had previously supported Lavelle, were angry with his liaison with the Guinness family. One correspondent to the *Connaught Telegraph* in 1879 stated:

Cong is changed and so is Father Lavelle. The soft hand of Lady Olive (Sir Arthur's wife) has worked wonders. How she must have winked at Sir Arthur when Father Lavelle was parading the poor tenants and instructing them as to how they were to cheer on that festive occasion, which was described by him in a local contemporary as "Tenants" rejoicing at Ashford . . .⁹

There was one issue which brought Guinness into conflict with his tenants and that involved their trespassing on his lands. While most local courts in the west had to contend with the question of evictions and ejectment notices, in Cong and Clonbur the petty sessions courts were more involved with the issue of wilful trespass. Guinness was prepared to use the full rigours of the law against the people if they trespassed onto his property, in particular the woods and lakes which he stocked for fishing and shooting. He prohibited the keeping of dogs to ensure that the wildlife on the estate remained undisturbed for hunting. It was alleged that this increased the number of rats which the tenants had to contend with, thus reducing the amount of corn available. The setting of traps or snares for game was strictly forbidden, as was the cutting of heath, which the tenants used for bedding for their cattle. In most instances the tenants had to pay heavy fines on conviction in the courts. In April 1874 thirty tenants were fined 2s. 3d. each at Clonbur Petty Sessions for pulling heath at Coolin Mountain. The tenants argued that they required the heath for cooking purposes because of a scarcity of fuel.¹⁰

If there was any single issue which created bad feeling between landlord and tenant, it was over the prosecutions for trespass on Guinness's property.

Guinness was also at variance with his tenants over their nationalist aspirations. Although he was a Conservative M.P. for Dublin City between 1868-70 and 1874-80, and while he allowed his tenants a free vote at the 1868 general election and 1872 Galway by-election, he was not prepared to espouse the nationalist sentiments that swept the country after 1874 under the guise of Home Rule. Right up to the time of his death in 1915 he opposed the principle of legislative independence for Ireland.¹¹

This hostility to the rise of nationalism also manifested itself against the emerging Land League agitation in the south Mayo-north Galway region for a reduction in rents. This opposition would appear to be partly due to Fenian involvement in the movement, in the form of P. W. Nally, Matthew Harris and J. W. Walsh. As it happened, the Fenian organisation was particularly strong in the Cong-Clonbur region in this period.¹²

Much of Guinness's opposition to the Land League was born out of his frustration at the League's intimidation tactics against the payment of rents. There is little doubt but that there were tenants who had the money to pay their rents, not alone on the Guinness estate but throughout the whole region, but who were coerced by League members into withholding it.¹³ The importance of collective action was such within the Land League, that it was imperative for the success of the agitation that everybody adhered to the same policy to ensure rent reductions were secured. While most of the Guinness tenants were in a position to pay their rents they were told to withhold them. This had an adverse effect on relations on the estate. As rents were not paid, the number of artisans and labourers employed on the estate declined, with only 100 being paid in 1879-80 compared to the normal complement of 4-500.¹⁴

Guinness was aware of the plight of many of his tenants, but he nevertheless refused in the early months to give in to their demands for a reduction of rent. It was not until December 1879 that he consented to a rent abatement of between 20 and 30 per cent for most of his smaller tenants. He also included £3,000 for meal and seed potatoes. However, this magnanimity was overshadowed by his decision to exclude those tenants on the mountainous parts of his estate from the rent abatements, because of their opposition towards him in the past.¹⁵ Guinness was ensuring that those tenants who were loyal to him received total help, but those who caused him trouble would not be helped. As other landowners used the notice to quit to ensure their tenants behaved themselves, Guinness used the threat of the withdrawal of relief to keep them in check.

The difficulties on the estate were exacerbated by the Land League's attitude to Guinness's estate agent, William Burke. Burke was also agent for other landowners in the region, most notably Lord Kilmaine and Lord Clanmorris. Much of the ill-feeling towards Guinness during the Land League days can be attributed to Burke, who did not endear himself to local nationalists and tenant right campaigners, because of his ejectment notices to a number of tenants on the Clanmorris estate and his treatment of

the Noonan family in Cong. It resulted in Burke being one of over one hundred people in south Mayo who had to receive protection by the end of 1880.

The emergence of the Land League agitation in 1879 polarised the relationship between Guinness and his tenants. In some instances the League provided cover for those critics of the Guinness family who had previously withheld their anger. Many of these were tenants who had been transferred from their lands in 1852 in order to consolidate the holdings on the estate.¹⁶ It must be noted that it was these grievances that were constantly referred to and not Sir Arthur's actions as a progressive landlord.

Two instances indicate the strained relations that existed between Guinness and his tenants in this period. The first of these occurred in June 1879 when Guinness evicted the Noonan family from a property in Cong village. The Noonans were sub-tenants of their uncle, Michael Hopkins, who had been in possession of the house for forty years. Bridget Noonan and her brother, Nicholas, took control of the house and refused to leave despite the protestations of their uncle. The only way Hopkins could regain possession was to appeal to Sir Arthur Guinness, who initiated the process of having all three evicted and then reinstating Hopkins. This was the only legal course open to him. It resulted in Bridget Noonan throwing a bucket of scalding water over the agent, William Burke, as he rode through Cong on 13 June, for which she was duly arrested and imprisoned.¹⁷

The leaders of the land agitation were quick to seize on the opportunity to discredit the landlord, especially as Guinness had always been portrayed as a caring, progressive landlord. While nationalists regarded the case as one of landlord aggression it is important to examine the case more closely. In essence the case was a squabble between troublesome family members rather than a simple case of landlord tyranny against a tenant. During the Land League agitation all evictions were regarded as being of an unjust nature, even though while some people were technically evicted, they were not always reduced to having to spend their last days on the road side.¹⁸ It indicates that in many instances the fear of being ejected was more traumatic than the actual eviction itself. In the Noonan case the point was lost that it was more expedient for Guinness to evict Hopkins and then reinstate him as caretaker of the property, than to have the Noonans evicted and retain Hopkins in possession.¹⁹ The case was more than just a straightforward eviction due to non-payment of rent.

The second attack on Guinness using the Land League as cover came from Fr. Walter Conway, the administrator of Clonbur, where Sir Arthur was the principal landowner. Conway was an ardent supporter of the League and extremely critical of all landlords. He used the agitation to denounce Guinness on the pretext that he was a bad landlord. The real motive for his attack would appear to have been his failure to secure money from Guinness for repairs to his church at Clonbur. Instead Fr. Patrick Lavelle had received this money for a new church at Curraghnamorsa, between Cong and Maam.²⁰ Conway alleged that Guinness had done nothing for the people of his estate. The allegations carried weight because most of Guinness's estate lay in Clonbur

rather than Cong, and they were being made by the Catholic administrator of the parish. Conway did all in his power to discredit Guinness as a landlord, going so far as to compare him with some of the most notorious landlords in nineteenth-century Ireland, including his notorious neighbour, Lord Leitrim, who had been murdered by his Donegal tenants in 1878 because of his barbarity.²¹ He also went so far as to attack him in a letter which was read at a Land League meeting in Cong on 11 July 1880. Conway wrote that he hoped to make public the disgraceful conduct of tyrants who had been held up in the locality as model landlords and went on:

I must for the present be content with saying that I have never witnessed such callous and heartless indifference to the moral and religious, as well as the social and physical, well-being of the people as I have since I came to this parish. If landlordism here is to be taken as a specimen of the institution I would say unhesitatingly, "Away with it - cut it down". Give them what they would not grant their unfortunate serfs - compensations, and let them no longer lumber and curse the sacred soil of Ireland . . . You have only to look around, and from the very platform on which you are standing you can see the swaying forests which have superseded the fields of waving corn which was prepared by those mills which have shared the fate of other sources of employment, and which are now razed to the earth, or standing idle and silent as the tomb.²²

It was later found by the leading Land League newspaper in the west of Ireland, *The Connaught Telegraph*, that Conway's allegations were totally without foundation. Nevertheless, the extent of this bitterness between Sir Arthur and Conway was evident long before the Cong Land League meeting. During the summer of 1879 the Clonbur administrator had exhorted the tenants to press for a rent abatement.²³ This action enraged Guinness who for six months refused to accede to the tenants' demands, and when he did provide them with an abatement in December 1879, he was very angry with those people who had incited the tenants, a clear reference to Conway's role.²⁴

As in other parts of Connacht the distress of 1879-80 had a devastating effect on the Cong region. By the second week of January 1880 there were over one thousand people in need of relief, and it reached its height in early April when 2,333, or 70 per cent of the population around Ashford had to be aided. It necessitated the establishment of a relief committee in Cong in January, which was chaired by Guinness. It included twenty of the most influential people in the parish, including Lavelle as secretary.²⁵ Two factors were responsible for the high levels of distress in the region. There was a high proportion of labourers and tradesmen in the Cong area and the downturn in economic activity in the late 1870s brought great hardship. As we have seen only one-quarter to one-fifth of the labourers employed by Guinness were now given full employment. While Guinness attempted to aid his tenants by providing meal, there were eleven other estates in the parish whose owners did little or nothing to assist their tenants.

The good relations that existed in Cong can be seen in the composition of the Cong Relief Committee, which included farmers, landowners, doctors and clergymen of all persuasions. It was more representative in its composition than in most of the neighbouring parishes. In Ballinrobe none of the Protestant clergymen was prepared to become involved in the local committee, while in The Neale and Clonbur there was

much acrimony between the Catholic and Protestant priests. In Clonbur the problem centred round the allegations by Fr. Walter Conway, secretary of the local relief committee, that the Protestant members were doing little to alleviate local distress.²⁶ Much of this attack was targeted at Guinness. The participation of local landed proprietors on the relief committee in south Mayo-north Galway was minimal, or non-existent, except for Cong, because of the refusal of local tenant leaders to participate if these local landowners were included.²⁷ There were altercations on other parts of the Guinness estate, as in Killanin parish, where the landlord and the local Catholic administrator, Fr. Patrick Coyne, were not on speaking terms with each other because of allegations that Guinness was selective as to who received relief.²⁸ One can thus see that Guinness's relationship with the local clergy was an important component in his rapport with the tenants.

A further problem for landlords like Guinness was the jealousy that existed between different parts of their estate as to the level of relief they each received. In April 1880, the Mansion House Relief Committee reduced the level of aid to the Cong district, because of the unfounded allegations that an adequate level of relief was provided in Cong by Guinness himself.²⁹ This resulted in the activities of the Cong Relief Committee bordering on total collapse. The money forwarded from Dublin was barely adequate to meet the basic requirements of the committee, and there were cases of people being sent home empty-handed because sufficient funds had not been made available.³⁰

There is little doubt that without Guinness's magnanimous help his tenants in Cong would have endured greater hardship than was the case. His involvement with the central committee of the Mansion House Relief Committee, meant that more funds were made available to the Cong-Clonbur region than came from Land League sources.³¹ While the Mansion House Relief Committee provided over £700 to these parishes, the Land League expended less than one-tenth of this sum. The Cong Relief Committee received virtually nothing from the Land League. Two factors were responsible for this – the fact that Guinness and other landlords were involved on the committee, made the league's leadership loath to forward funds to such local groups.³² At the same time there was Guinness's detestation of the League itself.

The demise of the Land League after 1882 helped to partially restore the relationship between Guinness and his tenants in Cong. The annual addresses of the tenants to their landlord and the general festivities at Ashford Castle returned when he visited his estate. However circumstances in the region had changed. The legacy of the Land League made the tenants more vocal in their demands for peasant proprietorship, and the emergence of the Home Rule issue made Guinness, or Lord Ardilaun as he had become in 1880, aware that life would never be the same in Cong. As a result of this he was one of the first landlords in Mayo to sell off his estate to his tenants under the terms of the 1885 Ashbourne Land Act.

Between 1868 and 1886 the Ashford Castle Estate can be seen to resemble that

of many other properties in Ireland. While Guinness enjoyed a good rapport with his tenants, he was determined to exercise a strong hand against those tenants who had the potential to cause trouble. He wanted an estate where all could share the benefits of his improvements. However as with all such developments there are winners and losers. In order to make the holdings more economical land had to be consolidated. Nevertheless, Guinness's rule and its legacy must be seen in the light of the improved circumstances it brought to most of the people of his western estates.

The affairs of the Guinness estate prove that landlord-tenant relations in post-Famine Ireland cannot be viewed in a straightforward black and white situation. An examination of such relations on other estates and in other regions will have to be undertaken before a comprehensive re-evaluation can be made. Only then can the activities of the more notorious landowners, such as Lord Leitrim, Vincent Scully and John George Adair, be put into a proper perspective.

Notes

1. For examples of W.E. Vaughan's revisionist theories on landlord-tenants in Ireland see 'Landlord and tenant relations in Ireland between the famine and the Land War, 1850-78' in L. M. Cullen & T. C. Smout (eds.), *Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History, 1600-1900*, (Edinburgh, nd); 'An assessment of the economic performance of Irish landlords, 1851-81' in F.S.L. Lyons & R.A.J. Hawkins (eds.), *Ireland under the Union: Varieties of Tension*, (Oxford 1980), pp 173-200; *Sin, Sheep and Scotsmen: John George Adair and the Derryveagh Evictions, 1861*, (Belfast 1983).
2. U.H. Hussey De Burgh, *The Landowners of Ireland* (Dublin 1878), p 196. Another source has stated the Guinness estate to be 33,400 acres but the official figures put it at 25,341. F. Dunn, *Landlords and Tenants in Ireland* (London 1881), pp 246-7; Patrick Lynch and John Vaizey, *Guinness's Brewery in the Irish Economy, 1759-1876* (London 1960), p 182.
3. For a fuller examination of seasonal migration to Britain from the West of Ireland see Gerard Moran, 'A Passage to Britain': Seasonal migration and social change in the West of Ireland, 1870-1890' in *Saothar* xiii (1988), pp 22-31; C. Ó Gráda, 'Seasonal migration and post-Famine adjustment in the West of Ireland' in *Studia Hibernica*, xiii, (1973).
4. N.L.I., *Special Commission of 1888 on Parnellism and Crime*, County of Mayo.
5. *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 20 Oct. 1877, p 1; Lynch and Vaizey, op. cit., p 196.
6. For problems of absentee landlords in Mayo see Gerard Moran, 'Absentee landlords in Mayo in the 1870s' in *Cathair na Mart*, ii, (1982), pp 30-34; P. Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-1882* (London 197), pp 23-4.
7. *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 6 Jan. 1877, p 1; *Galway Express*, 13 Jan. 1877, p 4.
8. See Gerard Moran, *The Mayo Evictions of 1860: Father Patrick Lavelle and the 'War' in Partry* (Westport 1986); Patrick Lavelle, *The Irish Landlord since the Revolution* (Dublin 1870), pp 393-496; Tomás Ó Fiaich, 'The patriot priest of Partry: Patrick Lavelle, 1825-1886' in *The Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, (1974).
9. *Connaught Telegraph*, 12 July, 1879, p 5.
10. *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 25 Aug. 1874, p 1.

11. See F. Mullally, *The Silver Salver: The Story of the Guinness Family*, (London 1981), p 36.
12. For an examination of the strength of Fenianism in the region see State Paper Office, *Fenian Papers*, F. Files 1866-74, (7303 R), dated 26 Mar. 1871).
13. See T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846-82* (Oxford 1981), p 333.
14. Dunn, op. cit., p 247.
15. *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 6 Dec. 1879, p 1; *Nation*, 6 Dec. 1879, p 8; S. Clark, *The Social Origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton 1979), p 238.
16. Dunn, op. cit., pp 247-8.
17. *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 21 June 1879, p 1.
18. See Barbara Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971), pp 51-88.
19. *Connaught Telegraph*, 7 Aug. 1880, p 4.
20. *Ibid.*, 17 July 1880, p 3.
21. *Ibid.*, 31 July 1880, p 2; For an account of Lord Leitrim see Liam Dolan, *The Third Earl of Leitrim* (1978).
22. *Connaught Telegraph*, 17 July 1880, p 3.
23. *Tuam Herald*, 19 July 1879, p 1.
24. *Galway Vindicator*, 6 Dec. 1879, p 4.
25. *Dublin City Archives*, (D.C.A.), Mansion House Fund, 1/39/83, Cong. Co. Mayo, letter from Lavelle, dated 12 Jan. 1880, *Galway Vindicator*, 28 Jan. 1880, p 4.
26. D.C.A., Mansion House Fund, 1/39/160, Clonbur, Co. Galway.
27. See Gerard Moran, 'Famine and the Land War: Relief and distress in Mayo, 1879-81, pt 2' in *Cathair na Mart*, vi, (1986), pp 111-27.
28. See *Connaught Telegraph*, 6 Mar., p 5, 29 May 1880, p 4; *Irishman*, 13 Mar. 1880.
29. See D.C.A., Mansion House Fund, Lavelle to Dublin, dated 16 Apr. 1880.
30. *Ibid.*, Lavelle to Dublin, dated 8 July 1880.
31. For Guinness's involvement with the Mansion House Relief Committee see *Irishman*, 10 Jan. 1880, p 436.
32. See Moran, *Famine and Land War*, pp 119-22.

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Keir Hardie's Visit to Mayo in 1906

By J. Dunleavy

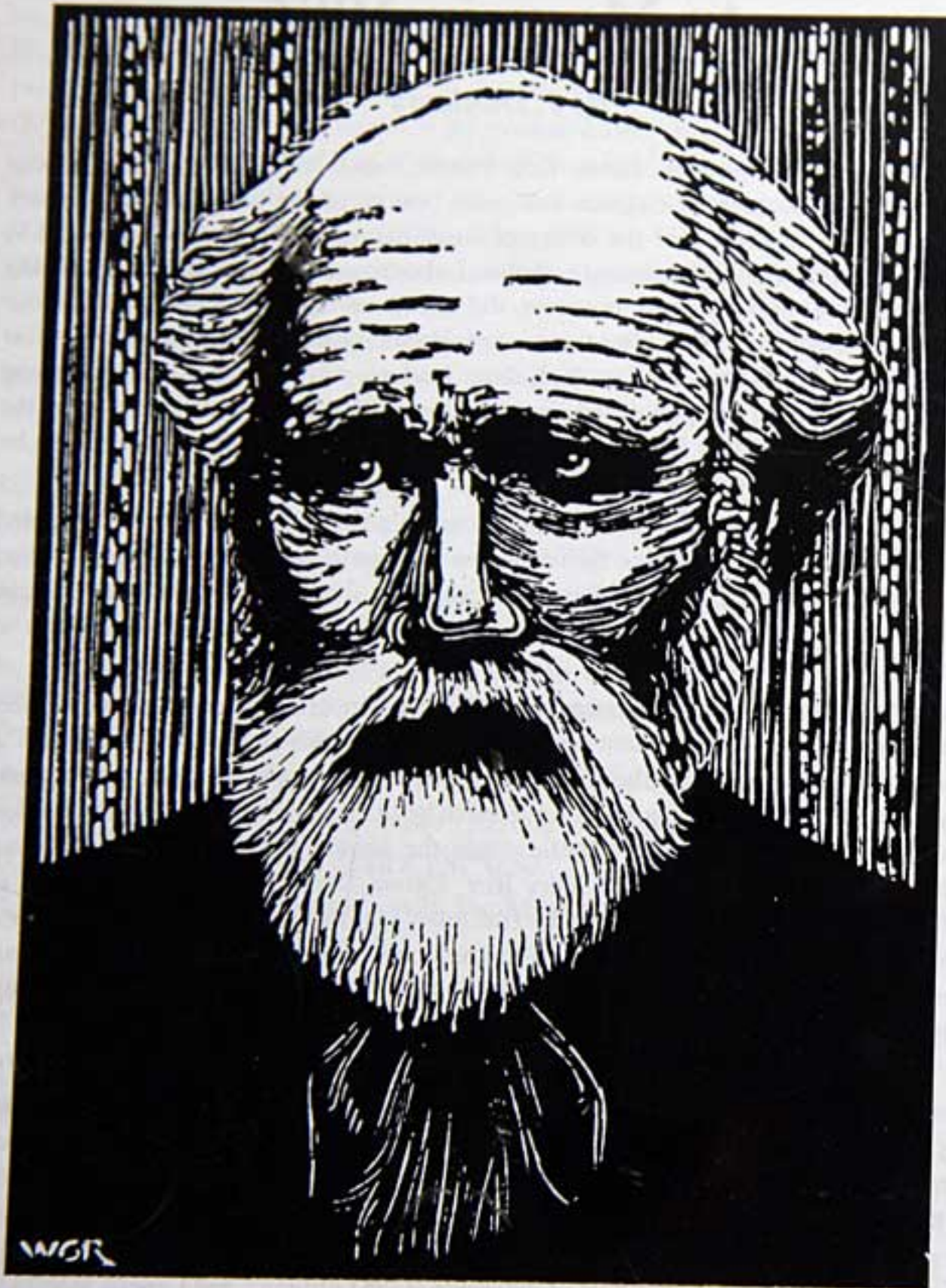
In 1888 an ex-miner, James Keir Hardie, stood as an independent labour candidate in a Scottish by-election and came bottom of the poll. The Mid-Lanark contest was symptomatic of the desire of wage-earners to elect their own kind to Parliament, and in 1892 Hardie and two other Labourites were successful in becoming M.P.s. The real breakthrough, however, did not come until 1906, when 29 Labour M.P.s were elected. Shortly after this victory Hardie visited Ireland, spending a few days in Mayo. It was not a holiday: the Labour leader's purpose was to see at first hand some of the work of the Congested Districts Board. This is an account, based on the impressions recorded by Hardie at the time, of the people he met and the places he visited eighty-four years ago.¹

Following the exertions of the political campaign in Britain, Hardie, accompanied by newly-elected M. P. George Barnes began his tour in Belfast, traveling to Dublin to meet the leaders of the Irish Party. He was also able to confer with Mayo-born Michael Davitt, who had assisted Hardie and most of the other Labour candidates so energetically during the election.²

The first provincial excursion was to Cashel, Tipperary; then Killarney, Tralee, and so on to Galway ('an ancient seaport [Hardy noted] which has seen better days'), where he was impressed by the red petticoats and black cloaks worn by the farmers' wives. Claremorris, in Mayo, he discovered to be 'a clean prosperous looking market town'. On the following day Hardie made the acquaintance of one of the most outstanding men in Ireland: the Very Rev. Canon Denis O'Hara, parish priest of Killedan (Kiltimagh). As he approached the town, Hardie was met by a brass band, and from the steps of the church spoke to 'a great concourse of people'. Canon O'Hara presided as chairman, and as the crowds dispersed the band 'in quite creditable fashion' played 'Auld Lang Syne'.³

Although he still had many years of useful work ahead of him, 'Fr. Denis' as he was affectionately known, was already something of a legend, enjoying a reputation not unlike that enjoyed by Monsignor James Horan in our own time. Bernard O'Hara, in his *Mayo*, states that the Sligo-born priest was largely responsible for the development of Kiltimagh. His first appointment after ordination in 1873 was to Killedan, followed by spells in Curry and Ballaghaderreen; Fr. O'Hara returned as parish priest to his first posting in 1888. A strong nationalist, he spoke at the Gurteen Land League meeting in November, 1879, becoming a firm friend of Michael Davitt.⁴

Hardie marvelled at the way in which Kiltimagh's pastor knew the name of every



Determined to see more workingmen in the British Parliament, he was instrumental in founding the Scottish Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party and, in 1900, the Labour Party. Often described as 'the father of the British Labour Movement.' (Labour Party Library, London).

member of the 900 families in his parish. Fr. Denis was a man of many parts (as Hardie discovered) acting as 'legal adviser, banker, instructor and encourager, and everything else.' His parish contained some of the poorest land in Ireland, yet in his many years of service he had been instrumental in building a church and convent, while new houses and improved holdings were evident on all sides. The Canon, Hardie noted approvingly, had been a lifelong rebel: the material and moral betterment apparent in that district was ascribed by the Labour leader to 'this rebellious, reforming spirit'.⁵

With Fr. Denis, Hardie travelled out to Clearagh, a township 'occupying an eminence in the midst of a bleak, dreary moor,' where they called at the holding of Michael Leydon, who was only able to support his wife and family by working for part of each year in England. Not surprisingly, emigration was a feature of the district: yet, as Hardie observed, the practice of saving while in England or America was already well-established and repatriates frequently settled in their place of origin, however unprepossessing the environment might be. Hardie considered this must surely be 'one of the mysteries of mysteries, this love of home and kindred which deepens and grows in strength in proportion as the land is poor and the condition of life poor'.⁶

Both Barnes and Hardie were impressed by the hospitality extended to them during their stay in Ireland, making new friends and renewing old acquaintanceships. A long-time advocate of Home Rule for Ireland, Hardie had acquired a reputation since entering the Commons in 1892 as 'the member for the unemployed'. Although he espoused a variety of causes during his lengthy parliamentary career, none claimed his attention as much as the fate of the workless. In the absence of a socialist solution, Hardie was for ever on the look out for remedies to alleviate the plight of the jobless which he believed was a reflection on the shortcomings of the capitalist system. Hardie found it ironical that while British Governments consistently shied away from intervening in economic affairs to help the less fortunate, in Ireland the Land Act of 1881 had reduced rents, while that of 1903 seemed set to make Ireland a country of owner-occupiers. Local councils, under the Labourers' Acts, had power to let cottages and land at low rentals. The record of the Congested Districts Board, Hardie declared, excited the wonder and admiration of the reformer.⁷

On his return to Britain, Hardie set down his impressions of Ireland, a country he had not seen for five years. While he still considered the standard of living to be poor, he claimed to discern causes for optimism with regard to the future. Emigration was still claiming many young people, but given the improvements at home, the attraction of America was diminishing. Hardie felt the benefits conferred by the Congested Districts Board were considerable, an instance of the state taking powers in order to promote the welfare of the poorer elements in society. His admiration for the work of the Board was unbounded: 'It is [he wrote] the most sensible institution I have ever known to be set up by law, and, with adaptations to meet differing conditions, forms the model upon which I would like to see our Unemployment Committees constituted'.⁸

As a Celt, Hardie instinctively identified with the activities of the Gaelic League,

which he maintained had attracted to its ranks 'a very large proportion of the brightest and best spirits in Ireland'. The League rule concerning total abstinence earned his approbation. As a teetotaler, Hardie welcomed news of the success of the temperance crusade, at that time reputedly sweeping through the southern and western counties, the likes of which had not been since the days of Fr. Matthew.⁹

The emergent Sinn Féin movement did not go unnoticed: he regarded this as an offshoot of the Gaelic League. Its programme intrigued him: he was told the people should endeavour to help themselves and not become dependent on the English government or English capitalism. Sinn Féin was individualism of a most pronounced type, he decided, though unlike adherents of the Manchester School they had no fear of the state except in so far as it might undermine the people's spirit. Hardie admitted he was unsure of the current strength of Sinn Féin, but his fellow Labour M.P. agreed with him when he stated that Sinn Féin was bound to play an important part in the development of Ireland.¹⁰

Hardie and Barnes left Ireland feeling that centuries of misgovernment were being remedied and a better day was about to dawn. 'Hope is gathering strength in the hearts of the people and with the coming of hope self-respect is asserting itself, and twenty years hence the visitor of today who then revisits Ireland will find that it has been re-created; that where poverty and despair had walked hand-in-hand under the harsh rule of landlordism, comfort and happiness have taken their place.' He looked back over his week's stay with pleasure. The reception was of the pleasantest. Hardie expressed the view that if only other Labour leaders in Britain spent some time in Ireland misgivings concerning Home Rule would speedily disappear.¹¹

Notes

1. I. McLean, *Keir Hardie* (London, 1975). Hardie's impressions, 'A Week in Ireland,' appeared in the columns of the weekly *Labour Leader* (London) during February and March, 1906.
2. B. Nield, 'George Nicoll Barnes (1859-1940), Trade Union leader and Labour M. P.', in Bellamy and Saville (eds.) *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, iv (London, 1977), pp 7-15; T. W. Moody, 'Michael Davitt and the British Labour Movement', *Trans. of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, iii, (1953) pp 53-76.
3. B. O'Hara, 'Kiltimagh and Fr. O'Hara,' in O'Hara (ed.) *Mayo, Aspects of its heritage* (Galway, 1982), pp 234-244; F.S.L. Lyons, *John Dillon* (London, 1986), *passim*; *Labour Leader*, 9 and 23 Feb. 1906.
4. O'Hara, *op. cit.*
5. *Labour Leader*, 23 Feb. 1906.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 2 March 1906.
8. *Ibid.* Local Unemployment Committees could be set up under an Act of 1905. They did not grant benefits but were able to advise the workless. Labour Exchanges and the National

Insurance Act introduced by the Liberals proved to be much more effective.

9. *Labour Leader*, 2 March 1906.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.* Hardie's conclusion is interesting in retrospect, Labour M.P.s, like the Liberals, were ostensibly pro-Home Rule: Hardie may have been influenced by the new Liberal Government's programme which omitted Home Rule in that Parliament.

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Charles Kerrigan and the Mutiny of The Connaught Rangers at Solon, 1920

By Stuart Barr

The 88th Foot, the Connaught Rangers, bore an enviable reputation as a redoubtable fighting unit from its raising in 1793 to its disbandment in 1922. For almost 130 years successive generations of the young men of Connacht had been happy to find adventure and three meals a day, with scant heed to the vicissitudes of Anglo-Irish politics. But after the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916 and the beginning of the struggle for independence in 1919, the bitterness of the armed conflict and its widespread impact on the civilian population of their native land, could not fail to leave many men of the Connaught Rangers with troubled minds and divided allegiances.

After World War I, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Connaught Rangers had been reformed at Dover in 1919 and the 1st Battalion, although not up to establishment, was posted to India in November of that year. Further details of recruits, on completion of their basic training, were to follow on from Dover. These drafts contained a new generation of Irishmen, one which had not known the horrors of the World War, but which was aware of the beginnings of the rebellion in their homeland. One such recruit was Charles Kerrigan, who, a few months before his eighty-sixth birthday, told me of his service in the Connaught Rangers and his part in the mutiny.¹

Charles Kerrigan, the son of a farmer in Co. Leitrim, was born at Glencar, a few miles from Manorbhamilton in April 1901. He was one of seven children and attended the local school in Glencar until he was thirteen, when he left to work on his father's farm. His two older brothers enlisted in the Royal Irish Rifles early in the War. Tom, the oldest, was killed in action with the 7th Battalion at Ginchy in September 1916, Denny was invalided out in 1917 with a severe head wound. Despite the grievous toll taken of his family by military service, Charles decided to follow his brothers into the army. He was prompted to do so by a strong desire for adventure and a wish to see foreign parts. His intention, when he presented himself to the recruiting officer in Sligo on 4 May 1919, was to join the Irish Guards, but after a cursory medical examination he found himself on his way to Renmore Barracks, Galway to become a Connaught Ranger. Enrolled as 32245 Pte. Kerrigan C. he was documented, kitted out and sent on quickly via Dublin and Holyhead to the 1st Battalion at Dover. There he trained from May to December 1919 and although he enjoyed his training, he felt ill-at-ease in his unaccustomed English surroundings. His discomfiture was increased when the Battalion sailed on the *S.S. Sardinia* on 24 October without him and he was glad to follow them to India with an all-Irish draft in December. The troopship took four weeks to Bombay



Charles Kerrigan, February 1987, aged 85.

and after a three-day train journey he found himself with 'D' Company, 1st Battalion, the Connaught Rangers at Jullundur in the Punjab. Charles settled in well to battalion life in India, but no sooner had he become acclimatized and made new friends in the Company than he was posted with part of 'C' Company to the hill station of Solon. The process of settling in began all over again, but he found nothing to complain about. Indeed, he found the posting an agreeable one, the camp having a more temperate hill climate and other advantages which accrue from being at some distance from the Battalion.

Down at Jullundur, disquiet increased amongst the men during the early summer. Mail from Ireland gave first-hand accounts of the brutality of the Black and Tans, of actions which could no longer be relegated to the category of political wranglings which could be well left to the politicians to sort out. When it was seen that families and friends were directly affected, tempers rose at Jullundur and, on the evening of 27 June 1920, five men, Privates Stephen Lally, Joe Hawes, Paddy Sweeney, Pat Gogarty and William Daly, resolved over their pints of beer in the canteen, that a protest must be made. Hawes was a forceful character and an experienced soldier who had seen much action during the War. His brother was in the I.R.A. and the division of his own allegiance had been brought home to him when, on leave in Clare, he had been turned away from a hurling match at the point of a bayonet by men wearing the same uniform as himself.

Next morning, four of the five men presented themselves at the guard room declaring that they would soldier no more for England and that they wished to be locked

in the cells. Word quickly spread round the camp and during the day something like four hundred men refused to obey the orders of their officers. They were addressed by their C.O., Lieut. Col. Deacon, D.S.O. who, with twenty-nine years service in the Connaught Rangers and a gallant record in the Boer and Great Wars, was grief-stricken that the Regiment to which he had devoted his whole life was about to be dishonoured. After briefly reminding the men of the proud fighting history of the Regiment, he said he understood the feelings of the men, but that if they returned to their duties no action would be taken. At a meeting in the theatre that evening, however, an elected committee of seven mutineers led by Lance-Corporal John Flannery was formed to plan and instigate a campaign of passive resistance. There was no coercion and those who wished to disassociate themselves from the mutineers were allowed to do so. Strict discipline was maintained by the committee, double guards were posted and the Irish tricolour was run up instead of the Union Jack.

The Garrison Commander, Lieut. Col. Leeds, arrived in the late afternoon and was accorded all the honours due to his rank by the mutineers. His main strategy was that of separating the men from their weapons and in this he was partially successful. Hawes and his committee agreed, in view of the very real threat of action by the local Indian population, not, in fact, to hand their weapons over to their officers, but to store them and mount an N.C.O. guard over them. The impasse which then existed between mutineers and their superiors was broken next day by the arrival of an astute Roscommon man, Col. Jackson from Division, who persuaded the rebels to march from Wellington barracks to another camp some three miles away. He pointed out that the barracks were now surrounded and that bloodshed would only ensue if the men opposed the entry of other units into the camp.

The mutineers marched out with panache with an Irish tricolour borne by a colour party and the four hundred men singing 'God Save Ireland'. Detachments of the Seaforth Highlanders, the South Wales Borderers, the Machine Gun Corps and half a battery of artillery had been surrounding the barracks and the mutineers were escorted into what was a hastily constructed internment camp on the plains. Here, enclosed by rolls of barbed wire and watched by men with machine guns placed at the four corners, the mutineers were given a last chance to abandon their protest. Some, realizing that the authorities now held the initiative and believing further insubordination was futile, did so and were marched back to Wellington Barracks. Exposure to temperatures of over one hundred degrees quickly took its toll of those who remained and many collapsed through heat stroke. It soon became clear that the hard-core mutineers would rather die than give in. The Medical Officer, Captain Carney² insisted that all the remaining men must be taken back to their bungalows. The officers had little alternative but to concede this demand. The mutineers, in a much weakened condition, were marched back to Jullundur. There, a detachment of Seaforth Highlanders separated the hard-core rebels from the rest and the mutiny at Jullunder was over.

News of the mutiny at Jullunder was taken to 'C' Company at Solon by two of

the rebels, Lance-Corporal Frank Keenan and Pte. Pat Kelly. Showing considerable initiative, they slipped out of Wellington Barracks on the first day of the mutiny and, evading or bluffing their way through all security checks on the way, arrived at Solon that evening. Major W.N.S. Alexander D.S.O., second-in-command of the Battalion, had been warned about their mission and had C.S.M. White arrest them on their arrival. Word, however, had spread in the camp about the mutiny at Jullunder. The effect of this news was, in the next thirty-six hours, to have dramatic and tragic consequences amongst 'C' Company of the Connaught Rangers.

Charles Kerrigan saw neither Kelly nor Keenan on their arrival at the camp, but he was quickly informed of the message they brought by Pte. James Daly who went round the bungalows inciting men to action. The twenty-year-old Daly was from Tyrrellspass in Co. Westmeath and, like Kerrigan, had seen his older brothers enlist in the British Army during the War and decided to follow them. Daly was one of a dozen or so men who were angered by the news of Black and Tan activities in Ireland, and who were aggrieved that the Adjutant, to whom they had taken these reports, had dismissed them as propaganda. For his part, Charles Kerrigan does not recall much dissatisfaction in his bungalow before the arrival of the emissaries from Jullundur. In his case, participation in the mutiny was not motivated by any news from home of Black and Tan atrocities, since he had not received any disquieting reports. Nor was he dissatisfied with his officers, who seemed remote from his, the private soldier's world. Life at Solon was in fact quite agreeable. Most of the training took place early in the day and they were often free from eleven in the morning. As Charles saw it, the outbreak at Solon was more a spontaneous gesture of solidarity with their pals at Jullundur, and the course the mutiny took at the hill station was largely due to the forceful and dominant personality of James Daly.

Following Daly's tour of the bungalows on the evening of 30 June, a group of men responded to his appeal for action and followed him up to the Officers' Mess to register their grievances. The officers were at dinner, but Captain Charles Badham, M.C., the officer commanding 'C' Company, came out on to the verandah and gave the group a sympathetic hearing. After stating that their complaints would be brought to the notice of higher authority he told the men to return to their quarters. Daly wanted to enlist the support of 'A' Company of the Battalion stationed a few miles up the railway line at Jutogh³ and had plans to go there next morning. The mutineers eventually went to bed, unsure of their future course of action, but firm in their resolve to continue their protest.

The following day, the 1st July, was a Thursday and usually a rest day at Solan. The men were ordered to parade and refused to do so. Daly took the initiative and stated that if Major Alexander wished to speak to them he would have to come to the bungalows to do so. This the Company Commander did. In his address to the mutineers he stressed the serious nature of their show of indiscipline and the grave consequence it would have. It was his opinion that their refusal to obey orders would have no effect

whatsoever on British policy in Ireland. At this juncture, Col. Woolridge, commanding Ambala Brigade appeared and also spoke to the men. The pleas of both officers were rejected by Daly who then gave orders to the mutineers to escalate the protest. 'Our rifles were stored in each bungalow under lock and key since there was a danger that the Indians might break in and try to steal them,' recalls Charles Kerrigan. 'Jim Daly ordered Private Kelly and myself to break open the racks and take out the rifles. We did this, but there was no ammunition. This was kept in the Magazine and only issued when needed for firing practice'. Major Alexander, who received a report that the mutineers were in possession of both rifles and ammunition⁴, was now faced with a situation of growing seriousness. Soon after three o'clock he sent Lieut. D. T. McWeeney, M.C., down to the bungalows to try to restore order, but with no success. The C.O. then turned to the one man likely to be listened to by the mutineers – Father Baker. Resident in Simla and a member of the Capuchin Order, he was acting as Chaplain to the Connaught Rangers at Solon. After more than an hour's discussion with Daly and the other rebels, Father Baker finally persuaded them to hand their rifles in at the Magazine. Major Alexander then gave orders for a guard of twenty bandsmen, each with a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition, to be placed on the magazine. The guard had orders to shoot to kill if necessary should an attempt be made to break into the magazine. Capt. Badham was then instructed to arrest the mutineers at eight o'clock next morning.

Events took a dramatic turn when, after heated discussion in the wet canteen that evening, Daly decided to try to regain the rifles from the magazine. With his hard-core of militants from the canteen, Daly went around the bungalows seeking support. Charles Kerrigan, who drank only rarely, had not been in the canteen and was in fact in bed asleep when he was aroused by Daly and told to prepare himself for action. Like most of the others, he armed himself with whatever weapon was available, in his case his bayonet, and joined the group outside, not quite sure of what was happening.

Meanwhile some N.C.O.s had told the officers of the agitated discussions in the canteen. As a result, Lieut. W. O'Brien stationed a number of his armed bandsmen across the top of the main path leading to the Magazine, whilst Lieutenants McWeeney, Walsh and later Sarsfield took position on a pathway leading off in order to block any infiltration from the flank.

It was thus against a small but prepared force of armed officers and men that Daly led the charge up the hill to the Magazine. Charles Kerrigan recalls that he himself was well up amongst the leading men of the group and had Privates Eugene Egan and Daly in front of him. As they got to within twenty or thirty yards of the magazine he was able to distinguish two of the officers barring their way – Lieutenants McWeeney and Walsh. There was much shouting, then he heard shots being fired but was unable to distinguish from whom. He saw Egan fall and almost immediately came the dramatic intervention of Father Baker who ran between the mutineers and the officers, calling upon the latter to stop firing. This they did and the mutineers, shocked by the shooting, retired down the hill at the request of Father Baker. Charles Kerrigan saw Pte. Smyth

lying dead on a bed in a bungalow. He, apparently had not taken part in the charge but had been struck by a bullet fired from the hill. Pte. Sears, from Ballinrobe, who had rushed up through the scrub on the left of the hill was brought down dead, and the wounded Pte. Egan was taken off to hospital on a stretcher. According to Charles Kerrigan the whole episode was over in 10 or 15 minutes.

His account differs little from that recorded by Lieut. McWeeney, M.C.,⁵ although the latter's memoir, written in 1971, is a little more detailed:

[...] a number of men, probably about 20,⁶ led by Daly, who was very visible as he was wearing a white shirt, and all carrying bayonets or heavy sticks, crossed from right to left where Walsh and I were standing. Encouraged by Daly they moved along the path and turned up the main track leading upwards to where O'Brien and his bandsmen were standing across the top of the track. It seemed obvious that a serious confrontation was about to take place within a few seconds especially as Daly & Co. had quickened their pace. It seemed essential that something had to be done quickly to try and avert the worst happening so about 6 or 8 revolver shots were fired over the heads of the group of men on the path [...]. There was a fair amount of confused shouting, O'Brien warning them to halt, and at the moment when it appeared to hang in the balance whether they would advance again (the shots halted them) Father Baker erupted onto the scene running from behind O'Brien's position (he had been coming from the direction of the bazaar when he heard the shots). He rushed between the two parties with his arms wide spread and asked O'Brien not to fire. O'Brien said he wouldn't if they went back. So Father Baker urged Daly to retire which I think they were glad to do. At this stage Private Smith was discovered lying dead beside the main path. I don't think he was with Daly's party as he was a quiet man but probably came along to see what would happen as he was rather apart and seemed to have been hit in the head by a descending bullet. A .45 as you know has a pretty limited range. Also a Private Egan⁷ discovered he had been slightly wounded in the chest probably by a ricochet. Whilst this was happening Private Sears with a bayonet in his hand rushed up the small path towards where we were standing. He was called on to halt several times, paid no attention and a shot had to be fired. He was unlucky, but for all practical purposes he committed suicide. The assistant surgeon, or George Wood the R.A.M.C. doctor (an Irishman), was quickly on the scene and examined and dealt with the casualties. Daly and his supporters retired to their barrack huts, and C.S.M. White and the N.C.O.s got things quietened down.⁸

After coming down from the hill, Pte. Kerrigan got into his bed and slept until morning. He and Pte. Kelly went off for breakfast and heard that the other mutineers had been rounded up by a British Army unit⁹ and all placed in one bungalow. The two thought they had been overlooked but their freedom was short-lived. Whilst they were eating, an officer came in and told them that they were under arrest. They were taken to a bungalow with the other mutineers and Charles Kerrigan was transferred with others to Lucknow. Here they were held in a bungalow for seven weeks whilst the charges against them were prepared. The seriousness of their offence had been made clear to them by the officers at Solon and Charles knew that the sentence for mutiny could be death by firing squad.

In August 1920, the mutineers from both Jullundur and Solan, were brought to Dagshai. There, in the gymnasium of the barracks, the Courts-Martial were held, presided over by Major-General Sir S.T.B. Lawford, formerly of the Royal Fusiliers. Charles had no complaints about his trial which took place on 4 September. He thought it was fairly conducted, but he felt some contempt for the Irish junior N.C.O. who

testified against him. Soon after his court-martial an officer came to his cell, opened a brown envelope and read out the sentence of the court. Pte. Charles Kerrigan had been sentenced to death. The officer, in an effort to soften the blow, spoke of the sentence being commuted but Charles spent one of the worst nights of his life reflecting on his sentence of death. Of the 69 mutineers court-martialled, 61 were found guilty and of these, fourteen were sentenced to death. The rest were given terms of imprisonment varying between one year and life.

All the sentences had to be confirmed by Lieut. Gen. Sir George de S. Barrow, G.O.C. District (himself a former Connaught Ranger) and for the fourteen men condemned to death, the next five weeks must have seemed interminable. Finally, on 14 October 1920, the mutineers were paraded and their definitive sentences were read out to them. The death sentence on Pte. James Daly was confirmed; of the remaining thirteen, twelve had their sentence commuted to penal servitude for life. Charles Kerrigan, because of his youth and short period of service, received twenty years penal servitude. Compared to the other thirteen he got away lightly.

Early in the morning of Tuesday 2 November 1920, James Daly was strapped to a chair in the yard at Dagshai prison and shot by firing squad. Charles Kerrigan, asleep in his cell at the rear of the prison recalled being awakened by the sound of the volley and got up to join his fellow prisoners in a noisy protest. The inevitable solitary confinement followed, which he accepted with the same stoical indifference as he did the rest of his penal servitude.

In December 1920 the transfer of the convicted mutineers to prisons in Britain was begun. They were embarked at Bombay in groups; Charles being in the last group which left soon after Christmas. He spent four weeks on board a troopship confined to a cell, and remembers the curiosity shown by the other troops on board when he and the other prisoners were walked around on daily exercise under the close supervision of guards. On arrival at Southampton the long-term prisoners were transferred to Portland Gaol where they found Irish political prisoners. It was from them, and they included Robert Barton who was to be a signatory to the Articles of Agreement 18 months later, that the mutineers were able, for the first time, to get a clear idea of the war then being waged in Ireland for independence.

After a short period in Portland, the mutineers were moved to Maidstone prison in Kent, where they were to serve out their long sentences. Charles remembered the transfer vividly since, for the first time since his arrest, he was handcuffed. Then in a manacled group of six, he was marched through the town to the railway station under the gaze of the curious passers-by.

Maidstone Gaol, like all other prisons in Britain at that time, was a grim place. With no hope of release for twenty years, Charles for the most part made the best of a bad job. He read prolifically from the books in the library and availed himself of the voluntary classes offered in the prison. He got on well with the master and improved his basic educational skills to a considerable degree. He was employed during the day

in the tinsmith's shop making coal-scuttles and enjoyed this, his only grumble being that he was only allowed to do part of the job and never had the satisfaction of completing it. Charles had no complaints about the prison food which he found 'fairly good' and, unlike some of his fellow mutineers, appears not to have kept himself in a state of semi-permanent rebellion against the system.¹⁰ He did, however, join a protest against the wearing of a distinctive uniform which differentiated the mutineers from the other convicts, and received fifteen days solitary confinement on bread and water. This punishment appears to have affected his health since he was given an outdoor, gardening job afterwards.

Apart from letters from his family, Charles had little news of the outside world whilst at Maidstone. What little he received came mainly from a visiting priest, who told him of the Treaty which was being negotiated. He was unaware that efforts were being made by Irish officers of his old Regiment to obtain the release of the mutineers. In the autumn of 1922, an appeal was made to this end by General Sir Bryan Mahon, Colonel Maurice Moore, Major Bryan Cooper, Captain Stephen Gwynn and others¹¹ and this, together with other pressures, including the Amnesty Bill passed in the Dáil, resulted in the release of the Connaught Rangers' mutineers.

At Maidstone, the prisoners had no prior indication that they were to be set free. The first that Charles Kerrigan knew about it was at early morning roll-call on 4 January 1923 when the Governor announced to his great delight that the mutineers would be released that day. They were then given a civilian outfit, two shillings, and vouchers for rail and boat travel to Dublin. The group left immediately and took the night boat from Holyhead to Dún Laoghaire.

They were taken to Dublin where a breakfast reception had been prepared for them in a hotel and Charles was welcomed home by the T.D. for Sligo. Later that day he and John Scanlon (who had received fifteen years for his part in the mutiny) took the train to the West and both got off in Sligo. After a welcoming drink, Charles set off to walk the remaining eight miles to his home. His mother had died whilst he was in Maidstone and he was welcomed home by his father, well over seventy at the time, and who was to die a few months later. Charles was penniless when he arrived in his native Leitrim, but the villagers rallied round, gave a céilí in his honour, and presented him with the £10 proceeds. Soon after his return he met his future wife and settled down to run the family farm. This he sold seven years later to buy a larger and more prosperous one which included a large acreage of mountain sheep grazing. The Kerrigans had fourteen children, two of whom died, and eighty grandchildren.

After his return, Charles had little contact with his fellow mutineers. He did meet John Scanlon in Sligo occasionally and would have attended reunions had they been held locally, but the remoteness of Leitrim and long hours demanded on the farm meant that he lost contact with those who had participated in the 1920 drama.¹² He was unable to attend the ceremony in Dublin when the bodies of Smyth and Sears were brought back from India for re-interment at Glasnevin, nor could he go to the re-burial of James

Daly, whose body was brought back at the same time and interred at Tyrrellspass on 1 November 1970, fifty years after his execution. After many years campaigning, the mutineers finally received a pension when the De Valera Government came to power in the 1930s. Charles Kerrigan received a lump sum of £132 initially, one pound for each week of his imprisonment and with the passing of The Connaught Rangers Pension Act in 1936,¹³ a small monthly pension.

Charles Kerrigan's account of the mutiny at Solon and its aftermath was told to me in straight-forward, simple terms, without embroidery, exaggeration, or political colouring. He remembered the dramatic events of 1920 with good humour and had no recriminations to make. After reading through so many highly dramatized accounts of the mutiny, it was refreshing to listen to Charles's sober testimony. For me it had the undeniable ring of authenticity about it.

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Notes

1. I am grateful to Charles Kerrigan for granting me the interview and to his daughter, Mrs. Nuala Dolan, who welcomed me in her home at Calry, when her father was staying there with her.
I am also grateful to Mr. Julian Putkowski, London, for providing me with additional information for this article. He and Anthony Babington are at present preparing a book on the mutiny of the Connaught Rangers to be published by Leo Cooper in 1991. I would also like to thank Cynthia McWeeney, for giving me access to her father's private papers; RTE for providing a tape of Lieutenant McWeeney's broadcast in 1970; Ray Duke of Athlone for confirming one or two points from his records and Beatrice Dixon and Peter Broadbent for facilitating my research work on this article.
2. For an appreciation of Philip Carney (and his wife Marie who witnessed the mutiny at Jullundur), see Kevin Myers, *The Irish Times*, 21/1/1988.
3. 'A' Company under the command of Major Truell at Jutogh did not take part in the mutiny.
4. Summary of Evidence presented by Major Alexander before the Court Martial, Pollock, op. cit., p47 'About 1500 hours on the 1st July 1920 I received a report in the Orderly Room at Solon that the rifle racks were being broken and the boxes containing pouch ammunition'.
5. Desmond McWeeney was born at 84, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin in 1897 and educated at Castleknock College. He was commissioned into the Connaught Rangers in September 1917, posted to the 6th Battalion and saw much action with them in France. He was awarded the Military Cross whilst still a 2nd Lieut. After leaving the Army in 1922 he emigrated to America but returned to Ireland in the late 1920s. He was a keen rugby player and later

- became prominent in Leinster Rugby Union circles. He died in 1982 in Dublin, aged 84.
6. The number of men who attacked the Magazine varies with individual witnesses. Father Baker says: 'about 40' (Kilfeather p182); Pollock, p73 gives 28; Kilfeather, quoting C.S.M. White, writes of 'two files of twenty-five' (p181).
7. Pte. Eugene Egan, from Claremorris, Co. Mayo, recovered quickly from his wound in hospital, stood trial at Dagshai in September and was sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. He lived to a ripe old age and was present at the unveiling of a monument to James Daly in St. Croan's Churchyard, Ballymoe, Co. Galway on 8 August 1971. For an account, with photograph, see the *Irish Independent*, 9/8/1971.
8. NAM London. 7609-35-12. The account was written for Lieut. Col. Seymour Jourdain, (nephew of the last Colonel of the Connaught Rangers, H.F.N. Jourdain) and sent on 1/4/1971.
9. The Suffolk Regiment, who according to Lieut. McWeeney, 'looked a pretty unimpressive lot and far more alarmed than the Ranger'. It is piquant that it should be the Suffolks who had to round up the mutineers since the two regiments had a long history of rivalry at Galway in the late nineteenth century. See: Comdt. P. D. O'Donnell: 'Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa', in *An Cosantóir*, June 1974, p185.
10. See for example, Joseph Hawes's account quoted extensively by Kilfeather, pp201-204.
11. The signatories carried some social and political weight. General Mahon had been commander of the 10th Irish Division during W.W.I. and was shortly to become a Senator when Seanad Éireann was created on 6 December 1922. Colonel Moore of Moore Hall, Co. Mayo, after 32 years in the Connaught Rangers, had been Inspector-General of the Irish Volunteers and later the National Volunteers. He was to join General Mahon in the Senate and become a member of Fianna Fáil soon after its creation. Major Bryan Cooper of Markree Castle, Collooney, had fought with Jourdain's 5th Battalion at Gallipoli, became a T.D. and wrote the history of the 10th Division. Stephen Gwynn, the well-known Irish author, had served with the 6th Battalion in France.
12. In 1927 a Connaught Rangers Mutineers Association was formed and established its headquarters at the Kevin Barry Memorial Hall, Parnell Square, Dublin. The Association pleaded continually with various Irish governments for the return from India of the bodies of those who died in the mutiny. The CRMA was still active in the 1970s when its Secretary was Michael J. Kearney, who had received 15 years imprisonment for his part in the mutiny.
13. In seeking to assess the size of the pension, the Free State Government sought details of the military service of each of the mutineers and found the British authorities uncooperative on the matter. There was a high degree of hostility between the two governments at the time as a result of De Valera's refusal to pay the Land Annuities agreed in 1923 and the subsequent economic retaliation by Britain. P.R.O. WO 32/4235 and 4236.

Stuart Barr was a Polytechnic and University lecturer for more than thirty years before his retirement. He has lectured widely on the Irish Regiments and recently addressed the Military Society of Ireland on Senator Colonel Maurice Moore of Moore Hall.

The National Movement, 1916-1921 period, as it related to areas south of Westport – Drummin, Carrowkennedy, Liscarney, Lankill, Cordarragh.

By John Joyce

THE RISING

The 1916 Rising gave a military boost to the National Movement. All leading men in the Rising were executed. Among those was **Major John McBride** of Westport. A parade organised in Westport 1917 against this man's execution resulted in several people being arrested, tried and sent to an internment camp in Wales known as Frongoch. Included in the number were **Pat Tunney**, Derrykellew and **Manus Keane**, Lankill. Several people throughout Ireland were sent to this internment camp at that time.

1917 and 1918

Sinn Féin took root as a political organisation, with branches in all areas. Heavy manpower losses incurred by Britain in the First World War at the Western Front and the Dardanelles persuaded her government to extend conscription to Ireland. Resistance to conscription was organised throughout Ireland. The following is a directive to Owenwee Sinn Féin Cumann:

SINN FÉIN

6 Harcourt Street,
Dublin.
19/4/1918

To:
The Secretary of each Cumann,
A chara,

In order to carry out the Conscription Pledge you will give every assistance after Mass next Sunday. This will necessitate careful preparations, that must at once, on receipt of this Instruction, be undertaken by you and such other members of your Cumann as you can communicate with.

The simplest method will be to purchase sufficient exercise books and take the signatures at each Chapel. At the head of each book, in bold and clear writing, the following words must be written in ink:

Denying the right of the British Government to enforce Compulsory Service in this country, we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist Conscription by the most effective means at our disposal.

In consultation with the priest, responsible men must be placed in charge of each book, and care must be taken not to take the same signature in more than one book. The books, when completed, must be carefully preserved.

Is sinne,

do cháirde i gCúis na h-Éireann,

AUSTIN STACK

DARRELL FIGGIS

Hon. Secs. Sinn Féin.

ANTI-CONSCRIPTION MEETING, TOWN HALL

This instruction was received by **James Kearns**, Secretary Owenwee Sinn Féin Cumann. He gives the following account of a meeting in Westport Town Hall, the aim of which was to organise the taking of signatures, and each signature to be backed by a deposit of one pound returnable to signatories at a later date.

While the meeting was in progress a parade was taking place on the streets. The marchers seemed to be fairly noisy shouting slogans as they passed the barracks. The meeting became alarmed as there could be a police raid on the Town Hall. Should a raid take place, preparations were made by the meeting to burn all documents and papers rather than allow them to fall into police hands. As a result of determined resistance throughout Ireland, conscription was never enforced.

The First World War, which had a considerable impact on Ireland ended in 1918. The emergence of several independent countries after the collapse of the Central European Powers was a great boost to the National Movement. The following countries became independent: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia.

The General Election 1918 gave Sinn Féin a landslide victory, which resulted in the setting up of a parliament in Dublin now known as Dáil Éireann. Sinn Féin demanded an Irish Republic, which was desired by the majority of the people, but would not be conceded by Britain.

ARRESTS

A collision course was by now inevitable which led to the War of Independence, 1920-1921 period, also known as the Black and Tan War. More arrests were made, and prisoners were sent to jail in Galway. Those arrested were **Laurence Moran**, Killeenacoff, **Peter O'Connor**, Loughloon, two **John Hastings**, Derryherbert, locally known as Big John and Little John, and **Broddie McLoughlin**, Oughty.

THOMAS LYONS SHOT DEAD

On 21 November 1920, **Thomas Lyons**, blacksmith, Liscarney, when on a visit to his uncle's house in Knappagh, was spotted by cycling soldiers crossing fields in the direction of the house. Some reports say he was called on to halt. However, he was shot dead. British army instructions at the time were to fire on any suspicious person. His funeral was held over for a few days, due to a complaint by a **Mrs. Corbert** to the British officers commanding in Westport, that the remains should be put in a clean condition for relatives and friends. **Mrs. Corbert** was home on holidays from the U.S.A. visiting her home in Owenwee.

SHOOTING IN THE TOWNLAND OF DERRYKELLEW

In 1921 the situation becomes serious. A direct confrontation took place in the townland of Derrykellew between Volunteers and R.I.C. It was a life or death incident depending on who fired first. The Volunteers fired first leaving a **Sergeant Coughlin** dead and **Constable Love** wounded. **Patrick Hoban**, a native of that townland who came on the scene, gives this report:

The wounded man told him to take his bicycle and go to Westport, an 8 mile journey to get a doctor and priest. He found the cycle not working and he had to walk it to Westport. On arriving at the Workhouse, now the Leenane Road cottages, he was called on to halt by the sentry and advance three paces to be recognised, which he did, and told his story to the sentry. On hearing this, the sentry took a whistle out of his pocket, blew a few loud blasts, after which reinforcements arrived. He was then taken to the barracks for further interrogation. His story was not taken as reliable 'till a policeman came on the scene that knew his father. He was asked to travel to the shooting scene in the R.I.C. car, but his option was the doctor's car in whose car he returned.

O'MALLEY'S HOUSE BURNT

At this time the Crown Forces had stooped to the law of reprisals. The **O'Malley** house in Carrowreivaugh townland was set on fire. A cow in the house was also burnt and the male occupants badly beaten and stabbed with bayonets. Their names were **Owen, John and Edward**. Owen had to spend considerable time in Westport Workhouse for treatment.

SHOP AT CUSHLOUGH SET ON FIRE

In the month of March 1921 **Darby Hastings'** shop was set on fire for reasons which are not clearly known. Speculation is that a number of the Crown Forces was in his pub drinking, when aggravated by being asked to pay for the drink, they set the shop on fire. All food was burnt leaving the Hastings family without anything to eat. The first man to arrive with food was **Pat O'Malley**, Carrowreivaugh locally known as Pat Paddy.

Also in the month of March 1921 **Pat Cox's** house, Drummin, was set on fire, a cow being burnt as well. For a considerable time the Cox family had to live in an outhouse.

At the same time, there is a river in Drummin, the crossing of which seemed a handicap to the Tans. They overcame this by getting a man by the name of **Michael Fergus** from Derrykellew townland to stretch in the middle of the stream. Then each man made good use of the human stepping stone

MARTIAL LAW, BURNING AT LETTERBROCK

The country was then ruled by Martial Law, which means among other things that people should not group or assemble together. In the townland of Letterbrock a group of young men had assembled at **Patrick Navin's**. They were spotted by a Tan lorry just passing. The men were beaten up and Navin's house burnt. **Thomas Navin's** house was also burnt when the soldiers returned. Thomas Navin put out the fire and saved half of his house. The ill-treated men did not sleep in their own houses that night but moved on to Owenwee and slept under big rocks.

CARROWKENNEDY AMBUSH

On 2 June 1921 took place the Carrowkenedy ambush which was a successful operation for the Volunteers. Figures killed or wounded are not accurate – ten or twelve killed and about the same number wounded. After the surrender Volunteers went to the townland of Claddy there, to have a meal and prepare for the next journey. Volunteer instructions had been, especially to **Peter O'Malley**, to sympathise with British officers on their loss but to misinform them as to their movements. They did arrive the following day and were told the Volunteers did move in the direction of Partree. As a result all the men in the townland east of Carrowkenedy as far as Bohaun, were brought to Hastings' public house, Cushlough, screened and stripped to see if they had any wounds or marks. None of them had any marks.

Those soldiers who survived the ambush made the journey to Westport on foot, a distance of 8 miles, between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. that evening. Their first call was to Keane's at Liscarney cross roads. **Mrs. Keane**, who was after milking her cows, was relieved of all her milk without a drink being even asked for.

It should be emphasised there were four periods in recent Irish history, that is:

1) 1916-1921 period characterised by the rebellion and resistance to conscription, General Election 1918, War of Independence 1920-1921 ending in the Treaty.

2) 1922-1932 period leaving a lasting impression on the people. The split in the great Sinn Féin movement resulting in the Civil War. The foundation of the Fianna Fáil Party by Éamon de Valera in 1926.

3) 1932 to 1939 period. First Fianna Fáil Government attained office, retaining land annuities amounting to 3½ million pounds and R.I.C. pensions amounting to 1½ million pounds – total 5 million. Britain retaliated by placing tariffs on all agricultural produce exported by Ireland to Britain. Almost all produce went to England at that time. It did make times very hard for the farming people of Ireland at that time.

4) 1939 period, outbreak of Second World War, 1 September 1939. Declaration

of neutrality by the Irish Government. Ration period commences; tea, sugar, flour, petrol, paraffin, and tyres were all rationed. And then started what was known as the Black Market. The rhyme was:

Bless DeValera and Seán McEntee, who gave us the brown bread and the half ounce of tea.

John Joyce, a native of Liscarny, Westport, was postmaster there for many years. He served in the local defence force during World War II, and is a committee member of Westport Historical Society.

Recollections based on the Diary of an Irish Volunteer 1898 to 1924, Part I

By Jim O'Donnell

I have written this booklet for the following reasons:

1. To fulfill a promise I made a long time ago to a gallant leader and a true friend, General Michael Kilroy, who at that time requested me and others to write out our own personal experiences as to the part we took in the fight for freedom – what we actually did and saw and any useful information about the Newport Battalion Area, in order that he might put them all together and write a true account of the noble part taken by the people in that area in the fight.
2. As a tribute to the members of the I.R.A. and the others who stood true to Ireland's cause through dark and evil days, and who thought no sacrifice too great and spared no effort when called upon to help in that cause.
3. As a special tribute to my father and mother, and to the fathers and mothers of all the volunteers. Also a tribute to the householders of those days who stood behind the fighting columns through thick and thin. When the column men who had billeted in their homes the previous night were far away, they had to stand up to the enemy troops and take whatever punishment they were given. Regardless of the consequences, they refused to give any information. These were certainly the silent heroes.
4. To give to the present and to future generations a general idea of the part played by every volunteer in the area, the difficulties they had to overcome, and the pattern of life they followed during that glorious and difficult period.

Jim O'Donnell, Shanballyhue, Newport, County Mayo, Ireland.

Diary of an Irish Volunteer

I was born on the twenty-third of October 1898 at No. 6 Bradley Place, Morley, Yorkshire, England. My parents, Richard O'Donnell and Catherine Mulchrone, both natives of Derrycooldrim, Newport, County Mayo, Ireland, emigrated to Morley shortly after their marriage and set up a home there. My older brother Michael and two sisters, Mary and Nora, and I were born there. I was sent to school at three years of age and I don't remember much about it. I do remember a school exam at which I won a

prize, and I also remember an old man named Taylor being drowned in a mill dam at the top of our street. I also remember the layout of the street in which we lived and a bridge we had to pass on entering it. In fact when I visited Morley Christmas, 1920, I asked my cousin who met me at the station to stand back and see if I could find the house on my own, as the memory I had of it was just like a dream of which I wasn't too sure. I walked straight on and found the house as I had always imagined it.

When I was five years old my parents bought our present home in Shanballyhue, Newport, County Mayo, from Peter and Ellen Burke. At that time it was just a thatched cottage with ten acres of land. I had just had my fifth birthday before we left for Ireland. My father often told us the story of how he was carrying me through the ticket office at Morley Station. The station master asked him how old I was, as anybody under five travelled free. He said that I was almost five. I then spoke up and said 'I'm five since last Tuesday!' The station master just smiled, gave him the tickets, and wished him luck.

When we arrived in Shanballyhue my parents furnished and stocked the place, and we settled into the usual family routine. As we grew up strong enough to take our places, we each were given our own tasks, and we had to have our work done on time. My father, though a kind and generous man, was also a strict one and his word was always law at our home. There were nine children in the family, four boys and five girls. Bridget, the youngest, died at the age of four months. That was our first great sorrow, as we all loved her.

When my father was a boy of eighteen he was stricken with rheumatic fever and was for twelve weeks between life and death. During his lifetime he had six attacks of it, each of twelve weeks duration. The doctors warned him to take no chances, but to be always careful. That left a heavier burden on my mother and more responsibility on each one of us. In spite of his handicap, he managed the home well and we were never short of good wholesome food and neat clothing, as he was always at the helm and directed every operation even though he could not do heavy work.

From 1909 to 1913 the principal topic of conversation at every gathering was Home Rule, which after a long fight was passed through the British House of Commons and the House of Lords, and placed on the Statute Books. Then Sir Edward Carson, at the head of the Orange Order, started up in opposition, organized the Ulster Volunteers, started gun running in public, armed them and defied the British government to put Home Rule into operation. The British made a half-hearted attempt to quell this defiance, but the army in the Curragh of Kildare mutinied and refused to disarm the Orangemen.

John Redmond, as leader of the Irish people, organized the National Volunteers a short time previously. Then in 1914 World War I started, and all the politicians called for recruits to help England to fight the war for small nations, while forgetting the fact that their own small nation was being trampled underfoot. Home Rule was then shelved, and the National Volunteers, disgusted with the turn of events, split into two

sections. The breakaway unit which was the larger, called themselves the Irish Volunteers and later formed the nucleus of the Irish Republican Army. The smaller unit, which stood by John Redmond, called themselves the National Volunteers. After a time this unit faded away.

During the big strike in 1913, Jim Larkin and James Connolly formed the Citizen Army within the labour ranks, armed them, and marched them out in public. Then Liam Mellows, Erskine Childers and others organized what was later known as the Howth gun running, and brought in a large consignment of arms – about 1,500 rifles and 50,000 rounds of ammunition on the yacht *Asgard*. The Volunteers marched down to the quays in broad daylight, received their rifles and marched back to their headquarters in defiance of British orders.

Of course, this was only a small portion of the arms needed, and quite a big part of the arms and explosives used later was acquired in several ways. One of the most effective, I think, was that of Irish organized companies in England and Scotland who bought small arms and explosives from British ex-soldiers of World War I and also from regular soldiers, and from miners who used explosives in mines. Sir Roger Casement and his men worked on the Continent and arranged to have arms shipped from there to Ireland. He himself came to supervise the landing of the largest consignment of the whole operation, the landing of the *Aud*, with 20,000 rifles at Banna Strand. Hard luck hit the whole operation from the outset as two volunteer officers who had been detailed to meet the *Aud* took a wrong turn in dense fog, ran into the sea and were drowned. This left those on board without the necessary signals to guide them.

The ship was also sighted and followed by British destroyers and when those in charge of it saw they were going to be captured, they scuttled and sank it rather than let the guns fall into British hands. If that consignment had been safely landed it might have made a big change in the history of the struggle, for at that time England had her hands full.

Roger Casement was taken prisoner, tried for treason and later hanged. The Volunteers started planning an all-out rebellion and arranged for all the country units to rise at the same time as Headquarters. The Rising was planned for Easter Sunday. But just on the eve of the Rising, Eoin MacNeill, who was the 'chief of staff' and who seemingly had not been consulted previously, issued a countermanding order, calling it off. The result was that only two or three units outside Dublin took part. The fight made during Easter Week is now past history and there is no need to repeat it here.

After the general surrender the leaders were all executed except Éamon De Valera, who, although sentenced to death, was reprieved when the American government stepped in and said hands off, as he was an American citizen. The prisoners were then removed to Wormwood Scrubs, Frongoch and other British prisons where they started a series of hunger strikes and other forms of agitation.

In the latter part of 1916 all opposition seemed crushed, as all, or nearly all, of the leaders who were living were in jail. But the people were not by any means cowed

but were waiting their opportunity. In the early days of 1917 the volunteers again started to get active and to recruit large numbers. On 15 June 1917, I myself and several of my companions joined the Newport Company Second Battalion, West Mayo Brigade, and from that time forth I was a member of the Irish Republican Army.

Shortly after this I took the **Oath of Allegiance** and I can honestly say that I have tried during my life to live true to it. Let nobody think that then, or in later years, we had all the people on our side. A large number of the Irish people, and in fairness to them I will say good Irishmen and Irishwomen, thought we were mad, and did not agree with our methods as they thought we had no chance against the might of the British Empire and were only stirring up trouble which would gain nothing.

During the latter half of 1917 and the early part of 1918 we drilled intensively, sometimes in the valleys of Derrylahan, northeast of General Kilroy's old home, and sometimes out in the islands in Clew Bay at rifle practice.

Saint Patrick's Day 1918 was our big day in Newport. All the Volunteers in the area, about sixty in number, mobilized at the Old Parish Hall and marched to the Fair Green. We did all kinds of foot drills, including platoon drill. When drill was over we got the order to march, then to double towards Westport. The police came after us on the double. As we were light lads and good runners we led them a merry dance for an hour. Whenever we went on route marches, we always had four to six policemen after us and we often made them travel! As a general rule, there were no hard feelings between the Volunteers and the police at that time, nothing like that which developed later.

During the period 1918 to 1920 we often had to take our turns at patrolling the town, especially on fair days and holidays. We generally worked in twos, and our orders were to watch out for brawls or fights – be there before the R.I.C. and have the combatants removed before the police could get them, and take over, as far as possible, the functions of the police. We were equipped with police whistles to call for help if needed.

I remember on one occasion I was standing one night with a number of my school pals. They started gibing me about our drill display in the town that day. They said we were just a lot of gossoons, showing off. They got me so mad that I jumped on to the road and told them that they'd be glad to have the protection of the Volunteers before a month. And although I didn't dream I was telling the truth, it happened that inside three weeks, the Conscription Bill was passed three times through the House of Commons, three times through the House of Lords, and received the king's signature, all in one day.

Every party and creed then came together and united in one grand protest against conscripting any of our people. During that period, it would make any Irishman proud of his country and his people to see their splendid unity and determination against that threat. Very Reverend Canon McDonnell and all the other priests throughout the country spoke from the pulpits urging the young men to join the volunteers and resist

by every means in their power the menace of Conscription. Where there was only a handful of Volunteers before this, others joined up in hundreds and after nightfall every night could be heard the sounds of men drilling. As we all know, Conscription was defeated, and after that the attitude of the people in general changed towards the Volunteers – changed when it was seen what could be achieved by unity, and the people gave us more support.

At times all agitation died down and everything seemed quiet for a while, only to flare up again. We were working hard and were succeeding in turning public opinion in our favour.

Then some time after Conscription came the General Election of 1918 which resulted in a landslide for Sinn Féin and Republican candidates who captured 73 seats out of 80. Then on 27 January 1919 they set up their own Parliament, appointed their own cabinet, their own courts of law, and their own police force. Then came a pause and everything seemed to be dying out, and people seemed to lose interest.

On 1 April, 1919, at the second session of the Republican Parliament, Éamon De Valera was elected President and Michael Collins director of Intelligence and Minister for Finance. Then there was a period of quiet. Most of the Volunteer activities were confined to route marches, raiding for arms and training. Anybody in the area who had shotguns or small arms and who did not offer them to the Volunteers, had his house raided and his arms commandeered. They were given receipts for those guns and were compensated for them at the end. A number of men were then left in charge of them and had to keep them cleaned and oiled and shifted from place to place, as things were getting dangerous.

In June 1920 a bunch of us went to a little mining town in Scotland, called Calderbank, about twelve miles from Glasgow, as everything seemed to have died out around home. We remained in Scotland for seven months. During that time we helped to organize a company of Volunteers about thirty strong between Calderbank and Airdrie. Our officers were Captain John O'Brien and John Timmons, First Lieutenant. Harry McStravick, adjutant, was son of the boss for whom we worked. That company did good work later.

About that time, Mrs. Mary Ainsworth, who, like all her family, was an enthusiastic worker in Ireland's cause, received a letter from her brother, Jim Clinton of Shanballyhue, Newport, Co. Mayo, telling her of a raid the Black and Tans made on his house. They beat up the family and took him out for a night, blindfolded him and drove him for miles. Then they made him walk out in a lake up to his shoulders, fired shots around his head in the water, and after a night of terror, brought him home. That raid was typical of the Tans' methods of terrorizing the people.

(Commandant Ned Lyons, one of our first officers, was arrested and so badly beaten that he never recovered and died after he was sometime in jail. We of the Old I.R.A. had a memorial erected to him and his comrades of the Newport Battalion a few years ago. It stands on the Newport Fair Green, a beautiful statue of native limestone.

His comrades in Chicago and Cleveland were among those who contributed to its erection.)

About the middle of January 1921, Tom McDonnell and I came home with dispatches from the Scottish Company, one of which was an offer of thirty men for the fight if need be. On the journey from Greenock to Dublin we had a company of Black and Tan recruits under a captain, and they were a rough lot. I delivered my messages to Commandant Clinton, and he told us to report at once to our company officer.

Shortly after our arrival, General Kilroy was considering forming a flying column with the limited supply of arms at his disposal – and they were limited indeed! Each company was mobilized on its own training ground. The organizer lectured us on the formation of the column. He said that a volunteer who agreed to join had nothing to gain from it but an early death, and that anyone who did not feel he could see it through would be thought none the worse of it if he stood down. Those who did volunteer should be prepared to see it through to the death if necessary, as they knew the odds we were up against. We had thirty-one men that night.

The organizer asked that anyone willing to serve should cross a given line which he made. Among the first to cross were Peter and Anthony Caine, Derryhillagh; Davy and Johnnie Gibbons, Acres Bridge; John T. Maloney, Letterlough; Mike Horan, Jim Sweeney, Tom McDonnell and myself. Of the rest I am not quite clear, but I do know that sixteen men crossed it apart from the officers who included Mike Gibbons, Rosslave (Captain); Mike Fergus, First Lieutenant; and Mike McNeela, Second Lieutenant. Willie Burke (former Captain) was in jail at the time. We were told we would be called when needed and when arms were available.

One night shortly afterward I asked my mother to prepare my clothes as we expected to be called any day. We had each received a haversack. She got all my clothes together and packed the haversack for me and left it ready. Some of my friends tried to advise me that I was acting foolishly as we were up against too much opposition. One man in particular complained to my father that I was at very dangerous work and bringing danger to the home also. The answer he made was, 'If he wants to fight for his country, I won't stop him. I took my place in my own day and nobody stopped me. He has my blessing.' Those words often gave me courage when things looked black. That was his attitude towards me to the end.

The Tans now roamed the country at will and beat and terrorized the people. Jim Moran and his brothers Tom and Patrick were savagely beaten in their own home. Owen Caine, Carrickaneady, was asleep in his home when the Tans called. They beat him until he was unconscious, then put a young filly into the room with him, fired shots at it until it went crazy, in the hope that she would trample him to death.

Then the house of Stephen McGough, Brockagh, was raided. They gave him a savage beating, then went to his cowhouse and roped a young heifer, put him up on her back, fired shots at her 'till she went madly out the door, in the hope that this would kill him. This was being done everywhere in the hope of demoralizing the people.

That is where they made their big mistake – for that is when all that is brave and noble in the Irish people shows – when they are fighting with their backs to the wall. For a time the Tans had it all their own way, and beat and terrorized the country, raiding homes every night, beating people in a savage way. General Michael Kilroy then decided to stop this, and prepared to form a flying column. As I have already said, the supply of arms was very limited and the position was that for every rifle or shotgun available, there were ten men anxious to use it. Michael picked a certain number of men from each Company and gave them the arms on hand, and made all the others go on the waiting list – sometimes causing a little disappointment or jealousy among those who were not picked. It could be done no other way as the arms just were not there.

He gave all the others their own jobs to do in the meantime, such as cutting roads, making dugouts or underground rooms, storing, cleaning and moving arms. Also, intelligence work, dispatch carrying, helping and acting as guides for the Columns, and finding out information about enemy movements which would be valuable to the columns – a highly dangerous job, a lot of which was done by the *Cumann na mBan* (Irish Women's Organisation).

There was another section of the movement, which we nicknamed the Irish Navy. Those were the boys who ferried the I.R.A. officers and men in boats across Clew Bay whenever needed. As everybody knows how vulnerable a target a boat can be from a position on the shore, you can well imagine how dangerous an occupation that was. The principal men involved were Tom Fergus, Tom Chambers and Mike O'Donnell, all of Ardagh and the Tiernaur Comoany; on the Kilmeena end the Morans, and Burkes of Ross, Barretts and Geraghtys of Drunnagh, and Pat Quinn, Inniscuttle.

In the last weeks of March, as the Column was preparing for action, Jim Moran, Pádraig Joyce and Jack Clarke, all of Tiernaur Company, raided the house of an Englishman named Good, who lived occasionally in Rockfleet. They got a short Martini rifle and other small arms. Jim Moran carried that rifle all through the Tan and Civil Wars and used it in many a daring raid. A few nights later Good came with the Tans to raid Jim's house, having with him a rope to drag him to his death behind the car – but Jim was not there.

As time went on, the I.R.A. made the Tans withdraw to their barracks, and soon they were glad to stay there. The wild raids then ceased, and unless travelling in force, they did not venture out at all. Ambushes were set in several places, and a few of them came off, such as Kilmeena and Skirdagh in the Newport area and Carrowkenedy in the Westport area. In Kilmeena, four I.R.A. men were killed, four wounded and captured, one captured unwounded, and three wounded who escaped. Those killed were Tom O'Donnell, Rossbannagh, Newport; Séamus MacEvilly, Castlebar; Pat Stanton, Kilmeena; John Collins, Westport. Those wounded and captured were Paddy O'Malley, Rossinrubble; Paddy Malloy, Tiernaur; John Cannon, Kilmeena; and Paddy Jordan, Islandeady. Those who were wounded but escaped were Jimmie Swift and John Chambers, and Michael Hughes, Castlebar. The prisoners who were captured were

brutally handled and thrown bodily in across the side of the lorry and left lying on the floor on the journey to Dublin. Paddy O'Malley, whose leg had been broken by bullets during the fight, and which General Kilroy had set in a fair way, was again injured by being thrown into the lorry. He was most of the time unconscious, as was Paddy Mulloy whose hip was almost shot off.

Paddy Jordan died from his wounds the day after his arrival at the Dublin hospital. It was afterwards said that, had he been properly treated, he would have survived. In Skirdagh, Jim Browne, Drimgarve, Kilmeena, was mortally wounded and died two days later. Sergeant Munroe was wounded and one Tan killed.

Carrowkennedy was a great victory. Twelve Tans were killed and thirteen captured, together with 25 rifles, 25 revolvers, one Lewis machine gun, 60 Mills bombs and 5,000 rounds of .303 ammunition. This victory left General Kilroy in a good position where he could call in more of his men and arm them.

In the meantime, several other ambushes were set. One was at Burrishoole bridge, one at Yellow River bridge, and one in Carrickaneady, which did not come off, as the Tans were getting more wary and often did not return on the same route on which they went out.

The Black and Tans were made up of a collection of ex-British soldiers of World War One, and of ex-British criminals who were serving sentences in British prisons for murder and other crimes and who were pardoned if they joined up and came to Ireland to fight the I.R.A. They were recruited in such a hurry that they couldn't supply them with proper uniforms fast enough, and had to dress them in part khaki and part bottle green of the R.I.C. and from this they got their nickname. They were paid 10/- per day salary and were both feared and hated by the people. There was another section called the Auxiliaries who were ex-British officers and were paid one pound per day.

At the Carrowkennedy Ambush, where the Column had captured a number of R.I.C. and Tans, there happened to be one R.I.C. sergeant who had beaten the parents of some of the Column boys. Naturally, they felt like having some of their own back. General Kilroy then said, 'Boys, they are now our prisoners and they cannot be illtreated.' The Sergeant in question showed him a badge of the Sacred Heart and asked him in honour of that name to spare his life – he would not fight against him again. I heard later that he did not live up to his promise.

Even the English newspapers of that time gave a very favourable comment on the treatment meted out by General Kilroy to his prisoners. The *Manchester Guardian* in an editorial said that, considering how General Kilroy had treated the British prisoners he had captured that day, the I.R.A. must not be the mob of terrorists they were held up to be, as they had shown such good discipline. It was even hinted sometime later that it had a good influence on the calling of the truce. The truce was called on July 1, 1921 and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. All returned to their own homes. Dances and parties were held for the Column, and everyone was happy, little knowing the disappointments and heartaches that lay ahead before it was all over.

It was an uneasy peace, and no one knew whether the fight would start again. The I.R.A. again got busy. We had two weeks of intensive training at Sheeane Lodge, Ballycroy. All the officers and N.C.O.s of the West Mayo Brigade were called there. After that it was continued in weekend camps and preparations for resuming the fight if necessary.

Some time after that the British vacated all the small barracks, amongst them Newport police barracks on Castlebar Street. The officers of the battalion were ordered to take over and run the services. The officers were Jack Connolly (battalion commandant); Jim Clinton (vice-commandant); Dan O'Donnell (quartermaster); Willie McNulty (O C engineers); Mike Brown (O C transport); Tom Chambers, Shramore (O C Intelligence); I was O C signallers; and N.C.O.s Paddy Mulloy, Jimmy Kelly and John Murray. Captain Willie O'Malley was district Inspector of police, and Marcus McDonnell also a member of the police force. They were in charge of policing the entire battalion area and we had to help when needed. We had occasionally to run classes for the different special services at weekend camps.

After the truce was put into operation on 11 July 1921, Lloyd George invited De Valera and any colleague he might select to a conference in London to try to work out a settlement. The following day he crossed to London with three colleagues, including Arthur Griffith.

A short time previously, Winston Churchill, who was then Chairman of the Committee for Irish Affairs in the British government, advised Lloyd George to offer a wider scope of self-government than that offered in the Government of Ireland Act of 1921, and if the Irish did not accept to mount a tremendous onslaught on them, using an army of 100,000 specially trained men from a network of blockhouses all over the country. This was the big stick held over the heads of the Irish people. To their credit, although weary of war, they stood up to it splendidly.

The Volunteers waited anxiously for the outcome, but kept on with their preparations, little knowing the trials that lay ahead. Every day the Volunteer Army increased in numbers and efficiency.

At the conference in London, Lloyd George and DeValera argued the issue bitterly. Lloyd George offered Ireland something similar to Dominion status like Canada. The only difference was the cutting off of the six northern counties. DeValera stood firm for the thirty-two counties and independence. Lloyd George's proposals were put to the Second Dáil. Despite the threat of immediate and terrible war, they were turned down by a unanimous vote on 16 August 1921.

Every day the I.R.A. improved and the nation waited anxiously for the terrible onslaught. Instead, DeValera received another letter from Lloyd George, reopening negotiations. In October, a delegation from Dáil Éireann left for England with a draft treaty drawn up by the Irish Cabinet. It represented the irreducible minimum which would satisfy all shades of opinion in the Dáil. DeValera was often blamed for not leading the delegation himself. There were several views taken of this, and several

reasons given. Amongst these was that Arthur Griffith resented the fact that he was not allowed to lead the delegation, and that DeValera allowed him to do so. Another view was that his absence could be used by the delegation as an excuse for not allowing themselves to be stampeded into making any hasty decisions in London. The plenipotentiaries, as they were called, had definite instructions not to sign anything but to report back to Dublin.

In five long weeks of argument nothing was achieved from the Irish viewpoint. But the British did succeed in splitting the Irish delegation, and in tricking Griffith into believing Lloyd George's promise of a Boundary Commission to adjust the boundaries to the satisfaction of all concerned. The Irish delegation for their part failed to get the British to accept DeValera's viewpoint. The British would not hear of the phrase 'External Association' which means that Ireland, though independent of the Commonwealth, would remain associated with it, and would recognise the Crown only as the symbol or head of that association.

The delegation returned to Dublin with a set of British proposals which offered Ireland the status of a Dominion, envisaged the possibility of a semi-permanent border, retained the control of three naval bases, and insisted on an oath of allegiance – broadly speaking, the same terms that Lloyd George had offered DeValera at their first meeting.

The delegation was already divided. Now the Cabinet divided. Some of the delegates, as did some of the Ministers, began to think that this was as far as the British were prepared to go at this time, and began to wonder if it would be wise to accept it and look for more later.

Collins thought that the Oath was an unimportant piece of 'sugar coating' which might make the British swallow a settlement on other points. Even DeValera himself thought that the Oath might be phrased in such a way as not to commit them to anything against Irish aspirations. He even suggested an alternative form to be sent with counter-proposals to the British, though he remained insistent that nothing binding should be signed without reference to Dublin and to him. Griffith was now strongly in favour of acceptance. He believed that this was Britain's last word, and that the alternative was war. Two members of the delegation were dead against it in its then form, and so were part of the Cabinet. It was agreed that the delegation return to London and press for at least some of the amendments that had been discussed. When the delegation went back to England to conclude the talks, the members were so bitterly divided that they even travelled in two separate parties, one by the Dublin-Liverpool route, and the other by the Dún-Laoghaire-Holyhead route.

The delegation, which consisted of Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins, Robert Barton, Edmund Duggan and George Gavan-Duffy, with Erskine Childers as secretary, met in London on Sunday December 4, 1921. Three of them, Barton, Duggan and Gavan-Duffy, set to work drafting amendments to the proposed Treaty, to try and meet the requirements of the Cabinet in Dublin. But when the amendments had been completed, Griffith announced that he would have nothing to do with them. Collins

also refused to go to Downing Street with the counter-proposals. 'Let those who want to break with the British,' he said, 'go themselves and present the documents'. One theory as to what happened between the meeting of the Sinn Féin Cabinet and the meeting in London which caused Collins, of all men, to abandon the idea of an Irish Republic and to accept partition in return for less than Dominion status, is too strange to consider. One theory is that it may have been pressure brought to bear on him by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, of whose Supreme Council he was a member. They may have decided, without reference to President DeValera, who had resigned from that Conference five years previously, to accept England's offer without his knowledge.

For two days Collins refused to take part in any talks, but was talked into a private meeting with Lloyd George, who bulldozed the delegates into meeting and signing the Treaty as it stood. There is no doubt whatever that Lloyd George, having bullied them into meeting him, took advantage of their position. At one stage of the talks he snatched two envelopes from the table in front of him, and holding them up dramatically said, 'Look – here are two documents. One contains the Articles of Agreement reached by us here. The other says that the Sinn Féin representatives refused to come into the Empire. If I send the latter, it means war within three days – immediate and terrible war. Which is it going to be?'

Lloyd George had tried the same bluff on DeValera during former discussions, saying that if he refused to accept the document, the responsibility for renewing the war would be on his shoulders. DeValera, leaving the document on the table where Lloyd George had thrown it, pointed out that he wouldn't *dare* to take a document like that back to the Irish people, nor would he accept responsibility for renewing the war. 'If you attack us,' he told Lloyd George, 'the responsibility will be yours and not mine.' Had the delegation held out, and taken up the firm stand DeValera had formerly taken, the result would have been different, as the morale of the I.R.A. and of the people was never better.

Collins and the delegation, being under a terrible strain, now collapsed. Griffith and Collins persuaded the other three to sign, and in the early hours of 5 December 1921, the Treaty was signed by all five members.

Back in Dublin, DeValera read in the morning papers that an agreement had been signed, but he had still received no word from his delegation. Later in the day the terms of the Treaty were published, and immediately the split began to appear in the Sinn Féin party which had up to this fought the battle so valiantly. To say that the Irish people as a whole wanted – although sick and tired of war – to surrender, would be wrong. They faced the situation bravely and continued to support the stand taken by the I.R.A.

General Kilroy and more than 90% of the men of the 4th Western Division of which he was in charge stood firm and decided to see it through to the death if necessary. The tragedy of it was that Collins and Griffith, by over-riding their authority by signing the Treaty, had split the country from top to bottom. Having once taken that step, there was no going back.

On 7 January DeValera resigned as President, and he and his Republican deputies, numbering 57, withdrew from the Dáil. The pro-treaty deputies, numbering 64, met on 14 January, elected Griffith president, and formed a provisional, or caretaker, government. Collins, with the remnant of the I.R.A. who supported the provisional government, which was, in fact, only a committee, set about carrying out the terms of the treaty. The small section of the I.R.A. which supported the Treaty, together with a lot of young boys who were attracted by the nice new uniforms and the glamour of army life, as they thought it, and also those people who had sat on the fence during the fight to see how it would go, and who now decided to take a hand and join the Free State Army, now formed the army backing Collins. We now had two armies in Ireland: the Irish Republican Army, to which we were bound by oath, and the Free State Army. Tension increased daily, and everyone waited anxiously for the next move.

Liam Lynch, Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor and Cathal Brugha declared their allegiance to the Republic and refused to recognize the provisional government. They then set up their headquarters in the Four Courts on the following grounds:

1. The Irish people had never recognized British rule in Ireland as lawful.
2. They had fought a bitter war for five years to maintain the Republic.
3. They had taken lives in its defence.
4. They had sworn to defend the Republic against all enemies, foreign and domestic.
5. The treaty had been signed behind the backs of the Cabinet of Dáil Éireann and of the army, and in violation of the signatories' oaths, credentials and terms of reference.
6. The treaty was signed under threat of war – an unworthy surrender for a proud and honourable nation.

Dáil Éireann had approved the treaty by 64 votes to 57, but only three of those 64 deputies accepted it on its merits, 61 stating they were accepting it as the only alternative to war. I remember reading the terms of the treaty in the *Daily Press*, and it was so confusing and hard to understand that I had read it four times before I could grasp its full meaning. My final reaction to it was that it was a surrender of almost everything we were fighting for.

Dick Mulcahy, the new Minister for Defence, in the provisional government, at once publicly declared that the army would be maintained as the Army of the Republic.

An election was held on 16 June 1922. DeValera proposed that Sinn Féin put forth a panel of candidates, both pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty, who would go forward unopposed within their own party. Although they could be opposed by other interests outside the party, the party would show a united front. Collins and Griffith agreed to this, only to repudiate it the evening before the election. Collins also promised that he would draw up a Republican constitution in time for the election, but he did not have it published until the evening before the polls, too late for the people to see it before casting their votes. Such was the confusion that reigned the people did not know what to do.

During this time the I.R.A. was also busy, and both sections called for an army convention to ensure that Mr. Mulcahy's undertaking would be carried out. The Dáil agreed and Mr. Mulcahy called the convention for 20 March 1922. On 17 March, three days before it was to be held, Griffith proclaimed it. Here – as in every move made – the hidden hand of England was at work. Every day that passed showed plainly that the provisional government, instead of being an Irish government, was becoming more and more the tool of the oppressor.

It must be remembered that the army was an unpaid volunteer force, which was in existence before the Dáil was established, and which as a condition to coming under its jurisdiction had insisted on all the members of the Dáil taking the Oath of Allegiance to the Republic. Only one member, DeValera himself, refused to take the oath.

The provisional government started to obtain secretly from England a supply of arms including heavy artillery. The army executive decided as a precautionary measure to occupy the Four Courts and other buildings. The legality of this occupation was never questioned by the Dáil. No request was ever made by the provisional government that the Four Courts be evacuated.

About this time, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson was shot dead on his own doorstep at his London home by two Irishmen, ex-British soldiers. It was well known that Wilson was responsible for the hanging of Kevin Barry, also for the Belfast pogroms and the murder of Catholics. The British government claimed that documents had been found which proved the I.R.A. had killed Wilson, and called on Collins to get Rory O'Connor out of the Four Courts. Actually, the order to shoot Wilson had come from Collins himself.

Mr. Churchill, in the English House of Commons, on 26 June, four days before the meeting of the Third Dáil, demanded an attack on the Four Courts. Shortly before this tension was high. The I.R.A. and also the Free State forces, far from being bitter, were anxious that things should be straightened out, and many and fervent were the prayers said by all that peace would be maintained. A large number from both sides met in Limerick in those early days. On one side of the street the I.R.A. was lined up, and on the other, the Free State forces, both fully armed. Everyone prayed that tragedy might be averted – but such was not to be the case, and Ireland now really entered on her Purgatory.

On 28 June, Collins, with guns borrowed from England, bombarded the Four Courts, and the Civil War was on. It dragged on for most of the summer. Griffith, worn out and now realising the situation for which he was mainly responsible, died of a broken heart on 17 August 1922. He was succeeded by William Cosgrave. Michael Collins was shot dead in what was supposed to be an ambush on 22 August 1922. It has never been established by whom he was shot, or why. There have been several versions of his death, but I think the story told by some of the men who were his bodyguards on that day, sounded true. Collins, although forced to take the road he took, never liked it.

I was a prisoner in Hut 13, Tintown 2 Camp, the Curragh, during the hunger strike in the harvest of 1923. I was the only Western in that Hut – all the rest were Cork men and numbered 112. Among them were some of Collins's own bodyguard on the day of his death, and the story they told was as follows:

Collins rose on the morning of his death and announced to his men, 'I am going out today to meet the Long Fellow, and before the sun sets we'll settle this trouble, as there is too much good Irish blood shed on both sides.' (DeValera was nicknamed the Long Fellow and Collins the Big Fellow). His men said he was shot from behind by an ex-Black and Tan who had been detailed to do the job in just such a case as this, as the British government never trusted him. When others saw how Collins was treated, they deserted over to the Republican side and fought there until the end.

A large number of the Newport Battalion who were on the Active Service Unit in Castlebar military barracks, including Dan O'Donnell and the McNeelas, Derrylahan; the Gibbons and O'Malleys, Rosslave; the Caines of Derryhillagh, Newport, and representatives of all the families whose sons were volunteers, were sent on to Collooney and other parts of Sligo where heavy fighting was going on. There they had a number of successful encounters, in one of which they captured the armoured car *Ballinalee*, which was later used by General Kilroy in the capture of the strongly-held garrison at Ballina.

During this period too, the Brigade Engineers, Staff Captain Jim Moran, Lieutenant Willie McNulty, Thomas Moran, who was the brains of the job, assisted by Jim Grey, Achill Co.; Willie Walshe, Tiernaur Co.; Jim Grehan (miner) and others, commandeered a boiler from the Railway Hotel, Mulranny, fitted it to the chassis of a Crossley lorry, and transformed it into an armoured car which they named the *Queen of the West*, and which some time later was the principal factor in the capture of the important military post at Clifden, County Galway.

General Kilroy, who had early in the fight set up his own little foundry in Shramore and later moved it to Castlebar, now turned out from it larger supplies of hand-grenades about the size of the Mills bomb, but far more effective as the sections were smaller and therefore would cover a wider area when exploded.

Fighting now broke out in all parts of the country and went on for three or four months, the I.R.A. having the better part of the exchanges in most cases. Even then there was no real bitterness between the rival forces as one would expect – only a feeling of unbelief that such a thing would or could happen. We who were in charge of the barracks still held on to them.

Orders were then sent out to all Republican garrisons to evacuate and burn their barracks and again take to the hills in guerilla warfare, as it was becoming impossible to stand up to frontal attacks. The provisional government was now being supplied with heavy guns by England.

We received orders from headquarters to evacuate and burn Newport barracks.

Everything was stacked up and set on fire, and in a short time the building was a blazing inferno. Some of the locals who later became the foundation of the Free State Army in Newport, but who had no previous connection with the Volunteers, looked on.

By some oversight, the Tricolour, which waved at the top of the flagstaff, was not removed before the fire was started. The flames raged around the flag and rose at times to a height of twenty feet above it. Strange to say, when the fire died down, it wasn't even scorched.

The fight was not going to England's satisfaction and the reaction may be summed up in a leading article in the *Irish Times* which at that time was always the mouthpiece of English interest in Ireland. It was said that ex-members of the Imperial army would have to be recruited if the Republicans were to be defeated. The *Irish Times* summed up the military position as follows:

1. The colonial army (meaning the Free State Army) is unable to crush the IRA.
2. The IRA has doubled its efficiency since July.
3. The civilian population was becoming more friendly with Republicans, and little information was reaching Free State divisional headquarters.
4. The IRA was trained and tried in guerilla warfare – the Free State was not.
5. Free State drives and sweeps had failed definitely and were becoming too costly.
6. One chance of speedy success remained: the Free State must have a definitely larger number of troops, better officers, and unlimited transport.
7. Even the insufficient troops of the Free State are neither trained nor properly led.
8. The I.R.A., better led, have skillfully seized their chance of attack, and have succeeded in putting to their credit the capture of certain garrisons.
9. The war will go on indefinitely unless the Free State can recruit enormous numbers of trained men and experienced ex-British officers.

England, taking the hint, cracked the whip. The Free State had no option but to obey and carry out the orders. Ex-British soldiers, ex-Black and Tans and ex-Auxiliaries were recruited in large numbers. The tone of the fighting became more bitter every day.

Then the most deadly blow of all came. In October 1922 the Bishops of Ireland issued a joint pastoral giving full support to the provisional government, and condemning all those who opposed it and who upheld the Republic to which they had pledged their oath. Excommunication followed, banning them from receiving the Sacraments which they loved more dearly than life itself. You can well imagine all those young boys who had been trained by good Catholic parents to love God and country, travelling day and night with death staring them in the face every hour, without even the consolation of the Sacraments to comfort them in their last hours.

The only alternative was that we give up the fight for freedom and prove traitors to the Oath we had taken. It was a terrible decision to take, but we, one and all, decided

to trust in the mercy of God and to carry on. I do claim without hesitation that time has vindicated our stand. We have only to refer to the achievements of Mr. DeValera in having removed every article of the Treaty in 1938 to which he objected in 1921 with the one exception of partition to prove that. Had the country stood firm behind DeValera at that time he would have succeeded, notwithstanding England's threat of war. The articles removed in 1938 included the oath of allegiance; the return of the three naval ports, namely Cork Harbour, Berehaven and Lough Swilly; the governor general, the land annuities, and every other objectionable feature of the Treaty.

While not wishing to censure the action of the Irish Bishops, I do wish to state that I read in the daily papers of that time and distinctly remember a report of the Papal Legate, Monsignor Luzzio, whom the Holy Father had sent to investigate the case. His ruling was that the action towards the Republicans was a mistake and never should have been made. His Holiness also received Dr. Conn Murphy and Mr. Arthur O'Cleary of Dáil Éireann, who were sent to Rome to present a petition to the Pope and give him the facts of the situation. On his return, Dr. Murphy was arrested and cast into prison. When the news reached the Holy Father, and also the news that he was on a hunger strike, not only did he write to the Cardinal Primate to use all his influence to have him released—he also sent the Papal Blessing to the prisoner himself. I believe this goes to show what the Holy Father himself thought of the Republican fight for freedom, and how right or wrong he thought it.

(To be continued)

The 'Soviet at Galway' and the Downfall of Dunkellin

By John F. Cunningham

Not only leaders have fallen during the recent revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe. Monuments, identified with the discredited former regimes, also took a tumble. This type of onslaught, against the iconography of a displaced stratocracy, is not unknown in Ireland, the most famous example being the levelling of Lord Nelson in 1966. Concern with the symbolic, whether in the case of pillar-boxes, street names or statues, can be expected to be most frantic when it becomes apparent that a revolution is failing to alter social relations, is not 'turning the world upside down'. The destruction of the Dunkellin statue which had dominated Galway's Eyre Square for almost fifty years came at just such a moment.

On Thursday evening, May 16 1922, several thousand people gathered in Eyre Square under the auspices of the Galway branch of the Town Tenants League. They had come for the ritual burial of Irish landlordism which had been loudly trumpeted over the previous few days through the streets of the town.

The chosen personification of landlordism, Lord Dunkellin, while having been a faithful servant of imperialism, did not have the opportunity to distinguish himself as a landlord. He had served in the Crimean War, been successively MP for Galway county and town and ambassador in Constantinople before succumbing, at the age of forty, to Bright's disease. His inheritance, the Clanricarde title and estates, passed to his younger brother, the last, hibernophobic, Lord Clanricarde¹. It was the relationship of the bronze representation to the latter individual that sealed its fate.

The chief objective of the Dublin based Town Tenants League (TTL) was to secure for urban dwellers the advantages gained, through Land League agitation, by the rural tenants in the various land acts. In its propaganda it continually stressed the similarities between the previous plight of the tenant farmer and the current situation of the town tenant. Its most celebrated struggle had been in the town of Loughrea, in 1905, during the Martin Ward eviction which was perpetrated, incidentally, by Clanricarde². The Galway town branch had an occasional existence. Founded in 1905, it was re-established in 1911 and closely connected with the Galway United Trades Council at the time. It soon fizzled out but was revived briefly in 1920. In March 1922 it reappeared with Stephen Cremen the local official of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) as its secretary. At its first meeting in the ITGWU's Liberty Hall in Forster St., Cremen, who incidentally had served as a volunteer during the War of Independence, articulated the well-worn analogies of the TTL. He urged the members not to look to the present government, or indeed any government for redress, as he felt that they would implement 'landlord-made laws'. Concluding his militant



Dunkellin Monument, Eyre Square, Galway (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).

address, he urged that the Dunkellin monument be pulled down³.

It was not the first threat to the statue. During land agitation the nationalist politician Tim Healy – in 1922 he was to become a representative of the British government as the first Governor-General of the Irish Free State – had urged the people of Galway to ‘melt it down for saucepans’. On another occasion the Parnellite agitator and local councillor Tom Sullivan had taken his horses to the statue in an abortive attempt to remove it. More recently there had been a proposal to replace it with an image of the Dominican preacher, Fr. Tom Burke, but a decision was taken to place that monument near the Dominican church in the Claddagh⁴. Hostility to the statue can be explained on two counts. After all many members of the aristocracy survived, and still survive, unmolested, in stone and plaster throughout the country. There was a widespread belief that subscriptions, ostensibly donated by ‘the inhabitants of the county and town of Galway, as a tribute of affection and respect to his memory’, were forcibly levied from the Clanricarde tenantry⁵. There was also the unpopularity of Lord Clanricarde the *bête-noir* of the Land League, notorious for the Woodford and other evictions and for his stubborn and lifelong opposition in the House of Lords to any hint of land reform⁶.

The statue itself was fashioned by Foley the celebrated Anglo-Irish sculptor who was also responsible for the O’Connell monument in Dublin, the Fr. Matthew statue in Cork, as well as others on which the sun has, presumably, by now set throughout the British empire⁷. Erected in 1873, six years after its subject’s death, on a plinth of Aberdeen granite, the bronze figure which towered twenty-two feet was unveiled by Lord Clonbrock, deputising for Sir William Gregory the chairman of the memorial committee, in the presence of virtually the entire Galway aristocracy.⁸

The revived branch of the TTL soon enrolled 200 members, and under the energetic leadership of Cremen and chairman Paul Kiely began to make an impression in the town. It is not surprising that it should have. A total of three hundred and seventy-five of the urban area’s two and a half thousand odd habitations had been certified as uninhabitable⁹. Since its establishment in 1899 the urban council had been criticised for procrastination in the provision of public housing. There were allegations that this was due to the influence of private landlords who were not keen to lose their tenants to municipal schemes¹⁰.

A rent strike was declared to reduce rents to 1914 levels. The TTL was not unique in believing that the massive inflation of the 1914-18 period was due to war-time profiteering, and a hankering for a return to the more modest prices of halcyon days was frequently expressed in resolutions of one sort or another. The location of public housing was also an agitational point, and the local authority was asked to build these in Taylor’s Hill or Newcastle with space for gardens rather than on swampland at Grattan Road as was envisaged. The council was also pressurised to devise a scheme under which tenants might be enabled to purchase their own houses, those owned by private landlords as well as by the local authority – ‘to do what the tenant farmers did’.

Cremin led delegations on a few occasions to the council chamber to make representations on these issues¹¹.

He might have got a more favourable reception if the council was not one of the 'landlords' affected by the no-rent manifesto. Tactically he was in a difficult position. The rent strike had been in place before demands to the council were formulated. The rent collector had complained of harassment by tenant pickets which interfered with his exercise of his duty. Cremin agreed to suspend the rent strike insofar as it affected the council and the councillors agreed, late in April, to devise the type of scheme demanded 'without waiting for the government'. Cremin emphasised that the matter should be dealt with expeditiously and emphasised that he would continue to press the issue¹².

Sub-committee meetings were held and proposals for a scheme were promised for 26 May. In the meantime private landlords began to sue individual tenants for rents outstanding as a result of the strike¹³.

It soon became apparent that the TTL's propaganda was having little effect on that section of the population which acted as justices in the new Free State courts. The rights of property were asserted as before. This realisation coincided with the visit to the town of the leader of a breakaway from the TTL, William J. Larkin, secretary of the Dublin (Workers) Town Tenants League.

A public meeting was arranged to meet the situation¹⁴. The landlords were, as usual, roundly condemned by Cremen. He reserved special venom on this occasion however for the justices of the new courts. It could be speculated that this reflected the disappointment of somebody who, having spent the previous two years on the run, was just realising that the recently achieved victory was not the one that he had fought for. The large good-humoured crowd listened as he castigated the courts which were, he claimed, 'strongly behind the landlords' and 'a damned sight worse than the old ones'. He alleged that the justices were now being selected in public houses and argued that the people should have the right to elect and recall their own judges. Larkin, after outlining grievances, went on to point out that the system of justice was inherited from England and that the judges were merely implementing 'Queen Victoria's laws'. If we claimed to be independent, he said, we should revert to the ancient Brehon laws.

This theme, derived from the writings of James Connolly, was a popular one with speakers from the labour and socialist movements in these years. The remains of the pre-Norman primitive communal society were compared to the modern ideals of communism and socialism. Connolly's purpose was essentially propagandist. He countered the accusation that socialism was a foreign, even an English, ideology with the not entirely sustainable argument that the communal norms of the Celts had been forcibly replaced by the colonisers with the immoral – and English – system of capitalism. It followed that any sincere opponent of imperialism would throw out the alien ethos along with those who had imposed and enforced it. In contrast to those who were to simplify his teaching Connolly did not advocate turning the clock back a

millennium. His concern was merely to assert the compatibility of socialism with Irish nationality.

Over the following days open-air meetings in a similar vein were held by the league in the working class districts of the Claddagh, Bohermore, Salthill and Wood Quay¹⁵. On Ascension Thursday morning, 26 May, members of the league, accompanied by a fife and drum band, assembled outside the council chamber in Dominick St., in the expectation of hearing details of the new scheme which was due to be unveiled by the council. These arrangements, with the accompanying panoply, would suggest that Cremen was expecting to be disappointed.

In any case the plans were not available due, it later transpired, to the illness of a friend of council chairman Dr. Tom Walsh. Cremen and Larkin who had been acting as spokesman, then led the crowd of hundreds into the chamber until it was 'packed to suffocation.' After listening to the explanations of the councillors for the non-availability of the plan Larkin accused the body of 'star chamber methods'. It had proven itself to be unrepresentative and was therefore, he declared, defunct. All elected representatives, with the exception of Labour's Colohan and Rea, then left the chamber. Larkin then took the chair by acclamation and expressed the belief that Dáil Éireann would favourably receive any request for funds for housing from the assembly. A 'monster meeting' of the TTL was announced for that night, when the Dunkellin monument would be pulled down.¹⁶

This takeover of the council was dubbed 'The Soviet at Galway' by the *Connacht Tribune*. It was not an event without precedent. A few weeks earlier ITGWU members in Roscrea had used similar tactics to award themselves a wage increase. In the previous few years self-styled Soviets, in emulation of the Russian Revolution, had established themselves in various parts of the country, most of them as a tactic in industrial disputes. Other manifestations of militancy, particularly those involving seizures whether of land or industries, were tarred with the same designation by local newspapers.

That evening a crowd of several thousands gathered at a TTL meeting in Eyre Square. People set to work sawing the legs of the statue. Ropes were procured and pulled by hundreds. Dunkellin crashed to the ground. Larkin, Cremen and Kiely ascended the recently vacated pedestal and speeches followed, in the course of which Eyre Square, which took its name from another landlord, according to Cremen, was rechristened. It was now, he proclaimed amidst cheers, Fr. Griffin Square, in honour of a popular young priest who had been murdered by Black and Tans in November 1920. All symbols of landlordism would now be pulled down, he declared, and monuments to good Irishmen put in their place. The usual condemnations of councillors and justices followed.

A rope was attached to the statue at the end of the meeting and, behind a marching band, it was dragged by thousands through the streets of the town to Nimmo's Pier. At that point Larkin officiated at a mock funeral for Irish landlordism and, to the popular

tune 'I'm forever blowing bubbles', Dunkellin was dumped into the sea.¹⁷

The following evening another League meeting was held, in the course of which it emerged that the statue had been removed from its 'final resting place' and was in the process of being melted down. A further meeting was announced for Sunday, at which a new council and justices would be elected. Afterwards the fife and drum band led large numbers to Fr. Griffin Square where a house belonging to local businessman Joseph Young OBE was seized. Another property, owned by the Magdalen Asylum, was also taken over and both were given to needy tenants. Republican police from Eglinton St. station later returned both houses to their legal owners.¹⁸

The events of the week were condemned from pulpits on Sunday, most strongly by Canon Nestor in the Pro-Cathedral. The destruction of the monument savoured of Bolshevism, he declared. He went on to criticise doctrines being preached on the streets of the town, which were in direct opposition to Catholic teaching and were, therefore, rank heresy. Both the fourth and seventh commandments, he decided, were violated, usurpation of lawful authority and wanton and malicious destruction of property by men who didn't own it.¹⁹

When the League members gathered at noon for the elections Larkin met these criticisms head on. 'Bolshevism', he said, 'is the finest ring from the bell of the peoples' voice for justice.' He declared that he was 'proud of being Catholic' but 'from a social point of view, twice as proud of being an Irish Bolshevik'.

A resolution proposed by Cremen and seconded by William Carrick of the National Union of Dock Labourers was passed as follows:

In public meetings, assembled at Fr. Griffin Square, we the tenants of Galway, having deposed the existing useless body of the urban district on Ascension Thursday 1922, hereby approve the following councillors for Galway as the council best fitted to act for the people, the new council to act as from Monday May 29 1922 and it is further resolved that we call upon the official and clerical staff of the urban district to produce the books and letters at the first meeting of the new council, to be held on Wednesday evening next in the people's council room.

Nominees for the new council and bench were unanimously endorsed and consisted of existing Labour councillors, Colohan and Rea, TTL leaders, Cremen and Kiely, prominent local trade unionists, leaders of the ex-servicemens association, with two places reserved for nominees of the Gaelic League. It is not clear if many of the new councillors or justices were present to accept the honour.²⁰

Larkin seemed to have thought that he had done as much as he could and returned to Dublin the following day. In a farewell letter to a local paper he thanked the friends of the tenants and appealed to all sections of the community to row in behind the tenants' cause. In this he wasn't displaying much faith in the system of local administration he had helped put in place. He did not call for loyalty to the new council or courts. In fact his letter did not refer to either.²¹

There is no record of any meetings or attempted meetings of the new council. A few of its members distanced themselves from it over the following weeks. The

dissolved 'useless body' resumed its existence and was, predictably, critical of the week-long soviet. The local press was also criticised by council chairman Dr. Tom Walsh and others for the allegedly favourable coverage given to the events. It was resolved to prosecute those involved in the destruction of the monument and an appeal for evidence was issued.²² This was largely ignored. Debate continued at the council on the housing scheme but the Town Tenants League did not feature in any discussions or agitation. Indeed it followed its predecessors into extinction. Cremen's immediate immersion in another controversy which was to culminate in his leading a breakaway from the ITGWU, must have been partially responsible for this.²³ Representations on housing began to come instead from the Trades and Labour Council.²⁴

It is not apposite to consider the 'Soviet at Galway' in the context of its success or failure. One cannot assess to what degree it influenced housing policy in the town of Galway in the early years of the new state. Even the objectives of its architects, Larkin and Cremen, are not entirely clear. Undoubtedly they wished to draw attention to the deplorable housing conditions but whether they saw a future for a revolutionary administration or for a return to the Brehon laws in a small town in the west of Ireland is at least debatable. The remarkable thing about the events is not what Larkin, Cremen and a few acolytes said or did, but that they achieved massive, albeit temporary, support for their actions.

The Soviet, literally council, in its Russian birthplace was a representative assembly of workers and was the device used by the Bolsheviks to replace existing structures with revolutionary ones. In Ireland they were adopted, but not necessarily understood, by sections of the labour movement, particularly in 1919 and again in 1922. They were seen as a solution to a particular grievance as in the creamery seizures in Munster, or as a militant form of protest rather than as part of a general struggle to establish any particular type of administration in the country.²⁵ It is in this context that we must view the Galway events.

Another part of the backdrop to these events was the political situation at the time, the period of the 'phony civil war', between the Treaty and the outbreak of open hostilities with the storming of the Four Courts in late June. There were frequent incidents during this period. Indeed Nora Barnacle and her children had fled the town in early May in fear of their lives.²⁶ It is unlikely that 'normal' forms of protest, pickets and representations, would have much appeal at a time when rival armies were jockeying for position and influence. To be noticed action would have to be militant, even spectacular.

And spectacle there was. Large public meetings, marching bands, the invasion of the council chamber, the destruction of the monument, the seizure of the houses, culminating in open-air elections in a re-baptised town square. Yet there is more of a sense of theatre about it all than of a serious attempt to achieve or exercise any power. The undoubted grievances of a substantial section of Galway's working class fuelled by the rhetoric of Cremen and Larkin dictated the course of events. There was no plan

or consideration of tactics. The TTL gained mass support for a week but, like a shooting star careering without direction, burnt itself out.

One of Cremen's promises was fulfilled, however. A 'good Irishman', Pádraic Ó Conaire, replaced Dunkellin in the Square. The plinth of the destroyed statue, now bearing a celtic cross and re-dedicated to 'Óglaigh na hÉireann', stands in the village of Castlegar, a few miles from Galway.

Notes

1. *Galway Vindicator*, 17 August 1867, obituary of Lord Dunkellin. For biographical detail on Lord Clanricarde see Desmond Roche, pp 13-19 in *A Forgotten Campaign* (Woodford Heritage Group, 1986).
2. *Galway Observer*, 23 Dec 1905.
3. Ibid., 6 Mar 1905; *Connacht Tribune*, 3 June 1911, 12 June 1920; *Galway Observer*, 11 March 1920. Stephen Cremen was a native Galwegian, from Raleigh Row in the West ward. In 1922 he was 39 years of age. His mother was a brushmaker and his father had served in the British army. As a young man he had worked at his mother's craft. When the Galway branch of the ITGWU was formed in 1919 he was appointed secretary. In 1920 the union offices, located in the Sinn Féin hall in Prospect Hill, were burned down by the Black and Tans and Cremen went on the run. In 1921 he was confirmed in his position when the branch was re-established. To the surprise of commentators he headed the poll in the elections for Poor Law Guardians as a Labour candidate in the West ward in 1921. In June 1922 he became General Secretary of the Irish Mechanics and General Workers Union, a short-lived Galway breakaway from the ITGWU.
4. *Galway Observer*, 3 June 1922.
5. *Galway Express*, 27 Sept. 1873.
6. Roche, op. cit.
7. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, John Henry Foley, who was born in Dublin in 1818, was renowned for his equestrian statues, on an Indian theme, of Lord Canning, Lord Hardinge and Sir James Outram. Among his other works are Gen. Stonewall Jackson in America and, in Dublin, O'Connell, Goldsmith, Burke and Gough. The latter met a fate not dissimilar to that of Dunkellin's.
8. *Galway Express*, 27 Sept. 1873.
9. According to the 1911 Census there was a total of 2,448 houses in Galway. *Galway Observer*, 27 June 1922.
10. *Connacht Tribune*, 3 June 1922.
11. *Galway Observer*, 11 Mar., 8, 22 Apr., 1922.
12. *Connacht Tribune*, 22 Apr. 1922.
13. Ibid., 20 May 1922.
14. Ibid., 27 May 1922.
15. *Galway Observer*, 27 May 1922.
16. *Connacht Tribune*, 27 May 1922.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 3 June 1922.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. *Galway Observer*, 17, 24 June 1922.

24. Ibid., 10 June 1922.

25. For the context of the soviet movements see Emmett O'Connor, *Syndicalism in Ireland* (Cork University Press, 1988).

26. Brenda Maddox, *Nora* (Minerva, London, 1989).

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Major John MacBride

Speech by President Éamon de Valera on the occasion of the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to Major John MacBride on his birthplace at the Quay, Westport, on 4 August 1963. This house is now the premises known as 'The Helm', owned by Mr. Vincent Keogh.

It is said that there is an island in Clew Bay for every day of the year. That may be so, but for John MacBride there was one island in particular: Island More. His mother's people came from Island More. She was Honoria Gill: a truly remarkable woman, forceful, kind, but always masterful. She married a ship's Captain from the Glens of Antrim, Patrick MacBride. Storms seldom delayed his ship.

Capt. MacBride died shortly after John's birth in 1868, and Honoria had the task of rearing John and his four elder brothers and of running the family business at the Quay. But she was one of those capable, forceful women which the West produces.

In those days Westport Quay was a thriving port. The Gills and the Kellys from the islands ran ships to the Americas¹; there were regular sailings to Scottish and English ports; there were thriving mills; cattle and salt meat were the chief exports. The tall masts of four-master sailing ships and the Glasgow and Liverpool steamers intermingled in the fairway leading to the Quay. Sailing in and out of the islands was the summer pastime of the young MacBrides.

There was a strong Fenian tradition in the Gill family. James Stephens, the Fenian, was a friend. Martin Gallagher who married a Gill was the Head Centre of the Fenians in Mayo; he made a spectacular escape to America and later took part in the Fenian invasion of Canada in 1870.

It is against this background of sails and of the Fenian tradition in the West that John MacBride grew up. He became a friend of John O'Leary. From 1893 he was regarded by the British Authorities as a 'dangerous nationalist' and was constantly shadowed by detectives wherever he went in Ireland.

In May 1896 he went to the Transvaal where he organised the Irish in Johannesburg and Pretoria. Back in Ireland the following year, he organised the West of Ireland Famine Relief Fund. The Boer War was threatening and in 1898 he founded the Transvaal '98 Association. He then set about organising the Transvaal Irish Brigade in 1899. Much of the preparatory work had to be done abroad, in France and America. It is difficult to realise at this distance of time what the organisation of a military unit involved at that period and in those circumstances. Much of the work had to be done underground. He was commissioned with the rank of Major and given Boer citizenship by President Kruger. He led the Irish Brigade in the notable action of the Tugela River in which several pieces of British artillery were captured. It was on this occasion that he accepted the surrender of Colonel Buller and his forces. That local military victory

was short lived.

Meanwhile, in Ireland, despite the unceasing efforts of John O'Leary, Willie Rooney, Arthur Griffith, Maud Gonne, Dr Anthony MacBride and a small band, the cause of Irish Republicanism was at a low ebb. The British Empire was at the zenith of its power. In October 1899 Michael Davitt made his memorable speech resigning from the British House of Commons: 'I have been some five years in this House and the conclusion with which I leave it, is that no cause, however just, will find support; no wrong, however pressing or apparent, will find redress here unless backed up by force. This is the message I shall take back from this assembly to my sons.'

In an effort to rally national sentiment behind the Republican cause, the Central Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood decided to put forward Major MacBride as a candidate at a bye-election in South Mayo in February 1900. He was then leading the Irish Brigade in Transvaal. He was bitterly opposed by the United Irish League. His election campaign was led by Arthur Griffith, John O'Leary, Willie Rooney, Dr Mark Ryan and Joseph MacBride. It was a turbulent bye-election and he was defeated by a substantial majority. This was a bitter blow to the Fenian cause and must have been very disheartening to Major MacBride and the Irish Brigade.

After the defeat of Cronje, the Boer forces were compelled to retreat to the Transvaal. Gradually the Irish Brigade was forced back to the Portuguese frontiers. After various adventures Major MacBride reached France once again. In a message to Irish papers in February 1903 from Paris he said: 'The Almighty never meant Ireland to be governed by Britain. I would dearly love to deal with the English in their own country as I did when I was fighting with the Boers – and maybe, I will one day'.

He married Maud Gonne in 1903 and their son Seán was born in 1904. Back in Ireland he was an active member of the I.R.B. and a frequent speaker at National functions.

Of all the leaders of the 1916 Rising, he probably better than any of the other leaders knew what faced him. As a military man, he knew there was no hope of success; as an implacable foe of British rule in Ireland, he knew there would be no mercy shown to him. With Thomas McDonagh he was in charge of the Republican forces in Jacob's Factory. Captured and sentenced to death, he was executed on 5 May 1916. He asked not to be blindfolded, adding, 'I am used to looking down the barrels of British guns.'

Major MacBride's brother Joseph who had campaigned so hard for him, was returned unopposed as the Sinn Féin candidate for South Mayo in 1918 and represented South Mayo until his death.

Note

1. See article on Islandmore by Honor Sisk in this issue. The Gills and the Kellys were pilots. – Editor.

The Islandeady Ambush

By Jarlath Duffy

In early May 1921 a family in the Islandeady Parish was saying the family rosary when a knock came to the door. The son went out, conversation took place and he disappeared. Next morning the mother saw activity around the Halfway and felt an ambush was being set up. She saw danger for her son. A lorry of Black and Tans approached. She ran to warn them not to go any further but to return to Castlebar. The lorry turned and less than a mile up the road they came upon a support party cutting the road to prevent reinforcements arriving. Some escaped, some were wounded, two were shot in cold blood. One of those fatally wounded was her son . . .

Popular rendering of the story of the Islandeady ambush is sometimes told in this vein. Whereas it relates a tale of great pathos and evokes in the listener or reader feelings of great sadness for man's inhumanity to man and the cruel hand that can be dealt at times to a family, a closer examination of the facts might reveal a somewhat different story, and maybe when all the available evidence is to hand, what really happened in Islandeady on that May morning almost seventy years ago may be known.

Michael Kilroy who was the leader of the West Mayo Flying Column is rather terse in his description of that day. 'There was another ambush on the Islandeady Road. Local fellows were taken out to cut the road. The Tans came out, went past and came back again . . . Two boys were killed.'¹

John Duffy gives a further account to the late Ernie O'Malley.

There was another ambush on the Castlebar Road near Kilvery beyond the Halfway House at the Big Wall. The Brigade column was in position from 2.30 p.m. A section of the Islandeady boys was to cut the road when they heard shooting and they were to cut the road at Sheeaune Hill also. The Islandeady men cut the gullet when the enemy passed but the Tans only went to Stauntons at the Halfway House and then back they came. Cannon's cow was cut with a bullet. Three or four of the lads were shot for they had not arranged any protection and Boyle had his mouth smashed. The prisoners were brought into Castlebar but we didn't hear a word about it. About 6 in the morning we were in position and at 10 o'clock three or four lorries came onto the Halfway House with soldiers from Castlebar. We could see them and we were waiting for them to move up. Were they told about the ambush? Then they went back to Castlebar. We moved onto the Ballinrobe road.²

We now know for the first time that there were two excursions of Black and Tans from Castlebar that day. The early one never reached the site of the ambush for whatever reason and the second group turned off the main road before reaching the ambush site.

Johnny's brother Paddy was also there. He gives this account of the arrival of the first lorry:

At the Halfway I was beside Paddy Jordan who was later killed in Kilmeena and the Castlebar men who were thoroughly untrained. (Jordan) was in charge of them but he actually was



Monument at ambush site Islandeady. (Photo Frank Dolan).

standing up on top of the hill. I was right beside him, then someone shouted that there was a lorry coming and he made a sudden movement, made a dive for cover and then the lorry pulled up, turned around and went back towards Castlebar when the RIC killed 3 men.³

There is a suggestion there that the lookout man at the ambush site may have been careless and may have been the cause of the lorry of Black and Tans returning to Castlebar with the awful consequences thereafter.

Paddy Cannon from Castlebar who made a miraculous escape from the road cutting when the Tans returned unexpectedly, explained that the RIC were raiding the Staunton house that morning of 6 May 1921 and when they had completed their task they returned. O'Malley, Boyle and McNulty were captured he tells us.⁴

In *West Mayo Brigade 1921-1971* the following factual account is given of the ambush:

On May 6th, the combined A.S.U. of Westport, Newport and Castlebar lay in ambush on Westport/Castlebar road at the Big Wall between the villages of Drimneen and Kilbree. A section of the Islandeady Company was detailed to cut the road at Cloonkeen in case any military passed from Castlebar to Westport. In the early morning a single military lorry travelled from Castlebar towards Westport, and immediately it passed, the Islandeady section started to cut the road. Sentries were then posted to watch for further lorries coming from Castlebar. The ambush party lay ahead waiting for the lorry, but before reaching them the lorry turned and, travelling at a fast pace, reached the Islandeady section cutting the road. The sentries signalled the lorry's approach, but thinking it was coming from Castlebar, the Islandeady men took cover only to be fired on from the rear. Volunteers Lally and O'Malley were killed, Frank O'Boyle was captured and P. J. Cannon and others escaped.⁵

Tommy Kettrick's account of this tragedy is also available to us. He had been in hospital in Dublin, left and came down to Westport picking up the column at Islandeady

Before leaving Dublin I had been given instructions to keep things moving in the West in order to relieve the pressure in the South. Having joined the column, I immediately started planning ambushes. I got in touch with the Castlebar column and arranged that the two would amalgamate. The two columns joined forces on 18th May 1921. We were all billeted in a village close to Islandeady. We arranged to lay an ambush at a spot known as the Big Wall, which was a boundary wall between the main Castlebar/Westport road and the railroad and situated about halfway between Castlebar and Westport. On the night of 18th May I sent a despatch to the local Volunteer Captain to the effect that when military vehicles passed through the district in the direction of Westport on the following day, a culvert, or trench should immediately be cut in the roadway in order to delay reinforcements after the vehicles had been passed.

Next morning I proceeded with the two columns to the Big Wall, placing the Castlebar column on one side of the road and the Westport column on the other. I took charge of the two columns – we had about 40 men in all and about 20 Service rifles; a good supply of short-arms and shotguns, and an abundance of hand grenades. I took a squad of bombers inside the Big Wall. Eventually, a lorry did travel in our direction and the alert was given to our men but, to our great chagrin, the lorry turned on the street of the local publichouse and proceeded back towards Castlebar again. It seems they came across our men cutting the trench in the road – obviously our people had failed to do as ordered – place scouts on the route – and had opened fire on them, killing two and wounding two. This labour squad or working party of Volunteers was, of course, unarmed. After the lorry had turned back we immediately held a council of war and decided to cross over to the Ballinrobe/Westport road which ran somewhat parallel at that point, where we hoped to be able to pick up a stray lorry or two.⁶

He gives a more mature account later as follows:

On my leaving the Mater Hospital, I again met Collins, who was far from satisfied with the part the 'West' was playing in the war. He asked me to try and stir things up when I got back there and I promised him I would do my utmost. On arrival in the West, I got on the trail of the 'Westport Column' and after nights of weary trudging I at last picked them up, or at least, they picked me up for they awaited in the shadows of the roadside to pounce upon me as I entered the village where they were "billeted" for the night.

The days that followed were full of activity, but we had realised few results. The forces of the Crown were not leaving the towns very much, and when they did, they came in huge numbers, realising that the small force of Westport men would be inadequate to deal with any enemy patrol, under these circumstances.

I got in touch with Dr. Madden and Paddy Jordan – of the Castlebar Batt. Column (later killed in action) – with the result that we combined forces and planned an ambush on the Westport/Castlebar Road midway between the two towns. In order to arrange that any reinforcements would be temporarily delayed in getting to the rescue of the ambushed party a despatch was sent to two sections of Volunteers – one on the Westport side of the position and similar instructions to the Castlebar side – announcing the plans and asked that, on lorries passing in the direction of our position, they would immediately cut trenches or culverts in the road, and thereby delay reinforcements. A special warning not to be surprised in the act was added and that scouts should be placed as protection. Unfortunately, this last part was not attended to. A lorry of military passed the Castlebar section and when out of sight, our men immediately set to cutting the road. The lorry only travelled a short distance to the house of a local volunteer officer, named Staunton, raided it, and finding him absent, returned by the same route. Finding the men cutting the road, they opened fire, killing two fine lads from Islandeady, named Lally and O'Malley. In complete ignorance of what was happening, and not hearing the shooting, we waited expectantly for the sounds of lorries. At last one lookout scout announced two lorries coming from the direction of Castlebar. So, we prepared to give them a warm reception. At the position



Monument in Islandeady graveyard. (Photo Frank Dolan).

was a wall fully 10 or 12 ft. high, on the roadside, while on the railway embankment parallel to the road, it was scarcely 4 ft. high. Outside the wall, we had cut a large trench, which was round a deep curve in the road, and would not be discernible to the enemy until they were practically within a yard or two of it, and too late to pull up. I took charge of a bombing party inside the wall, my plan being as soon as the lorry would have run into the trench to immediately let them have a fusillade of hand grenades. But, we were to be disappointed, for when the lorries had come to sighting of our position, they swung around and returned to Castlebar. This was the first instance we doubted something amiss. So I called Comdts. J. Ring, Malone, Madden and Jordan into conference with the result that it was the general opinion that we should retire from our position to a point of vantage on an adjacent hill and watch developments. And a lucky decision it proved to be, for we had scarcely left the place, when 30 or 40 lorries of military swept into view and opened fire with machine guns and rifles on our vacated position.⁷

Some of the following facts seem to be agreed by those who were there and whose account of that fateful morning is available for study. The Flying Column men were hand-picked by Michael Kilroy as the best available in the general area. Their actions over the period of the War of Independence showed that on many an occasion they lacked the sharp training necessary for engaging the enemy and of course, their weaponry left much to be desired. The back-up service of scouts, message carriers, guides, intelligence gatherers would be equally lacking, and many found themselves in the hot fury of the battle with little of the training that those shooting at them had received. It can be taken that two separate lorries of Black and Tans/Police left Castlebar that morning and travelled towards Islandeady. Inadequate planning or

placing of sentries, or indeed a careless movement could have been the cause of the first lorry turning back and surprising the road-cutting party.

Patrick Owen Mugan the last surviving member of the ambush party was a member of the road trenching detail. He gives the names of those who took part – giving the date as 7 May:

Paddy Cannon, Cornagashlaun (below Islandeady Church)

Frank O'Boyle, Letter, Islandeady

Brian McHugh, Letter, Islandeady

Peter Tunney, Kilvery (on the Westport side of the Half-Way House)

Tommy Kilcoyne, Ballynamaroge (near the railway crossing on the Aghagower road out of Cloonkeen)

Tommy Hastings, Fairhill (about a mile beyond Tommy Kilcoyne's house)

Patrick Owen Mugan, Cloonkeen

John Heraghty, Cloonkeen

Patrick McNulty, Derrylea/Pheasant Hill (c.half mile on road to Belcarra)

Tommy Lally, Dooleague (about 200 yards on the Castlebar side of the Half-way House)

Tommy O'Malley, Lismolin (above Islandeady railway station)

Michael Staunton was their chief organiser from 1917 when the Sinn Féin Club was set up in Islandeady. Tom Derrig, Broddie Malone, Ned Moane and Tommy Kettrick all came to talk and help in setting up the Club. They met in Joyce's barn every week. They burned the Barracks in 1920 on orders from Castlebar. At one time he remembers De Valera inspecting the volunteers. With others he brought guns and bombs from the Ballyheane direction to the ambush site on that morning. They walked along the railway line. There was a tip that a lorry would go back from Castlebar to Westport. He and others were detailed to cut the road when the lorry had passed. The lorry went back. The job was tackled. Four men were on sentry duty. Maybe one 'didn't do his stuff'. The trenching party took off – some west, some east. Tans pulled up and started firing. Two were taken prisoner. Paddy Cannon and McHugh went down and across the river and got away. Patrick Mugan running for his life met O'Malley and Lally and Tunney sitting down under a bank. They were hidden and not inclined to keep going. Tunney agreed with Patrick to go. A quarter of a mile from the road O'Malley and Lally were shot in cold blood in a seoch. The other two escaped. The bodies were brought into Castlebar Jail. Fr. Prendergast who had been a chaplain in the British Army, met the lorry outside Castlebar and insisted with his authority that the lorry would halt. He anointed the two men. They were buried a few days later in the graveyard in Islandeady.⁹

The full truth may never be known but the poor mother's story would seem to be very wide of the mark. Fifty years later another ambush took place at the same place without loss of life, but with overtones of the Northern Ireland troubles, and around

which again mystery has grown up. During the unveiling last summer of the memorial to Tommy O'Malley and Tony Lally in Islandeady the crowd was led in Irish in a decade of the Rosary.

May all those whose lives were affected by the events of that morning long ago rest in peace.

Notes

1. Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, Archives Department, U.C.D., P 17b/101/14, p 43.
2. Ibid., P 17b/109/22, p 83.
3. Ibid., P 17b/138/50, p 3.
4. Ibid., P 17b/78/44, p 77.
5. *West Mayo Brigade 1921-1971*.
6. Statement by Mr. Thomas Kettrick, Abbey Street, Howth, (Unpublished) pp 25, 26.
7. *The Threshold of Freedom in Retrospect* – by Thomas Kettrick, (Unpublished), pp 96-99.
8. Statement of Patrick Owen Mugan – 4 March 1985.
9. Mr. Mugan in conversation with author – 5 June 1989.

Jarlath Duffy, Principal, Westport Vocational School; Executive Member of A.P.V.S.C.C.; Chairman of Westport Historical Society and Board of Directors, Clew Bay Heritage Centre, Ltd.; Editor, *Joe Baker My Stand for Freedom* (Westport 1988).

An Unknown Chapter of History: Fethard-on-Sea*

By Patrick Shanley

In August or September 1985 I attended a Berkley Seminar at Trinity College, Dublin. There was a very distinguished panel of lecturers from universities in Britain, France, Germany and America. In the course of the first lecture I asked a question in relation to the influence of Descartes on Berkley. Afterwards at the reception following the lecture one of the lecturers approached me and said, 'That was a very interesting question you asked but you did not follow it up the way I expected.' I said, 'I could not. I am only an amateur where philosophy is concerned.'

With that another one approached to speak to me and he suddenly said, 'Where is my wife? She is always trailing after me. She won't fly by air and insists on coming by boat. But there are compensations. She gets the boat in Canada and she has developed a friendship with a woman there called Marjorie Pound.' I said to him, 'Is this Marjorie Pound you mention the Secretary of the former Canadian Prime Minister Diefenbecker because I know her?'

He said, 'Did you know that she is in Dublin, staying with her brother-in-law Maurice Dockrell? She came over with my wife.'

I said, 'No, I don't know that. Please give me his telephone number as it is likely to be ex-directory', which he did.

I rang Marjorie Pound and suggested she would come in to the lecture the following day and afterwards we would have lunch together. I hadn't seen Marjorie since I was in Canada in 1980.

Maurice Dockrell drove her in the following day, and him I also knew as he had been a member of the Central Branch Fine Gael Dublin when I was Secretary.

After the lecture Maurice invited myself, Marjorie Pound and Mrs. McCracken, wife of one of the lecturers to come as his guests to lunch at the Dáil Restaurant. He had been a member of the Dáil some years before that, and later of the Senate, and as such he had always the right to use the restaurant.

Apart from his being a T.D. and Senator, his family had played a distinguished part in public life in this country for at least three generations. His grandfather had been a member of parliament before this State was set up, and his father had been returned regularly to the Dáil during his life, and Maurice had followed him there and had indeed served as Lord Mayor of Dublin for a period. Also they were typical representatives of the Protestant community.

During lunch Maurice began to reminisce. He started to speak of Mr. De Valera,

and said that when he went into the Dáil he had all the prejudices of his class against De Valera, but that he found that he was the most practical man in the Dáil and had a very commonsense approach. Maurice was on the Board of the Church Representative Body, and had cause to seek an interview with Mr. De Valera in regard to a right of way problem arising in relation to a Church property, and he found him very courteous though he was not able to help in that matter.

Later, when the Fethard-On-Sea dispute arose, he was horrified at the bad publicity Ireland was getting in the international press over this incident. It was being represented almost as an example of persecution of Protestants in the Irish Republic. He said that as a child his nurse was a Catholic and a kinder woman one could never meet, and he described how on his walks she would bring him into a church to light candles. The Irish people were a very tolerant people unless religious differences were intermingled with political ones. He had come to the conclusion in this matter that there was somebody turning what was essentially a minor disagreement, based to a large extent on personal differences, into just such a situation.

Around that time he was talking to another T.D. about this matter and he said to him, 'What role does the Papal Nuncio play in this country. What is his function?' This man said to him that it was the job of the Papal Nuncio, if anything arose between this country and the outside world, to advise the Pope.

Maurice was so troubled that he decided to ask for an interview with Mr. De Valera who was then Taoiseach and this was accorded him.

He reminded Mr. De Valera of their previous meeting but he had forgotten it. He then said to him that Ireland was getting a very bad press because of the Fethard-On-Sea dispute, and he expressed to Mr. De Valera the view expressed above; and that the whole matter had been blown out of all proper proportion.

Mr. De Valera then said to him, 'I am very disturbed also by it but what can I do?'

Maurice said this had now become an international matter, and he thought Mr. De Valera should go and see the Papal Nuncio and ask his help. Mr. De Valera expressed no opinion as to this, and after talking a little further, they parted.

Shortly afterwards Maurice read in the papers that the Papal Nuncio had gone to see the Cardinal at Armagh, and that the Cardinal had gone down to Fethard-On-Sea to enquire into the situation. Within a day or two the whole controversy had died down and there was no more about it.

A month or two later Maurice received a letter from the Government stating that Mr. De Valera had appointed him to the Council of State. This is the body that advises the President on matters of importance outside the ordinary run of things.

This is an unknown chapter in the story of Fethard-On-Sea, and would never have been known if that strange meeting with Marjorie Pound had not come about.

There were present at this discussion apart from Maurice Dockrell and the writer, Marjorie Pound and Mrs. McCracken, wife of one of the speakers at the symposium.

Maurice Dockrell has died since. Marjorie Pound has returned to Canada, and was last living at 3-24 Chapleau Ave, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 1E2.

Helmi wishes
Best Christmas 1996
Chris &addy

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.

* Some years ago at Fethard-On-Sea, Co. Wexford, a boycott was proclaimed against a certain family who had a small business in the town and became the subject of intense press speculation.

Difficulties of Education

(A translation by Patrick Shanley from the Russian version by L. Ginsberg of the German poem written by Hans Magnus Ergensberger.)

Truly, the wonderful
Breath taking ideas
Paradise here and now
The brotherhood of man
Are always bogged down.
All would be right, achieved
If only – there weren't people.
They mix things up
Confuse the issue
Always wanting something
They're nothing but trouble.
We go over to attack, at last we'll free them:
–They're going to the hairdresser.
Our whole future is at stake!
They're looking for a beer.
Instead, of fighting for truth
They're fighting influenza,
Shakes, chicken-pox.
Just when our fate stands on a hair
They're going to post a letter
Looking for a bed to make love on!
Just when the golden age is at hand!
They're washing napkins
Cooking soup.
What aren't they at?
They're banging a guitar
Playing skat
Stroking the cat
Dangling children.
Tell me, how can we possibly
have a proper government?
They're barbarians, lumps, mediocrities.
Obviously, you can't kill them all
You can't spend whole days educating them.

If only they weren't there, if only
Why then life would begin, everything
Would be easy, simple, Then, then . . .
If they weren't there, I wouldn't be bothering you
With poems.

To the Beloved's Daughter

(A free translation by Patrick Shanley from the German of Heinrich Heine)

I look at you and hardly know –
It was again the rose tree,
The scent that clouded out my mind
The memory like a summer haze.
Ah then, I was foolish and young
Now, I am foolish and old,
My eyes are full – I must speak
In rhymes indeed – It goes too hard.
The heart is full, the head is weak.
Sweet cousin-bud* seeing you
Brings strange dreams about my spirit
Such strange dreams, and in their depths
Awaken pictures long long gone.
Cries of the Siren well within me
These laughing eyes swim up again.
Like water splashing. The loveliest of the group
And like her even to a hair.
It is the young heart's dream of love.
I look at you, and once again
These are the looks of that sweet Siren
She had a voice a little turtle-hoarse
Intoxicating all both young and old.
The colour in her eyes sea changing
Sea-lucent – something of the dolphin,
Perhaps a little sparse the eyebrows
Yet nobly drawn; a conqueror's
Arch of triumph.
And then beneath the eye
A little mole in a rosy cheek.

Ah yet, neither men nor angels are quite perfect
As we read of old, all have their faults,
And in the story, when the lover found
And won his mermaid from the sea
Now and again there came a time
When the serpent's tail was seen.

*Heine loved his cousin Amalia Solomon. She married somebody else.

Westport Historical Society

Proceedings 1 December 1989 to 30 November 1990

Vol. 9, No. 1 of *Cathair na Mart* was in print in December 1989. This volume features a previously unpublished letter from Ernie O'Malley to Mrs. Erskine Childers written from Kilmainham Jail in December 1923. The other articles are of the usual high standard. Outstanding among them are the articles on the Western Islands which were the papers read at the Society's fourth School of History which took place on 7, 8 and 9 April 1989.

The journal was launched on Friday 20 April 1990 in the Clew Bay Heritage Centre, by Mr. Seán Staunton, editor of the *Mayo News*, Chairman of Westport Urban District Council and Ireland West Tourism. Mr. Staunton congratulated the Society on the journal and the Heritage Centre. The attendance had an opportunity to inspect the exhibits which had been gathered to date.

The **Clew Bay Heritage Centre** opened to the public at Easter, and has since attracted much interest from Irish and foreign visitors. We are sincerely grateful to all the people who have presented items to our collection, or who have helped with financial donations. We must also mention the volunteers who helped with the transport of artefacts and their installation in the centre, especially Mr. John Bradley, a member of our committee, who is Honorary Curator and has done trojan work in displaying the items to their best advantage.

The number of visitors to the centre has been steadily increasing. Mrs. Brónach Joyce attends on weekday mornings throughout the year from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., while volunteers attend in the summer months for the afternoons and weekends. Groups visiting the centre include foreign students, school classes, the O'Malley Clan Association, and the Association of Principals of Vocational Schools and Community Colleges.

For the **O'Malley Rally** on 30 June there was a special exhibition of valuable artefacts connected with the clan. In particular, Miss Jane O'Malley lent us priceless items associated with her family who were outstanding in the literary, academic, legal and diplomatic spheres. The Clan Association has expressed its support by a donation of £500.

Two important ancillary activities of the Heritage Centre are our genealogical section, and **historical walks** of the town and quay area. These latter take place on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings during the tourist season. They are conducted by Brónach Joyce and Peadar Ó Flanagan, and have been much appreciated by visitors to the town.

Our **genealogical service** is in the capable hands of Brónach Joyce, backed up by our extensive records gathered from all over the parish. These consist of information

based on church records, schools registers, rent rolls, cemeteries, local newspapers and business records. There has been a steady stream of inquiries with over eighty being actively pursued, and there is no doubt that this service fills a long-felt want for our visitors. For those whose ancestors came from this area, a visit to the centre can be richly rewarding. These records have also been of immense value to research students.

Lectures given to the Society during this period were:

1989

- 22 November: 'Assisted Passages to America' Gerard Moran
1 December: 'Archbishop McEvilly' Liam Bane
5 December: 'Memoir of the Wasp' Enda McLoughlin

1990

- 30 March: 'Bones, Bodies and Diseases' Laureen and Victor Buckley
7 April: 'The German Campaign in France 1940 and the Origin of the Modern Blitzkrieg' Dr. Dermot Bradley

Other activities: Our annual **Church Gate Collection** was held following a meeting between the Chief Superintendent and our Officers, as there has been a difficulty with these collections for some time in the Westport area. The Society advised Mayo County Council where suitable **memorials** might be erected in the town, and made representations to the Council concerning the proposed deepening of Moher Lake, which would have an adverse effect on the **O'Malley crannóg** there. This is a unique monument in our area and every effort should be made to preserve it.

The Chairperson represented the Society at the launch of the *History of Irishtown* in February, while the Chairman and Vice-Chairperson represented the Society at the unveiling by Most Revd. Joseph Cunnane, D.D., of **St. Patrick on the monument at the Octagon**, on St. Patrick's Day. The Society warmly congratulates Liam Walsh and the members of the Monument Restoration Committee for their marvellous achievement in such a short period of time. The restored monument in cream-coloured Portland stone, with its statue by Ken Thompson of a young and vigorous St. Patrick, is a striking feature of our town, and has been much admired by townspeople and visitors. We are pleased to announce that the remnants of the old statues are at present being re-assembled for exhibition at the Clew Bay Heritage Centre.

The Society deeply regrets the untimely death of the Revd. Anthony O'Toole, P.P., Islandeady, who was a great supporter of our activities, and worked so hard to preserve the history of the parish. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal!

Donations to the Clew Bay Heritage Centre

Agricultural Credit Corporation plc	£500.00
Allergan (Ireland) Ltd.	£250.00
Allied Irish Bank, Westport	£1,000.00
Bank of Ireland, Westport	£100.00
Berry, Joe, Westport	£500.00
Blackwell, Major Joseph	£100.00
B P Nutrition, Westport	£500.00
Carraig Donn Sales, Ltd., Westport	£250.00
Chamber of Commerce, Westport	£250.00
Conway, Michael, Rosbeg	£50.00
Dawn Dairies, Galway	£100.00
Duffy, Cathal, Castlebar	£200.00
Fobert, Mary, Oak Forest, Ill., U.S.A.	\$100.00
Granuaile Trust of the O'Malley Clan	£500.00
Hastings, Tim, Westport	£100.00
Helm, (V. Keogh), Westport	£50.00
N.C.F. Westport	£100.00
Northern Feather (Ireland) Ltd.	£100.00
Nuala & Rudi, Germany	£50.00
Thomas O'Malley Memorial Fund Committee, Philadelphia	\$1,000.00
Raleigh Geraghty, U.S.A.	\$140.00
Staunton, Sean, Streamstown	£50.00
U.D.C., Westport	£500.00
Ulster Bank, Westport	£100.00
Withers, Martin, The Variety Store, Westport	£500.00

The Westport Historical Society is deeply grateful to all the above for showing their appreciation of our efforts in a practical way. We are especially grateful to Mr. Pádraig Flynn, T.D., Minister for the Environment, for his continued support, and will be honoured to have him open the Centre officially at Easter 1991.



Ms. Dymphna Benson, Manager A.I.B., Westport, presenting cheque from the bank to Jarlath Duffy.
(Photo Frank Lolan)

