

**The Irish Revolution of 1916-1921 and Modern
Remembrance: A Case Study of the Commemorative
Heritages of County Tipperary**

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I hereby declare this is my own work

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GLOSSARY OF ABBEVIATIONS

AIB	Allied Irish Bank
ASTI	Association of Secondary School Teachers of Ireland
ASU	Active Service Unit
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
FCA	Fórsa Cosanta Áitiúil (Local Defence Force)
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GPO	General Post Office
NUI	National University of Ireland
NFA	National Farmers Association
PP	Parish Priest
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
USA	United States of America

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ABSTRACT

Both in Ireland and internationally, acts of commemoration have garnered much attention in recent time from political organisations and academic writers, as well as from the media and general public. Much of the focus has been on the ability of commemoration to keep open the old wounds which have long-divided certain communities, or, conversely, on the power of these remembrances to unite opposing factions by finding common ground and avenues for reconciliation.

This thesis focuses on the commemorative heritages of County Tipperary. In exploring key dates and anniversaries in its militant republican history, the thesis will explore how the mythologies surrounding County Tipperary's participation in the so-called 'Irish Revolution' of 1916-21 have been commemorated in modern times.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, John and Mary Lawlor.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

Memory is central to cultural identity. Both as individuals or collective groups, memory is an imperative part of who we are. For the individual, everyday happenings - like a song or a smell, can trigger memory. For the group, however, memory is prompted by acts of commemoration. Commemoration has garnered much attention from political organisations and academic writers in recent times, both nationally and internationally. Commemoration allows members of a particular group, a family, a community, a nation, to remember someone's brilliance, or some exceptional event of common suffering or triumph. In the private domain, as Fitzpatrick notes, the memory of the dead may be partially recovered through mourning at a funeral, tending to a grave or looking at a photograph.¹ Fitzpatrick duly recognises, however, that personal remembrance is seldom strictly private, since our strategies for coping with death often involve an appeal for supportive grief from others and for public participation in the ceremonies of mourning.² A good example of this perception was the aftermath of the recent terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September, 2001. On that fateful day over 2,700 people from several different nationalities lost their lives. The United States of America and almost every nation in the world were plunged into a sense of unified mourning. Fitzpatrick's theory would also seem to be true for Ireland. Ireland's mixed heritages ensures diverse types of commemoration. Events such as the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and the Hunger Strikes continue to be celebrated by nationalists, while loyalist's cling tightly to the Siege of Derry and the Battle of the Boyne. Recently however, progress has been made with the Irish Government's decision to fully commemorate the Battle of Somme in which thousands of Irishmen died fighting for the British Army in the Great War.

Commemoration has the ability to reduce complex historical phases to basic images. A simple statue can represent a community's affiliation with a particular historical struggle or a roadside monument can condense some tragic event into a momentary glance. The significance attached nowadays to the memorialisation of past events is effectively illustrated by the fact that acts of remembrance in Ireland form important dates in Ireland's yearly calendar. People's experience of memory and its heritages is inextricably interwoven with some of the major events in Ireland's history, for example, the Great Famine, the struggle for independence and the commemoration of the death of political leaders at state funerals.³

Structure of the Thesis

Situated within critical historical scholarship in the burgeoning fields of cultural memory and heritage studies, this thesis will draw extensively upon archival research, fieldwork and newspaper reportage to explore how the mythologies surrounding County Tipperary's participation in the so-called 'Irish Revolution' of 1916-21 has been commemorated in modern times. Special attention will be devoted to the Easter Rising of 1916 and the War of Independence of 1919-21 – two events which have formed key elements of hegemonic nationalist metanarratives of Tipperary's contested heritages. This study consists of seven chapters, the Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology, followed by three core chapters and finishing with the Conclusion.

In order to examine the trajectory of the continuous iconographic primacy of the Irish Revolution in metanarratives of County Tipperary's heritage and identity, an

outline will be presented in Chapter 4 of the county's connections with the personalities of the Rising (e.g. Thomas McDonagh) and its intimate involvement in the guerrilla warfare that marked the War of Independence. The period from 1916-21 was a crucial time for the formation of the Irish Free State, and like many other places throughout the country, County Tipperary was to suffer many of the horrors associated with armed conflict. Chapter 4 will explore the experiences of men and women from County Tipperary who were intimately involved in militant republican activities. The narrative commences by tracing the aggressive battle of Easter week, 1916, when the IRB and Irish Citizen Army stormed the steps of the Dublin's GPO and other public buildings. While the Rising was easily defeated, the British response was heavy-handed and resulted in the execution of the ringleaders – a response which turned public opinion in favour of the insurgents' cause. As support for a revamped Sinn Féin grew, this study will demonstrate how the Solohead ambush in West Tipperary proved to be the spark that ignited the War of Independence (or Anglo-Irish War) of 1919-21. The militant activities of Tipperary's organised flying columns will be investigated, and efforts will be made to furnish biographies of some of those individuals who derived from Tipperary's republican strongholds. In addition to McDonagh, the militant activities of other individuals such as Pierce McCan, Dan Breen, Ernie O'Malley, Thomas O' Dwyer, Con Maloney, Seán Treacy, Seán Hogan and Dinny Lacy, as well as countless more will be documented.

Attention will then be devoted in Chapters 5 and 6 to the making of memory through the discourses, events, monuments and spaces associated with the various public spectacles that were staged from 1916 to the present day in order to mark the memory of revolutionary activity. These chapters will also focus on how the actions of Tipperary rebels were commemorated by unveiling monuments and public spaces

in their honour, by annual commemoration ceremonies as well as through the countless songs and stories retold among successive generations. Chapters 5 and 6 will also seek to illuminate how the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1968 had far-reaching consequences on the way in which militant nationalist deeds were subsequently commemorated in County Tipperary, largely due to the fact that the Provisional IRA were utilising the 1916 mythology in order to justify their own armed struggle. The ideological impact of revisionist historiography also served to enhance the commemorative embarrassment that characterised the far more scaled-down events that were organised in more recent times to remember the Rising. This was particularly noticeable during the muted 75th anniversary of the Rising in 1991, during which the Irish authorities were careful to avoid being associated with the glorification of murder in the name of Irish freedom. In advocating a philosophy that stresses the legitimacy of the pluralistic nature of Ireland's heritages, and embracing notions of memory which strive to illuminate the links between memory and social experience in the present, this thesis will conclude by illustrating how the cessation of Provisional IRA violence, the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998, and the decommissioning of IRA weapons in 2005 has heralded a new era of maturity, respect and understanding between different traditions in County Tipperary and within the wider island of Ireland. Within such a climate, references will be made to the reburial of the Mountjoy 10 at Glasnevin Cemetery in 2001 – as an illustration of how the legacy of the militant tradition has been partially rehabilitated in recent times. Furthermore the Irish government's decision to officially commemorate the many thousands of Irish men from both traditions who lost their lives during the Great War, 1914-1918, and the official commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising in 2006, will be examined. In addition to matters of commemorative representation,

Chapter 7 of this study will seek to address the moral relationship between memory and county (and nation), and will be cognisant of the notion of ‘commemorative trajectory’ – which relates to how memory in the guise of its representation changes over time, through space and between different peoples in different ways.

References:

¹ D. Fitzpatrick, 'Commemoration in the Irish Free State: A chronicle of embarrassment' in I. McBride, (Ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), p.184.

² *Ibid*

³ M. McCarthy, 'Historico-Geographical Explorations of Ireland's Heritages: Towards a Critical Understanding of the Nature of Memory and Identity' in M. McCarthy, (Ed.), *Ireland's Heritages: Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005), pp. 16-17.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to this thesis's prime concern with matters pertaining to commemorative heritage. Such literature includes that which deals with issues of historical remembrance and commemoration, both nationally and internationally. Material regarding the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence is addressed, especially that which relates to the modes by which these two important events are commemorated.

The Historiography of the Irish Revolution

The events between 1916 and 1921 had a huge impact on Ireland and its historical relationship with Britain. The constitutional changes which accompanied the violent convulsions led to the end of the union between Ireland and Great Britain, the formation of the Free State and the creation of Northern Ireland.¹ Debate on this subject has been endless. It has been virtually impossible to find a generally accepted term to describe the period as a whole. As Augusteijn notes, the period is usually described by naming its constituent parts, the Easter Rising and the War of Independence.² Ó Haicéad refers to the period from 1919-1921 as 'The Tan War', as did a number of orators who this writer observed at republican commemorations throughout the county of Tipperary, namely the Soloheadbeg commemoration in January 2005 and the Nenagh Easter Sunday commemoration of the same year. Lee defines the period of 1912-1922 as a 'rebellion' in the first chapter of his text, *Ireland, 1912-1985, Politics and Society*.³ In recent historiography the previously rarely used phrase the 'Irish Revolution' has become popular among scholars to describe the entire period, although Fitzpatrick has recently noted in *History Ireland* that 'it has

become commonplace for historians of Ireland to describe the events of 1912-1923 as a “revolution”, typically without attempting to define that term’.⁴ Augesteijn’s definition is preferred however as it clear and simplistic and is commonly used.

For national communities, as for individuals, there can be no sense of identity without remembering.⁵ The functions of commemoration vary according to the relationship between the dead and their celebrants. The commemoration of dead heroes or saints, and the events by which they left their mark, is an essential element of Irish political, religious and social organisation.⁶ McBride observes how political life in Ireland has traditionally revolved around the calendar of commemoration.⁷ The right to march on Orange anniversaries has been a source of inter-communal conflict for over 200 years and has often led to violence between Nationalist and Unionist communities. During the IRA violence of the 1970s, attacks seemed to coincide with key dates in the republican calendar such as Easter, or the anniversary of interment. At the same time, sites of remembrance also became targets for political violence with the detonation of a bomb at Nelson’s Pillar in Dublin, (1966), and a statue of the evangelical street-preacher Hugh Hanna in Belfast, (1970). Fitzpatrick comments that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Irish political parties, fraternities and other societies have demonstrated an astonishing mastery of commemorative technique.⁸ This, of course, is evident in the intricate and well oiled machinery by which tens of thousands of Orangemen, Blackmen and Apprentice Boys are mobilised in elaborate annual processions and loyalist commemorations, according to an almost invariable calendar and protocol. Similar processional skills are displayed by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in their annual processions on St. Patrick’s Day and by the republican organisations in their commemorations of Wolfe

Tone, Easter or Bloody Sunday as well as the numerous 1916 Rising and War of Independence commemorations held annually in Tipperary.

Ó Ciosáin notes that the term ‘memory’ has become ubiquitous in recent historical writing. It is used to refer variously to historiography, to the subject matter of that historiography, and to an entire range of commemorative practices, both public and private, which constitute historical consciousness.⁹ Recent writers who have agreed with Ó Ciosáin include Dunne, in *Rebellions, Memoir, Memory and 1798*, by McBride in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* and in a 2005 publication edited by McCarthy entitled *Ireland’s Heritages, Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity*.

Though repugnant to the diminishing bands of Unionists and constitutional Nationalists, the 1916 Rising offered a credible focus for reconciliation between supporters and opponents of the Treaty. The Easter Proclamation and Pearse’s writings still appealed to both groups and the ‘martyrs’ were celebrated with competitive enthusiasm by all factions descended from revolutionary Sinn Féin. Early efforts at commemorating the Rising in Dublin have been documented by Fitzpatrick, who observes that those competing claims to the Easter legacy made it impracticable to erect a memorial acceptable to all parties. This was clearly demonstrated in October 1923, when Clement Shorter offered a donation of £1,000 from his wife’s estate, to enable her sculpture commemorating the executed rebels to be fashioned in Carrara marble, set on a pedestal of Irish limestone, and erected in Glasnevin Cemetery.¹⁰ Its centrepiece was to be an image of Patrick Pearse. Cosgrave, who remarked that Pearse’s mother’s response would ‘be largely affected by the contact which the

government has with the proposal', demurred at the proposed exclusion of those killed by other means, and suggested that any memorial should be erected outside Leinster House rather than at Glasnevin. He feared that the unmodified proposal would make it 'look as if we wanted to have one last slap at the British'.¹¹ The eventual permission for the sculpture to be unveiled in Glasnevin was granted in December, 1923. Fitzpatrick also identifies numerous other problems and concerns that the Executive Council faced with further plans for commemorative Easter Rising monuments for Glasnevin Cemetery around 1925, and in particular, with their positioning. In one case it was feared a monument would be dwarfed by existing tombs in the cemetery, whereas its erection nearby would hide President Griffith's grave and cause resentment among relatives.

Until recently, the Irish Revolution had romantic connotations. Militant republicans who were willing to sacrifice all and take up arms against the British Army were glorified and held in high esteem. Those who wrote on the subject promoted the leaders and their beliefs. The 25th and 50th anniversaries of the 1916 Rising, in 1941 and 1966 respectively are testament to this fact. Later celebrations, as will be shown later on in this study, were somewhat more subdued than those previously mentioned. The 50th anniversary of Easter 1916 particularly verifies the reality of respect and admiration given to those martyrs who shed their blood for Irish freedom. Later findings in Chapter Five will illustrate that the celebrations and commemoration ceremonies held Tipperary and indeed throughout Ireland during Easter Week of 1966 were of huge proportions. However, during the 1970s and 1980s, the motives and actions of militant republicans were seriously questioned by Irish revisionist historians who were at the forefront of demolishing traditional views

of Irish history that were put forward by nationalist historians.¹² One universal meaning which can be taken from this new word in Irish historical writings, 'revisionism', is to change, alter, or to restudy work. As previously mentioned, Republicans commemorate the 1916 Rising at Easter. The 1916 insurgents attempted to break the connection with the British Empire and aspired to an all-Ireland democratic Republic. Part of the proclamation signed by the seven signatures reads as follows:

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty: six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades in arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.¹³

This is the expression of the desire for freedom and a challenge to an oppressive foreign government's right to dominate the people. It is important to note the centrality of the separatist element, they were for national self-determination, and nothing less; they were not there for 'equality', 'parity of esteem' or 'all party talks'. The 1916 insurgents were what some call today a micro group. It is on that basis that the various Army Councils claiming 'continuity' with 1916, or utilising the 1916 mythology, proclaim that they administer the military affairs of the Republic 'in trust for the people'.¹⁴ This is what is probably most explosive politically about the Proclamation, it inspires groups or armies with no electoral mandate to take up arms against British rule. This is why celebrating 1916 causes so much unease amongst the establishment and why commemoration of it has been taken to task by revisionist historians. Conversely, this thesis will make efforts to highlight the conflicting

actions of the 1916-1921 insurgents and the modern day splinter group republicans who still continue the struggle to bring about a 32 county united Ireland.

Fennel, an anti-revisionist, in his chapter, 'Against Revisionism', describes the term revisionism as:

'a retelling of Irish history which seeks to show that British rule of Ireland was not, as we have believed a bad thing, but a mixture of necessity, good intentions and bungling; and that Irish resistance to it was not as we have believed, a good thing, but a mixture of wrong-headed idealism and unnecessary, often cruel violence'.¹⁵

The popular image of historical revisionism is that in our relations with Britain on the Irish question, the Irish have been very much at fault. Ellis describes this brand of history as 'a debate about the ousting of traditional faith and fatherland perspectives on the growth of an Irish nation and state in favour of a more broadly based, pluralist approach to Irish history'.¹⁶ Its impact, as Dunne certifies, has meant that 'Irish historians, like the population at large, are less preoccupied with nationalist rhetoric, and as a consequence can feel less defensive about research findings that 'support' rather than the subvert, elements of the traditional account'.¹⁷ Fennel traces the origins of revisionism to the 1960s when British, American and German capital provided the wealth which Sinn Féin economics had failed to provide, and the rise to power in Dublin of a new elite of businessmen, bureaucrats, media people and politicians who adopted swinging London as their cultural and moral lodestar. This ensured a journalistic campaign against everything which de Valera and his era stood for. Fennel's main arguments against revisionism are that he finds the subject's moral interpretation incorrect, and secondly, he argues that such history does not serve the well-being of the nation. He feels that every nation and its people have needs for a collective well-being, an image of their national past which sustains and energises them personally, and which bonds them together by making their inherited nation

seem a value worth adhering to and working for.¹⁸ McCarthy would seem to be in agreement with Fennel on his dating of the start of revisionist history. He traces the first indications of revisionism to the late 1960s when Irish historians began to focus their attentions on other matters, besides the national question.¹⁹ However Boyce and O'Day claim that no origin of revisionism can be fully justified and is very much up for debate.²⁰

The Great Famine of the nineteenth century, for instance, has been reinterpreted by some as the result of unfavourable market forces. Another reason so many people starved to their death was because Irish shopkeepers raised the price of grain considerably. The argument still rages today with regard to where responsibility lies for this great calamity. McCarthy shows that revisionism in essence, is about not placing the blame for all of Ireland's misfortunes on Britain for every bad thing this nation has suffered and that is a fair point. Roy Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* has been described as a 'model of careful, dispassionate scholarship, judicious assessment and elegant compression'.²¹ However his revisionist views have attracted criticism from former G.A.A. president Peter Quinn who stressed that his revisionism amounts to anti-nationalism, and that it denounces Irishness and traditional views. Post-revisionist Diarmaid Ferriter also finds flaws in certain aspects of revisionists' thinking. Referring to the Mountjoy 10, including volunteer Kevin Barry, he feels that there was a lot of what was known as 'the usual revisionists saying this was a glorification of murder and all that'.²² Ferriter believed that the response of the public on the streets of Dublin, which was to applaud the 10 volunteers as they were given state funerals, was an answer to whether or not the revisionism debate was dead;

'In the sense that here were the people who, particularly post-ceasefire in Northern Ireland, were basically saying that these people gave their

lives for the cause of Irish freedom. We're applauding them for what they did, which doesn't mean that we approve of violence now, that we are fellow travellers with the Provos'.²³

For this researcher, Ferriter's argument is comprehensive and successfully counters the revisionist tendency to link these early volunteers with the violence which marred Northern Ireland, Ireland and England in later decades. Furthermore, Ferriter's comments have relevance for this writer. Performing with Tipperary based rebel band *Devil's Bit* has brought pleasure and perception in understanding why the activities of the men and women associated with the Irish Revolution were necessary. Reading Ferriter's comments about how the general public on the streets of the capital offered applause as the remains of the Mountjoy 10 were transferred to Glasnevin Cemetery did not necessarily mean they supported the IRA violence carried on in Northern Ireland over three decades plucked similar chords with the rebel songs performed by *Devil's Bit* and this writer's philosophy. Popular rebel songs like 'The Boys of the Old Brigade', 'The Merry Ploughboy' and 'The Broad Black Brimmer' all tell the tale for the struggle for Irish Independence. These songs however, are sung out of respect for what these people gained and certainly do not advocate support for the continuation of IRA violence. Like the public approval on Dublin's streets that day in 2001, they are sung because many of these brave men and women fought, or gave their lives, for the cause of Irish freedom, and performing these songs is a way of acknowledging their actions. Another who seems to think along the same lines as Quinn, Whelan and Ferriter is novelist Morgan Llywelyn. In an interview conducted on the on line edition of *An Scáthán*, Llywelyn reveals her inspiration for writing her novel *1916*;

I had been thinking for a long time about the events of 1916 because it is so central to contemporary Ireland; it shaped what we are now. The more I read about the Rising and the people involved, the more I realized how drastically the last 30 years of revisionist history has altered what should have been our proudest

moment, and how it had been disremembered. The more I learned about the men involved, the more I realized Ireland had won her independence as a result of a conspiracy of poets. They were undoubtedly among the most extraordinary people we have ever produced. So I wanted to put together a coherent linear examination of that time and because I am a novelist I decided that it would be better to do it through the medium of the novel than try to write a non-fiction history.²⁴

The Republican weekly publication, *An Phoblacht*, goes some way to tackle revisionists Roy Foster and Peter Hart. In an article entitled “Revisionism Exposed as Recycled Propaganda”, the commentary suggests that elements of revisionism can be traced back to the Tan War in Ireland. It claims that during this period, Mr. Basil Clarke, an ex-journalist from the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Daily Mail*, headed the department whose job it was to spread misinformation across the globe. New research by Dr. Brian Murphy reveals how this propaganda reappears in revisionist history²⁵. After examining documents in the British Public Record Office, (now known as the National Archives of England and Wales), Murphy argues that historians like Roy Foster and Peter Hart rehash and recycle propaganda. Reports of battles and ambushes could become ‘our version of the facts’, said Clarke. He also remarked that the British view would contain ‘verisimilitude’, or have ‘the appearance of being true’. Clarke’s team produced ‘official’ reports of incidents that were handed out to correspondents gathering each day in Dublin Castle. In this way, the British tried to dominate the reporting of the war in Ireland.

A good example is British ‘damage limitation’ after Dublin's Bloody Sunday, on 21 November 1921. Michael Collins had ordered the assassination of British Intelligence agents that morning. Later that afternoon, British troops mowed down 12 members of the public and Tipperary GAA footballer Seán Hogan in Croke Park. Clarke concocted a report suggesting that those shot by Collins were mainly involved

in 'legal' work. Murphy described how the lie was constructed and disseminated. Brian Murphy draws our attention to Roy Foster's reference in *Modern Ireland* to 'unarmed British officers' being killed 'on suspicion of their being Intelligence operatives' according to Basil Clark's version of events. Even the official British Record of the Rebellion stated: 'The murder of 21 November temporarily paralysed the Special Branch. Several of its most efficient members were murdered.' Roy Foster, according to Murphy, preferred British spin over British fact.

Another interesting point to note is the debate surrounding revisionists and post revisionists on the Kilmichael Ambush, Co. Cork. This controversy has been simmering for six years since the publication of *The IRA and its Enemies* by former Queen's University academic, Dr. Peter Hart, (now based in Canada). Brian Murphy and Meda Ryan, the latter being author of *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, criticise Hart's allegation that IRA leader Tom Barry had soldiers, who had surrendered, shot in cold blood. Interestingly enough, Diarmaid Ferriter is also in agreement with Hart on this issue in his book *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*. For 17 Auxiliary Officers who had survived the First World War, a routine patrol through the Cork countryside on a Sunday afternoon was to end in death when they were ambushed by an IRA Flying Column led by Tom Barry. Three IRA men also died, two of them shot, according to Barry (who died in 1980), after they stood up to take the surrender of a group of auxiliaries. But Tom Barry's account has been challenged by Hart, who argues that the notion of a false surrender was made up to excuse the execution of defeated soldiers in cold blood. Hart claims that Barry did not make the 'false surrender' claim until the 1940s. Ryan showed that it was published in the 1920s. Hart's apparently clinching point about Barry failing to mention it in a major 1932

Irish Press article was refuted by showing that it had been edited out of the story, and that Barry himself had protested in writing²⁶. Both Ryan, Murphy and Kilmichael and Crossbarry commemoration secretary Sean Kelleher have further ammunition to challenge Hart on this point by claiming that his two sources for the Kilmichael ambush are still anonymous (now over 80 years after the event) and therefore difficult to test and to validate. Peter Hart says that he carried out his interviews in 1988 and 1989, but according to the records consulted by Meda Ryan, only one battle survivor was alive at that stage, and was too infirm to repeat his account. Reportedly, none were alive on 19 November 1989, the date of Hart's interview with the scout. According to Ryan, the last scout died in 1967, while the last survivor, Ned Young, died on November 13 1989. Ryan simply blames the ruthless campaign carried out by the Black and Tans in west and mid Cork for the ambush. This is an anomaly that needs to be addressed and for which there may be a simple explanation. As of yet, it has not been proffered. In relation to Ferriter's similar claim of Tom Barry's murderous exploits after surrender, Kelleher sources Ferriter's findings to Peter Hart and expresses his astonishment that Ferriter did not take account of a long series of letters between Hart and critics of his views which were published in *The Irish Times* in 1998 and in *History Ireland*.²⁷

There has been remarkably little coherence to the debate on Irish revisionism. *The Making of Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the revisionist controversy*, editors Boyce and O'Day put forward the point that a clear definition of revisionism remains absent from the discussion as previously stated. As a consequence they note that there is not an agreed list of who is and who is not a revisionist and unlike Fennell who dates the origins of revisionism to the 1960s; Boyce and O'Day declare

that no exact date or timeframe can be given to the birth of revisionism. Characteristically, Boyce questions the motives of those responsible for planning the 1916 Rising. Boyce, a revisionist, puts forward a series of questions. Firstly, he asks if the Rising was a 'coup d'état' or a bloody protest? Secondly he queries if the rebellion aimed at provoking or inspiring general uprising against the British, and lastly he asks if the Rising was a deliberate attempt to create martyrs in order to shock the nation out its torpor and into a more nationalist mood, the blood of the martyrs acting, as it were, as the seed of the church.²⁸ The answer to the first two questions in the researcher's opinion is yes. The 1916 Rising was a bloody protest, but the leaders of the Rising could not have anticipated the heavy handed response of the British in the form of executions making the protest even bloodier. Who could possibly think that the leaders of this insurrection would deliberately put the lives of their comrades and friends at risk? They took the course of action they chose because they felt it was the only option left to them. For far too long politics had failed in securing an Irish Republic. The 1916 Rising reshaped Irish history and had more impact than decades of constitutional politics. It came at a time when millions of British men were at war on the continent. 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity' was the adopted motto of the Irish Volunteers, who felt that it was time to turn to the gun in a bid to secure Irish freedom. Again the answer to the second question posed by Boyce is yes. Of course the rebellion was aimed at inspiring fellow Irishmen into trying to rid their country of oppression. All week long, as the air around them thickened with smoke and the sound of gunfire became deafening, they still remained hopeful more comrades would join them. Confusion over the staging of the Rising of course ensured that only a small number of rebels actually took part in the fighting. Eoin McNeill's cancellation of all military events for Easter Sunday meant that a large

percentage of volunteers either returned home to their families or enjoyed the race meeting being held in Punchestown that long bank holiday weekend. Both sides to the latter question put forward by Boyce have been extensively argued recently. The nationalist side will claim that the rising was not a deliberate attempt to create martyrs and to shock the nation into supporting nationalism. Granted this was the actual outcome of the week-long fight. The nationalistic view is that the 1916 leaders were not to know they would be executed after the Rising. Life imprisonment would have been more probable and humane. It was the British themselves, who shocked the nation and turned the general public into favouring the rebel's actions. They themselves later admitted they had handled the situation completely wrong. Some English officials, such as the Viceroy of Ireland, were actually opposed to the executions of 'comparatively unknown insurgents'. Expressing his dismay in a letter which he sent to Sir General Maxwell, Commander of the British army in Ireland, on 8 May 1916, he noted that the executions were 'capable of producing disastrous consequences'.²⁹ This view would have been held until just after 1966, when as Townshend puts it, 'some serious thinkers began to reassess the rebellions place in the title deeds of the Irish state'.³⁰ The revisionist debate, as previously mentioned, was provoked by the revival of IRA terrorism and their justification of Pearse's ideology that a blood sacrifice was necessary to secure a united Ireland.

The concepts of certain elements of revisionism are somewhat puzzling for this researcher. The 1916 rebels had drawn their ideas and inspirations from 1798, and although revisionists have tackled the motives of those men, and the women who supported them, little or no blame has been attributed to the 98 rebels when celebrating the bicentenary of the failed United Irishmen rebellion. On the contrary,

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1916 celebrations have been downgraded recently because of the IRA terror campaign. With the centenary year of the 1916 Rising getting closer by the day, one wonders what significance this date will hold for Republicans and for Irish people worldwide. With the IRA having decommissioned and still on ceasefire and with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, the St. Andrew's Agreement in 2006 and the establishment of power sharing at Stormont in 2007, one would hope that commemoration and remembrance of this event would once again come to the fore, as seen on the 50th anniversary of the revolution in 1966.

The 1798 rebellion and its insurgents had a huge bearing on 1916. The year 1998 marked the bicentenary of this widespread rebellion. With over 1,000 events spread across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the bicentenary of 1798 was an exercise in commemoration of massive proportions.³¹ In 1998 a wave of 'statuemanía' swept the country, exceeding the widespread erection of centennial '98 monuments a century earlier. Folk songs and ballads such as 'Boo-lavogue', 'Irish Soldier Laddie' and 'Kelly, the Boy from Killane' became very popular and were aired openly during commemorative celebrations. Roy Foster sarcastically observed 'that there was lot of dressing up and posing with pikes'.³² Pikes, however, symbolised the pride that locals held with the connection of the commoner in this particular rebellion, no place more than in Wexford, where most of the rebellion actually took place. The obvious presence of pike people exposed the limits for manipulation of collective memory, reminding politicians and historians alike that on a grassroots level the pike, with its loaded symbolism of violence and mayhem, could not be taken out of the popular memory of 1798.³³ One indeed wonders if the proclamation, which authorises 'micro groups' or republican army councils to take up

arms against British rule in Northern Ireland, or the Thompson gun, the weapon of the 1916 commoners, will take on the same role as the pike. Wexford folk have the same connection to 1798 as Tipperary and Cork folk have with the War of Independence. In *I Crossed the Line: The Liam Dunne Story*, biographer Damian Lawlor outlines how Wexford hurler Liam Dunne's account of how in his final year as an inter-county hurler, he would struggle to run up Vinegar Hill five times a night. This gruelling peak caused him much suffering but whenever doubts and fatigue set in, thoughts ventured back through the centuries to the men, women and children who had suffered so much on the same hill. Seven months later, in an All-Ireland hurling semi-final, three points down and in the dying seconds of the game, a drained Dunne's thoughts once again returned to Vinegar Hill. Drawing inspiration from its mythology and folklore, he mustered enough energy for one final attack to send the ball down the field to the Wexford full forward who shot to the back of the Cork net to equalise. This shows the admiration and respect Wexford people hold for the events of 1798 and indeed how they still draw strength from their ancestor's actions all those years ago. Dunne also talks extensively about the bicentenary commemorations of the rebellion in Wexford, in 1998, and how the last time he saw faces filled with such pride was on the victorious home coming of the 1996 All-Ireland hurling final.³⁴

Revisionist historians take their ammunition from the outbreak of the troubles in Northern Ireland in 1968, two years after the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. These events have subsequently had repercussions on the way in which Irish history was commemorated. During a 30 year killing campaign, republican and loyalist paramilitaries embarked on a killing spree in which roughly 3,500 people lost their lives, many of whom were blameless civilians, more of whom were innocent soldiers

and police.³⁵ The Provisional IRA had taken their ideologies from and indeed justified their campaign of violence on the ideas held by Pearse, and his fascination with the idea that bloodshed was necessary to indeed secure a whole island of Ireland. It is unfortunate that the men and women of 1916 suffered as they did in the revisionist debate. They reacted to a situation when they felt politics was getting them nowhere. They stopped the fighting when they realised they were fighting a losing battle, to prevent more bloodshed and more loss in a city they adored. They were, as novelist Morgan Llywelyn portrayed them as a group of 'poets' who had tried to gain freedom for a land and culture they cherished. Revisionists in this case, some might argue, are before their time. Undoubtedly, in fifty years time, in 2057, if they decided to revise Irish history from 1970–2000, they would have every right to attack militant republicans, and everyone, including this researcher, would agree that the bombing of the World War I Remembrance Day in Enniskillen was an outrage and an atrocity. So too, the bombing and shooting campaign in Britain during the 1970s, the bombing of Omagh in 1998 by the so called 'Real IRA', as well as several more atrocities and punishment beatings. Have no doubt about it; the soldiers of the GPO and today's republican soldiers are similar in one way and in one way only, both desired an all 32 county united Ireland.

Historiographical Perspectives on Commemoration

Literature concerning the theme of collective memory in an Irish context comprises a limited but growing body of academic scholarship. Many of the discourses relating to the topic were prompted by the widespread commemorations that marked the bicentenary of the 1798 rebellion. Internationally, the notion of the contemporary meaning and relevance attached to past events has become a

substantive subject in its own right. This is emphasised by the American academic David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country*, which studied the insatiable public appetite for consumption of the past, whilst also examining the benefits and costs of society's relationship with history.³⁶

Given the recent attention devoted to the topic of history, memory and commemoration, McBride's (2001) *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* was certainly timely. McBride's volume is comprised of contributions from international scholars who address the relationship between the past and the present in Irish society and the ways in which identities have been moulded through the evocation and commemoration of crucial episodes in Irish history. *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* has certainly helped to define a number of main concepts, arguments and concerns in what is an emerging field of enquiry in an Irish context. The majority of contributors in the book, including Fitzpatrick, Leersen and Longley, are concerned with the use and abuse of history in the shaping of either a Republican or Unionist identity. Some of the more persistent issues addressed in the book include a review of the uncomfortable role the government has played in state commemoration and the significance of monuments as a means of remembering. McBride also puts forward the notion that our understanding of pivotal moments in Irish history is under constant change owing to the pressures of 'individual actors, cultural patterns, social forces and technological advances'.³⁷ Another publication which has addressed commemorative practices in Ireland is Brian Walker's *Dancing to History's Tune*.³⁸ One of the publications chapters entitled 'Commemorations, Festivals and Public Holidays' takes an overview of the history surrounding St. Patrick's Day festivities as well as observances of the Easter Rising, the 12th of July and Remembrance Sunday. Though

lacking in-depth academic critique, Walker does emphasise the historic, symbolic and deep-rooted nature of the events.

A more recent scholarly publication, which highlights the ability of commemoration to unite is Eberhard Bort's *Commemorating Ireland*. Like McBride's publication, Bort and his contributors examine the commemorative events which have taken place in Ireland recently, namely the 1798 Rebellion, the Great Famine the Battle of the Boyne and World War 1. However unlike *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, Bort leans towards the view that remembrance of the past can and should lend itself to the establishment of a more cohesive society. Bort defines the advantages associated with acts of commemoration: the ability to measure social progress, the urge fulfilled in re-examining and understanding the past for its own sake and the uniting of societies through 'creating common images, thus providing social and cultural glue, collective reassurance, shared belief, coherence and identity'.³⁹ While Bort also acknowledges that commemorations can sometimes be 'an unwanted burden, a hollow ritual, an ironic distancing of the past' he prefers to highlight the concept that commemorative events should be 'healing, bonding experiences and should help us on contemporary challenges'.⁴⁰

Mark McCarthy has also shown the gradual shift away from the remembrance of a linear form of history towards a more pluralistic approach to the past in the introduction to his edited volume *Ireland's Heritages: Critical perspectives on Memory and identity*.⁴¹ These practices of remembering and forgetting are often undertaken in a bid to protect one's own cultural identity in light of the perceived threat from another and this theme is furthered in the first section of the book entitled 'Commemoration and the Politics of Heritage'. With valuable contributions

highlighting the role of the heritage industry in remembrance by Guy Beiner and the overlooked history of the Connaught Rangers by John Morrissey, the opening section of the book is timely with the abundance of contemporary commemorative activity. In 2006, the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising was acknowledged by the Irish state while even more recently the government was also to the fore in acknowledging the Irishmen who lost their lives in the Battle of the Somme in the same year. The 25th anniversary of the death of the hunger strikers from the Maze prison has also given rise to much debate and recall while the eyes of the world will continuously focus on America as the anniversaries of the 9/11 al-Qaeda attacks occur.

Conclusion

With regards to the key events throughout the course of the Irish Revolution, particularly in county Tipperary, Foy and Barton's *The Easter Rising*, has been described as 'the best survey of the 1916 Rising' by Roy Foster writing for *The Irish Times*.⁴² This work was excellent in accounting for the actions of Thomas MacDonagh and his garrison of soldiers who occupied Jacobs Biscuit Factory from Easter Monday to the following Sunday when the rebels surrendered. With regards to the entity of the county unit, Daly explores the idea that shared historical events have given rise to a sense of county allegiance and connectedness, and thus identity.⁴³ Indeed many of county and local histories have been published across the country since the start of the 20th century. The most ambitious and consistent of these are, without doubt, the volumes in Geography Publications History and Society Series, (series editor, William Nolan), which commenced with County Tipperary in 1985. This collection delves into various fascinating aspects of Tipperary's intriguing history, with several scholarly articles dedicated to Tipperary's role in the Irish

Revolution. Local publications such as Pádraig O Háicead's *In Bloody Protest* and his more recent publication, *Keep their Names Forever Green* investigate pivotal moments, such as ambushes or attacks on RIC personnel or British soldiers throughout the course of the Irish Revolution in Tipperary. It is here that this thesis aims to fit into the corpus on the county – specifically Tipperary. By examining not just the history of a given area, but the modes by which modern societies constantly interact with that history, it can be revealed how commemoration of a localised past can provide insights into such identities.

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Chapter 3
Methodology

‘Sources are like witnesses at a trial; the cross examination by the historian must contain the right questions to make them yield up what they know’.¹

Introduction

The study of how the past is commemorated and remembered has emerged as an increasingly popular practice among scholars of late. Commemoration connects with several fields of scholarly endeavour concerned with heritage studies – including history, geography, historical sociology, and folklore. Such disciplines have scrutinised both the facts of individual and collective remembering, and the social processes of memorialisation inherent in the way nations practice commemoration through ceremony and monument. A range of methodologies is therefore required in order to explore how the storylines of Tipperary’s links to the Irish Revolution featured in a range of commemorative acts over time and through space. The methodologies employed by this thesis draw much insight from the concern with contemporary or new approaches, perspectives and themes embodied in much of the recent scholarship in the fields of heritage studies and cultural memory.

Researching the Irish Revolution

To trace a period such as the one in question, where daily and weekly events had huge bearing on guerrilla warfare, the empirical research attached to this thesis relied strongly on a range of primary source materials. Although it is now nine decades since the Irish Revolution of 1916-1921, it remains an era that can still be touched by those living in the present. For example, Eamon de Valera, one of the last living links to the Easter Rising, Richard Mulcahy, who had been the IRA’s Chief of Staff and later leader of the Fine Gael Party, and General Tom Barry, west Cork IRA

leader during the War of Independence all lived well into the 1970s or 1980s.² On more personal levels, memories linger of grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, fathers or mothers who by one means or another challenged British rule in Ireland. The author travelled throughout Co. Tipperary, to speak with and interview surviving relatives of those Tipperary men and women who were involved in militant forms of republicanism. One such interviewee was Mr. Con Hogan, a relative of the well-known Sean Hogan, whose bullet at Soloheadbeg on 21 January 1919 prompted the War of Independence. Mr. Len Gaynor, Kilruane, Nenagh, County Tipperary, whose uncle was a member of the North Tipperary flying column (and was shot dead by British forces during a raid on Luckybags public house), was also interviewed on the role his uncle played during his short life, his involvement in militant republicanism and his life on the run as a wanted man. Many more family relatives of Old IRA volunteers were contacted and their recollections will be discussed later on. In addition to these people, an interview was also conducted with Mr. Pádraig O Haicéad, author of *Keep Their Names Forever Green* and *The Bloody Protest*. O Haicéad has completed a great deal of research for the compilation of his two books on both the North Tipperary Brigade of the IRA and the Mid Tipperary Brigade of the IRA and his personal expertise on the subject matter has proved invaluable to this piece of research. Members of committees dedicated to remembering IRA volunteers from the Irish Revolution were also asked for information and commentary on various monuments, public spaces or plaques unveiled in their memory.

Fieldwork was another major part of completing this thesis. Certain dates in the calendar have specific relevance to the militant history of County Tipperary. Commemoration ceremonies are almost always carried out as close as feasibly

possible to the date in question. This fact is backed up by the 86th anniversary commemoration of the Soloheadbeg ambush. As previously mentioned, this ambush in west Tipperary was the igniting spark for the War of Independence. The 2005 commemoration was held on a small country bye road, at the monument that marks the point where arguably the most important and controversial historic event of the 20th century in Ireland took place. The rally was used as a medium to attack certain journalists who have claimed it was incorrect to honour Tipperary's patriot dead. Much more detail will be given of this commemoration Chapter Six which deals with the commemoration of the War of Independence in Tipperary. Chapter Four deals with the actual course of the 1916 Rising and War of Independence, and certain places like MacDonagh's birth place in Cloughjordan, Tipperary, or Soloheadbeg, Knocklong, Modreeny, as well as various other places where ambushes, or guerrilla warfare activity against British forces in Ireland, took place have been visited. Elements of fieldwork, and actually going to certain sites and monuments, are very closely linked together in Chapters Four, Five and Six. Then Chapters Five and Six will deal with the making of memory or lack of it, in the places mentioned above associated with Tipperary's militant republican past. Statues, rallies, and speeches, decades of the rosary as well as the singing of the national anthem, or some rebel song associated with the particular event in question, are all ways in which these events are remembered. The latter chapters will deal will this extensively.

Another research method utilised during the course of this study was a questionnaire survey of individuals attending and participating in ceremonies commemorating the Rising and the War of Independence during 2005 and 2006. (See

Appendices 3.1) One such commemoration ceremony was the annual Easter Sunday celebrations of the 1916 Rising in Banba Square, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. Through the Chairman of the Sinn Féin Party, and Lord Mayor of Nenagh town, Mr. Seamus Morris, permission was granted to circulate a specifically designed questionnaire during this commemoration ceremony. This specific survey aimed to establish why those who attend commemoration ceremonies do so. It also helped establish the social class, gender, age group, occupation and place of residence of chosen candidates. This information was valuable in determining the type of people who attend such remembrance ceremonies and in establishing whether or not certain trends were evident in Tipperary's commemoration ceremonies. The results will be shown in Chapter Five. The questionnaire circulated at the 2006 Easter commemoration in Nenagh were of special interest in determining the public view on the Irish Government's decision to officially commemorate 1916 by holding military parades for the first time since the early 1970s.

Secondary sources proved to be an invaluable source throughout this thesis. Books and journal articles were utilised in order to give a clear understanding on the position and state of the country at certain periods and to show whether County Tipperary's military activities were in any way unique compared to other counties throughout the island of Ireland during this troubled era. There are also many books available documenting accounts of individual personalities throughout the Irish Revolution. This is certainly true in Tipperary with texts documenting the struggle of Thomas MacDonagh, Dan Breen, Seán Treacy and many others. Texts like these are important in tracing key battles and ambushes during the Irish Revolution.

The archives of local and regional newspapers were also researched in great detail, to trace the activities of the various rebel groups and investigate the subsequent commemoration of their deeds. A particularly useful collection is the Irish Political and Republican Newspapers Collection that is available on microfilm in the James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway. National papers such as *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Independent* were examined in order to explore the overall national picture. Local papers such as *The Nenagh Guardian*, *The Tipperary Star* and *The Midland Tribune* yielded much and proved to be excellent sources. The *Clonmel Nationalist*, for instance, reported extensively on the commemoration of the Soloheadbeg ambush in January 2005. The headlines read ‘Great Leaders remembered at Soloheadbeg Commemoration’. The article detailed every happening during the commemoration ceremony in depth.

In order to seek out relevant archival sources, reference was made to the *Directory of Irish Archives* by Helferty and Refaussé, which provides a list of all archival institutions throughout the island of Ireland. Surviving manuscript material was also traced through the 14 volumes of Richard Hayes’s *Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation* (1965, 1977) and other relevant catalogues. Manuscript sources consulted included the Colonial Office Papers (available on microfilm in NUI Galway), the Richard Mulcahy papers (in the University College Dublin Archives Department), the Eoin O’Mahony papers (also UCD), and the Con Maloney papers (also UCD). The Bureau of Military History archive was also used to gain original data from individuals from both sides of the Irish Revolution.

Irish Republican songs and ballads all tell the story of the many volunteers who joined the struggle for Irish independence. Such nationalist songs are a familiar part of Irish heritage and through their lyrics and music the deeds of the men and women who fought in the cause for Irish freedom are recalled. Bands such as the Wolfe Tones, The Sons of Éireann, The Pogues, Devil's Bit, The Blarney Pilgrims and Rebel Hearts all travel throughout Ireland and the world playing rebel ballads such as 'The Galtee Mountain Boy', 'Seán Treacy', 'The Merry Ploughboy', and Tipperary So Far Away'. Indeed one of Ireland's most popular and well known rebel bands, The Wolfe Tones, go so far as to give a brief synopsis on the history of each song before performing it, in their own way commemorating the patriot dead from 1916-1921. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, further detail will be given to the remembrance of Tipperary's nationalist dead through the medium of song and music. Poetry is another means of remembering republican activities in County Tipperary. Upon hearing of Thomas MacDonagh's death, well known poet Francis Ledwedge penned his beautiful lament, 'To One Dead Thomas MacDonagh'. Other such poems and writings have also been examined and used in this study in view of their commemorative value in remembering Tipperary's rebel heritages.

In relation to each of the chapters, a number of websites were accessed and were useful when seeking details regarding commemoration-related speeches given by orators at republican commemoration ceremonies, as well as speeches given by state representatives. The website of 'An Phoblacht', a republican weekly, and the website of Department of the Taoiseach are such examples.

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² F. Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its Aftermath 1916-1923* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2003), p. 315.

Chapter 4

Tipperary and the Irish Revolution of 1916-1921

‘The history of Ireland is a history of oppression, and the struggle of the people against it, a history of grasping landlords and conniving politicians, who sought to deprive the people of their birth rite. At regular times in Ireland’s past, these grievances have boiled over and the ordinary people have reacted in the only way open to them...rebellion’.

Ronnie Drew, *The Dubliners*,
‘Wrap the Green Flag Around Me’

Introduction

Rebellion has been an extremely prominent theme throughout the course Irish history. From the earliest times foreigners were attracted to Ireland’s shores. The most prominent and dominant of these invaders came in the form of English and Scottish planters in the sixteenth century. To this day their descendants remain central to Ireland’s contested heritages. Their presence in Ireland was not always welcomed however and failed rebellions in 1641, 1798, 1803, 1848 and 1867 are testament to this fact. This chapter will deal with the first quarter of the twentieth century, when two successive rebellions against English dominance in Ireland aimed to end British rule in Ireland, namely the Easter Rising of 1916 and the War of Independence of 1919-1921. When grouped together they take the name the Irish revolution. The first part of this revolution, the 1916 rising, came at a time when Great Britain was involved in the First World War which lasted from 1914-1918. Irish revolutionaries believed that England’s difficulty was Ireland’s opportunity and that England’s resistance might be weakened considerably with so many troops fighting vigorously on the war fields of Europe.

The Historiography of the Irish Revolution

General definitions of revolution are many, various, and sometimes complicated. Charles Tilly’s definition, however, is simple and well thought out:

‘A revolution is a transfer of power over a state in the course of which at least two distinct blocs make incompatible claims to control the state, and some significant portion of the population subject to the state’s jurisdiction acquiesces in the claims of each bloc. A full revolutionary sequence thus runs from a sundering of sovereignty and hegemony through a period of struggle to reestablishment of sovereignty and hegemony under new management. We can usefully distinguish between revolutionary situations and outcomes. A revolutionary situation consists of an open division of sovereignty, while a revolutionary outcome entails a definitive transfer of power’.¹

The Irish revolutionary movement has proved hard to fix with assurance. Before the First World War, Pádraig Pearse was certain it had already begun. In March 1914, Pearse hailed the ‘existence on Irish Soil of an Irish army’ as ‘a fact which remarks definitely the beginning of the second stage of the Revolution which commenced when the Gaelic League was founded’.² Hart speaks of a revolutionary decade falling between 1912 and 1922, but points out that the Home Rule crisis of 1912-14 was by no means revolutionary by itself.³ Boyce’s work, actually headlining the concept of Revolution in its title did not offer a methodical evaluation of the revolution, instead offering an ‘exploration’ reaching back into the nineteenth century. Boyce ignored the concept of discussing whether the events of 1916-1923 could be classed as revolution, and went on to insist that ‘nothing in Ireland conforms quite exactly to the models of revolution constructed by political scientists’⁴, suggesting that the Irish Revolution failed to follow the pattern of more structurally correct earlier revolutions. In recent Irish historiography there is a wide range of terms associated with the Easter Rising of 1916, and with the Irish War of Independence, although there is a general assumption that the years from c.1913 to 1923 form a consistent epoch. Costello uses the term Black and Tan War⁵ to describe the period from 1919-1921 whereas Hopkinson prefers the term Anglo Irish War⁶. Foster speaks of rebellion and takeover rather than revolution. Hoppen uses the terms ‘Violence and separatism’ whereas Lyons preferred the term ‘struggle for independence’. Elsewhere, ‘revolution’ sometimes

appears as an internal title. At the end of his *The Long Gestation* (1999), Patrick Maume's chapter 'Reflections on a revolution' seems misplaced without having once used the term in his text. Stephen's, in his book refers to an 'Insurrection'.⁷ Townshend remarks that the clearest specification of an Irish revolution has been made in the work of David Fitzpatrick⁸. Fitzpatrick affirms that 'if revolutions are what happens to wheels, then Ireland underwent revolution between 1916 and 1922': 'its major social and political institutions were turned upside down'.⁹ Revolution means change. More often than not this change occurs rapidly and violently, although it doesn't necessary always mean bloodshed. Skocpol's insistence that 'the central feature of every true revolution was the transformation of a state', has been the most significant feature of revolutionary studies in the late twentieth century.¹⁰ This point gives meaning to Hart's assertion that almost all large scale comparative studies of revolution have left Ireland out. From this perspective we can understand why Ireland does not feature in the study of modern revolutions. Ireland, under control of the 1801 Act of Union in 1916, was not a state but a peripheral part of Great Britain.

Almost all of the revolutionaries committed to physical violence were men, although works carried out on republican women (such as Kathleen Clarke's *Revolutionary Woman*) document women activists, stressing they were clearly unable to participate in the mode of action carried out by male revolutionaries. Life on-the-run participating in guerrilla warfare under organised flying columns meant harsh lifestyles. Volunteers, at times, had to endure days or even weeks without a decent meal or a place to rest at night. Women participated, as Townshend notes, 'through a separate organisation, which accepted an auxiliary military function - albeit one that might be categorised in some areas as a semi-combat role'.¹¹ The revolutionary

experience can be productively pursued through individual biography and of late there has been a welcome increase of the field beyond the better known names of revolution such as Collins or De Valera. Of particular interest in tracing Tipperary's role in the Irish Revolution are works like Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* and Winfield and Park's work on Thomas MacDonagh *The Man, The Poet, The Patriot*. These add a new dimension to the topic although Foster's comments in 1998 that 'there are few worthwhile biographies for the period' remain largely valid. Ireland's revolution however may be the best documented modern revolution in the world.¹² Hart stresses that dozens of daily and weekly newspapers provide a detailed local and national record for every city and county. Thousands of memoirs and reminiscences have been recorded in published or unpublished form, many solicited for an official archive, the Bureau of Military History.

Tipperary's Connection with the Road to Revolution

The Irish Volunteers was founded in November 1913. The reiterated objective of the organisation was to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to the whole of Ireland.¹³ Parks notes that at that time the general feeling felt by Irish nationalists was that if Sir Edward Carson, a Unionist member of the British Government from Ulster, had the right to arm his Ulster Volunteers in the North then the men in Dublin had the right to arm and protect themselves also. British connivance had permitted the Ulster Volunteers to become an armed force and had winked at their securing arms.¹⁴ If one section could organise and arm, so could the other. After an enormous rally held to recruit new members, a provisional committee of 30 was set up. This group included Eoin MacNeill, The O'Rahilly, Pádraic Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Rodger Casement and Tipperary native Thomas MacDonagh.

MacDonagh, history tells, was a signatory of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and was executed for his part as a leader of the 1916 Rising. The MacDonagh clan first came to prominence in Co. Sligo circa 1400 A.D.¹⁵ They continued to live in the Sligo area holding less and less important positions as English power reduced the native Irish to ever inferior status. The *Midland Tribune* Easter supplement of 1966, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Rising, traces MacDonagh's families' movement until they finally settled in Cloughjordan, roughly 15 kilometres from Nenagh, near the Tipperary/Offaly border. MacDonagh was born in Cloughjordan in 1878, (Figure 4.1). He was the eldest of four boys, John (1880), James (1881) and Joseph (1883). He had also two sisters, Mary and Helen. Mary was the last family member to see her brother alive when, as a sister of the Holy Order, she visited him in his prison cell to give him their mothers' rosary beads before he faced the firing squad.¹⁶ He attended Rockwell College near Cashel, Co. Tipperary. The school stressed its Irishness, teaching Gaelic and making a huge occasion of the feast of Saint Patrick. After leaving Rockwell College in 1901, MacDonagh took up a position as teacher of English and French at Saint Kieran's College, Kilkenny.



Figure 4.1. The Birthplace of Thomas MacDonagh, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary

Source: Author

It was in Kilkenny that he joined the Gaelic League. According to Parks, while working in Kilkenny, MacDonagh and another Cloughjordan native, Patrick J. Kennedy organised the Union of Secondary Teachers, which later developed into the present Organisation the Association of Secondary School Teachers of Ireland, (ASTI).¹⁷ Through the Gaelic League MacDonagh had become acquainted and friendly with Pádraic Pearse. In September 1908 when he opened his Irish speaking school, Pearse asked MacDonagh to be a member of staff. In 1912 he married his long term girlfriend, Murial Gifford, whose sister Grace Gifford was married to Joseph Mary Plunket in his prison cell before Plunket was executed for his part in the Rising.

Late in October of 1914, the long awaited first convention of the Irish Volunteers was held. A Central Executive, of 12 members was elected. McDonagh, Pearse and Plunkett were included. It immediately took steps to strengthen the military organisations. Seven of its members were appointed as headquarters staff. Thomas MacDonagh was appointed as Director of Training, a position he took very sombrely. He recommended various texts for his troops to read and devoted Sundays to fieldwork only.¹⁸ The summer of 1915 gave the Volunteers an ideal opportunity for a spectacular display. One of the most loved and adored Fenians, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, died in exile in America and his body was brought home to be buried in the Fenian plot of Glasnevin Cemetery. MacDonagh was one of the members of the committee that took charge of the funeral arrangements. His particular task was to serve as Commandant General in charge of all arrangements for the funeral march and procession.¹⁹ The funeral procession included 10,000 persons and lasted from 2.30 until 6 o'clock. After the ceremony Pearse delivered his now

famous graveside oration in which he declared ‘The fools, the fools the fools, they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree, shall never be at peace’.²⁰ A funeral souvenir pamphlet was later published in which MacDonagh penned his beliefs on the role the Irish Volunteers taking up arms to fight for Irish freedom. Clarke comments on how MacDonagh’s career took second place around this time, in this the winter of his life. He looked distracted and worried on more than one occasion at work. During one specific lecture on the young Irish poets, he took a revolver from his pocket and laid it on the desk. ‘Ireland can only win freedom by force’, he remarked as if to himself.²¹

The Easter Rising, 1916, and the Role Played by Tipperary Native, Thomas MacDonagh

‘The Republic which was declared at the Rising of Easter Week, 1916, was Ireland’s expression of the freedom she aspired to. It was our way of saying that we wished to challenge Britain’s right to dominate us.’²²

The ‘force’ MacDonagh envisaged was displayed on Easter week, 1916. Although military activities had been planned for that week, in a sense this week had been over half a century in the making, ever since the foundation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, (IRB), in 1858.²³ The Rising had been the brainchild of the Irish Volunteers, and in particular, a small Military Council of its leaders, Tom Clarke, Pádraig Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Sean MacDermott, Eamonn Ceannt and Joseph Plunkett. Earlier that year they had also formed an alliance with the radical socialist James Connolly, who had established an Irish Citizen Army for the purpose of setting up a workers’ republic but ultimately made common cause with this group of conservative nationalists in an attempt to overthrow British rule in Ireland. The planned Rising was kept top secret as Thomas MacDonagh’s sister reveals.

‘Tom, Pearse and Plunkett visited me, accompanied by Doctor Houston, a professor at Trinity shortly before the Rising. I had no idea about the Rising and I asked Pearse regularly why he would not join a monastery’.²⁴

From the early hours of Easter Monday, 24 April, a brilliantly sunny day, the Irish Volunteers and members of the Irish Citizen Army had been making their way to Liberty Hall. Confusion over the organisation of the Rising had meant depleted troops turned out. Eoin MacNeill had learned of the planned revolution, and after Rodger Casement’s failure to land German rifles and his capture by the British on Banna Strand, Co. Kerry, he publicly cancelled all planned events for the volunteers. Many of the Irish volunteers in the capital that weekend for the supposed rising returned home disappointed, unaware of what the week held in store. To the ignorance of MacNeill however, the Rising was rescheduled for Easter Monday. Dublin Printer Christy Brady, printer of James Connolly’s paper *The Workers Republic*, was summoned to Liberty Hall late on Easter Sunday.

‘James Connolly met us on the steps of Liberty Hall, brought us upstairs and introduced us to Thomas MacDonagh. Connolly said, “These are my workmen here”. Then Thomas MacDonagh said to us, “Well men, the time is about right to strike a blow for Ireland”. MacDonagh continued by producing a document which he said he wanted us to reproduce in print. When I read the document I fully realised it was a document declaring an Irish Republic and that it meant war.’²⁵

By 11.30 a.m. Tipperary native Thomas MacDonagh’s 2nd Battalion assembled at Stephens Green and integrated with members of the Irish Citizen Army. This sight must have shocked many common Dubliners’ out for an early morning stroll as it shocked an off duty British soldier who describes the scene;

‘I did not know what was going on. I saw the insurrection troops assembling at the top of Grafton Street and going into Stephens Green. I was struck by their magnificent physique. They were huge men. I realised then there was something serious on and I went home and got my uniform’.²⁶

Their orders were to occupy Jacobs Factory but they did not depart until Michael Mallin's Citizen Army contingent had arrived to occupy the park.²⁷ MacDonagh's second in command was Major John McBride who had fought against the British as leader of the Irish Brigade in the Boer War 15 years previously. McBride's celebrity had been further increased by his marriage to Maud Gonne, the most famous beauty of her day. The two split in 1905 after accusations of drunkenness and infidelity on Gonne's behalf. The scandal seriously damaged McBride's reputation. William Butler Yeats attacked him in some of his poetry. McBride went a long way to salvage his reputation by taking part in the Rising. When arrested in the aftermath of the fighting, he stood out from other volunteers because he was wearing civilian clothes of a navy suit and a grey hat. Townshend claims that McBride seems simply to have in Dublin because he heard something was going on.²⁸ He had met MacDonagh in the city centre at the last moment, where he was invited to join the Jacobs garrison. The main body of volunteers then marched the short distance to Bishop Street to occupy the biscuit factory. Foy and Barton describe the building as being an impressive sight, tall and impregnable, with its two immense towers providing a panoramic view of much of the city.²⁹ Townshend point out that Jacobs was strategically important because snipers with binoculars and scientific range finders could command Portobello Bridge, Portobello Barracks, the roof of Ship Street Barracks, Dublin Castle and much of Stephen's Green, all anticipated to be locations of British military activity.³⁰ The garrison smashed open the factory gates with a sledge hammer and while doing so were verbally abused by a large crowd of residents, many of whom were soldiers' wives, their husbands in the trenches of Europe fighting in World War I. The Jacobs garrison consisted of 178 men, most of whom were Irish Volunteers with a sprinkling of Irish Citizen Army men. Peadar Kearney, the composer of 'Amhráin na bhFiann'

was among the volunteers in Jacobs Factory.³¹ There were also a few Fianna Boy Scouts as well as some women cooks from the Cumman na mBan.

Upon gaining access to the building, MacDonagh and McBride established a command post upstairs while the other men fortified the building, smashing windows and barricading them with sacks of flour, loop holing the wall and placing biscuits tins on the pavement to give warning of a night attack. Foy and Barton claim that General Lowe, commander of the British forces during the Rising, had decided that because of Jacob's fortress like impregnability a frontal attack would have involved considerable manpower, while artillery would have inflicted devastation on civilian property. Instead he decided to wear down the garrison psychologically by low intensity pressure until he was ready to deal with the situation in his own time. That pressure involved sleep deprivation and unnerving the insurgents by sniping and having armoured cars speed noisily past the factory at night time³², a shrewd and effective tactic which created the maximum psychological disturbance. Townshend remarks that sleeplessness aggravated hunger and Jacob's was packed with biscuit and cake, a treat soon paled.³³ This only added to their despair. Jacobs's factory saw little action during the five-day battle. This was probably due to the previously mentioned fact of the impregnability of the building. General Lowe was more than aware that the rebellion would be quashed sooner or later and rather than sacrifice his men he waited until all the rebels surrendered to claim victory. The main action witnessed in Jacobs Factory took place on the night of Easter Monday when a tentative approach by about 30 British troops was ambushed down Camden Street by the Jacob's garrison. MacDonagh's men assumed this was a precursor to a full scale British assault but the British had other ideas.

On Easter Thursday MacDonagh seized the opportunity for some action when Eamonn de Valera's garrison in Boland's Mill requested arms and ammunition because of pressure from British soldiers in Merrion Square. The Tipperary man set off with 15 cyclists on a relief mission travelling by the south side of Stephen's Green and Leeson Street before dismounting at Fitzwilliam Street near Merrion Square. There they shot a lone sentry outside a house in the square and fought a brief encounter with soldiers inside, but broke off when they decided they could not fight their way through to Boland's. On the return journey, one of the volunteers was shot. He reached the factory supported by riders on both sides supporting him, but he collapsed soon afterwards and died. From their vantage point, they could clearly survey the city and the damage being inflicted to it. The GPO was blazing fiercely and the flames had spread the length of Sackville Street. The noise of the artillery, machine gun and rifle fire was deafening. By then the volunteers had come to realise the end was nigh but refused to use the word 'surrender' and concentrated instead on preparations for a last stand in which they intended to inflict massive casualties on the British attackers. On Saturday, while Pearse was arranging surrender elsewhere, the volunteers were actually strengthening their defences and firing on British troops in the area.

However, on Sunday 30 April MacDonagh's world fell apart dramatically. Nurse Elizabeth O' Farrell was being conveyed by the British to the various commands with Pearse's surrender order and in the course of the morning she arrived at Jacob's.³⁴ There she was blindfolded and taken to MacDonagh whereupon the blindfold was removed. She gave him the order, informed him of the evacuation of

the GPO, and also of Pearse's surrender in Moore Street. MacDonagh replied that he would not take orders from a prisoner and that as he was the next in seniority to Pearse he would not reply to the surrender until he had conferred with General Lowe and his own officers in the factory.³⁵ The factory was also visited by two priests who had been mediating between the rebels and the British. They had met Lowe who had intimated that, unless he was able to make contact with MacDonagh, he would demolish Jacob's. A defiant McBride opposed capitulation and MacDonagh reiterated that Pearse's status as a prisoner invalidated any surrender order. Instead MacDonagh now donned the mantle of *de facto* Commander-in-Chief and declared he would negotiate only with the General Officer commanding the British forces. Detached from reality, he talked like a man holding all the cards. He claimed that his garrison was well supplied and that the war was about to change in Ireland's favour. The two priests, Augustine and Aloysius, returned the news to Lowe who offered to meet MacDonagh at St. Patrick's Park at lunchtime. MacDonagh accepted the invitation and arrangements were made to negotiate in Lowe's car. The General began the process of connecting MacDonagh to the real world, explaining how Dublin City was engulfed in flames and of the hurricane that faced him in Jacob's if he continued the struggle. When he emerged from the car, he informed the two priests, the mediators, which he had decided to advise surrender to save life and the city he had grown so fond of. He agreed a truce until 3 p.m. that day to enable him to return to the factory and also to deliberate with Seán Ceannt at the South Dublin Union.



Figure 4.2. The GPO in ruins after the Easter Rising

Source: The National Photographic Archives

On his return to Jacob's Factory, the commandant hurried upstairs to headquarters where he held a lengthy officers' meeting and issued his recommendation to surrender. However a now shattered MacDonagh, unwashed and unshaven, was unable to face his men himself. He felt he was betraying them by surrendering and reiterated that it was not his decision to lay down arms. The rank and file were informed of the surrender by an officer, Tom Hunter, who wept as he made his way downstairs. The decision was received with uproar as cries of no surrender from the Volunteers which reverberated around the walls of the factory. Many of them moved upstairs to confront their leader, who, listless and careworn, stood on a table and announced that surrender would take place at noon.³⁶ He disowned personal responsibility for a surrender not of his making; he was only carrying out the orders of Pearse. Before he broke into tears, he concluded sadly, 'we have to give in. Those of you who are in civilian clothes, go home. Those in uniform stay on. You cannot leave if you are in uniform,' he said. Before he left the room he muttered how he would give anything to see his beloved wife, Muriel, one last time. When someone offered to go for her he declined, not wanting his wife to see and remember how her husband looked in defeat.³⁷ At this stage some of the Volunteers slipped away, others delayed their decision until the garrison eventually marched out of the factory and then simply melted into the crowds. When MacDonagh met Lowe again at St. Patrick's Park at 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoon he announced his intention to surrender.

The Execution of Thomas MacDonagh

A total of 3,340 men and 79 women were arrested after the Rising. Of these, 1,424 men were released and 73 women were released.³⁸ Apart from those selected for a court-martial, the rebels who were detained were transported immediately to

internment camps in England and Wales. The selection of the most prominent rebels was conducted in Richmond Barracks where, on arrival, prisoners were packed into billets with a few buckets to serve as latrines. The next day guards took the names, addresses and occupation of the insurgents. They were then marched to a gymnasium hall. Inside they were ordered to sit on the floor in rows of ten, facing a partition half of wood and half of glass. Behind it they could see themselves being scrutinised by detectives from the G Division of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. After a period the 'G Men', as they became known, walked among the prisoners. As they went they ordered to one side prominent rebels such as Pearse, Clarke, Plunkett, MacDonagh and Connolly. There were 186 men and one woman, Markievicz, selected for court martial. An IRA informer inside Dublin Castle described how the G Men set about their task;

'Immediately after the Rising was quashed, the senior political detectives went to Richmond Barracks to identify and classify the prisoners, selecting those who were best known as leaders for immediate trial. It was then that the political record books in the detective's office were brought into use. These records might show for example that Michael O'Hanrahan met Thomas MacDonagh in Grafton Street three months before and had a conversation for some minutes duration. That may not seem like an important item to be recorded but when it was brought forward at the trial of O'Hanrahan it was additional proof, apart from his participation in the Rising, of his general anti-British activities. The record books consequently assumed a more sinister role than one would have thought reading them before Easter Week, 1916.'³⁹

Townshend explains how the courts martial of the rebels consisted of a panel of judges, consisting of three officers who were not required to be legally trained. Any death sentence by them required a unanimous verdict.⁴⁰ The courts martial began on Tuesday, 2 May when Pearse, Clarke and MacDonagh were tried. All the rebels faced the same central charge, which in most cases was handed to them before trial. It alleged that they 'did an act, to wit did take part in an armed rebellion and in waging war against His Majesty the King.'⁴¹

In June 1916, 10, 000 copies of a speech alleging to be that of MacDonagh's court martial speech appeared in American newspapers and were produced in Dublin which led to prosecutions against three printers and a newsagent. Controversy surrounds this speech in which Foy and Barton claim the contents to be bogus⁴² where as Winfield Parks claims that the speech was taken down in shorthand and smuggled out of court to be reproduced later that year.⁴³ MacDonagh's brother John seems to be of the opinion that the speech was valid.⁴⁴ The content of the speech given by Thomas MacDonagh to the court is as follows:

MacDonagh - 'It would not be seemly for me to go to my doom without trying to express, however inadequately, my sense of the high honour I enjoy in being one of those predestined to die in this generation in the cause for Irish freedom. You will, perhaps, understand this sentiment for it is one to which an imperial poet of a bygone age bore immoral testimony, "it is sweet and seemly to die for ones country". You would all be proud to die for Britain, your imperial patron and I am proud and happy to die for Ireland, my glorious fatherland'.

A Member of the Court - 'You speak of Britain as our imperial patron'?

MacDonagh - 'Yes, for some of you are Irishmen and Britain is not your country'.

Member of court - 'And what of your imperial patron? What of Germany? Would you die for her'?

MacDonagh - 'Not if Germany had violated and despoiled my country, and persisted in withholding her birthright of freedom'.

President of the Court - 'Better not interrupt the prisoner'.

MacDonagh - 'There is not much left to say. The proclamation of the Irish Republic has been adduced in evidence against me as one of its signatories. I adhere to every statement in the proclamation. You think it is already a dead and buried letter, but it lives, it lives. From minds alight with Ireland's vivid intellect it sprang; in hearts aflame with Ireland's mighty love it was conceived. Such documents do not die. The British occupation of Ireland has never for more than 100 years been compelled to confront in the field of fight a rising so formidable as that which overwhelming force has for the moment succeeded in quelling. The fierce pulsation of resurgent pride that disclaims servitude may one day cease

throb in the heart of Ireland. But the heart of Ireland will that day be dead. While Ireland lives, the brains and brawn of her manhood will strive to destroy the last vestige of British rule in her territories. In this ceaseless struggle there will be, as there has been and must be an alternate ebb and flow. But let England make no mistake, the generous high-bred youth of Ireland will never fail to answer the call we pass on to them, will never fail to blaze forth in the red rage of war to win their countries freedom; other and tamer methods they will leave to tamer men, but they must do or die. Gentlemen, you have sentenced me to die, and I accept your sentence with joy, since it is for Ireland I am to die. I go to join the goodly company of men who died for Ireland, the least of whom is worthier than I can claim to be, and that noble band are themselves but a small section of the great unnumbered company of martyrs whose captain is Christ who died on Calvary. Take me away and let my blood bedew the sacred soil of Ireland. I die in the certainty that once more the seed will fructify'.⁴⁵

By 10 May, it had been decided that the verdict in 15 cases would result in death by firing squad. Apart from Thomas Kent, who had rebelled from his Co. Cork home and in turn had been tried there, all prisoners were transferred to Kilmainham Gaol, (Figure 4.3). Kilmainham had long since been associated with Irish political prisoners. Its inmates had included Henry Joy McCracken, one of the leaders of the 1798 rebellion and Robert Emmet in 1803. The prison lacked basic amenities. It had ceased to be a convict prison in 1911 and instead had been used as a detention barracks for military prisoners. The most significant part of the gaol was the former stonebreakers' yard where any executions would take place. The yard was so called because in the nineteenth century, prisoners were made break up huge slabs of stone which would be later used in the construction of roads and footpaths around the city.⁴⁶ Foy and Barton explain how the execution procedure had been laid down on 2 May, the same day the first court martial hearings of Clarke, Pearse and MacDonagh had



Figure 4.3. The Victorian wing of Kilmainham Gaol

Source: Author

taken place. This clearly shows that the ringleaders were condemned men before being even tried:

‘The condemned men were to be segregated beforehand and motor cars were to be provided, if desired, to bring any relatives or friends to the condemned mans cell for a final farewell, or a chaplain for religious comfort. All but the priest were to leave before 3. 30 a.m. when the first squad would parade. The first prisoner was to be brought out at 3. 45 a.m. It seems as they reached the long corridor which ran down to the execution yard they were blindfolded, their hands tied behind their backs and a white piece of cloth was pinned just above their hearts. The 12 soldiers were to have their rifles loaded behind their backs and one of the weapons was to have a blank cartridge inserted. Each of the four firing squads on duty would be arranged in two rows of six, with the front row kneeling and the back row standing. There was to be a visual signal from the officer in charge to fire at a distance of 10 paces. Afterward execution, the rebels were to be certified as dead by a medical officer and have a name label pinned to their breasts. The bodies would be removed immediately to Arbour Hill Barracks where they were to be put in a grave along side one another, covered in quicklime and the grave filled. One of the officers with the party was to keep a note of each body that was placed in the grave and a priest was to attend the funeral service.’⁴⁷

The stipulation about the remains came from the top ranking British Officer, General Maxwell. He feared that if the bodies of the executed men were released to their families, their graves would be turned into martyrs’ shrines inspiring future rebellions. Hence the rebels were to be buried in quicklime without coffins so that there would be no chance of the bodies being preserved. After their trial, MacDonagh, Pearse and the old Fenian Tom Clarke were brought to Kilmainham Gaol. There they were kept in separate cells under observation throughout the night. In their final hours on earth, Pearse received communion and wrote to his brother Willie whom he clearly expected to survive. He also wrote to his beloved mother and explained this was the way, if given the choice, he would have liked to die-a soldier’s death fighting for Irish freedom. Clarke was visited by his wife and he spoke of his relief that he was to be executed because his great dread was that he might be returned to rot in prison.

MacDonagh was visited by his sister and as she bid a final farewell to him she flung their mother's rosary around his neck. 'Ah no' the Tipperary man said, 'they will shoot it to bits', but when it was returned to her there was only four beads missing.⁴⁸ Thomas also took the opportunity to write to his wife Muriel and proclaim his love for his young family. He finished the letter 'Goodbye my love, until we meet again in heaven.'⁴⁹ The executions got under way between 3.30 a.m. and 4.00 a.m. on 3 May. The hands of Pearse, Clarke and MacDonagh had been bound behind their backs and they had also been blindfolded according to British stipulation. The firing squad which was provided by the 59th Division readied itself and then shot when ordered. History records that three men met their fate bravely. One soldier commented after the executions however that 'they all died well, but MacDonagh died like a prince'.⁵⁰ Another source recalls that oral tradition has it that as the orders rang out, 'Present Arms, Fire' MacDonagh 'simply smiled at his killers, as if safe in the knowledge that the fight was not over and he would not die in vain'.⁵¹ Other tales of bravery also come from other executions in Kilmainham Gaol. Before his death, Joseph Plunkett married Grace Gifford in the gaol's chapel. A popular Irish ballad entitled 'Grace' commemorates this sad event. Plunkett also told a priest before he faced the firing party: 'Father, I am a very happy man. I am dying for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland'⁵² John McBride was reportedly overheard telling the firing squad to 'Fire away, I've been looking down the barrels of British rifles all my life'. A comrade of McBride's during the Rising, Tom Kettle later amusingly described this as 'a lie, but a magnificent lie. He had been looking down the necks of porter bottles all his life'.⁵³ Overall, 15 of the 90 cases (16%) court marshalled had the death sentence imposed. The remaining 75 were commuted to varying terms of penal servitude, ranging from life in ten cases down to six months with hard labour in four



Figure 4.4. A black cross marking the spot at Kilmainham Gaol where Thomas MacDonagh was executed

Source: Author



Figure 4.5. Bronze plaque remembering the 14 men, including Tipperary native Thomas MacDonagh, executed in the stonebreakers yard of Kilmainham Gaol

Source: Author

cases.⁵⁴ Today, in Kilmainham Gaol, a simple black cross, (Figure 4.4) and a commemorative bronze plaque, (Figure 4.5), positioned in the stonebreakers yard, commemorate those executed for their role in the 1916 Rising.

The Aftermath of the Rising

Throughout Tipperary and elsewhere, public sympathy for the rebels was already increasing. It is quite possible to assume that even without the death sentences and mass imprisonments, public attitudes would have changed. One Tipperary revolutionary who fought through the War of Independence remarked;

‘After the Rising in 1916, and the executions of its leaders, things began to change and the people began to adopt a more advanced outlook and to think of independence’.⁵⁵

The Rising had succeeded in arousing the latent nationalist consciousness in spite of the tactics adopted and because of the British government’s coercive reaction. Some English officials, such as the Viceroy of Ireland, were actually opposed to the executions of ‘comparatively unknown insurgents’.⁵⁶ Another British soldier, Major Sir Francis Vane commented on how the rebels had been executed ‘in the most brutally stupid manner’.⁵⁷ The Rising had served the purpose that its conspirators had wanted, by restoring the soul of the nation and its memory played an important role in the regeneration of advanced nationalism. The cult of the 1916 martyrs and the religious symbolism of Easter underpinned the development of the Sinn Féin movement during 1917.⁵⁸ The choice of individuals connected with the Rising as candidates at crucial by-elections established this link at the same time as completely different political strategies were adopted. The emphasis was on responding to general opinion rather than, as in 1916, being in advance of it. The electoral strategy embraced by both Sinn Féin and the Volunteers reached its apogee in the Sinn Féin

victory at the December 1918 General election. With the public sway towards Sinn Féin, the threat of conscription to the British Army looming, and bitterness over the execution of the 1916 leaders still evident, there could have been only one realistic outcome. The conscription issue aside, in the years before the 1918 general election Sinn Féin had succeeded in making an impact at the local government level. Individual urban district councillors were elected in Loughrea, Dundalk, Donegal and Castlebar.⁵⁹ Tipperary followed the national trend with several Sinn Féin candidates being elected by overwhelming majorities. One such candidate was the father of War of Independence veteran Richard Dalton. Dalton remarked that when he was asked to stand for election he 'didn't even have to canvas for votes, such was the support for Sinn Féin.'⁶⁰ Further Sinn Féin victories saw Joe MacDonagh, Thomas MacDonagh's brother top the county polling vote with 16, 715 votes.⁶¹ Pierce McCan, James Bourke and Patrick Moloney were the other Tipperary Sinn Féin MPs elected unopposed. It soon became clear that, in advance of the next British general election, Sinn Féin could already count on taking at least one quarter of the parliamentary seats. In many constituencies it was clear that Redmondites would be unable to field a candidate. At the election, out of a total of 105 parliamentary seats, Sinn Féin won 73 seats, Unionists 26 and the Parliamentary Party six. Of Sinn Féin's impressive tally, 25 seats were uncontested. The 1918 election can be seen as fundamental in providing the republicans with the ability to claim in Britain, the United States and elsewhere, that they had the moral authority to govern Ireland and that the British Government did not.⁶² At the same time it cannot be concluded that this vote was a mandate for violence, nor was it necessarily a vote for a republican form of government. The huge majority of the new and younger voters, now including women over 30 and all working class men, went with the new consensus. A political revolution could not be

stopped but a militant revolution was also forthcoming. Hopkinson observes that between 1917 and 1921 Irish nationalists hit upon the most appropriate and successful methods of resisting the British administration: a mixture of guerrilla warfare and passive resistance with a high priority given to intelligence and propaganda and the sidelining of progressive social ideas.⁶³ The origins of the guerrilla warfare Hopkinson defines can be traced back to a key date in the achievement in Irish independence, 21 January 1919. On this day, owing to the result of the 1918 general election, the newly established Dáil Éireann met for the first time to politically declare the independence of Ireland. That same day, a small band of Tipperary Volunteers physically declared it by carrying out the first attack of what became known as the Irish War of Independence. The coincidence of timing might give an impression that parliamentary and militant Republican forces were seamlessly one at this point; in fact the Soloheadbeg Ambush was the product of local initiative rather than political or central command.⁶⁴ Indeed, the operation was conceived precisely because of a fear by local Republican military men that they were ‘in great danger of becoming merely a political adjunct to the Sinn Féin organisation.’⁶⁵ In Seán Tracey’s words; ‘It was high time we did a bit of the pushing’.⁶⁶

Guerrilla Warfare Days in Tipperary

‘It is not to those who can inflict most, but to those who can endure most that victory is certain.’⁶⁷

It bears nothing that two years and eight months had passed since the Easter Rising and the Soloheadbeg Ambush. No policemen, soldiers, or Irish Volunteers had been killed during that time. The 1918 Sinn Féin victory had kept spirits high and the public seemed happy enough with the state of affairs within the country. But while

there were few violent incidents, there was still considerable revolutionary activity. Local Tipperary newspapers correspond with this line of thinking. A series of speeches given by Mr. Joseph MacDonagh, brother of 1916 leader Thomas, in 1917 led to his arrest under the Defence of Realm Act, and minor disturbances followed in the town.⁶⁸ In August of that year, Edward O'Dwyer, with an address of Dundrum, Tipperary was arrested and tried in court on charges of wearing a uniform of military character and of practising men in movements of military movements.⁶⁹ IRA volunteers were poorly armed, however local RIC stations had weapon stores and ammunition in abundance and the plan was to attack these stations and seize these weapons to enable republicans begin their resistance to British Rule in Ireland. In 1918, a premises on the Mall, Thurles, was forcibly entered. Ammunition stores were emptied and explosives taken. Police conducted door to door enquiries and searched several houses to no avail. Commandant Paddy Kinane later explained how they secured the keys of the property from a volunteer working in the shop and carried their 'booty' to the nearby sports ground, now Semple Stadium, where a horse and cart were waiting to transport the goods to a safe house in the district.⁷⁰ That same year Dan Breen, quartermaster of the South Tipperary I.R.A. Brigade, along with Paddy Keogh started a 'munition factory'. This factory turned out gunpowder, hand grenades and cartridges which were to be used in the planned assault on British rule in Ireland. Breen and Tracey also made the 220 mile round trip to Dublin to secure six revolvers, 500 rounds of ammunition and half a dozen hand grenades.⁷¹ Some Tipperary men however felt it ridiculous just drilling with these weapons after acquiring them, it was their desire to put them to use. When orders for the same did not come they felt it necessary to take matters into their own hands and fire the first shots of what is now known as the Irish War of Independence.

Of all counties, Tipperary, and particularly south Tipperary, has been associated with the War of Independence in Ireland.⁷² The fact that the South Tipperary Brigade was the first to go to war meant that events there have been better recorded and more graphically described than those in most other places. In 1919, a group of Tipperary men barely out of their teens, poorly armed, with no money and little training, renewed the fight which had begun in 1916, to sever all ties with British rule in Ireland. The principles of this group, whose actions would see the beginning of a three year Guerrilla Warfare, were Dan Breen, Seán Tracey, (Figure 4.6), Seán Hogan and Seamus Robinson. Driven by bitterness over the execution of their fallen comrades of 1916 as well as the general public's early perception of the Rising, they began to reorganise the volunteers in and around the Tipperary Town area. All over Ireland the same trend was happening. IRA volunteers were far from the scum of society that British propaganda would later portray. IRA membership was strong in town and countryside: weakest amongst the well off and poor.⁷³ The archetypal IRA man was aged between 18 and 25 years of age, came from the lower middle class and was well educated, often by the Christian Brothers.⁷⁴ Men joined the IRA for recreational and social reasons as well as political ones. It provided a colourful alternative to the monotony of small town life. They served as body guards for speakers such as Éamon de Valera. Dressed in their dark green uniforms, they defied British law by openly carrying hurleys instead of rifles. The RIC in Tipperary informed their superiors about the open defiance of British law and orders were given to them to put the culprits under arrest. Dan Breen managed to avoid the RIC, Seán Tracey however was not so lucky. He was given six months imprisonment. Irish political prisoners refused to acknowledge British courts and openly mocked them by reading newspapers while the court was sitting.⁷⁵ While Tracey was interred, during

which time he and a number of other volunteers went on hunger strike (Tom Ashe died as a result of efforts to force feed him), Breen and comrades were busy organising and gathering arms and ammunition to use in the forthcoming planned war against the British. Contact had been made with a soldier in the Tipperary barracks where weapons could be bought for ready cash.



Figure 4.6. Seán Treacy

Source: www.premierview.com

. When Tracey returned home, both he and Breen set about expanding the Solohead Company which had previously amounted to 13 volunteers. Efforts were successful and the newly formed Donohill Company consisted of approximately 27 members. The new members came within a radius of seven miles from Donohill. Breen remarked of the difficulties of communicating with newly joined members of the Donohill Company: 'Today seven miles is considered the same as 100 meters but in those days a journey of such length on bad roads in the stillness of night so as to avoid the RIC was no easy matter.'⁷⁶

Throughout the latter half of 1917, volunteer divisions were extended into East Limerick and in 1918 the South Tipperary Division of The Irish Republican Army was formed. In the absence of Tracey, Dan Breen was elected Commandant. Brigade officers were urgently needed as the threat of conscription in Ireland was looming. On the 16th April, 1918, the Conscription Act was passed. All Irish bodies resisted it. On Tracey's release from jail, Michael Collins asked him to take the post of full-time Volunteer Organiser for county Tipperary. Seamus Robinson, a northerner who took part in the Rising was appointed Brigadier. The revolutionary activity documented above was provoked in many ways by the threat of conscription. With the end of the Great War in 1918, and more importantly the threat of conscription extinct, large numbers of recruited Irish volunteers ready to fight the threat of conscription vanished. They were basically trying to save themselves from the war fields of France. The small number that remained thought that it was worthwhile to fight for Irish Independence. The others as Breen put it 'believed, as did the old political leaders, that Ireland's freedom was not worth the shedding of one drop of blood'.⁷⁷ Plans for a revolt once again lay in tatters. The Soloheadbeg ambush, coming when it did, was a good example, as one writer has noted, paraphrasing Che Guevara – that 'it

is not necessary to wait until all conditions required by revolution are present; they can be created'.⁷⁸

The Soloheadbeg Ambush in County Tipperary

'Where Tipperary Leads, Ireland Follows'.⁷⁹

Before Christmas 1918, the South Tipperary Brigade leaders had decided to attack an RIC patrol carrying gelatine from Tipperary town to a quarry at Soloheadbeg. Dan Breen's brother took a job in the quarry to supply them with information.⁸⁰ Breen reminisces how the moral aspect of such action was vigorously criticised after the event. Former friends branded them murderers, but he explains how the pros and cons of such an endeavour were weighed up until they arrived at the conclusion that it was their 'their duty to fight for the Irish Republic that had been established on Easter Monday, 1916.'⁸¹ This time, however, learning from the mistakes of 1916, they decided to take advice of Eamonn Ceannt, an executed 1916 leader. In a final statement dated 7 May, 1916, Ceannt had wrote, 'I leave for the guidance of other Irish Revolutionaries who may thread the path which I have trod this advice, never to treat with the enemy, never to be backed into a corner by an enemy, and never to surrender to his mercy, but fight to a finish'.⁸² They would fight them on their own terms in deadly guerrilla warfare in open countryside, where they could strike and disappear back into the surrounding landscape.

Soloheadbeg is a small townland about two and a half miles from Tipperary Town and less than a mile from Limerick Junction in West Tipperary. The quarry, no longer in use, stood on an height over a little by road. Farmhouses and cottages are

fairly numerous in the neighbourhood but there is no village nearer than Donohill, a mile and a half distant.’⁸³ Extreme detail was given to the planning of this ambush. The leaders were very conscious of the collapse of the 1916 insurrection and wanted to learn from its failings. Around this time the volunteers carried out several detailed surveys of the region and soon choose the spot for their first ambush (Figure 4.7). Because a number of the volunteers involved in the ambush were born in the area, they knew the topography extremely well, every bend and fork in the road, and more importantly, every safe house and hiding place. Indeed, Seán Tracey’s home place was less than a mile from the ambush site.⁸⁴ Hopkinson describes how 11 men were chosen to hang around the vicinity for days before the ambush but Breen clarifies this point in his book when he states that the rebels had received misleading intelligence on the movement of the peelers. They were informed that the convoy would pass on 16 January. It did not pass their hiding place until five days later. During these days they lay in ambush waiting. These men had left their homes without any indication of their whereabouts so their families must have been worried. After three days, eight men were selected to stay, along with one scout on lookout, principally because they had not the funds or the provisions to cater for a larger number. The men who would make history that day were as follows:

- 1) Seán Tracey
- 2) Séamus Robinson
- 3) Dan Breen
- 4) Seán Hogan
- 5) Tim Crowe
- 6) Patrick O’Dwyer
- 7) Michael Ryan
- 8) Patrick McCormack
- 9) Jack O’Meara⁸⁵

For five whole days the group lay in waiting. Their main objective was not to be observed by locals who might think it strange for a bunch of men to be hanging around the quarry. Most locals were employed in the quarry and any threat to its existence would have forced them to give up a job which was necessary to provide for their families. The rebel band gathered at the ambush site every morning at 5am, in the depths of Irish winter, and remained in hiding until 2pm, when they felt certain that the consignment would not pass their way as they knew the RIC men would want to be back in town before the darkness of night had descended. For several long, cold and restless hours the rebel band waited, ready to write another chapter in the bloody fight for Irish independence. The squadron had spent each night at Breen's house. His mother rose at 4am every morning to prepare breakfast for them and remarked to the group on the morning of 21 January; 'If you don't do something today, you can get your own breakfast tomorrow'.⁸⁶ After breakfast, the rebel band returned to the carefully chosen scene where the ambush was planned for and slipped between the shadows to wait. Shortly after ten o'clock that morning, two employees of South Tipperary County Council, Patrick Flynn and Edward Godfrey, called at Tipperary military barracks with a horse and cart. They collected 160 lbs of gelignite and 30 electric detonators.⁸⁷ The gelignite also had a two man RIC escort, Constables MacDonnell and O'Connell. Both carried loaded carbines. From Tipperary town they began the short journey to Soloheadbeg quarry. They had no reason to believe that they would never reach their destination, nor that they would both become the first casualties of the Irish War of Independence. In arguably the best personal account given on the ambush, Breen recall the events as follows:

Finally, the scout, who for days had his eyes firmly fixed on the twisted Tipperary road, came scampering to the ambush site, dashing towards us, he gave the word of warning, "They're coming, they're coming". If any of our number felt nervous or excited, he showed little or outward sign of it.

In a flash every man was alerted. Our hour of trial was at hand; we were to face the enemy; in the balance was our life or death. Our scout returned to report the actual distance and the number of the escort. Nearer and nearer they came. In the clear air we heard the sound of the horse's hooves and the rumbling of a heavy cart. Our nerves were highly strung. The hour had come. I cast a hurried glance down the road. The driver and the County Council employee who was to take delivery of the explosives walked beside the horse. Two uniformed policemen armed with rifles were following a short distance behind the cart. They were almost under the shadow of our revolvers. "Hands up". The cry came from our men who spoke as if with one voice. In answer to our challenge they raised their rifles, and with military precision held them at the ready. They were Irishmen too, and would die rather than surrender. We renewed the demand for surrender. We would have preferred to avoid bloodshed; but they were inflexible. Further appeal was useless. It was a matter of our lives or theirs. We took aim. The two policemen fell, mortally wounded. James Godfrey, the driver of the cart, and Patrick Flynn, the County Council employee, looked on in stupefaction. If we had disarmed the police without firing a shot the matter would not have been so serious. The shots had alarmed the countryside. In a moment men and women were appearing at every doorway. Within an hour, hundreds of police and military would be scouring the countryside for us. From that moment we were outlaws with a price on our heads.

The rifles and police equipment were seized. Tracey, Hogan and I mounted the cart and drove away. The rest of the party had been ordered to escape in different directions. The cart contained more than a hundred weight of gelignite. Hogan held the reins while Tracey and I sat behind. We were heading for Donaskeigh. Finally we reached the spot where we had decided to hide the booty. We quickly deposited the gelatine with the exception of two sticks I kept for a decoy. The explosives were hidden in dugout trenches after the horse was abandoned at Ryan's Cross.'

A group of children came upon the gelatine Breen had deliberately planted so as to lead Crown forces away from both their trail and the location of the hidden explosives. The discovery of the horse and trap set the British in motion. The missing horse and cart, minus the gelatine were found on Tuesday night by District Inspector Poer O'Shea, Clonmel, and Sergeant Horgan, Tipperary, on a road at Alleen Creamery, near Dundrum.⁸⁸ On Friday, January 24, Tom Carew, later to become Intelligence Officer of the Third Tipperary Brigade, and his brother collected the gelignite with a horse and cart. The explosives were taken and buried on Tom's farm from January to November, where it was then divided out among the local companies of the IRA to be used in the war against the British. The rebels were now wanted

outlaws and had to go on the run. The ambush, along with little rest from the previous four days ensured they were worn-out, but there was little time for rest. Their priority was to distance themselves from the ambush site. To make matters worse the weather had turned intensely cold and it started to snow. The danger was that footprints left behind them in the snow would possibly alert the British to their whereabouts. Originally travelling north, they faced south-east, towards the Galtee Mountains.



Figure 4.7. The Soloheadbeg Ambush Site, Donohill, West Tipperary

Source: Author

As Breen himself said about the region; ‘The Galtee Mountains and the Glen of Aherlow have often been the refuge of the Tipperary felon.’⁸⁹ The three had travelled four miles before they stopped off at Mrs. Fitzgerald’s of Rathclogeen, near Thomastown. A brief stop for a meal was all they could spare for more distance had to be put between them and Soloheadbeg. Breen recalls the journey;

‘We resumed our journey towards the mountains. At Keville’s Cross we crossed the Cahir and Tipperary road. The wind was piercingly cold. The only other living things we saw out in the open were two mountain goats spancelled together near the crossroads. Several times we lost our way. We dared not call to a strange wayside farm-house, for at that time people had not learned the virtue of silence. At one point Seán Tracey fell into a ravine about 20 feet deep. Seán Hogan and I feared he had been killed. When we got him out, we found that he was little worse for the fall; he assured us that he would fire another shot before handing in his gun. All three of us continued our journey towards the summit. When we had traversed the Glen and climbed Galteemore’s rugged slopes from the Tipperary side, we lost our bearings. It had taken us three hours to make the ascent, but after all our exertions we wandered back to the two goats, back to our starting point. We abandoned all hope of crossing the mountain. In the height of summer you will find it chilly enough on Galteemore, you can imagine how we felt that evening in midwinter. When we returned to Keville’s Cross, we altered our original plan. We crossed to the railway line and headed for Cahir – a fortunate decision indeed. We had not gone many miles along the line when we saw the lights of the military lorries out looking for us. Had we been on the road, we could not have avoided them. The road to Cahir was long and in the conditions it made matters completely worse. Several times, suffering from exhaustion, we would stop and doze for five minutes against the ditch by the railway side. Finally, we reached Cahir, a journey of fifteen miles, but of which had taken them three times that because of their exploits in the Galtee Mountains.’⁹⁰

Mrs. Tobin of Tincurry House was the safe house for that night. However excitement, cold and exhaustion made sleep impossible, they did however get the chance to rest their weary limbs. Breen described how the three arose next morning to anticipated headlines, much of the given information however was false. They learned how two young men had been arrested in connection with the murders. Two schoolboys, one of whom was Seán Hogan’s brother, were also arrested by the British, as they were reported to have seen the rebels flee the scene. Both boys were obtained for months and interrogated. Both victims of the ambush seemed to have been popular in the locality and the action was widely criticised from the pulpits and in the press. On the other hand, the rebels of 1798, the Fenians and the men and women of 1916 were all condemned in their day too, before being glorified after death. ‘Two Policemen Shot Dead, Tipperary Tragedy’ read the headlines of the *Nenagh Guardian* on 25 January, 1919. The article continued to document eyewitness

accounts given by Patrick Flynn, a County Council worker accompanying the explosives. Mr. Flynn is reported to have taken ill during giving evidence and had to receive medical treatment.⁹¹ At the subsequent inquest, the coroner said of Constable McDonnell, 'a more quiet inoffensive man he had never met' and of Constable O'Connell that he was 'quiet and decent'.⁹² Furthermore, a reward of £1,000 was offered to anyone who might offer information on the whereabouts of the group;

'We also learned that a reward of £1,000 was offered for any information that would lead to our capture. A few months later this offer was increased to £10,000. Nobody ever tried to earn it with the exception of a few members of the RIC. They failed, many of them never made a second attempt'.⁹³

Hopkinson seems to be in union with English on the timing of, and the importance of the Soloheadbeg ambush. He claims that the timing of the ambush, happening on the day the first Dáil met, ensured it lived in the memory longer.⁹⁴ There had, he argues, been numerous attempts to disarm RIC men during 1918 but this was the first to cause fatalities and it took place on the same day as the first sitting of the Dáil which he believed gave it far more significance. Nevertheless, this small rebel band had struck a stinging blow and unsettled the British. In time this stinging would start to throb, and eventually pain. Now wanted men, (Figure 4.8), the nine rebels, were faced with life on the run constantly looking over their shoulder in anticipation of their foe. There had also been a sequel to the Solohead shootings that also had impacted greatly on the life of the general public. South Tipperary was declared a military area. Fairs, markets and meetings were prohibited. Reinforcements were rushed to the area and garrisons of soldiers were set up in villages that never before sheltered a British soldier. Night and day they patrolled the roads and fields. They raided any house they deemed worthy of harbouring a fugitive. From 1919 onwards, the British response to

POLICE NOTICE

£1000 REWARD.

WANTED FOR MURDER IN IRELAND



DANIEL BREEN
(calls himself Commandant of the Third Tipperary Brigade)

Age 27, 5 feet 7 inches in height, bronzed complexion, dark hair (long in front), grey eyes, short hooked nose, stout build, weight about 12 stone, clean shaven; sulky bulldog appearance; looks rather like a blacksmith coming from work; wears cap pulled well down over face.

The above reward will be paid by the Irish Authorities to any person out in the Police Service who may give information resulting in his arrest.
Information to be given at any Police Station.

Figure 4.8. Wanted poster with reward for Dan Breen

Source: An Phoblacht

republican subversion frequently involved punishing the wider population for IRA activities: this had the unintended, indeed counterproductive-effect of strengthening the very IRA that it was intended to undermine. Republican action provoked state reaction; violence was followed with revenge then counter-retaliation and then war.⁹⁵ British reprisals undermined British legitimacy in Irish nationalist eyes. 'Their campaign of terror was defeating itself', as Ernie O'Malley wrote of 1919-1921.⁹⁶ Leading County Clare IRA man Michael Brennan wrote of the same era that 'the British reprisals, instead of turning the people against us as the cause of their miseries, had thrown them strongly behind us'.⁹⁷ Crown forces, frustrated at not being able to convict those responsible for attacking, injuring and killing their comrades, resorted to reprisals targeted against violent opponents, but affecting much wider numbers than that. 'A war of conquest, such as England's war against Ireland, develops, inevitably, into a campaign of terrorism against the people.'⁹⁸

Life on the Run in Tipperary

The rebels plan was to get to Mitchelstown, which is situated at the extreme end of the Galtee Mountains in County Cork. As already witnessed in Breen's account of escaping the ambush site, this mountainous area was extremely difficult to navigate in the depths of winter, and even more so on foot. Nights were spent under the roof of trusted friends and republican sympathisers on route. Upon arrival in Mitchelstown, the group took shelter in Christy Ryan's house and Breen amusingly recalled seeing eight armed policemen pass by their door guarding a packet of blasting powder. Evidently the Soloheadbeg ambush had taught them a very valuable lesson but these are the plain unvarnished facts concerning the first armed encounter in which RIC

men were killed since the 1916 Rising. Not all republicans were behind the happenings at Soloheadbeg though and many a door was slammed in the face of outlaws seeking shelter. 'We had to tramp from parish to parish without a penny in our pockets. Our clothes and boots were almost worn out and we had no replacements. Many in whom we thought we could trust would not let us sleep even in their cattle byres'.⁹⁹ This was logical because as a consequence of the Soloheadbeg ambush the RIC became far more ruthless. Many republicans were probably afraid of the penalties associated with harbouring wanted IRA Men. As Dalton notes:

'After the Soloheadbeg Ambush in January 1919, the RIC became more aggressive and night after night they raided the houses of whom they suspected of being members of the Volunteers'.¹⁰⁰

From Mitchelstown they travelled to Doon in County Limerick, still only seven miles from Soloheadbeg. In this small rural village they were once again reunited with their comrade in arms at the ambush site, Seamus Robinson. During their short stay in Doon a proclamation was drafted ordering under the penalty of death 'all British forces to leave South Tipperary'.¹⁰¹ The Dáil and General Headquarters of the Volunteers in Dublin refused to let this proclamation be published. Instead they felt it fitting that all those involved in the ambush should be shipped away to America but Breen sums up the attitude of the men involved wonderfully when he states that 'to leave Ireland would be tantamount to an admission that we were either criminals or cowards. Ireland's fight would have to be made by Irishmen on the hills and on the highways in Ireland, not with printers ink in America'. Breen's thinking demonstrates he had anticipated the guerrilla warfare that was to follow. While the squabbling went on between headquarters and the fugitives, the latter spent the weeks wandering helplessly around Tipperary's four divisions. On

several occasions they narrowly escaped encounters with the RIC which would have meant their doom. On one occasion, having acquired a motor car to get Sean Hogan medical attention after falling ill, Hogan, Breen and two local volunteers journeyed through Limerick city towards West Limerick for shelter when they met a convoy of lorries and soldiers dashing in the direction of Tipperary. It was only after the incident Breen found out that they had received information that the group were lying low around Upperchurch. The vehicle was halted and a young soldier proceeded to tell the four men that two lorries had broken down blocking most of the road and they wouldn't be able to pass. The gunmen knew there was a price on their head and that many British soldiers had studied their photos carefully hoping to spot them and earn a handsome reward for turning them in. Not wanting to have to get out and walk, exposing themselves to so many British soldiers, Breen, unfazed, explained how they had urgent business in the city and that he was crippled with rheumatism and that even a short walk meant agony. The soldier called four of his colleagues to lay down their arms and push the car for about 200 yards until they had passed the broken-down lorries. Here was a section of the British army going out of its way to save the Soloheadbeg ambushers the trouble of walking, while thousands of the same army were searching the countryside for them! After a few weeks rest in Limerick at a priests house, the fugitives were anxious to return once again to familiar faces and surroundings in Tipperary, even though it meant the risk of being captured. Also three uneventful months had passed since the ambush at Soloheadbeg and its assailants had expected that it would have been followed by active operations throughout the country: instead it was becoming a mere memory. The IRA was still an army only in name. All over the country, men were being arrested for drilling or carrying arms but

little or no initiative was being shown. It was around this time that Breen, Tracey, Robinson and Hogan tried once again to kick starting the nation into war.

The Knocklong Train Rescue

Early in May of 1919, Tipperary's main activists in the war against Britain were now back in West Tipperary, where four months previously they had gunned down two RIC constables at Soloheadbeg. Most of the locals had given up hopes of ever seeing their friends alive again, mainly because there was now a price on their heads and because so many of the Crown's forces were on their trail. Moving around the district they met with some of the officers of their own brigade and questioned their plans for the future. Nights were spent sleeping in barns or cattle-sheds and days were spent rallying the troops and trying to inspire them into fighting. On the night of 10 May they received word of a dance to be held at Éamon O Duibhir's house in Ballagh. O Duibhir was one of the pioneers of the national movement in the county. Before Easter Week 1916 he was the highest ranking IRB man in the county and unknowns to the leaders of the Irish Volunteers, he was involved in planning the Rising.¹⁰² Without a second thought they made for the dance which took place right in the middle of the martial law area and at a time when several British raiding parties were breaking open the doors of cottages and farm houses in their search for the Tipperary rebels. By this stage they had grown accustomed to taking risks. Everyone at the dance knew them and at any time they could have slipped out of the house and made their way to the nearest police barracks to earn themselves £1,000, but that never happened and all involved danced all through the night. Breen was the first to leave, Tracey and Robinson soon followed but Seán Hogan stayed for a few more dances. That night was the first night in a long time a bed had been made available for

them to sleep in. Life on the run and sleeping rough was obviously not luxurious and the comfort of a bed as opposed to sleeping rough in cattle sheds or hay barns meant that it was not very long before all three men were sound asleep.

Roughly three hours later, the three were awoken by an ecstatic Paddy Kinane. Kinane was a prominent republican figure from Upperchurch in West Tipperary. The news he brought soon shook the cobwebs of sleep off Breen, Tracey and Robinson. Seán Hogan had been caught by the RIC leaving a house in the vicinity after the dance. The three immediately made the decision to either rescue Hogan, or to die trying. The 'Big Four' as they became known as in Tipperary has lost their youngest associate and Hogan's three remaining comrades were going to risk their own lives in an attempted rescue bid. Because martial law was in full swing in Tipperary at the time, few people ventured on Tipperary roads at night for fear of bumping into British troops who were patrolling the roads at all hours. Hence, they were immediately faced with their first problem, trying to identify where Hogan had been taken. Cyclists were sent out in all directions to try and pick up his scent. Eventually he was traced to Thurles Barracks. After a brief brainstorming session, it was decided a frontal attack on the barracks was useless because the barracks was now a stronghold holding one of Ireland's most wanted men, Seán Hogan. There was one glimmer of hope, however. They knew that Hogan would only be kept in Thurles for a matter of days to be precise before transfer to one of Ireland's big gaols - Mountjoy, Cork, Maryboro, Dundalk or Belfast.¹⁰³ Intelligence was soon received on Hogan's imminent transfer from Thurles to Cork by train. It was first decided to journey to Emly to ambush the train. This decision was made for simple reasons. Firstly, Emly was a small station so there were no large barracks nearby, secondly, it was close to the borders of Cork and

Limerick so various escape routes were possible and lastly because the district and many of its inhabitants were known to the rebels so shelter at night time would be probable. The task of holding up a train however was a daunting and dangerous one. It would take more than Breen, Tracey and Robinson to achieve their goal. Reinforcements were urgently needed. A despatch rider was sent to the Tipperary Town commandant with the plans of the rescue bid and details of the manpower needed. Telegrams or telephones were not an option in case they would be leaked to the British. Tracey, Breen and Robinson then cycled to the village of Emly, a journey roughly 30 miles but because of fear of capture they were confined to the back roads which added an extra 20 miles to their journey. They finally reached the village at 3.30 a.m. and proceeded to a safe house in the vicinity, the Maloney's, for a couple of hours rest. They were aware that the first train on which Hogan might be on was due in Emly at noon, so they eagerly awaited the back up from Tipperary Town. At 11.30 a.m. there was still no sign of reinforcements arriving, just half an hour before the first train was due in the station. At that point, however, they decided that Hogan would not be taken away without a fight, even though they were aware the escort would contain at least eight policemen armed with rifles, bayonets and revolvers. At 12 o'clock they made a dash up the platform just as the train was arriving. With fingers ready on their revolver triggers Breen notes that they scanned each carriage but found no prisoner. 'We were sadly disappointed. In a sense, too, we felt a little relieved, for there would still be time to look for help before the next train was due.'¹⁰⁴

The three returned to their resting-place and felt sure that the message to the Tipperary commandant must have been misunderstood or miscarried. It was a bitter pill to swallow. If Hogan had been held captive on that train the three would have

been surely overpowered. There was however a positive to take from the ordeal, there was still enough time to acquire fresh help because the next train was not due to leave Thurles until 7 p.m. Word was immediately sent to the old Galtee Battalion, the men from the mountain districts. Within an hour a reply had come back, five of their men would join Breen, Tracey and Robinson at 5 o'clock. At a quarter to five, Ned O'Brien, James Scanlon, J. J. O'Brien, Seán Lynch and Edward Foley joined forces with the three, a quarter of an hour early.¹⁰⁵ Breen notes that Foley was to pay dearly for his part in the Knocklong train rescue:

‘Almost two years later to the day, Foley was condemned to death by hanging for his part in the Knocklong rescue. Paddy Maher also went to the scaffold with him for the same ‘crime’ even though he had not been next or near Knocklong that day. They both gladly gave their lives for Ireland, may they rest in peace.’¹⁰⁶

Now the group was eight strong, five armed and three unarmed. After a brief consultation a change of plan was decided on. Tracey, Breen, Robinson and Ned O'Brien decided to cycle to Knocklong, the next station on the line about miles south of Emly. Along with Emly, this station was hardly ever patrolled by the British. The other four men were to board the train at Emly, without arousing suspicion, and find out what carriage Hogan was being held in. At Knocklong the four outlaws entered the train and immediately received the signal by a slight motion of hands from their comrades as to the whereabouts of Hogan. Dan Breen gives his personal account of next few moments:

‘It was a long corridor-carriage divided into about a dozen separate compartments. An outer passage-way extended along the entire train. The Galbally men were in this passage. In one of the compartments we saw Seán Hogan, handcuffed, and facing the engine. At his right hand sat Sergeant Wallace; at the left Constable Enright. Seated opposite were two other constables, all fully armed. Seán Tracey, to whom command of the operation had been assigned, said ‘come on boys’. He held his revolver at the ready and sprang to the running-board. Ned O'Brien followed close on his heels. They rushed along the corridor, burst into the prisoner's compartment, presented revolvers and gave the command ‘hands up’! Only a moment before, as we heard later, Sergeant Wallace had slapped Seán

Hogan's face asking, sarcastically, 'Where are Breen and Tracey now?' Constable Enright had his revolver levelled at the prisoner's ear. Orders had been given to shoot Hogan dead if any attempt were made to rescue him. It was a matter of Hogan's life or the constable's. The policeman was in the act of pulling the trigger when he was shot through the heart. Immediately pandemonium raged. Constable Ring hurled himself through the open window and took to his heels, roaring like a maniac. Tracey sprang at Sergeant Wallace while Constable Reilly, clutching his rifle, grappled with Ned O'Brien. All four were locked in a deadly struggle while some of the Galbally contingent attempted to lend a hand. But space was so cramped that it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Jim Scanlon succeeded in wresting the rifle from Reilly and crashed the butt-end of it on his head. Reilly slumped to the floor.

The epic clash between Tracey and Wallace continued. Tracey's gun had slipped from his hand in the early stages of the scuffle. Wallace was aware of this and all his efforts were concentrated on freeing his right hand in which he held his revolver. But Tracey clung on from grim death by sheer will-power, for he was doing battle with a man of great physique. Wallace's right hand was gripped as in a vice and at last his strength began to ebb. His breath was coming in short gasps. Tracey in a do-or-die effort wrenched the gun from Wallace's hand and fired at him from point blank.

Meanwhile, another crisis had arisen. Reilly had recovered from the blow on the head and in the confusion that prevailed had managed to slip unobserved from the train with Ring's rifle concealed under his greatcoat. From the platform he fired random shots through the window of the carriage in which Wallace and Tracey were struggling. O'Brien and Scanlon were hit but their wounds seemed superficial. I rushed from my position at the rear of the train and I thought I was out of range, as I was armed only with a revolver, I tried to draw the rifleman's fire. I succeeded only too well. Reilly took aim. The first bullet pierced my lung; the second found its mark in my right arm. My revolver fell to the ground. Had Reilly kept his head he could have wiped out every one of us. Fortunately, I was able to pick up the revolver with my left hand. When he saw me level my gun he turned and fled from the platform. Victory was ours.¹⁰⁷

Having taken part in the first major gun battle of the war of Independence, the 'Big Four', as they became affectionately known, along with the men from Galbally, wounded and bloodstained, turned, and once again faced life on the run as wanted Tipperary felons for murder in Ireland.

With the participants of the Soloheadbeg ambush and the Knocklong train rescue no longer safe in Tipperary, they were forced to move from house to house, from parish to parish and from county to county until they eventually received an

invitation from Michael Collins to hide out in Dublin City for a while. Breen recalled life in the city and his disguise as a priest and how he would openly stroll around the city. He also remarked how he was sure many of the RIC men in Dublin recognised him but were aware that if they arrested a priest in the wrong the public outcry would be deafening. On one occasion he was even so bold as to stop at a police barracks to get assistance in mending a puncture to his bicycle!¹⁰⁸ While the 'Big Four' lay somewhat low in Dublin, volunteers in Tipperary became very active and ambushes and attacks on RIC stations became very fashionable. The incidents of 1919 had seemed so kick start the other brigades into action. Brigades were divided into Battalions and Gaynor recalls that in 1919 there were three brigades formed in Tipperary.¹⁰⁹ The Number One Tipperary Brigade covered north Tipperary, the Number Two Brigade took in all of mid Tipperary and the No. 3 Brigade covered all of south Tipperary. Next they formed companies into battalions of which there were seven in each brigade. In the Number One Tipperary Brigade for example, the 1st Battalion was Nenagh; 2nd Battalion-Toomevara; 3rd Battalion-Ballywilliam; 4th Battalion-Borrisokane; 5th Battalion Templederry; 6th Battalion-Newport; 7th Battalion-Roscrea. There were on average five companies in each battalion, which consisted of smaller parishes or town lands around the battalion headquarters. There were about 40 to 50 men to each company.¹¹⁰

The Arrival of the Black and Tans in Ireland

After 1910, the quality and quantity of RIC recruits began to decrease, a consequence of government neglect and better opportunities elsewhere.¹¹¹ Before this period, being a member of the RIC was considered to be a respectful and honest job. Hart states that 'in Kerry you could hardly go into a house without a son in the police,

or if they hadn't they had a brother.'¹¹² He also notes that this decrease was accompanied by a rise in hostility towards the RIC and its officers. The GAA refused to admit policemen to their organisation,¹¹³ and these sentiments were echoed by other groups. It was generally felt that the RIC was anti-nationalist. After the summer of 1920, the constabulary to which many Irish Catholics had devoted their lives to began to change rapidly for the worse. Constables were given rifles, grenades and machine guns and were put on a war footing to face the aggressive young guerrillas of the Irish Republican Army. As a consequence, Irish recruits dwindled almost to nothing. On the contrary resignations rose swiftly. New British recruits began to pour into the country, aggressive, poorly trained and ignorant to the Irish countryside. They were veterans of the Great War, 1914-1918, and were psychologically maimed to the point where some of them no longer recognised the Irish as human beings. These new recruits, dubbed 'Black and Tans' because of the colour of their uniforms, showed little or no respect to senior constables. One old Irish policeman said of the new men; 'They weren't as disciplined as the R.I.C., not at all. They were on their own, hurt one and you hurt them all.'¹¹⁴

The Burning of Borrisokane R.I.C. Barracks

Up until late 1919, attacks on the British in Tipperary and elsewhere were mainly confined to ambushes of armed police patrols in large parties, like that of Soloheadbeg. This made it difficult for the poorly armed volunteer units to handle them effectively. Gaynor notes that as a natural sequence, a decision was taken to attack them in their strongly fortified barracks on a large organised scale¹¹⁵. Many barracks in the south were successfully attacked. Each Brigade leader surveyed their constituency in an effort to pinpoint which barracks offered the most likely chances of

success. There were many angles to be considered as the barracks were very strongly fortified, doors were bolted closed and only opened a few inches to identify the caller, and the garrisons inside were always on constant alert. On the slightest sign of attack, light signals were sent up and telegraphs dispatched to bring reinforcements from surrounding military garrisons. Borrisokane and Rear Cross Barracks were singled out for special attention by acting Brigade Commandant Seán Gaynor, who held position while Frank McGrath was in jail, because both barracks adjoined houses. The idea behind this line of thinking was to break into the house adjoining the barracks, get onto the roof of the barracks, and on smashing a hole through it, to pour petrol and lighted torches into the barracks, and smoking out the RIC. The fact that petrol was strictly controlled at the time by the British, presented a major problem to secure a sufficient quantity for the intended purpose. The planning put into burning the Borrisokane Barracks goes a long way in demonstrating the interrelationship between Republicans during the Irish War of Independence. Previously at Knocklong, Tracey, Breen and Robinson sought help from the men of Galbally, in Co. Limerick in attempting Seán Hogan's rescue bid. Once again this coherence was displayed in Borrisokane. Men from different Battalions and Brigades joined forces in the attempted burning of an RIC barracks. Men from Monegal, in Co. Offaly, secured 100 gallons of petrol from Nenagh Train Station and hid it in a sandpit near their village. This was more than enough to set the whole barracks ablaze. Volunteers from the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the No. 1 Tipperary Brigade set about cutting off road communications and blocking roads, to delay reinforcements and at the same time leave a line of retreat for their own forces. Gaynor remarks how the sites for specific road blocks were carefully selected in the weeks leading up to the attack.¹¹⁶ Every tree to be felled was marked and men were briefed on when to cut them. The best snipers

in the district were selected and shown the positions they would take up. This was a well thought out, planned attack and perhaps that is what made the outcome of this rebellion different than the rebellions previous to it?

After weeks of planning the attack was scheduled for a Saturday night in mid June, 1920. Midnight was zero hour, and all forces were mobilised and ready at a quarry a mile from Borrisokane by 11 pm. By they time the reached their target the men from the 1st and 3rd battalions had successfully felled the trees blocking all roads into the town, apart from one, which was their line of retreat along the banks of the River Shannon. The house adjoining the left side of the barracks was entered and at twelve o clock the snipers peppered the windows and doors with bullets. Naturally the sandbags on the interior of the windows gobbled up the bullets, but this action was taken to distract the occupants from the all important work of breaking through the barracks roof to douse the interior with petrol. From inside the building fire was returned at the rebels and lights were sent up in the sky to act as a signal for reinforcements to come. By this time, a hole had been successfully breached in the roof of the barracks and its interior had started to burn. A constant supply of petrol was passed up to those up on the roof. The petrol was kept in the archway of the adjoining house and those supplying it to the roof men were constantly at risk from 'friendly fire' or from splinters from British hand grenades. For many of the rebels, it was the first time they had tasted guerrilla warfare. It was around this time that the occupants of the barracks began firing shots in the direction of the roof and three of the insurgents were hit and removed to the local doctor. Frank McGrath, who was Commandant of the No.1 Tipperary Brigade and who had been only released from prison, called a halt to proceedings fearing for his men's safety. This bitterly

disappointed Gaynor who felt the British were only five minutes away from surrender. The battle had lasted two hours and the interior of the building was engulfed in flames when the rebels recoiled along the banks of the Shannon. This strategic element of guerrilla days in Tipperary became known locally as 'smoking out the RIC'¹¹⁷ and this group were not alone in their actions. Between 1 January and 30 June, 1920, 15 barracks in Tipperary occupied by the RIC were destroyed and 25 damaged. This trend continued throughout almost every county in Ireland. The British had vacated many of the smaller barracks in the rural parts of the country also and between the same phase, 351 of the vacated barracks were destroyed and 105 were damaged.¹¹⁸ This tactic had a major bearing on the outcome of the War of Independence in Ireland.

The Death of Seán Treacy

With blazing guns Treacy met the Huns,
And forced them to retreat,
He shot them in pairs going down the stairs'
In that house in Talbot Street.¹¹⁹

Dan Breen lay in the Mater Hospital in Dublin, riddled with bullets following a shoot out with British Soldiers and RIC officers at Fernside. Back in Dublin again in an attempt to persuade General Head Quarters to pursue an intense Guerrilla Warfare, and to ask Michael Collins for funding - Collins being Minister for Finance, he and Treacy were not idle during their time in the capital. They had taken part in an ambush at Ashtown on Lord French, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and as a result had every RIC man, soldier and informer in Dublin as well as the 'Cairo Gang' tracing their every step. On October 14, 1920 the Mater Hospital was surrounded by British troops and armoured cars. Breen was sure he had been tracked down, but

unknowns to him, the British were after a volunteer from Dunboyne named Matt Furlong who was taken to the Mater after explosives he was testing blew up on him¹²⁰. The hospital was raided and Furlong, who bore a striking resemblance to Breen, died during the raid. When the soldiers found him dead they assumed he was Breen and that they had seen the last of the Tipperary rebel.

Upon learning of the proposed raid on the Mater Hospital, Seán Treacy, (Figure 4.6), thinking it was his old friend Breen the British were after, immediately went to Headquarters to organise a rescue party of which he was to be part of. In his haste he walked openly through the principal streets of the city. It was not very safe for an outlaw with £10,000 on his head to do this. He was shadowed to the 'Republican Outfitters' shop on Talbot Street where he was to meet with some friends from the Dublin Brigade of the IRA to organise a rescue attempt for Breen. No sooner had he entered the premises, when an armoured car and two lorry loads of British Soldiers turned into Talbot Street. Treacy emerged with guns blazing, and although he knew he was cornered he would not be taken alive by the British. In spite of the odds against him Treacy did not waver. He shot dead a British intelligence officer in civilian clothing and he wounded another intelligence officer who had identified him. Meanwhile, a British agent had slipped around Treacy's rear and shot him in the back from a distance of around five yards.¹²¹ Sean Treacy slumped to the ground and regardless of their own comrades' safety that had been in close combat with Treacy, the whole British contingent opened fire on the dying man.

In the hail of bullets that followed, two innocent civilians were shot dead. The British had identified Treacy as a thorn in their side, and their mission was to kill him

at any cost. His body was taken to King George V hospital for identification and the next day the coffin arrived by train to Limerick, where it was then transported to Solohead church. The next day, the day of burial, was observed as a day of mourning in Tipperary and when Treacy's remains were interred, a five mile queue from Kilfeacle Graveyard to Solohead Church portrayed the high esteem that the man was held in. Most businesses in Tipperary closed their doors in honour of Treacy's ultimate sacrifice in the fight for Irish freedom. Folklore in Tipperary even tells how British Soldiers saluted the hearse as it passed by. Seán Tracey's final resting place in Kilfeacle has become a place of pilgrimage for all who revere his memory and those with a passion for Irish history.

Bloody Sunday
Croke Park – November 21, 1920

On Saturday 20 November, 1920, the Tipperary football team travelled to the capital via train, to compete in the All Ireland football final against Dublin. The team comprised of players from all over the county, just as it is in today's set-up. It was not until they reached Ballybrophy that the full Tipperary panel was assembled. Some of the men close to the Kilkenny border met the panel at Ballybrophy, a station renowned in Tipperary for changing trains on route to Dublin. Shortly after departure from Ballybrophy a group of British soldiers from the Lincolnshire regiment boarded the train and started taunting one of the Tipperary players, Jacky Bret. Angered by this, Bret lounged at one of soldiers but was knocked to the ground. Assistance was called for and soon half of the Tipperary panel, consisting of three volunteers, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Ryan of the 6th Battalion of the No.3 Tipperary Brigade, Jim Ryan of the same Battalion, and Michael Hogan, also from South Tipperary, were exchanging fisticuffs with the Black and Tans. When all the Soldiers had been

decked, Thomas Ryan and his namesake Jim picked two soldiers up and tossed them out the carriage window.¹²² Upon arrival in Kingsbridge Station (Heuston) the Tipperary players fully expected to be met and detained by British soldiers. When the contrary happened they counted their blessings and decided against staying as a group in Barry's Hotel in Gardiner place, and instead went separate ways finding their own accommodation. The two Ryans' made for Phil Shanahans', a safe house in Dublin city. As Breen remarked, 'every Tipperary man who was on the run or wanted a good dinner made for Phil's'.¹²³ At Shanahan's house the two learned that a 'big job' was taking place in the city the next morning, and later that night a volunteer called to the house to collect arms from Shanahan's cellar. The next morning they awoke to the news that Michael Collins had sent his squad out to assassinate the "12 apostles" as they had become known, 12 British Intelligence officers who had been gathering information on prominent Republicans in both the city and country. The same morning Thomas Ryan received a message from Dan Breen, who had been lying low in the city after the Knocklong rescue, informing him that he would be returning home to Tipperary soon and would be glad to have Ryan accompany him. Breen also advised Ryan to stay well clear of Croke Park that day following the happenings of that morning. Ryan, ignoring the advice togged out in the blue and gold of Tipperary and took his place on the field of play. The game was only on about 10 minutes when Tipperary were awarded a penalty. Thomas Ryan was the designated free taker. This is how he recalls the events of Bloody Sunday;

'A penalty had just been awarded against the Dublin Team, and I was about to take the free-kick when a burst of machine-gun fire occurred. The crowd of spectators immediately stampeded. The players also fled from the field in among the sideline spectators except six of us who threw ourselves on the ground where we were. The six of that remained Hogan and I – and four of the Dublin team were, I think, all Volunteers. I suppose it was our volunteer training that prompted us to protect ourselves by lying down

rather than rushing around. From where we lay, we could see sparks flying off the railway embankment where the bullets struck the wall, and we saw people rolling down the embankment, who presumably were hit. There was general pandemonium at this stage between the firing, people rushing and a general panic amongst the crowd. Two of the players who were lying on the field at this stage got up and made a rush for the paling on the Hill Sixty (now Hill 16) side, which was nearest to them. One by one we followed their example, and it was while Hogan was running from the field to the paling that he got hit by a bullet. I think Josie Synnott and myself were the last to leave the field. Going across to Hogan, I tried to lift him, but the blood was spurting from a wound in his back and I knew he was very badly injured. He made the exclamation when I lifted him “Jesus, Mary and Joseph! I am done!” and he died on the spot. My hands and my jersey were covered with his blood. Making a quick survey of the situation, I ran for a spot in the paling. The Auxiliaries had not come in on the playing pitch but were all around the grounds marshalling the people into groups, making them keep their hands up searching them, while here and there some of them kept firing their shots in all directions. As I reached the paling I saw one ‘Auxie’ loading a round into the breech of his rifle who appeared to be looking in my direction. I dropped to the ground and a youngster near me fell, which I took to be from the shot that was intended for me. So jumping over the paling, I got amongst the crowd. At this stage the firing began to die down and I began to think. Realising that I was a wanted man, the police had been looking for me at my home a few days before I left and that, therefore, I would probably be arrested at least, I cast about for some means of escape. I was the only member of the Tipperary team who wore the national tricolour on my stockings and kickers, and I realised that this fact alone made me conspicuous. I made a dash across Hill Sixty and got out of Croke Park over the wall.¹²⁴

“Bloody Sunday” claimed the lives of 14 people, including Tipperary captain Michael Hogan, (Figure 4.9). Even though Ryan made his escape into a house close to Croke Park, the Black and Tans surrounded the house, forced entry, and stripped Ryan naked. One of them called him a ‘Tipperary assassin’, most likely referring to the incident on the train journey to Dublin. He was dragged back through the streets of Dublin naked and told he was going to be shot along with the rest of the players. When the soldiers searched each players’ belongings and found no evidence or documents linking them to the IRA they let them go, before taking all their money. Ryan felt blessed he had not been shot because of the tricolour on his stockings and football boots. He returned to Tipperary from Dublin on the Tuesday after ‘Bloody

Sunday' for Hogan's funeral, but did not go home as his house had been raided by police and military and continued to be raided until the truce. From that day until the truce Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Ryan became a full-time volunteer on the run. The actions of the British on 'Bloody Sunday' had the same influence on many Irish men and they immediately enlisted in the ranks of their local companies. This tragedy occurred just 20 short days after 18 year old medical student Kevin Barry was hanged in Mountjoy prison for his part in a Dublin ambush, despite calls from leaders around the world to spare his life.



Figure 4.9. Michael Hogan, Tipperary Footballer, killed on Bloody Sunday.

Source: www.premierview.com

These two mishaps moulded many common Irish folk, even those with no revolutionary connections, into Republican sympathisers. As a result, safe houses were made available to Republicans on the run. Even the newspapers seemed more sensitive in their reporting as Breen recalls. The words 'shootings' and 'tragedies' became very popular as substitutes for 'murder' and 'outrage'.¹²⁵

The Tipperary Flying Columns

I joined the Flying column, in nineteen and sixteen,
In Cork with Sean Moylan, Tipperary with Dan Breen,
Arrested by Free Staters, and I'm sentenced for to die,
Farewell to Tipperary, said the Galtee Mountain boy.¹²⁶

Towards the end of 1920, many Tipperary IRA volunteers were wanted men with a huge price offered as a reward for their capture. It was no longer safe for these volunteers to stay in their homes, or the surrounding areas, because of the constant raiding of properties by British forces, so they joined together as a rebel band that would roam the countryside terrorising the RIC and the British forces in Tipperary whenever a chance presented itself. Life in the column, or the Active Service Unit (ASU) as it was also known as was far from luxurious. There was already a flying column in existence in East Limerick in which some men from The No. 3 Tipperary Brigade of the IRA were already active. Dinny Lacey's flying column was the first of such organisations in the county, and soon after a second flying column, under the supervision of Knocklong escapee, Seán Hogan was established. All weapons and ammunition were gathered together and divided out equally among the rebels. The men involved were well aware of the harsh lifestyle involved in being apart of such a movement consisting of eating poorly, training vigorously and sleeping rough. Thomas Ryan, later to become column leader, was one of the few who took up the challenge of life on the run through the Tipperary countryside. The column was set up just after he had returned home from Bloody Sunday in Croke Park. In December of 1920, the column consisting of 20 men endured a four week training camp in Glenpatrick in West Tipperary;

'In Glenpatrick we were made to realise that worldly comforts were not for the soldiers of Ireland. Apart from the food scarcity and lack of variety, we had no beds and nothing but one blanket to cover us. Our daily training

routine was vigorous, the column commander's aim being to subject us to a test of stamina and endurance, so that later, when these qualities would be needed, we would not be soft. We were constantly being called out of our sleep during the night to stand-to when an alarm was given. This meant that we had to be at our posts, ready for action, with full equipment in three minutes. We never knew from day to day whether these alarms might be genuine attacks by the enemy or part of the routine training. The use of lights or making noise while moving from place to place was strictly forbidden, so that we were kept alert at all times. A night march often followed these night alarms, during which the eyes, ears, and wits of the men of the column were sharpened. After a fortnight of this, we felt like trained soldiers and eager to put our training to the test in a clash with the common foe'.¹²⁷

The North Tipperary flying Column, under the command of Seán Gaynor, took part in similar training camps as the guerrilla campaign progressed and intensified within the county, and indeed the country. The personnel selected were brought together in the townland of Gortagarry, in the parish of Toomevara. Food was supplied by locals, laundry was done by the Monegal Cumman na mBan and boots and cigarettes, paid for from brigade funds, were supplied from Nenagh.¹²⁸ They also endured the hardships of their comrades from other parts of the county including poor diet, lack of sleep, and obviously poor health. However, they soldiered on willingly. The columns were somewhat unlucky in the early parts of their existence. They roamed the countryside waiting for intelligence on the movements of British troops in the vicinity. Often, on receiving information they would lay in ambush for three to four days before moving on in fear of being surrounded by their enemy. The British were extremely cautious of these marksmen, did not tend to move around the countryside any longer, unless it was in a convoy of four or more lorries. The flying columns, consisting of large numbers also, always had the element of surprise however and it wouldn't be long before this clever tactic of guerrilla warfare would have a huge impact on the War of Independence.

The Flying Columns in Action

In the Newport district, a mountainous area in North West Tipperary, the IRA was not as well organised as in other parts of the division. A Black and Tan officer by the name of Biggs had control of the vicinity and terrorised the countryside by burning the houses of anyone he had suspected been connected with the IRA, beating up men and shooting volunteers and members of their families.¹²⁹ On one occasion at Silvermines after a Sunday mass, he rounded up the congregation and ordered the people to sing 'God Save the King', which they made an effort to do after volleys of gunfire being fired over their heads! Another favourite practice of his was to bring well known IRA supporters or sympathisers as hostages in lorries through the open countryside to avoid being ambushed by the IRA. With the two fold purpose of organising and rallying the Newport Battalion, (Gaynor had just returned from Headquarters in Dublin where Collins had urged 'pep' talks to brigades and battalions not 'pulling their weight' in the war¹³⁰) and of assassinating Biggs, the North Tipperary flying column moved into the Newport area on 15 May, 1921. During dinner the next day, intelligence was received that Biggs had just passed close by in a private car on his way to Major Gabbitt's house, a well known loyalist who frequently entertained Biggs and his friends. Preparations to ambush the car on the return journey were instantly made. Gabbitt lived three miles from Newport in Killoscully (now famous for the RTE comedy 'Killinascully'). As there were two possible return routes from Killoscully to Newport, it was decided to collect half a dozen local volunteers with shotguns to ensure both roads could be manned successfully. Suitable ambush positions were taken up and scouts were posted to keep lookout. At around 3 pm that evening on the road Gaynor was manning, Biggs and company drove over a ridge and around a turn in the road to where the trap was

set. Blasts of gunfire filled the country air. This is how column leader Gaynor described the action:

‘The car travelled for around 20 yards and then came to a halt. Three people alighted from it. The local volunteer who was with us, and who knew District Inspector Biggs, shouted, “That’s the D.I.”! We re-opened fire on these three people. One ran off towards Newport and escaped; one fell in the centre of the road; and the third fell into the ditch. After a few minutes another man emerged from the car with his hands up, and he came walking towards us. He turned out to be Major Gabbitt. He informed us that a Miss Barrington had been shot. She was the person who fell into the ditch but, being dressed in mannish fashion, was mistaken for a man. McGrath, Ryan and myself then went up to the car, where we found an English woman named Rivers, unharmed. She was by no means frightened, and proceeded to give us “dogs’ abuse” for having shot Miss Barrington. Miss River’s language upset me somewhat, but Ryan quickly silenced her when he said; “Only for the bitch being in bad company, she would not have been shot”!¹³¹

The man who had fallen in the centre of the road turned out to be District Inspector Biggs. He had been killed and Barrington had been shot through the lungs resulting in her death a few days later in hospital. The IRA Active Service Unit pulled out of Newport and recoiled to Eglisish near Cloughjordan in the extreme North East of the District.

Over the week the North Tipperary flying column was put through an intensive training camp in the wooded areas around Cloughjordan. Gaynor focused specifically on the skill of taking up first-rate ambush positions. Unknown to the ASU, Gaynor had received intelligence on the scheduled movement of 13 policemen from Borrisokane to Cloughjordan for a court sitting programmed for 2 June. He had decided to keep this information to himself due to the fact that the British had failed to turn up when ambushes had been planned for them. Gaynor blamed this on information gained by the British by ‘loose talk’, even among the volunteers themselves. On Thursday 1 June, the column moved to Bantiss, a couple of miles from the Borrisokane-Cloughjordan Road where they camped overnight. They were

joined here by Bill Dwyer, 1st Lieutenant of the Cloughjordan company and seven of his men, all equipped with shotguns. At four in the morning the group arose to the shouting of Gaynor. Thinking this was an alarm call for training and an early march, the volunteers marched wearily along until they reached Modreeny on the Borrisokane-Cloughjordan Road. At this point Gaynor told them to prepare themselves for an ambush and the volunteers realised what the previous weeks training had been about. The I.R.A. force was 25 armed men, just short of double what the enemy force would be and Gaynor was confident in securing a moral victory. The men were divided into three different sections and took up position on either side of the road. At around nine in the morning the message was received from the scout that the British were approaching. However instead of 13 cyclists their party consisted of two police cyclists in front as scouts, then four motor cars, followed by four cyclists, two abreast, and in the rear a military lorry. After a brief conferral it was estimated that the British were 40 strong instead of 13 as expected, but that the attack would still go ahead as planned as Gaynor was extremely confident in his men's ability and wanted them tested in an ambush situation.

The leading cyclists, the British scouts, were allowed to go about 200 yards past the first group of rebels, and the first motor car was approaching them when the signal was given to open fire. The first cracks of gunfire rang out in the country air. The British troops tried to make it over the wall into the fields but were prevented from doing so from the accurate firing of two volunteers, Gleeson and Collison. The military lorry at the rear turned and made for Borrisokane again, obviously returning for reinforcements. Many of the policemen who tried to advance were either killed or wounded. The British tried to take command of the situation by firing rifle grenades

at the rebels but they fell harmlessly short. The ambush had been on for about half an hour when it was decided that reinforcements from Borrisokane would soon be on the scene so Gaynor decided it would be too risky to remain in combat. Before retreating, the volunteers collected as many weapons of the dead or wounded British soldiers they could manage. They also obtained ammunition scattered around the bicycles of the fallen RIC men. Whilst making their escape across the fields and through a bog, they spotted seven or eight lorry loads of soldiers making their way to the scene of the ambush.¹³² The volunteers had suffered no casualties during the Modreeny engagement and fighting with depleted forces against a force much greater than theirs they inflicted heavy losses on their appointments. Gaynor concluded that his flying column had killed four and wounded 14.¹³³ The outcome of the ambush had also pleased Headquarters in Dublin with IRA Chief-of-Staff, Dick Mulcahy sending a letter of congratulations to Gaynor and all involved in the Modreeny Ambush.

Conclusion

The Modreeny Ambush was to be the last major open encounter against British forces in Tipperary. On 11 July, 1921, a truce came into effect between the British and Irish forces ending the War of Independence. Throughout the summer negotiations took place between Eamonn De Valera and British Prime Minister Lloyd George. In early October plenipotentiaries, including Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, were sent to London to negotiate with the British government. The Irish delegate had been sent to London with the intention of securing an idea of external association, meaning that they wished the British Commonwealth to recognise Ireland as a sovereign and independent state. In return Ireland would agree to become an

external associate of the British Commonwealth. Negotiations continued until early December. The British refused to accept the idea of external association, and insisted that dominion status was the best they could offer. Faced with the threat of immediate war, the Irish delegates signed the treaty on December 6, 1921. The signing of the treaty closed a bloody chapter in Irish history, but opened an even bloodier chapter with the commencement of the Irish Civil War on 28 June, 1922.

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Chapter 5
**Commemorating the Easter Rising
in County Tipperary**

Introduction

'Let those who come after see to it that their names be not forgotten.'¹

The interpretation of Irish history sometimes manifests itself as politics conducted by other means.² What people commemorate, whom they commemorate and how they commemorate are essentially political decisions made to promote contemporary results and resonance. Tipperary, similar to other counties, has followed in the trend of remembering or ignoring the 1916 Rising. The key dates taken into account for this study are 1966, the Golden Jubilee of 1916 Easter Rising, 1991, which was the 75th anniversary and 2006 which marked the 90th anniversary of Easter Week. These significant dates are important in understanding the concept of commemorating 1916 as they demonstrate how those involved in the Rising were first glorified and then shamed, before being honoured once again. The outbreak of IRA violence in 1969 and their insistence on claiming the mythology of 1916 to justify their campaign of terror embarrassed the Irish Government into predominantly ignoring the men and women of 1916 from 1972 to 2006. Now that the IRA have decommissioned and declared their terror campaign over, the Irish government have seen fit to commemorate the 1916 Rising yet again by resuming military parades. This chapter examines the patchy fashion of commemorating 1916 in County Tipperary and Ireland.

Commemoration became an important theme in Ireland during the latter part of the 1990s. As Bort notes, Ireland during the 1990s witnessed a time of conspicuous economic achievement and the anniversaries of the Great Famine and the 1798

Rebellion provided an opportunity to reflect on some central aspects of Ireland's national experience.³ The urge to commemorate however has sometimes been derided by those who suspect that it is motivated by contemporary political considerations as opposed to a genuine urge to understand the past for its own sake, as later findings will show. Certain scholars have dissected the making of memory in Ireland into smaller particles in an effort to understand it more clearly. Ascherson raises the notion of whom or why we commemorate certain events and why we do not commemorate others.⁴ Walker identifies the relationship between specific commemorations and public holidays in Ireland such as Easter Sunday or 12 July.⁵ Quinn notes that Ireland's commemorative heritage has today been largely and variously moulded by interested parties and individuals; some with the honourable intention of acknowledging important aspects of history; some with ulterior motives.⁶ It must be remembered that today's Ireland is a nation of mixed traditions and indeed of mixed ethnic origins. Recently however the Irish Government has shown its willingness to commemorate both traditions in Ireland, north and south, by commemorating the Irishmen who fell (or who died) during arguably the Great War's fiercest encounter, the Battle of Somme. This positive and progressive step was further enhanced by the government commemorating all fatalities, British and Irish, during the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising in 2006.

The 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War which ensued, inflicted many deep wounds on the Irish people, physically and mentally. After the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December, 1921, efforts were made to prevent emotions from boiling over but the Irish Civil War soon broke out on 28 June, 1922. This period, it could be argued, was possibly the saddest chapter in Irish history, when brother fought against brother and green fought against green. One of

Ireland's greatest revolutionary leaders, Michael Collins, was ambushed and shot in west Cork 22 August, 1922.⁷ Irish politics was in turmoil with friction arising between those who opposed the Treaty and with those who backed it. However, as Fitzpatrick notes, the commemoration of the 1916 Rising offered a credible focus for reconciliation between both sides. The Easter proclamation and the leader's writings remained seminal texts for both parties.⁸

The first official government ceremony took place at Arbour Hill, the burial place of the executed rebels. Later ceremonies through the 1920s included the first rendition of 'The Last Post' and wreath laying ceremonies. The absence of a permanent and conspicuous monument to the Rising was finally remedied on Easter Monday, 1935, when De Valera unveiled Oliver Sheppard's *The Death of Cuchulainn* monument at the General Post Office. On the 25th anniversary of the Rising in 1941, major celebrations were held in Dublin. On Easter Sunday a military parade, described as the largest ever held in Dublin, took place.⁹ In Tipperary, the village of Dualla, outside Cashel, has commemorated the 1916 Rising annually since 1923 and is the oldest 1916 Rising commemoration in the county.

The Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Easter Rising in Tipperary

The year 1966 marked a very significant and poignant date in the Irish nationalist calendar. Fifty years had elapsed since a bunch of rebels, poorly armed and sparsely numbered, stormed the steps of the GPO in a bid to win Irish freedom from their nearest neighbour, Britain. Although the first line of thinking of most had been to condemn all involved, the needless execution of its leaders and the outcome of the

1918 General Election meant that the memory of those involved in the five-day fight was subsequently glorified. Newspaper articles from Easter 1966 consistently used the words 'glorious' or 'heroic' to describe the actions of Easter week 1916. One wonders if the journalists who wrote those words realised that certain members of their guild would attack these very men and women and brand them murderers involved in, to quote Myers, "a monstrous orgy of violence" a few decades later.¹⁰ Seán Lemass, Irish Taoiseach in 1966, took control of organising official 1916 commemorations in Dublin and was determined to show that the Rising was indeed the key to the legacy of modern Ireland, that it was part of the necessary struggle for freedom.¹¹ At the same time, Lemass determined that the celebrations should not interfere, or at least interfere as little as possible, with positive cross-border relations at the time.

Easter 1966, was a special occasion in Cloughjordan in the north-east of Tipperary. Commemoration came to the fore in the weeks leading up to, and indeed Easter Week, 1966, as the local newspaper *The Nenagh Guardian* demonstrates. A five page Easter Week commemorative supplement led with the headline: 'Heroic Armed Struggle against British Rule in the Cause of Ireland's freedom' in the edition printed the week before Easter. An article in the supplement stated that;

'50 years ago this Easter about 1,000 men and women, some said it was more, others less, marched out to death or Glory, or both. They were looked on with contempt by some citizens, tolerated with amused indifference by others while the vast majority disregarded them as 'rebels'.¹²

The editorial traced all of the events of the five-day battle, the reading of the Proclamation, the first shots of the battle, the surrender, Pearse's letter to his mother, and the Easter week casualties on both sides. The supplement also contained sketches and biographical details of the seven leaders as well as other personalities such as

John McBride, Thomas Kent, Con Colbert, Sean Heuston, and Willie Pearse. A copy of the proclamation was also included as well as a poem written by Francis Ledwedge after MacDonagh's execution. Ledwedge was born in Slane in 1890. He was acquainted with most of the leaders of the Rising. These lines, written in France following the death of his friend, are some of the most poignant ever written:

Thomas MacDonagh

He shall not hear the bittern cry,
In the wild sky, where he is lain,
Nor voices of the sweeter birds,
Above the wailing of the rain

Nor shall he know when loud March blows,
Thro' slanting snows her fanfare shrill,
Blowing to flame the golden frill,
Of many an upset daffodil

But when the dark cow leaves the moor,
And pasture poor with greedy weeds,
Perhaps he'll hear her low at morn,
Lifting her horn in pleasant meads.¹³

'Cloughjordan Honours MacDonagh' read the headline of *The Nenagh Guardian* edition on 16 April, 1966, with a subheading of 'New Library Dedicated to Thomas MacDonagh', after the Easter Sunday commemoration to mark the Golden Jubilee of the 1916 Rising. The library, (Figure 5.3) was erected by the Cork based firm Ro-Fab, in the course of 12 days, at a cost of £910, with an additional expenditure of £2,000 to equip and stock the library. The following is an extract from the address of Mrs Bairbre Redmond, daughter of Thomas MacDonagh, who unveiled the plaque to her father's memory and later the new library, which was blessed by Very Rev. P. J. Hewitt, P.P., to the public: 'Thomas MacDonagh never thought in terms of flags or victories in the field of arms and glory. His were the victories of intelligence. His objects the open mind, the educated community, with the poor man's

child an equal sharer in the benefits that flow from an educated mind.’¹⁴ The new library was dedicated to the memory of Thomas MacDonagh, who was born in a house near the library. The plaque, (Figure 5.4), in Irish and English contained the following inscription:

This library was erected in the Golden Jubilee
Year of the Easter Rising, in memory of Thomas
MacDonagh, a native of Cloughjordan, a signatory
to the proclamation of the Irish Republic, 1916.

To mark the occasion Mr. Charles Haughey, Minister for Agriculture, planted a rose tree, (Figure 5.1), to the memory of MacDonagh in a plot in front of the new library. Before he took the spade to dig the first sod and plant the rose tree the Minister quoted these lines from a poem by MacDonagh, ‘The Singer’s Grave’: (Figure 5.2)

If in my life I shall have sung or done something,
That all mankind may praise when I am gone,
Then bring a rose tree to my grave,
And plant it in spring.¹⁵

After the dedication of the new library there was a procession through the town to the newly named G.A.A. pitch MacDonagh Park. Tom Cleary, a founding member of MacDonagh Park in Cloughjordan, draws attention to the importance of naming the Cloughjordan parish’s new GAA grounds after Thomas MacDonagh:

‘The club, and indeed the parish, had been wanting to do something meaningful, something worthwhile, in Thomas MacDonagh’s memory for a long while before the MacDonagh Park idea came along. He was born in a house just at the back of where the pitch is, and I am sure as a young boy he, like all young lads of that time, would hurl away in that very ground. He made the ultimate sacrifice with his life so that organisations such as the GAA could exist and this is our small way of cherishing his memory.’¹⁶

All organisations assembled at the national school to march to the platform opposite the MacDonagh memorial park. The parade led by the Moycarkey Pipe Band,

comprised the FCA, Old IRA, Civil Defence, Templemore Pipe Band (now MacDonagh Pipe Band), NFA, GAA, Portumna Pipe Band, I.C.A. and Macra na Feirme. The salute was taken by Mr. Charles Haughey, Minister for Agriculture. On the platform was a distinguished group including members of the MacDonagh family. The proclamation in Irish and English was then read by two local school boys. The Last Post was sounded. There followed two minutes silence and then the Reveille. Mr. Roche Williams, National Teacher and Chairman of the MacDonagh Park committee said it:

'Gave him great pleasure to welcome all of the people to this commemoration in honour of the men of 1916. They had come to honour these men who went out in the glorious week and gave their lives in the cause of Irish freedom, the leaders, the seven men who fought and died.'¹⁷



Figure 5.1. The rose tree planted by Minister Charles Haughey in Cloughjordan, 10 April, 1966

Source: Author



Figure 5.2. Plaque which marks the rose tree commemorating the poet, Thomas MacDonagh

Source: Author



Figure 5.3. The Thomas MacDonagh Memorial Library (see also Appendices 5.1 and 5.2)

Source: Author



Figure 5.4. The plaque commemorating Thomas MacDonagh at Cloughjordan Library

Source: Author

However, this commemoration was understandably more about the celebration of Thomas MacDonagh's life rather than the other men and women who had lost their lives in the Rising 50 years previously. As Gilbert Williams put it, 'it was a proud day in Cloughjordan's record that a former townsman should receive such honour and commemoration'.¹⁸ Speaking to the huge crowd present, Roche Williams welcomed the Minister and said that the fact that the Government had sent a representative showed the importance they attached to this commemoration of the men of 1916. They were he said, also honoured to have members of the MacDonagh family with them, the daughter of Thomas MacDonagh, Mrs. Bairbre Redmond, and they extended to her a particularly warm welcome.

Lieutenant General Costello then delivered the oration. He said;

"We are here today to commemorate a decisive event in Irish history and to honour the great Cloughjordan man who was one of its chief architects. It has

reverberated around the world and inspired subject races everywhere. He was a versatile genius, a scholar, linguist, poet, dramatist, educationalist, critic, organiser, trainer and leader of men who faced death with him. He was also a very human person with a great gift of friendship. His friends included the leading literary figures of his day, as well as leaders of the Rising”.

Costello talked of how and why MacDonagh had foretold of his death: “he told us in advance in his poems why he made the supreme sacrifice. It was to jolt the Irish people out of national decadence, to bring dramatically to their notice that ‘cause which never dies’.”¹⁹ Following the oration, Parish Priest Fr. Hewitt remarked that it was very fitting that a Minister of State should be present at the commemoration, because that was the ideal MacDonagh had died for. That night in a fitting way to bring a close to the commemorative events of Easter 1966 in Cloughjordan, close on 200 persons were present, including many of the distinguished guests of the day’s celebration, for a jubilee dinner held in MacDonagh’s honour which was held at O’Meara’s Hotel, Nenagh.

1916 Jubilee Celebrations at Newport

There was an estimated attendance of 1,500 at the 1916 Golden Jubilee commemoration of the Easter Rising in Newport. The commemoration was a worthy tribute in keeping with the part played in the fight for independence. Following mass in the local church, a parade led by the FCA Colour party and the Newport Boys’ National School Band, and composed of the Old IRA from Newport and surrounding parishes, members of Cumman na mBan and representatives of the various organisations, took place from the church to the GAA grounds, Ryan Park. Tomás Malone delivered the oration. In his oration Malone said;

“On this the 50th anniversary of the Rising of 1916, I am honoured to have the privilege of paying tribute to Pádraig Mac Piaras and his comrades for their valour, heroism, courage and self sacrifice in unfurling the flag of the Irish Republic at the GPO on that glorious Easter morning. In saluting the men of Easter Week, let us also pay tribute to those who fought, suffered and gave their lives in the same cause from 1916 down to the present day. Above

all, since this is a Tipperary commemoration, let us salute the memory of those men from Tipperary who also gave their lives in a bloody sacrifice for a glorious thing.” “Tipperary has a very proud record in Ireland’s struggle for freedom. I don’t think that any county in Ireland can boast of so many great patriots, poets, historians and orators. Tipperary’s role is a long and distinguished one. Geoffrey Keating, Father Sheehy, Éamon an Chnuic, Galloping Hogan, Charles J. Kikham, Michael Doheny, and coming nearer or own time, Thomas MacDonagh.²⁰”

The proclamation was then read. The Last Post was then sounded and the National Anthem played.

The 75th Anniversary of the Easter Rising, 1991

Less than ten years following the commemorations of 1966, Ireland moved from a situation where the state sponsored strong emotions towards commemorating and honouring republicans to a situation when the republican songs most young kids learned at school were banned on the state radio. The IRA campaign of violence which commenced in 1969 marred the mythology of 1916 as its leaders claimed that the Proclamation stated that bloodshed was necessary to gain complete independence for Ireland. Thus, many people waited for the 75th anniversary of the Rising in 1991 with considerable interest. This time state television did not re-show the drama documentary it had shown in 1966 and there were no days off school for students like there had been in 1966. Instead state television broadcast various interviews with historians and public figures about the Rising. Did they think it was right or wrong? Did they think it should be commemorated? Roy Foster said: ‘Celebrating 1916, or commemorating it, I think there’s a big difficulty there. To celebrate something is, presumably, to say it was wonderful and to, in a sense, re-enact it as a communal ritual. I would think that is undesirable’. Local committees organising commemorative events seemed to think along the same lines as Foster.

Cloughjordan, 25 years after such poignant celebrations in MacDonagh's memory, this time held no commemorative events in honour of the village's most famous son. The *Nenagh Guardian* reported nothing on other commemorative ceremonies held in the district although diehard republicans, like the Sinn Féin parties in Nenagh and Clonmel and Cashel still held small ceremonies, mainly attacking revisionist historians for blackening the name of Irish republicanism.

In 1991 however, a cultural celebration of 1916 was organised, called 'The Flaming Door'. This mobilised artists, poets and writers to celebrate the 1916 Rising. It began with a bus tour around Dublin, on the morning of Easter Sunday, 31 March 1991, to the sites occupied in the Rising, with readings from poems and memoirs of the event. There was a poetry reading in the GPO in the afternoon and on the Sunday night, a concert was held in Kilmainham Gaol. It was the first time the Gaol was used as a public venue and the musicians used its prison cells as their changing rooms. Artists included members of the Dubliners, the Chieftans and the Hothouse Flowers. It culminated in a flaming door procession at midnight in the yard of the Gaol where the signatories of the 1916 declaration were executed. The event was conceived and organised by John Stephenson as part of Dublin's European City of Culture.

The 90th Anniversary of the Easter Rising, 2006

The planned commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising in April, 2006, turned into a spectacle. Commemorating the Rising stimulated earnest debate around questions of Irish identity. Discussions about who died on the Somme or in Kilmainham in the summer of 1916, and whether they should have or not, have

been rehashed and should stimulate an interest in all Irish people. In recent years Ireland has shown a greater willingness to honour the men who fought and died in the British uniform in the Great War. As work continues to build a shared and peaceful present and future on this island, it is appropriate that the memories of all 230,000 young men from all parts of this island who fought at the Somme and elsewhere in that war are similarly honoured. President Mary McAleese noted that ‘In the years following partition, our state-building efforts North and South, led us towards the establishment of mono-cultures, bolstered by a single national historical narrative – a narrative which, in the South, excluded the memory of those ordinary Irish people who fought in the Great War’.²¹ Ireland can no longer have two histories, separate in conflict. In the year 2006 there was an official Government commemoration on the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, in which the Ulster Division played such a prominent part. When President McAleese jointly inaugurated with Queen Elizabeth the Memorial Peace Park at Messines in 1998, she reminded us that men of the 36th Ulster Division and the 16th Irish Division fought side-by-side during the war, their historic differences transcended by a common cause. These Irishmen, who fell before a border was drawn around the six counties, were given a commemorative monument shaped as a round tower. In 2006, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern made the move of inviting Unionist politicians south of the border for the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising and the Battle of the Somme respectively. Unionist politicians declined however, citing their belief that 1916 was an act of terrorism. These are important steps on the road to reconciliation. However the time is now right to commemorate all sides involved in the Rising no matter what uniform they wore, not just the volunteers or the Citizen Army, but those who fought in British uniform as well as the many other civilians, 35 of them never identified, killed by both sides in the Rising. Clarke,

Pearse, MacDermott, MacDonagh, Connolly – these are all names familiar to us from 1916. However, these same surnames occur in the lists of men decorated, wounded or killed in British uniform during Easter Week 1916 in Dublin. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers were among the first regiments called upon to suppress the Rising. It is easy for the Irish state to honour and commemorate those who fell on the battlefields of Flanders or Gallipoli. Is Ireland now tolerant enough, 90 years on, to officially recognise and respect those Irishmen in British uniform who fell in Sackville Street (O'Connell Street) and elsewhere in Dublin during the five day battle? On the night before his execution, 1916 leader Eamonn Ceannt wrote: 'I bear no ill-will towards those against whom I have fought. I have found the common soldiers and higher officers human and companionable, even the English who were actually in the fight against us.' If Ceannt could forgive his executioners, surely Ireland can commemorate them. What is now needed is the language of the official commemorations on Easter Sunday, of the speeches and the publications, to be inclusive and reconciliatory and thus extend to all the combatants of 1916, as well as to the innocent civilians.

Recently, Ireland's national broadsheets, namely *The Irish Times* and the *Sunday Independent*, have debated if it is publicly correct to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising in such a large-scale manner. Journalists like Myers, Dudley Edwards, Harris and Hayes have all launched scathing attacks on plans to fully commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Rising. Myers attacked President Mary McAleese's address at UCC in January 2006 in which she referred to the men of 1916 as 'heroes'. Myers attack was based on the claim that these 'heroes' were the same men and women who shot civilians during Easter Week. The question he asks is what right had these insurgents to kill innocent civilians? Furthermore, he continues to

suggest that the Republic born out of the Rising was not a republic at all, but the 'formal inauguration of a political cult of necrophilia whose most devoted adherents over the past 36 years have been the Provisional IRA'.²² A fascinating response to Myers accusation of what 'right' the men and women of 1916 had in killing innocent civilians came in the form of a letter to the editor of *The Irish Times* under the heading 'Rights and wrongs of the Easter insurgents in 1916'. Mr Pádraig Mac Bheatha claimed that around the time of 1916 international law was in its infancy.²³ He continues by stating that concepts such as state sovereignty and the right of self determination were viewed in a different light than today. Therefore, he concludes, to talk of rights in a 1916 context is meaningless: the law of war in 1916 was too ambiguous to either prohibit or permit armed insurrection. Myers makes an interesting point in opting for no commemorative ceremonies to mark the 90th anniversary of the Rising when stressing that 40 years after the last giddy commemoration of the Rising kick-started the Troubles into life, the Government is organising yet another military parade on exactly the same uncritical and celebratory lines as 1966, which ultimately resulted in the deaths of 3,700 people on both sides.²⁴ Basically Myers is questioning if the 2006 commemorations will awaken a new breed of Irish freedom fighter like 1966 did? Myers, in attempting to condemn the actions of the leaders of the Rising and indeed their commemoration, had put forward a series of questions in his 24 February 'An Irishman's Diary' for *The Irish Times*. The fourth question he posed was "How could people today celebrate a monstrous orgy of violence in which hundreds of innocent Irish people died?" When Irish people celebrate 1916, they are, as Ó Haicéad puts it in no way celebrating a "monstrous orgy of violence" any more than the French celebration of the storming of the Bastille on 14 July or Independence Day celebrations in the USA "celebrate" the murder of innocent civilians.²⁵ On the

contrary, these events serve as a reminder that the lives of few were given for the sake of many in the struggle for a greater measure of freedom. Remember Ireland in 1916 was not a democracy. Half of the Irish population had no vote and essential democratic norms that we take for granted today, such as full separation of power or religious equality were non-existent. Irish affairs were controlled in Westminster by a British parliament, the corollary being that British interests always predominated in the administration of Irish affairs. The men and women of 1916 had no imperial pretensions, and nurtured no self-absorbed desire to conquer distant lands. Their objective was one far nobler; to rest jurisdiction over Ireland and root it firmly in Irish soil. Now surely that is something worth celebrating.

Commemorative Events Staged in Dublin and Tipperary

On Easter Sunday, 16 April, 2006 the Government of Ireland officially marked the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising by hosting a full military parade past the G.P.O. for the first time since 1972. Earlier that morning Taoiseach Bertie Ahern laid a wreath in the stonebreaker's yard of Kilmainham Gaol (Fig 5.5). A period of silence was observed in memory of all those who took part in the Rising. The national broadcasting station RTÉ aired full coverage of the commemoration and it became apparent that any embarrassment over past IRA atrocities had vanished when Bryan Dobson was seen interviewing historian Diarmuid Ferriter as to why the Rebels decided to attack British Rule in Ireland and why they had chosen the tactics they did. The same station still refuses to air any of the Wolfe Tones songs as they rate them too political. However, the station has moved with the times. Their coverage of the state funerals given to 11 volunteers including Kevin Barry, in 2001, is testament to that. The ceremony got under way at noon with the lowering of the national flag to

half mast to the sound of “Wrap the Green Flag Around Me” performed by a lone piper. Captain Thomas Ryan then proceeded to read out the Proclamation of Independence to commemorate the actions of Pearse and his comrades 90 years previously, after which the 120,000 in attendance broke into spontaneous applause. The Defence Force’s Band then performed Sean Ó Ríada’s *Mise Éire* before the Taoiseach invited President Mary McAleese to lay a wreath on behalf of all those who died. A minutes silence was followed by the Last Post. The national flag was then raised to rapturous applause once more from the huge crowd in attendance. The parade of 2,500 troops then left the grounds of Dublin Castle including the Army, the Naval Service, as well as the air corps on their route past the GPO (Figure 5.6). An air display was also a prominent part of the military parade and added an element of enjoyment for the many children in attendance (Figure 5.7).



Figure 5.5. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern about to lay a wreath in Kilmainham Gaol at the 90th anniversary of the 1916 rising

Source: www.antaoiseach.com



Figure 5.6. The 1916 commemoration parade on Westmoreland Street approaching O'Connell Street.

Source: www.antaoiseach.com



Figure 5.7. An air display flies past the GPO

Source: www.antaoiseach.com

Tipperary once again followed the national trend by holding major celebrations not seen in the county since 1966. Again the major commemoration ceremony was held in the home of the MacDonaghs, Cloughjordan. However, this 1916 commemoration was one of the few national celebrations that was not held on Easter Sunday. Instead it was held on Friday, 12 May, 2006, to coincide with the official opening of the Thomas MacDonagh Community Sports Centre. The commemoration was organised by the Kilruane MacDonagh GAA club and commenced at four o'clock in the afternoon with a parade through the streets led by the Thomas MacDonagh Pipe Band from Templemore as well as a platoon of members from the MacDonagh Branch, a contingent of the Army Reserve Battalion, Nenagh and juvenile hurlers and camogie players from the parish. The parade meandered its way to the G.A.A. grounds where the blessing and official opening of the Thomas MacDonagh Community Sports Centre took place. Next to follow was a 20 minute commemoration ceremony marking the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, with special remembrance of Thomas MacDonagh. Mr Roche Williams, a prominent speaker in the 1966 commemorations in Cloughjordan, then read the proclamation, recited a number of MacDonagh's poems interspersed with music. Chairman of Kilruane MacDonagh's GAA club, Mr. Len Gaynor expressed his happiness that the community had once again the opportunity to publicly acknowledge MacDonagh's instrumental achievement in securing Irish Independence. He launched a heated attack on 'the revisionist historians whom we solely blame for slandering the good names of the participants of 1916, hence impeding occasions like this'. Members of the MacDonagh family relatives were present at the ceremony and the most special part of the commemoration came with the unveiling of a newly



Figure 5.8. The portrait of Thomas MacDonagh which hangs in the Kilruane MacDonagh GAA club house

Source: Author

commissioned portrait of Thomas MacDonagh by his granddaughter Muriel McCauley (Figure 5.8). The ceremony was followed by a Gala Concert in which leading Irish entertainer Frances Black performed. This commemoration was very much a community occasion and demonstrates the dedication and pride the area still holds in associating with the memory of Thomas MacDonagh.

Cloughjordan was not the only Tipperary village to host a full scale 1916 Rising commemoration in 2006. The village of Dualla, in mid Tipperary also had special cause to remember the deeds of the men and women of Easter Week. The village has close links with the failed Rising. Dualla Cemetery is in fact home to Tipperary's oldest 1916 commemoration. In 2006, the year marking the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising, Dualla Cemetery was also marking its 83rd consecutive year of remembering the events of Easter Week 1916. An estimated attendance of 1,000 people gathered to remember those who were prepared to lead Tipperary's own fight in 1916.²⁶ A short parade led by the Seán Treacy Pipe Band left the village of Dualla and marched the short journey to Dualla Cemetery. There in the presence of the tricolour, mass was celebrated in the cemetery for all those who gave their lives for Irish freedom. The graves of Pierce McCan, (Figure 5.9), and other republicans interred within the cemetery, the Looby brothers and Paddy Hogan, were dressed with spring flowers. Dualla was also the chosen centre of control for the planned uprising in Tipperary during Easter Week 1916, under the overall command of Pierce McCan. Pierce McCan was Commanding Officer of the Tipperary Volunteers in 1916. From an early age he was involved in the Gaelic League and had a keen interest in Irish history. On the Thursday of Easter Week, 1916, McCan travelled to Dublin by train for news on the commencement of the planned Rising. He

returned to Tipperary late on Good Friday night with the anticipated news that the Rising was scheduled to take place on Easter Sunday. On Easter Saturday, McCan ordered the volunteers to prepare shotguns, rifles and pikes. He also held conferences with his men on the securing of route-ways through Tipperary so that the arms shipment from Banna Strand in Co. Kerry could be transported eastwards safely. McCan, or any of the Tipperary volunteers for that matter, were of course ignorant to the fact Rodger Casement had never actually landed the cargo of weapons. The RIC, having been tipped off, were waiting for the 'Aud' to land and arrest Casement. Over the next two days unconfirmed rumours circled Tipperary on happenings in Dublin. Finally on the Wednesday a dispatch rider was summoned to Dublin to report back to McCan as to whether the rumours of the fighting were true. The rider, Eamonn O Duibhir, was arrested shortly after and never accomplished his mission. After the failed Rising, McCan, a co founder of Sinn Féin, worked tirelessly to ensure the landslide victory for his party in the 1918 general election. McCan was arrested and interred without trial in Gloucester Prison, where he died of influenza on March 6, 1919.

In the town of Nenagh, a commemorative ceremony, which had been prearranged by the Sinn Féin party, commenced at 3.p.m. at the Irish republican monument, (Fig. 5.10), in Banba square on Easter Sunday. A crowd in proximity of 300 attended the ceremony. Activities commenced with the reading of the proclamation by Sinn Féin Councillor and Nenagh Lord Mayor Seamus Morris. The oration was then given by Paddy Hackett who published such works as *In Bloody Protest* and *Keep Their Names Forever Green*, a history and documentation of the

activities of the 1st and 2nd Tipperary Brigades of the IRA during the War of Independence of 1919-1921.



Figure 5.9. The grave of Pierce McCan, Dualla Cemetery.

Source: Author

Hackett, like so many orators on this emotional republican anniversary, launched a scathing attack on the revisionist historians who had in his view blackened the names of true republican heroes as well as downgrading their status publicly. He also called for the decommissioning of all Loyalist terrorist factions and called for the implementation of a power sharing government in Northern Ireland. Francis Ledwidge's lament for Tipperary martyr Thomas MacDonagh was then recited before the Roll of Honour for the 1st Brigade Tipperary IRA was read out by a Sinn Féin. The ceremony was brought to an end by the singing of *Amhráin na bhFiann*.

The republican memorial in Nenagh, (Figure 5.10), is arguably one of the most impressive of all the monuments dedicated to Tipperary's militants, partially because of its prominent position in the town. Interestingly enough, in recent years a campaign was also launched for a commemorative monument for those who lost their lives in the Great War 1914-1918. Over the years, as one scholar reminds us, the multiple stories of thousands of Irish men and women who served as active agents of British colonialism at home and abroad in various military and administrative positions have been effectively erased from public memory in post-independent Ireland.²⁷ The fight in Nenagh was successful and today the Great War Monument and the Republican Monument are less than 200 meters apart. Indeed most towns in Ireland now fittingly remember those who lost their lives on the battle fields of Europe during the Great War. The Republican Monument in Nenagh is chiefly dedicated to the memory of Tipperary's involvement in the 1916 Rising but is also partly dedicated to the 1981 hunger strikers. Each year the annual 1916 commemoration is held in the square and attracts hundreds of supporters. In 2006, the

commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the hunger strike, led by Bobby Sands in 1981, was also held at the monument.

Representing the Rising through Music, Song and Film

In any nation's culture, music and song is central to differentiating different traditions apart. In Ireland, music is central to identifying the mixed heritages and cultures the country shares. Unionists in the North celebrate their victory in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 every year throughout the month of July by holding marches in which flute players and Lambeg drums are prominent. Nationalists are associated with more traditional Irish music and instruments like the harp with its 32 strings, the fiddle or the banjo. As Zimmerman notes, in most European countries, ballads were inspired by political events, but few of them, if any, were retained by tradition.²⁸ However, he also claims that when a fight for independence had been a long hard one, coinciding with a strong current of folk singing, a certain number of ballads survived.²⁹ This is the case in Ireland. A ballad can be simply defined as a song that tells a story. The inspiration for Irish rebel ballads are many and varied. Sometimes it can be a great tragedy, an ambush, a murder or just a simple phrase that sets a chord vibrating. Throughout Ireland's long history of struggle for independence, each of the various uprisings has generated its own collection of songs. These invariably tell the story of Ireland's troubled history with its more powerful neighbour, Britain, and capture and support the political dreams of the generations who sought an independent nation. Irish rebel ballads can be classed into genres, the struggle of the peasantry to take possession of the land and the nationalist yearnings of the middle -



Figure 5.10. The republican Monument at Banba Square, Nenagh.

Source: Author

class. These songs, which were written within the reach of the virtually illiterate, were not only an expression of the singers' and listeners' feelings or opinions but also a form of propaganda. Greaves draws attention to the fact that the Irish ballads, for the most part, were derived from Gaelic poetry as well as from the Irish harp.³⁰ Indeed O'Boyle also stresses that a proper appreciation of Irish music and song is impossible without some knowledge of the Irish language.³¹ This is not difficult to understand.

Irish rebel ballads are instrumental in telling the story of the fight for Irish freedom. Not only can they be heard at commemorations throughout Tipperary and the rest of Ireland, they can also be heard in many other nations throughout the world. Most holiday destinations today have an 'Irish Centre' where Irish tourists and friends of the Irish gather to socialise nightly. These ballads and music prove extremely popular with Irish tourists who might never listen to this genre of music at home. The 'homesick' Irish tourist suddenly feels a need to identify themselves with all things Irish and this is the reason Irish centres in resorts like Santa Ponsa, Playa De Ingles and Puerto Rico in Spain, with their live Irish balladeers, have become so popular.

Anti-enlistment, and later on anti-conscription songs, relied heavily on sarcasm, a device used by ballad makers throughout history because it was considered the only weapon the oppressed had against the powerful. These ballads specialized in lampooning politicians and authority figures that encouraged Irishmen to fight in foreign wars. The figure of the 'Recruiting Sergeant' has traditionally been a target for verbal abuse and during the Great War he provided inspiration for many ballads as in this one from Tipperary included on the Pogues album "If I Should Fall from Grace":

The Recruiting Sergeant

As I was going along the road and feeling fine and larky O,
A recruiting sergeant came up to me, said he you'd look fine in khaki O,
The King he is in need of men just read the proclamation O,
The life in Flanders for you then would be a fine vacation O.

That may be true I answered back but tell me Sergeant dearie O,
If I had a pack stuck on my back would I look fine and cheery O
For they'd have you train and drill until you'd look like the frenchies O,
Well it might be warm in Flanders but its lofty in the trenches O.

The sergeant smiled and winked his eye his smile was most provoking O,
He wiggled and twirled his wee moustache, said he you're only joking O,
For the Sand Bags are so warm and high and the wind you won't feel blowing O,
I winked at a cáilín passing by, says I 'what if it's snowing' O

Come rain or hail or wind or snow we're not going out to Flanders O,
There's fighting in Dublin to be done, let you Sergeants and you're commanders go,
Let English men fight English wars, it's nearly time ye started O,
I saluted the sergeant a very good night, there and then we parted O.

A much older song than the 'Recruiting Sergeant' was the song 'Arthur McBride', commonly associated with folk singer Paul Brady and 'Gallipoli', sung by the Furey Brothers and Davey Arthur, tells the tale of a young Irishman leaving to fight on the continent but wanting to stay in Ireland for the planned Rising. The recruiting sergeant in Dublin fared no better than his colleague in Tipperary. The famous Dublin ballad maker Peadar Kearney who wrote many popular songs during this turbulent period (including the Irish national anthem, 'Amhrán na bhFiann'), treated the recruiting sergeant in an equally sarcastic manner in his song 'Sergeant William Bailey'. This song can be heard on the Wolfe Tones *Across the Broad Atlantic* album:

Sergeant William Bailey

Sergeant William Bailey was a man of high renown,
Tooral looral looral looral loo,
In search of gallant young recruits he used to scour the town,
Tooral looral looral looral loo,
His face was full and swarthy, of medals he had forty,
And ribbons on his chest red white and blue,
It was he that looked the hero as he made the people stare o,
As he stood on Murphy's corner tooral loo.

But alas for human greatness every dog he has his day,
 Tooral looral looral looral loo,
 And Sergeant William Bailey he is getting old and grey,
 Tooral looral looral looral loo,
 No longer youths are willing to take his dirty shilling,
 And things for him are looking mighty blue,
 In spite of fife and drumming no more recruits are coming,
 For Sergeant William Bailey tooral loo.

Peadar Kearney and another popular ballad writer, Brian O'Higgins, continued to use the cutting edge of sarcasm to great effect. They used some of their songs to mock the police who at that time were encouraged to learn the Irish language so that they might be able to charge the rebels with making seditious speeches. However, when it came to writing about the 'Easter Rising,' Peadar Kearney wrote not about a glorious rebellion but in an understated fashion, referred to the Rising as a row in the town. Incidentally, it is also worth noting that this is one of only two songs known to the writer written about 1916 that includes Tipperary volunteer and Commandant Thomas MacDonagh. The other song is a modern ballad called 'Bring Them Home' which deals with Irish nationalism throughout the years:

The Row in the Town

I'll tell you a story of a row in the town,
 When the green flag went up and the crown rag came down,
 'Twas the neatest and sweetest thing ever you saw,
 And they played the best game played in Erin go Bragh.

God rest gallant Pearse and his comrades who died,
 Tom Clarke, MacDonagh, MacDermott, McBride,
 And here's to James Connolly he gave one hurrah,

And he faced the machine guns for Erin go Bragh.³²

Big moments in history like the 1916 Rising almost always provide inspiration for a great ballad. In his book *The Easter Rising in Song and Ballad*, Greaves describes the Rising as 'the most spectacular event of the Irish Revolution'.³³

Greaves also remarks that Irish songs give a truer folk history because they recorded the emotions of the common people.³⁴ Patrick Pearse, the iconic leader of 1916 and James Connolly the trade union leader of the Irish Citizen Army are both solely commemorated in separate songs, simply called ‘Patrick Pearse’ and ‘James Connolly’. Joseph Mary Plunkett, another of the seven signatures to the Irish Proclamation, is also partly commemorated in a ballad called ‘Grace’, accounting for his last minute marriage to his long term girlfriend Grace Gifford from his prison cell before his execution. But why is there a ballad for Pearse, Connolly and Plunkett and none for the other leaders of the Rising such as Tipperary’s Thomas MacDonagh? Perhaps the manner of Connolly’s execution – still suffering from his wounds, he was shot strapped to a chair – or perhaps his role as a trade union leader inspired the ballad maker to immortalise him in song. Likewise, perhaps the dramatic wedding of Plunkett to Grace Gifford from his prison cell was enough to arouse certain feelings in an individual to pen a powerful ballad. With the centenary of the Rising rapidly approaching in 2016 and the decision to hold full military parades included in full commemoration ceremonies once again it would certainly be fitting for the ballad maker to fill the void and commemorate through song the four remaining leaders, Clarke, MacDonagh, McDermott, and Ceannt along with other important personalities of the rebellion such as Willie Pearse and John McBride who were also executed for their part, but to many still remain anonymous.

The inspiration for a ballad can come from anywhere. A parish priest from Kilcoo in Co.Down, Canon O’Neill, attended the first sitting of the new Dáil, or parliament, in Dublin in 1919. As the names of the elected members were called out he was moved by the number of times the names were answered by “faoi ghlas ag na

Gaill” (locked up by the foreigner). On returning home he wrote one of the finest songs that recounts the story of the 1916 Rebellion, *The Foggy Dew*:

The Foggy Dew

As down the glen one Easter morn
To a city fair rode I.
There armed lines of marching men,
In squadrons passed me by.
No pipe did hum, no battle drum,
Did sound its loud tattoo.
But the angelus bell o’er the Liffey’s swell,
Rang out through the foggy dew.

Right proudly high over Dublin town
They flung out the flag of war.
‘Twas far better to die ‘neath an Irish sky,
Than at Suvla or Sud el Bar.
And from the plains of royal Meath,
Brave men came hurrying through,
While Britannia’s Huns with their long-range guns,
Sailed into the foggy dew.

But the Bravest fell and the requiem bell
Rang mournfully and clear,
For those who died that Easter tide,
In the springtime of the year.
While the world did gaze with deep amaze,
At those fearless men but few,
Who bore the fight that freedoms light,
Might shine through the foggy dew.³⁵

Amhrán na bhFiann, Ireland’s national anthem, had its birth during the 1916 Rising. Known in English as ‘The Soldiers Song’, the chorus of the latter was formally adopted as Ireland’s anthem in 1926. It is played at all sporting and other public events across the country. In February 2006, Irish Eurovision entrant Brian Kennedy came under fire for reading the words of the national anthem before the Ireland /Wales six Nations rugby match in Lansdowne Road. Following on from that, Dublin Fianna Fáil T.D. Martin Brady called for the measure that all schoolchildren

be taught the national anthem to “commemorate the heroes of 1916”.³⁶ Brady continued by stating that it:

‘Was obvious that most Irish people did not know the words of Amhrán na bhFiann – a situation that should be rectified as the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising approaches. As we prepare to honour those who gave their lives in 1916 a fitting tribute would be for us all to commit to rediscovering Amhrán na bhFiann. It is said that in their darkest hour in the G.P.O., the men and women of 1916 sang Amhrán na bhFiann to raise their spirits’.³⁷

In a survey carried out after the publication of this article in *The Irish Daily Star*, 50 people were asked at random if they knew in full the words to the national anthem. An astonishing 43 people or 86% of those surveyed did not know the words of the National Anthem in full. It seems the first two lines and the last few lines are the only familiar ones to those questioned. It appears that Brady’s claim is justified. In response the Dublin T.D. said that he would be asking Education Minister Mary Hanafin to consider making the teaching of the anthem and its history part of the civics curriculum in second level schools.

There has been, it can be said, very few films or documentaries made to tell the story of what can be argued to be one of the most important periods in Irish history, the 1916 Rising. The classic *Mise Éire* is an historic artistic collaboration combining Seán Ó Riada’s music and George Morrison’s cinematic work. The Gael Linn production chronicles Ireland between the years 1896-1918. Perhaps the most stunning footage revolves around the Easter Rising including the 1915 funeral of O’Donovan Rossa, the old and last Fenian leader whose death in America after years of exile became a major rallying cry for the budding Irish freedom movement. There is priceless footage of the Irish volunteers and Irish Citizen Army in training, as well

as an amazing close up of the old Fenian Tom Clarke, the first name on the 1916 Proclamation and in many ways the inspiration of the 1916 Rising. On the morning of the Rising Irish volunteers are shown marching towards the city centre. British troops are shown flooding into the city to quell the rising, and there are many scenes of casualties as well as the destruction throughout Dublin. The surrender of the rebels and the anxious prisoners being marched to Richmond barracks to learn their fate is also shown. On the contrary, the return of those prisoners from England a few years later as the Sinn Fein movement begins to sweep the country is remarkable footage, none more so that the hundreds of thousands who showed up for Countess Markievicz, who is shown being driven through huge crowds in central Dublin. The musical compositions in *Mise Éire* are both poignant and appropriate. The Recording of the music for *Mise Éire* took place at the Phoenix Hall, Dublin, on May 19th 1959, with Ó Riada conducting the Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra.³⁸ Ó Riada draws heavily from the Irish tradition with songs such as ‘Róisín Dubh’, ‘Boolavogue’ and ‘Sliabh na mBan’.

Neil Jordan’s *Michael Collins* released in 1995 barely touches on the 1916 Rising as it mainly traces the role of Collins in the guerrilla warfare days from 1919-1921, a point emphasised by Lavery when he states that the War of Independence has proved far more popular than the 1916 Rising with filmmakers.³⁹ Lavery links this point to the fact the Rising did not allow for the sort of rebel-on-the-run narratives which could be set during the War of Independence.⁴⁰ The film devotes approximately five minutes to the rising depicting the Irish surrender from the GPO, the capturing and identifying of the ringleaders of the Rising and their subsequent execution. In 2001 a four part series entitled *Rebel Heart* aired on Irish screens for the first time. But Ronan Bennett’s four-part television drama for the BBC and RTÉ

was already controversial before it reached British and Irish television screens. Ulster Unionist leader and leader of the Northern Ireland power sharing government, David Trimble, berated the BBC for making the drama at a sensitive time in the far from steady peace process. He claimed the series would be used as propaganda for modern day Irish republicans and he attacked Bennett's own political convictions and a number of alterations made to actual historical events in the series. But setting aside the argument over whether it was wise for David Trimble to attack the series before it was even screened, it has to be said *Rebel Heart* was entertaining and informative. The series was an epic story of the Irish Rebellion as seen through the eyes of a young rebel volunteer, Ernie Coyne, torn between love and the fight for freedom. On the first day of the Easter Rising in Dublin, 1916, 18 year old Ernie Coyne joins the Irish Volunteers as they capture the General Post Office. He meets Ita Feeney, a Belfast girl who has joined the rebels in their fight for freedom from the British, and immediately falls under her spell. This powerful, epic drama depicts the Irish struggle for independence through Ernie's experiences. Set against the colourful, intense and often dangerous backdrop of a bitter war, this drama is full of action and heroism, interwoven with a deeply moving love story that sheds a very personal light on events that changed a nation.

Thomas MacDonagh and the Politics of Commemoration.

Thomas MacDonagh was Tipperary's sole representative in the week long battle of Easter Week, 1916. MacDonagh, a poet and family man had moved from his native Cloughjordan 1908 to take up a job as teacher in Fermoy before moving to Dublin to teach at Pearse's Irish school for boys Saint Edna's. His participation in the Rising as Commandant of the 2nd Battalion which occupied Jacob's biscuit factory and his signature to the Proclamation of Independence ensured execution after the

Rising was suppressed by the British. On 3rd May 1916 at 3.30 a.m., bound and blindfolded, MacDonagh was executed by firing squad in the Yard of Kilmainham Gaol. Tipperary folklore now tells how MacDonagh smiled at his killers before the order was given to fire, safe in the knowledge that more Tipperary men would continue the fight he had started.⁴¹ His body was hurriedly buried in quicklime, which guaranteed immediate disintegration so as to prevent any funeral processions or demonstrations which might stoke up any more unwanted emotions toward British rule in Ireland. Although it is now 90 years since his death sentence was carried out in the yard of Kilmainham Gaol, Thomas MacDonagh's name is still very much alive thanks to the making of memory in his honour, mainly through the Gaelic Athletic Association and by landmarks in his native Tipperary.

The Kilruane MacDonagh's GAA club is a successful hurling and football club in north Tipperary which draws its membership from the villages of Kilruane, Ardcroney and Cloughjordan. It is said that hurling matches took place in this area even before the GAA was founded in 1884. A number of teams also existed in the parish of Cloughjordan and they constantly battled each other for supremacy. The Lahorna De Wets were the most famous of these teams winning 14 north Tipperary championships in a row. Finally, in 1937 all the teams in the parish united as the Kilruane MacDonagh's in the memory of Thomas MacDonagh who hailed from the same parish.⁴² The MacDonagh's as they are more commonly known proved to be one of Tipperary's most successful clubs and on Saint Patrick's Day 1986, the name of Thomas MacDonagh once again reverberated around the country as Kilruane MacDonagh's became the supreme hurling team in Ireland capturing the All Ireland club title. With a grand total of 100 north Tipperary titles and 34 county titles the

history and folklore of the MacDonagh link is commonly known throughout Ireland in GAA circles. Today, the club wear black and white jerseys, (Figure 5.11) but more fittingly the club crest, (Figure 5.12) is a likeness of Thomas MacDonagh. There was always been a universal respect and fond admiration for Thomas MacDonagh from members of the Kilruane MacDonagh's GAA club and they are proud to carry his name. Thomas MacDonagh's name is further immortalised by the GAA with the decisions of two Tipperary clubs to name their grounds in his memory. MacDonagh Park is the chosen name of both Kilruane MacDonagh's and Nenagh Éire Óg's grounds. MacDonagh Park, Cloughjordan, (Figure 5.13), was officially opened during the 1966 Easter Golden Jubilee celebrations by Thomas MacDonagh's daughter Bairbre Redmond. An exhibition game between Tipperary and Galway marked the occasion at which thousands attended. The decision to name the ground in MacDonagh's memory, according to one interviewee, was 'a simple and fitting task to honour our parish's greatest son, in this fashion his memory will live on indefinitely'⁴³.

Nenagh's Éire Óg hurling club also saw it fitting to name their GAA grounds in memory of Thomas MacDonagh. Officially opened as MacDonagh Park in 1942 a North Tipperary selection played Ahane from Limerick in an exhibition game. Today MacDonagh Park and complex, Nenagh, is arguably Tipperary's finest club grounds. It now regularly hosts many prestigious inter-county, club and colleges hurling and football matches. A plaque, (Figure 5.14), at the entrance to the grounds displays a picture of Thomas MacDonagh and explains how he was executed for his part in the part in the Rising and how the grounds are named in his memory.



Figure 5.11. Kilruane MacDonagh's GAA jersey

Source: Author



Figure 5.12. The crest of Kilruane MacDonagh's GAA club

Source: Author



Figure 5.14. Memorial to Thomas MacDonagh, MacDonagh GAA Park, Nenagh.

Source: Author

These medals are presented to juveniles from under 12 up to players in senior ranks and having MacDonagh's likeness is an intelligent and informative way to commemorate the 1916 leader. The North Tipperary GAA Board have taken further worthwhile steps in commemorating MacDonagh by honouring the most successful club in the division every year with a trophy entitled the 'MacDonagh Cup'. Once again this demonstrates the esteem the officers of the Board hold MacDonagh in and it also reveals the proximity of the GAA and the nationalist movement in Ireland. MacDonagh, of course, was not the only figure from the Irish Revolution to have GAA clubs, club grounds or perpetual trophies called after him. For example, Sean MacDiarmada lends his name to a prominent GAA club in Dublin, Pádraig Pearse's is a club in South Roscommon, and Sean Treacy's is a famous hurling and football club in West Tipperary.

Thomas MacDonagh Memorial, Golden, Tipperary.

In the village of Golden in West Tipperary, the Thomas MacDonagh monument, (Figure 5.15), is arguably the most impressive of all those erected in memory of the 1916 martyr. Ironically, the village claims no connections with MacDonagh or his legacy. The local postmaster, Mr. Jack Hickey, explained why the community felt it necessary to honour MacDonagh in such striking fashion, He responded:

“You see, there is no need to have any reason to honour a man of the calibre of Thomas MacDonagh. This is a fierce republican part of the county, and Tipperary has always been a republican county. Just a few miles down the road there is where Treacy and Breen started the Black and Tan war, and where Brian Ború first fought the Vikings. Across the road you see the statue of Thomas MacDonagh, a true Irish Patriot and a man who died so lads like us could cast a vote. This monument is the least the village could do to honour him. He is held in fierce high esteem in these parts.”⁴⁵

The monument is 10 foot tall and is extremely prominent on entering the village. It is situated on the banks of the River Suir, and the limestone column supporting the bust of MacDonagh blends in harmoniously with the ruins of a 13th century Norman tower. MacDonagh is portrayed in his volunteer uniform, with jacket, shirt and tie. Two prominent inscriptions are visible on the monument. One, simply displayed on the limestone column reads in Irish:

Thomás Mac Donnada,
1878-1916,
A fuair bás ar son na hÉireann

This translates to English as:

Thomas MacDonagh

1878-1916
Who died for Ireland

The second inscription, adjacent to the monument bears the inscription:

Proudly Remember
Thomas MacDonagh
Tipperary Man
Commanded Jacob's Garrison, Easter Rising
Died like a prince, 3rd May, 1916

As you pass by, take heart from the nobility
And sacrifice of men differed in racial origins
Who gallantly tended the flame of Irish
Freedom down the ages in this countryside
Cherish not-least Norman forbears who,
Raised this castle, 700 golden years ago.

MacDonagh's memory is also cherished in Rockwell College where he taught before joining Pearse in Saint Enda's School for boys in Rathfarnham. A large portrait, (Figure 5.17) of the poet and patriot adorns the college reception and his legacy and tradition in promoting the Gaelic tradition is still taught to the college's pupils. Thomas MacDonagh is an icon for Tipperary and Irish people all over the world and his memory will continue to be valued and treasured at local and national level for years to come.



Figure 5.15. Memorial to Thomas MacDonagh, Golden, Co. Tipperary

Source: Author



Figure 5.16. Thomas MacDonagh memorial, Golden, Tipperary.

Source: Author



Figure 5.17. Portrait of Thomas MacDonagh, Rockwell College, Cashel.

Source: Author

Conclusion

The 1966 Golden Jubilee Easter celebrations were closely followed by the outbreak of the troubles in Northern Ireland. This prompted considerable heart-searching over the impact of Irish history on contemporary events, and questions as to whether or not the 1966 commemorations had prompted a renewed wave of militant nationalism⁴⁶. This heart searching led to a reassessment of the history curriculum that was taught in primary and secondary schools, and a new set of school textbooks was written which took account of the changed situation. After 1966, the anniversaries of nationalist historical events attracted at best low-key commemorations as Daly highlights with the hushed remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the founding of Dáil Éireann in 1969.⁴⁷ The 75th anniversary of the 1916 Rising was marked, or not marked, largely by embarrassment.⁴⁸ However, with the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998 and IRA decommissioning in 2005, the making of memory once again flourished in 2006, the year marking the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising. The 120,000 in attendance witnessed full scale commemoration on Dublin's streets, the likes of which had not been seen since 1966. Some scholars and journalists still resented the fact Ireland should celebrate its 1916 legacy by maintaining that such large scale celebrations would justify another killing spree in Northern Ireland, like what materialised from the 1966 Easter celebrations. However with the threat of IRA weapons no longer an issue, the people of Ireland can now look forward to the centenary celebrations of the Easter Rising in 2016 with optimism and pride.

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Chapter 6

Commemorating the War of Independence in County Tipperary

Introduction

‘If we lose our memory, we lose ourselves’¹

Commemorations, as Bort remarks, can be an unwanted burden or a liberating celebration.² They can be convenient or inconvenient. Commemorations ‘should be healing, bonding experiences and should help focus us to concentrate on contemporary challenges.’³ Throughout the island of Ireland there have been countless commemorations remembering ambushes, fallen volunteers or even train rescues associated with the Irish War of Independence. The War of Independence has provoked a massive amount of interest. As Hopkinson notes, IRA guerrilla warfare and Black and Tan reprisals have rivalled the issue of the British government’s culpability for the Great Famine as the most emotive subject in modern Irish history.⁴ Recently, the War of Independence has been in the public spotlight once again with the release of Hollywood and Irish made films on the matter, namely *Michael Collins* and *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*. These movies have had Irish and international audiences flocking to the movie theatre to observe different directors’ perspectives on a tit-for-tat guerrilla warfare. This combined with the most recent full scale government commemoration of the Irish War of Independence which involved the reinterment of the Mountjoy 10 and the staging of full state funerals,⁵ which as O Donoghue recently remarked, some commentators have criticised. However, the manner in which the Irish public reacted to the funeral cortège as it made its way through Dublin City shows that Ireland cherishes the memory of all volunteers who gave their lives for Irish freedom, as well as appreciating the ultimate sacrifice they made.

The Broader Context

The Reinterment of the Mountjoy Volunteers

In the summer of 1920, the British administration had come to the conclusion that there existed in large parts of Ireland a state of complete disorder and lawlessness. Most serious was the fact that policemen and British Soldiers were being killed with near impunity. It was not only very difficult to catch those who carried out such acts but those who were charged were let go by republican jury attitudes. In the House of Commons a frustrated Lloyd George reported that in the month of July alone 15 police and four military had been killed and 52 wounded.⁶ Over 50 policemen had been killed since the beginning of the year but no one had been convicted for their deaths. Countering such figures, Sinn Féin stated that 31 civilians had been killed by British Government forces.⁷ Some of the hardliners in the British Cabinet argued that the only way to deal with rebelliousness in Ireland was the imposition of strict and brutal martial law that would confer draconian powers on the military. Counties in the South, including Tipperary, had already been declared military areas with strict curfews imposed. However the majority of the British Cabinet was reluctant to sanction such a course of action. To address the situation the Restoration of Order in Ireland (ROI) Act was rushed through the parliament in Westminster in early August 1920.

The ROI Act provided for a host of rules and regulations including prohibition on the possession of carrier pigeons, power to close pubs early, power to search and question and power to require inhabitants to remain indoors.⁸ One of the most controversial aspects of the Bill was that death caused by Crown Forces would no

longer be subjected to a coroner's inquest but to an army inquest. In the supplemental regulations a section dealt with the trial and punishment of crimes by court martial. These court martials were aimed at overcoming the difficulty that existed in securing convictions in the civilian courts. The jury in these court martials consisted of British military officers. From October 1920 to June 1921, over 24 people were tried by these court martials. Ten were sentenced to death and were hung from the gallows in Mountjoy Gaol.

For 80 years members of the families of the 10 men executed in Mountjoy could only visit the resting place of their loved one with prior permission from the Mountjoy prison authorities. Immediately after their burial in Mountjoy the respective families campaigned, with the help of the National Graves Association, to give the executed men a proper burial. On 14 October, 2001, under grey skies and persistent rain, the ceremony that the families of the 10 men had waited for began in Mountjoy Prison. The bodies of the 10 IRA volunteers; Kevin Barry, Thomas Bryan, Patrick Doyle, Frank Flood, Patrick Moran, Thomas Whelan, Bernard Ryan, Thomas Traynor, Edmond Foley and Patrick Maher, were exhumed from the prison and they received a State Funeral with full military honours. Among those in attendance was the Minister for Justice, John O Donoghue and the Director of the Irish Prisons Service, Sean Aylward. Six members of each family acted as pall-bearers and brought the coffins, one by one, to the waiting hearses. The gathered families included grandsons, granddaughters, niece's, nephews and grandnephews of the dead men. As the cortège passed through the gates of the Mountjoy the prison bell tolled. The prison saluted as part of Mountjoy's history came to an end. As the funeral procession passed through the streets of Dublin City many people who had lined the streets burst

into spontaneous rounds of applause. At Westmoreland Street around 600 family members followed behind the hearses, which were led by a military band. Outside the General Post Office the cortège paused while a cadet guard of honour presented arms and a lone piper played a haunting lament.⁹

A Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Cathal Daly in the Pro-Cathedral with dignitaries such as President Mary McAleese, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, Government Ministers and members of the opposition in attendance. The 10 coffins were placed in a row before the altar. Following the Mass the coffins were once again placed in the hearses for their final journey to Glasnevin Cemetery. As the cortège passed the Garden of Remembrance it paused and a minute's silence was observed. At the request of his family volunteer Patrick Meagher's remains were brought to Glasnevin Cemetery and then to Ballylanders, Co. Limerick for burial with state honours. At Glasnevin the men's coffins were lowered into the ground one by one in the order in which they had been executed. Before the Taoiseach's oration wreaths were laid by the families. The burial plot is beside a memorial to Sir Roger Casement and in the shadow of the Daniel O'Connell tower. The graves of the nine men are today marked by a memorial designed by artist Robert Ballagh. Three volleys of shots were fired over the grave. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern then spoke:

'People of Ireland and friends all around the world. We are gathered here today in honour of the ten volunteers who died on the scaffold in Mountjoy Prison in the cause of freedom and the cause of Ireland. We are here to lay their remains to rest in this soil at last with dignity and honour. We all understand how much we owe these 10 young men and all the volunteers of that period, both men and women. Their sacrifice is not being forgotten by the people of Ireland, and it never will. In the war they fought, they had one support that could not be ignored. It is no wonder to the people of Ireland then that this day has come. Although we have difficulties in our own time, there is no fair person in this country that thinks it is wrong that we bury these men with State honours here today. Today's ceremonies relate to the

circumstances that led to the foundation of this state, and the sacrifices involved. We all look to a future in which the people of Ireland can conduct warm and friendly relations with each other and with our neighbours Great Britain on a basis of equality and partnership, in an atmosphere free of force and coercion, and in which people of all traditions can live and co-operate together for the common good.'¹⁰

The tricolour was raised from half mast to full mast. The playing of the national anthem marked the end of the ceremony. The reburial of the 10 volunteers with state honours, and the reception given to them by the general public was a resounding answer to most Irish people's perception of the recent revisionism debate. These people were saluting these 10 men who had died to ensure a better Ireland without advocating or tolerating modern IRA policies.

Commemorating the War of Independence Through Film

After the Irish Troubles began in 1969, Hollywood's old stereotype of the Irish as loveable drunk rogues gradually gave way to a baneful new stereotype of snarling, wild-eyed terrorists. Thankfully over the past several years, those cartoonish images have begun to be supplanted by more nuanced and complex cinematic portraits of the Irish. The enlightened tax-incentive policy of the Irish Government has stimulated a renaissance of indigenous filmmaking in Ireland while also encouraging an influx of American and British funding. As a result Irish directors such as Neil Jordan and Jim Sheridan have become major players in world cinema. But even more important in stimulating a fresher and more balanced perspective on Irish history and culture has been the tentative movement toward peace talks between the British and the Irish. With the British and American governments coming to accept the necessity of diplomacy with Sinn Féin, it is no longer so easy for filmmakers to paint the Irish with overly broad brushstrokes of derision. Once Sinn

Féin President Gerry Adams was welcomed at the White House, that breakthrough made even so recent a Hollywood movie as *Patriot Games* seem archaic in its one-sidedly anti-Irish caricature of the tragic complexities of the British-Irish conflict. The more three dimensional treatment of the Irish that led to such international hits as *My Left Foot* and *In the Name of the Father* has now made possible a multidimensional exploration of volatile Irish political issues in new films. Amongst this category of film lies Jordan's epic *Michael Collins* and Ken Loach's recent hit, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*.

As the title name suggests, Neil Jordan's 1996 box office hit traces the life of *Michael Collins* from the opening scene during Easter week 1916, right up to his assassination at Beal na Blath. Jordan's film won the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film festival in September 1996. The historical roots of the contemporary dilemma are dramatized with powerful immediacy in *Michael Collins*, a sweeping romantic biopic of the revolutionary figure who forced the British Empire to the negotiating table in 1921. Over the years, various filmmakers have wanted to tell the story of this gifted and conflicted man, including John Huston, Robert Redford, Kevin Costner and Michael Cimino. That a native Irish filmmaker finally succeeded made it worth the wait. Liam Neeson is perfectly cast as the man known to his comrades as 'The Big Fellow', a charming ladies man, whose ruthless guerrilla tactics blended with altruism and a fervent love of country. Foster notes that *Michael Collins* has had a much more powerful effect than any scholarly work has had, or is ever likely to have.¹¹ Lee, on the contrary, emphasises the historical inaccuracies found in the film from beginning to end like the murder of Ned Broy, which never actually happened.¹² The film is arguably more gripping in the first half, which shows the bitter fighting and intrigue between the Irish rebels and British forces. The most vivid sequence

depicts the horrifying events of Bloody Sunday, 21 November, 1920, the mass killing of British spies by Collins' men followed by the British machine-gunning of an unarmed crowd at Croke Park in which Tipperary footballer Michael Hogan lost his life. Another interesting aspect of the film is Jordan's portrayal of De Valera, played brilliantly by Alan Rickman. Jordan's dislike of De Valera is no secret and the behaviour of De Valera in the film will have the viewer rooting for the charismatic character that is Collins.

Ken Loach's controversial film release *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (see Appendices 6.3) received the 'Palme d'Or' award at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival. Set in Ireland, more specifically Cork, just after the First World War, Loach's movie traces the arrival of the Black and Tans in Ireland and portrays their ruthlessness towards the Irish population at the time. The film opens on a tranquil rural scene with a group of Cork men enjoying a friendly game of hurling. One of the main characters, Damian, played brilliantly throughout by actor Cillian Murphy is leaving for London to pursue a career in medicine and after the game he and a few others go to make his farewells to Peggy (Mary O Riordan), a smallholder and lifelong friend of his family. The Black and Tans, having got wind of the forbidden match, (hurling was banned as a 'Paddy' sport), storm into the farmyard and when Micheál, Peggy's grandson refuses to answer in English, they beat him to death. Though some of his friends want him to stay and join the fight against the British, Damian, a pragmatist, can not see how they can win with hurleys and pitch forks and leaves to catch his train. But when he sees the train driver being beaten by the Black and Tans for refusing to let them travel, he returns and swears an oath to the Irish Republican Army. After a string of flying column successes, which perfectly demonstrated ambush combat, the hardship

of life on the run, as well as the vindictive actions of the Black and Tans in acts of retaliation, a truce is signed with the British Government but independence comes at a cost as the group splinters into pro Treaty and anti Treaty factions with brother against brother style warfare the outcome. There have been mixed reactions to the film on both sides of the Irish seas with some English tabloids labelling loach a republican sympathiser. Nevertheless, as Loach states, the story of Irish Independence cannot be told without depicting British brutality.¹³ The film has even sparked fresh debate on the events of the War of Independence. Foster claims the film is far less crude than 'other gung-ho treatises on national liberation' such as *Braveheart*,¹⁴ and also refers to the reconstruction of the Kilmichael ambush, albeit with an important omission. The omission he refers to is the debate surrounding the issue of a false surrender at Kilmichael, which has raised fresh debate among local historians and revisionist historians. On the contrary, Acheson is of the view that the film does not depict the true cruelty of the British forces in Ireland throughout the War of Independence¹⁵.

The biggest reproach levelled at Ken Loach, post-Cannes, is that his film sympathises with the IRA. But *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* clearly shows the effects of war and class struggle on all the protagonists, both British and Irish. The Black and Tans, themselves often young men not long out of the trenches of Flanders, have been brutalised and, like all good soldiers, indoctrinated to the point where they no longer see the Irish as humans. The Black and Tans were in fact, sent in by the British Government to crush the guerrilla warfare and were not part of the regular army; their viciousness led to a tit-for-tat cycle of violence, with the war becoming increasingly dirty on both sides. The film is not, however, as some British tabloid journalists reported, pro IRA. *The Wind That Shakes the Barely* does not romanticise

IRA characters, on the contrary it shows the nasty decisions they had to make, like the time Damian executes a traitor who is also a friend he has known all his life or the visible distress and physical sickness on the republican side after they ambush a British convoy. Another interesting and worthwhile trait Loach emphasises is the role of women and how essential their strength and support was for the success of guerrilla war. The role of women throughout the War of Independence is often underestimated and Loach does his best to emphasise the important role they played. As one of several films at Cannes which dealt squarely with war and specifically aimed to make connections with the war in Iraq and its aftermath, *The Wind That Shakes the Barely* was the most straight forward politically. Loach has since lamented that the events of the War of Independence and Irish Civil War in Ireland remain unknown outside the country itself. The Palme d'Or win will ensure the film reaches an international audience.

Commemorating the War of Independence through Public Space in Tipperary

It would be fair to state that Tipperary is steeped in the history of the Irish War of Independence. However, within the county there is an imbalance of commemorative activity to mark the part that its personalities have played in the guerrilla warfare that lasted from 1919-1921. The south of the county has been successful in remembering those who took part in the events which ensured Ireland its independence. Other districts within the county, namely north Tipperary and mid Tipperary, have not been as prominent in honouring those who dedicated their lives to the cause of Irish independence. It is feasible to state that the majority of the fighting took place within the ranks of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade IRA but the 1st and 2nd Tipperary Brigade were by no means inactive during this turbulent period in Irish

history. The key figures of this war were also high ranking officers in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. Hence, it was the establishment of a committee, The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee, in the 1920s which has ensured that commemoration has come to the fore in regards the remembrance of IRA volunteers from the 3rd Tipperary Brigade.

The establishment of The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee dates back to the first commemoration of Seán Treacy that was held at his grave in Kilfeacle Cemetery in west Tipperary in the 1920. Since that date the committee have deemed it just to honour and remember each volunteer from the ranks of arguably the most famous and feared brigade during the Irish War of Independence. At present the grave of every volunteer, apart from one whose family objected, is marked with a separate remembrance plaque, independent of the headstone, detailing the volunteer's role during the guerrilla warfare years in Ireland. The committee has more recently begun to hold annual commemoration ceremonies to mark major events in the war in south Tipperary such as the Soloheadbeg and Ballinamursough ambushes. But what drives such a voluntary committee to do such work? One member of The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee remarked:

“For me personally, I suppose I was reared on ambushes. I remember sitting at home and my father would come home after a few pints and he would re-enact another ambush. As a group we would all have massive respect for what these men and women did and achieved. They single handedly took on, and brought to its knees, the most powerful and ruthless empire of its time, the British Empire. They lived in treacherous times, sleeping rough in flea ridden lofts or out houses. For me the recent film *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, great and all as it was, didn't depict how cruel these times were for Irish republicans. The 'Brits' were far more ruthless and callous than they were portrayed. The mothers of Ireland had a lot to put up with. Our Committee are proud of the work we have done and will continue to

remember with pride our patriot dead and all who helped in anyway during the troubles in Tipperary and beyond".¹⁶

The commemoration committee consists of Chairman Pat Hogan, Secretary Carrie Acheson, and committee members Frank McCan, Willie Toohey, Thurles historian J.J. Hassett and John Tierney. The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee is responsible for any monument or commemorative event remembering volunteers from south Tipperary. The committee has done and continues to do outstanding work remembering the dead who died for Ireland. They continue to play a vital role in recognising and promoting an awareness of the price paid for freedom and the respect the Irish people should have for that freedom.

Commemorating the Soloheadbeg Ambush

Over the past 12 years, thousands of people spanning the age and political spectrum have attended the annual Soloheadbeg Ambush commemoration which marks the start of the War of Independence in Ireland. Despite the inconvenience of it being held in the depth of winter, this commemoration always attracts a very large attendance. The commemoration is organised by The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee. It must be noted that this committee is independent of any political affiliation. Naturally the personnel involved are of old republican families and their prime objective has been to remember the men who challenged British rule in Ireland on a quiet rural Tipperary by road on a cold January day in 1919, close to one of the largest British military bases in provincial Ireland. A pleasant and refreshing aspect of the annual ceremony is the remembrance of both parties involved in the ambush. Constable McDonald and Constable O Connell, the two RIC men fatally wounded in the ambush, are equally remembered and honoured with the likes of Dan Breen, Seán Treacy, Seán Hogan, Tadgh Crowe, Paddy

McCormack, Paddy O'Dwyer, Seamus Robinson and Michael Ryan, the men who fired the shots that inflicted the first fatal casualties on armed British troops in Ireland since the 1916 Rising. Indeed the attendance yearly of relatives from both the McDonald and O'Connell families is an extremely appreciated part of the commemoration.

The Soloheadbeg Ambush commemoration is modelled on most republican commemoration ceremonies. According to the chairman of the Soloheadbeg Commemoration Committee, it generally starts between 3 pm and 3.30 pm on the Sunday nearest the actual date of the ambush, 21 January.¹⁷ The commemoration is always started by a procession led by the Seán Treacy Pipe Band from Coffey's Forge past Seán Treacy's homestead to the ambush site, recently identified by a limestone plaque, (Figure 6.1). There, in the presence of the Irish tricolour, the commencement of the ceremony is marked by a decade of the rosary, generally recited by Josephine Carroll, daughter of the late Pat McCormack, a deceased member of the ambush group. A local singer next takes their place on the pedestal and performs a local ballad such as "Donohill" or "The Ballad of Sean Treacy". The oration is then given by a guest speaker. Over the past couple of years this honour has been bestowed on Mr. Seán Kelleher, Chairman of the Crossbarry Kilmichael Ambush Committee, Derek Warfield former leader of the Irish rebel band "The Wolfe Tones" and Mr. Con Callaghan, the former Chairman of the Crossbarry Kilmichael Ambush Committee. In the early years of this commemoration the events of the ambush were simply relived through the orator but as time has progressed the orator's duties seem to lie elsewhere. The trend over previous years has often been to defend the names and actions of the participants of the Soloheadbeg Ambush, which have been attacked by revisionist

historians like Peter Hart or broadsheet journalists such as Kevin Myers who have questioned the republicans' motives and actions. In 2005, Kelleher delivered a speech which aroused cheers of approval and applause from those attending the commemoration. As a republican he said that he had 'felt outrage upon reading certain articles and texts badmouthing the men and women we are here to honour today'.¹⁸ He also attacked Peter Hart whom he described as losing his battle after the publication of Meda Ryan's *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter* in 2003 which suggested that there were major holes in his theory of the false surrender at the Kilmichael Ambush, Co. Cork. Nevertheless, this ongoing debate was not solved at Soloheadbeg and still rages today. Towards the end of his/her speech, before the National Anthem, the orator always comments on the Irish situation at present. Most crave a united Ireland and their hopes of lasting peace in Ireland are genuine. 'Hopefully we will all be here in 20 years again, commemorating this great and historic event with Ireland united and free'.¹⁹



Figure 6.1. Commemoration plaque marking the Solohead Beg Ambush

Source: Author

In recent years there have been opinions aired in view of making the Soloheadbeg Ambush site a national monument. If successful it would mean that the site would be protected by the state and preserved for future generations as well as making the public more aware of Tipperary's militant republican history. One of those who proposed such steps was Thurles historian John J. Hassett, a member of The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee:

“Soloheadbeg, three miles from Tipperary town, started a sequence of events that the Good Friday Agreement when fully operational will conclude permanently. Soloheadbeg is a quiet, unspoilt place and the landscape there has not changed since that historic day in 1919 when the first Dáil met and the first shots were fired in the War of Independence. It is a special historic place and we of this generation must retain its unspoilt state for future generations to visit, so they will remember the cost and the value of freedom and the generosity of those who strove to gain it”.²⁰



Figure 6.2. The unspoilt rural setting of the Soloheadbeg Ambush

Source: Author

Mr. Hassett is also certain that the Soloheadbeg and Tipperary Town areas could benefit economically if such a proposal were adopted by the state with students of history, emigrants, tourists and others visiting the area.

The Soloheadbeg National Memorial

On Sunday 22 January, 1950, the then President of Ireland, Seán T. Ó Kelly unveiled the Soloheadbeg memorial, (Figure 6.3), at Soloheadbeg cross, Tipperary. The memorial was erected to ‘remind future generations of the events of that stirring time, and of the brave men who fought and died for Ireland’s freedom’.²¹ The memorial comprises of a granite shaft supporting a bronze torch, symbolic of the re-kindling of the flame of national resurgence, built upon a limestone base and raised by artistically-finished pedestals bearing an inscription in Irish as follows:

I mbuan-chuimhne mortasach ar Ath-adhaint Chogadh na Saoirse taréis
Seachtmhain na Cásca 1916, ag Suicoid Beag, 21adh Eanáir. 1919,
Soloheadbeg, January 21st, 1919.

The monument is erected centrally in a massive limestone wall, in which are incorporated the Arms of the Four Provinces of Ireland, and the names of the eight participants in separate panels: Crowe, Ryan, Hogan, Treacy, Breen, McCormack, Dwyer, Robinson, representing the order in which they occupied positions in the engagement. Another interesting point to note is that the spot where the memorial is erected was the scene of the Battle of Sulcoit (Solohead) in which Brian Ború defeated the Danes. It was also at this cross roads that Seán Treacy drilled his first company of volunteers prior to Easter Week, 1916, making the spot a truly a suitable site for a national memorial. In recent times the monument has fallen slightly into disrepair with the

inscription plaques barely legible. The same can be said for the plaques representing the eight volunteers on the background wall. However, there are plans in the making to restore this memorial to its full grandeur shortly with The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee confident of securing money for the monument's restoration.



Figure 6.3. The Soloheadbeg National Memorial

Source: Author

Lieutenant Thomas O'Dwyer

On 29 March, 1920, volunteer Tom O'Dwyer was murdered by British forces in his house at Bouladuff, more commonly known as 'The Ragg', about five miles from Thurles in mid Tipperary. Tom, 21, a publican, was an active volunteer in the 2nd Tipperary Brigade of the IRA. On the night of his death, the RIC had dispersed a gathering of men from the village by firing shots and charging in their direction. O'Dwyer passed the RIC Constable on his return journey home from visiting friends.²² At around 12.30 that night a group of British Soldiers, wearing blackened faces and false beards entered O'Dwyer's house and bundled his sister to the ground. They made straight for the republican's bedroom and shot him dead as he was coming out of his room. It was widely believed that Lieutenant Thomas O'Dwyer's murder was a reprisal for militant republican activities on RIC personnel in the area. On 4 March, 1920, four IRA volunteers entered a public house in Bouladuff in an attempt to disarm two RIC men socialising. One surrendered immediately but the other was shot dead while trying to escape through a back door. On the same night as O'Dwyer's death, another young volunteer was also shot dead in his home in Thurles. These volunteers were the first victims of the RIC 'murder gang' in the mid Tipperary area.²³ O'Dwyer was laid to rest in the chapel yard, Drom, Templemore. The inscription on his headstone reads:

"Thomas O' Dwyer, Murdered by English Hirelings on 29 March 1920, Aged 21
Years"

In a glass panel, on a wall close to The Ragg Post Office (O'Dwyer's birthplace), a Celtic cross statuette, (Figure 6.5) and a commemorative plaque, (Figure 6.4) to his

memory are also displayed. Furthermore, there is also a bridge, with a plaque, in Templemore, Tipperary, named in his memory.

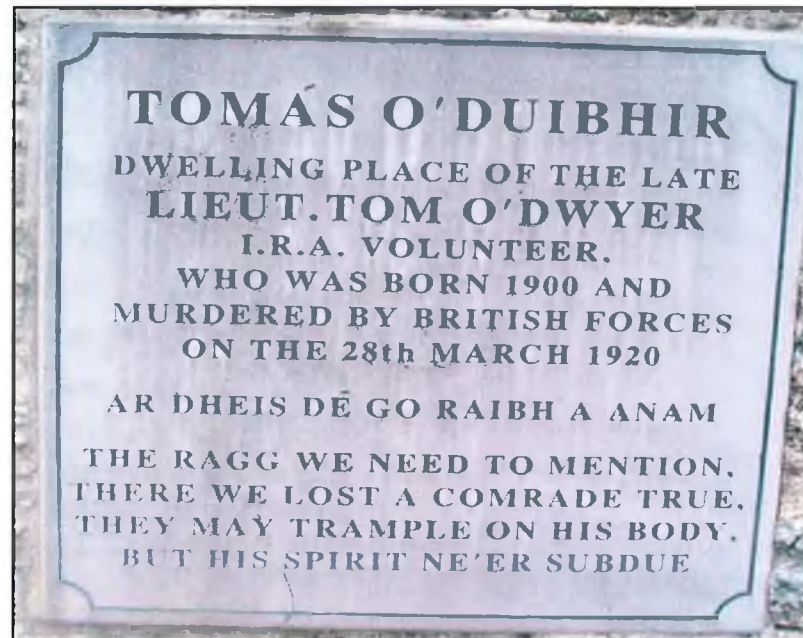


Figure 6.4. Memorial to Tom O'Dwyer, The Ragg, Co. Tipperary

Source: Author



Figure 6.5. Celtic cross in memory of Tom O'Dwyer

Source: Author

Commandant Thomas O'Donovan

Thomas O'Donovan was born in Glengoole, Tipperary in 1896. He joined the Irish Volunteers in May 1916. Later that month he was arrested and transported to Frongoch Internment Camp in Wales. Upon release he immediately re-involved himself in the work of organising and drilling volunteers. O'Donovan proved himself to be a very capable soldier with a keen intellect, qualities soon recognised within the movement so that by that year, 1918, he was elected First Commander of the Seventh Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade'.²⁴ O'Donovan was made a priority among the wanted men on the British hit list. Throughout 1919 and 1920 he took part in numerous militant republican activities including the capture and burning of Drangan Barracks where along with Breen, Treacy, Hogan and Robinson he accepted the British surrender. He also organised and participated in the ambush at Newtown Cross on 2 July, 1920 where an RIC sergeant was killed. The last few months of his life were spent constantly on the run with his Flying Column.

On the evening of his death, O'Donovan held a meeting with his men. That evening's mission was to travel to Killenaule and fire a few rounds of ammunition at a British sentry parading outside the military barracks;

'In Killenaule Tom and his men met up with a group of local volunteers. They were all armed with revolvers. As they were heading towards the barracks didn't they spot two peelers go into O'Connell's over there. They got the notion anyway that it would be a good move to capture and disarm these men and use them as hostages. But when they went in the peelers had gone. So after a brief discussion they decided to go ahead with the original plan and fire pot shots at the British Sentry. Just then, two British Soldiers came around the corner and had the appearance of being intoxicated...they were singing and staggering. Paddy Kinane who was with Tom O'Donovan that night always said after that Tom wanted to arrest them but then thought against it. As they came closer the soldiers drew their weapons and fired at point blank range, it had been an ambush on the British behalf.²⁵

Thomas O'Donovan was shot in the head. Some of the other volunteers received serious wounds but escaped and recovered sufficiently after time spent in IRA safe houses. O'Donovan was not dead after the first bullet so the British soldiers dragged him across the road and placed him against the wall where he was executed. The following day he was removed to Tipperary Town. He was buried in Glengoole cemetery. A plaque, (Figure 6.6), at the AIB Bank in Killenaule marks the spot where O'Donovan fell.



Figure 6.6. Memorial to Thomas O'Donovan, Killenaule, Co. Tipperary

Source: Author

The O'Briens Commemorated in North Tipperary

On 4 November, 1920, a British Intelligence officer, Lieutenant Hambelton, was travelling from Templemore to Nenagh when he was ambushed and killed at Casey's Cross, outside Nenagh. From the usual pattern of events it was felt that there would be reprisals in Nenagh that night for the killing of Hambelton, so a number of people quietly left Nenagh for the comparative safety of the countryside that evening.²⁶ Twenty-one year old John O'Brien and his 24 year old cousin Thomas O'Brien of Nenagh cycled the 10 mile journey to Puckaun to spend the night at the house of Rody Cleary. Cleary was a prominent Sinn Féin councillor and was an obvious target for British reprisals that night. Some locals recognised the danger and suggested that the O'Briens should stay in a more secluded house. The cousins declined the offer however. Shortly after midnight on 5 November a British Military lorry and two cars pulled up outside Cleary's home. They entered with the intention of arresting Cleary. They were informed by the occupants that he was in Dublin on business. He was in fact asleep in Kelly's house a few fields away. The raiding party consisted of an Intelligence Officer and 20 policemen. Upon searching the house the two O'Briens were found asleep in different rooms. They were ordered to dress quickly and assemble in the kitchen along with Phil Cruise, another Nenagh local who had left the town for the safety of the countryside that evening. Once dressed and assembled in the kitchen, they were arrested and placed in the back of the military lorry. What happened after the British contingent left Rody Cleary's house that night is still the topic of debate in north Tipperary to this day. The British claim that the cousins made a dash for freedom from the back of the military lorry but with 20 armed policemen watching their every move republicans in the area still maintain that this account is highly unlikely and purely British propaganda. The republican claim is

that the cousins were shot almost immediately after leaving Cleary's of Knigh, Puckane.

At the subsequent inquest into the killing of the O'Brien's, the Intelligence Officer claimed he had received information that a John O'Brien of Nenagh was an active member of the IRA and that he was one of the parties responsible for Lieutenant Hambelton's death.²⁷ Republican sources have always claimed that the O'Briens were members of the IRA but were not active and certainly not involved in the ambush of Hambelton. He was also questioned as to why, at first, all three prisoners were held together in the military lorry before Phil Cruise's subsequent removal to a car before departure from Cleary's house. The answer given was that he simply did not want the three prisoners held together. This adds further speculation to the republican claim that the O'Brien's had been immediately singled out for reprisal killings as punishment for the murder of Lieutenant Hambelton by the First Brigade Tipperary IRA earlier that morning. During the inquest it also emerged that the Intelligence Officer claimed that he thought the two were brothers and not cousins, and also alleged that if he was aware of the fact that John O'Brien held American citizenship neither man would have been arrested. What exactly happened on the road to Ballyartella that night will never be known. The military were the sole witnesses and only a censored version of the proceedings of the military inquiry was released in the local press. The funerals of the two O'Briens were marshalled heavily by the British in a bid to stem emotions from overflowing. Both coffins were draped in the Irish tri-colour and John O'Brien's coffin also carried the American flag. A memorial containing a Celtic cross in a white limestone casing, (Figure 6.7 and Figure 6.8), was

unveiled in 1925 at Knigh Cross, half way between Puckaun and Nenagh in memory of John and Thomas O'Brien.



Figure 6.7. Encased memorial to John and Thomas O'Brien

Source: Author



Figure 6.8. Celtic cross memorial to the O'Brien brothers in detail

Source: Author

Commemorating Bloody Sunday

Mick Hogan, the Tipperary footballer killed in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday, was born in the parish of Grangemockler, in the south west of the county, in 1896. The area was deep rooted in the ideals and aspirations of Davin and Cusack and Hogan was one of the first to join the volunteers in his area. On that Sunday, known now as Bloody Sunday, the Auxiliaries and RIC personnel smashed through the gates of Croke Park and drove their tanks to the centre of the field and opened fire on an unsuspecting group of spectators and players. This was a retaliation act in reprisal for Michael Collins's squad murdering the "12 apostles" as they were known, earlier that morning. Fourteen civilians, including Michael Hogan were gunned down that day.

Mick Hogan's remains, accompanied by the team, arrived in Clonmel on the Wednesday after the game. Thousands joined the funeral procession to Clonmel. Mick Hogan was buried in his Tipperary football strip; the coffin was draped in the tricolour and he was laid into his grave by the men who played beside him on the previous Sunday. Mick Hogan's memory was perpetuated by the erection of the Hogan Stand in Croke Park in 1951 and by the erection of the Hogan Memorial at his graveside in 1928. The 50th anniversary of his death was marked by a football match in Grangemockler between Dublin and Tipperary and has continued to be commemorated annually from that date.

Volunteer Jim Devaney Commemorated

'Luckybags' public house on the Nenagh/Cloughjordan Road is one of north Tipperary's most renowned landmarks. It has been in existence since the 1880s and is situated half way on the 12 mile long road linking Cloughjordan and Nenagh. Since the outbreak of guerrilla warfare in Tipperary, this route had been targeted as ideal ambush territory. Numerous attempts were made to ambush the British on this road but they always seemed to evade the IRA rebels, presumably after being tipped off. In January of 1921, four members of the north Tipperary Flying Column were socialising in Luckybags and were surprised by the noise of a Crossley Tender carrying police and Black and Tans slowing down outside the pub. Frantically they rose and rushed out a back entrance in a bid to escape. As they ran down the by road they were fired upon by the Black and Tans in the Crossley Tender. Three IRA men escaped through the countryside but the fourth volunteer, Jim Devaney of Toomevara, a young man in his 20s, was struck by a bullet as he was crossing the hedge from the by road into a field and he collapsed into the drain behind the hedge.²⁸ The Crossley sped away quickly. Sometime later a large body of RIC men and soldiers returned and searched the terrain where the four men fled. They soon discovered the remains of Devaney in the drain lying in a pool of blood. Labourers in the nearby fields were rounded up and arrested. They were brought to Nenagh Military Barracks where they were interrogated. They were released some weeks later. The spot where Jim Devaney died is marked by a Celtic cross, (Figure 6.9), inscribed:

In Loving Memory of
James Devaney IRA
Shot by Crown Forces
At Kilruane
26 January 1921
R.I.P.



Figure 6.9. Celtic cross which marks the spot where IRA Volunteer Jim Devaney was shot dead

Source: Author

The Old IRA Dispatch Centre Memorial, Rosegreen

Rosegreen is a small rural village approximately 10 kilometres off the Dublin/Cork road in south Tipperary. Just outside the village, on the Cashel side, a memorial now commemorates the 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA dispatch centre. It was from this dispatch centre that IRA volunteers from Rosegreen and the surrounding battalion areas would receive their orders to ambush or attack RIC personnel or British soldiers.



Figure 6.10. The Old IRA Memorial, Rosegreen

Source: Author

The monument, (Figure 6.10), consists of a Celtic cross backed by a headstone. It is enclosed by a black iron railing to its front and a three sided stone wall.

The inscription on the memorial reads as follows:

In Days When Terror Stalked The Proud Land Of The Gael,

When Oppression Denied Us Our heritage,
Proud Young People Passed This Way,
In Defiance of Death Itself,
Bearing On Their Persons, To And From
The Brigade Dispatch Centre,
The Messages Upon Which,
The Waging Of The Fight For Freedom,
In 3rd Tipp Brigade Area Depended
1919-1921

Do Cum Glóire Dé Agus Onóra na h-Éireann

The dispatch centre, still standing 300 yards north of the memorial, has fallen into disrepair over the past few decades. The owner of the land on which the old centre is sited, local farmer Mr. Mick Flanagan, at present houses farm produce in the ruins, (Figure 6.11). Mr Flanagan hopes that one day the dispatch centre will be restored and preserved for future generations to learn and recognise the hardship the men and women of that era had to endure to secure Irish independence:



Figure 6.11. The Dispatch Centre as it Stands Today

Source: Author

“Many’s the skinned heel that went up that old boreen there to the dispatch centre to receive their orders during the Black and Tan War, God bless them all now. Shouldn’t this be preserved for the children of the future so they too can come and see what these men and women sacrificed for us? If they told me in the

morning I'd have that shed cleaned out. All it needs is a decent roof and a general tidying up. I don't know how many times I've been on to them now about trying to preserve it. Sure isn't it a part of our heritage?"²⁹

Mick Flanagan certainly has a point. This old dispatch centre is very much a part of our military heritage and it would certainly be refreshing to see steps taken to restore and preserve this historic set, which at present resembles an old farmyard outhouse, in a part of the country steeped in the history of the War of Independence. The 'they' Mick Flanagan refers to is the Office of Public Works, upon whose door he has campaigned on several occasions in a bid to get something done in regards restoring the old dispatch centre. The Heritage Council is another organisation that should be made aware of the old dispatch centre and its history. Its local grants scheme is fundamental in providing the capital needed in restoring old buildings into tourist attractions. For the moment Mick Flanagan is glad steps have been taken to mark this historic spot. The monument was erected in 1972 with The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee, the 1st Battalion of Rosegreen IRA veterans and their relations and friends all influential, both financially and physically, in the erecting and caring for the monument.

The Liam Lynch Monument

Liam Lynch was born in 1893 at Barnagurraha, north of Mitchelstown, on the Limerick/Cork border. As a volunteer in the IRA in Fermoy at the commencement of the War of Independence, his shrewd thinking and planning soon led him to the high ranking position of leader of the 2nd Cork Brigade IRA. Lynch held command throughout the War of Independence where his contingent became masters of the ambush tactic, inflicting huge casualties on British troops. Lynch's band of rebels

made the first attack on a military target, when on 7 September 1919; they attacked a party of 14 soldiers attending the Wesleyan Church in Fermoy.³⁰ His decisions and actions often brought him over the Galtee Mountains or the Knockmealdown Mountains into Tipperary where he integrated with the 3rd Tipperary Brigade IRA in the continued assault on British forces in Ireland. After the truce called on 11 July, 1921 Lynch had a decision to make. He opted to take an anti-Treaty stance claiming he would be dishonouring his fallen comrades by accepting the treaty Collins brought home from Britain. Lynch was appointed IRA Chief-of-Staff during the Civil War. The Irish Civil war was fought between June 1922 and May 1923. In the 11 months of fighting roughly 3, 000 Irish men and women lost their lives.³¹ The war became one of guerrilla conflict; of ambushes, raids and counter-raids. Michael Collins, the brain behind the War of Independence, was killed in an ambush at Beal na Blath, Cork on 22 August 1922.

In the early hours of 10 April, 1923, Lynch and his anti-Treaty comrades were on the run in the Knockmealdown Mountains near Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. They had just sat down to a cup of tea when a scout brought the news that a column of Free State soldiers were in pursuit of them. Lynch was carrying important documents important to the republican side in the Civil War and so he and his six comrades began a retreat up the steep Knockmealdown Mountains. Half way up the mountain they encountered another column of Free State soldiers and shots were exchanged. Lynch and his comrades were at an extreme disadvantage because they were carrying only pistols in contrast to the Free State soldiers who were armed with rifles. In the dash for shelter that followed Lynch was struck by a bullet and collapsed to the ground. The IRA men attempted to carry him up the incline, but it was to no avail.

Lynch gave them the documents and ordered them to leave him. They did so reluctantly. That was the last time they saw Lynch alive. When the Free State soldiers reached the dying rebel and asked who he was he replied:

‘I am Liam Lynch, get me a priest and a doctor, I am dying’.



Figure 6.12. The Liam Lynch Monument, Knockmealdown Mountains

Source: Author

Lynch lived to reach the hospital in Clonmel where he died later that night. On 7 April, 1935, a 60 foot round tower was unveiled at the spot where Liam Lynch fell. Many of his republican comrades and friends were involved in the strenuous task of labouring on the project which involved transporting suitable stone up the rough terrain of the Knockmealdown Mountains and then cutting the stone on site. A staggering 15,000 people from all over Ireland were in attendance at the unveiling of the Liam Lynch Monument, (Figure 6.12), in 1935, which demonstrates the respect and admiration Lynch was held in as the newly built round tower replaced the simple wooden cross that had marked the spot of Lynch's fall for 12 years. Four statues of Irish wolfhounds stand guard at the Liam Lynch Monument in the scenic Knockmealdowns. These ancient symbols of Ireland are a fitting tribute to Liam Lynch, a native of Cork who dedicated, and gave his life to the cause of Irish Freedom.

Dinny Lacey Commemorated in Tipperary

Dinny Lacey, it could be argued, was Tipperary's unsung hero during the Irish revolution. Lacey was a constant thorn in the side of the British, inflicting heavy casualties on crown forces from 1919-1921. He was also a regular presence to the Soloheadbeg ambushers in 1919 notifying Breen and Treacy on the various movements of crown forces in the vicinity. Lacey was appointed commander of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade IRA flying column during the War of independence and participated in numerous attacks on RIC stations and British soldiers throughout the war. In 1921, when the truce was signed Lacey sided with the republican anti-Treaty side. Dinny Lacey was shot dead on Sunday, 18 February 1923 in the Glen of

Aherlow, an area he had familiarised himself with whilst on the run during the Civil War. Lacey had been hiding in a safe-house when Free State soldiers arrived in the glen and commenced firing into the house. The three IRA men occupying the house scattered and fled in separate directions with the Free State soldiers pursuing them. Lacey fled in the direction of the Aherlow River, but constant rain for a number of days made the river impassable. Lacey could not swim and when he recognised the predicament he was in he dropped his weapon and turned to face his enemy. The Free State soldiers immediately opened fire and Lacey fell to the ground. Local folklore recalls how animals would not graze in the field for years after Lacey's death.³² Today, Lacey's name is immortalised in such Ballads as *The Galtee Mountain Boy* and *The Rifles of the IRA*. The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee also saw fit to commemorate one of Tipperary's unsung heroes in the village of Annacorthy in West Tipperary, Lacey's home village, (Figure 6.13 and Figure 6.14).

Seán Treacy and the Politics of Commemoration

Sean Treacy, who was killed in action in Dublin's Talbot Street on 14 October, 1920 was arguably Tipperary's most active Volunteer during the War of Independence. Treacy was a fearless republican militant leader and organiser who sacrificed his life for the cause of Irish freedom. His name is cherished in his native county and further afield, and the making of memory in his honour is proof of this fact. Along with Dan Breen he started about expanding his local Solohead Company



Figure 6.13. Memorial to Dinny Lacey in Annacorthy Village.

Source: Author



Figure 6.14. Plaque erected at the Dinny Lacey memorial in Annacarthy

Source: Author

of the IRA for the anticipated fight against British forces in Ireland. Treacy's gun fired the first shots of the three-year long War of Independence at Soloheadbeg; he played a leading role in the rescue of Seán Hogan at Knocklong as well as participating in several other ambushes on British forces in Tipperary and Dublin. He was killed while trying to organise a rescue party for his comrade in arms and friend Dan Breen. His death, coming when it did, was a severe blow to the republican side and hopes in the War of Independence. His remains are interred in Kilfeacle Cemetery in Tipperary and his grave is a memorial for scholars and republicans. Today Treacy lends his name to several clubs, buildings, musical compositions, organisations and other associations both nationally and internationally. Each year numerous annual

Easter 1916 commemorations occur at Seán Treacy's graveside, (Figure 6.15), and attract thousands from all over Ireland. The most interesting aspect of Treacy's death is that nobody can interpret what way he would have sided in the Civil War. 'Seán Treacy's affiliation lies nowhere, anyone can claim him'.³³ Hence, a number of 1916 commemorations, including the Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and the 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee, take place one after the other every Easter. Treacy's grave, having been cared for by The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee is in a dominating lofty position with the steps leading up to the grave originating from the steps of the old military barracks in Tipperary. This serves to 'link the past with the present'.³⁴

Another site dedicated to his memory is the Seán Treacy Swimming Pool which was officially opened by President of Ireland, Erskine Childers in Tipperary Town on 28 October 1973. For years the public of Tipperary Town had been searching for something worthwhile and substantial to commemorate the town's most famous son, Irish patriot Seán Treacy. In 1973 that dream was finally realised with the opening of a swimming pool backed financially by The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee. In addition to serving as a pool, the site also houses a small commemorative museum of Treacy's personal belongings and memorabilia from the War of Independence. Clearly visible upon entering the pool, the display is housed in tidy display cabinets in two separate glass rooms on either side of the main entrance. Items like the shoes Treacy was wearing at the time he was gunned down—complete with bullet holes, personal letters, dispatch notices, weapons and ammunition from the period, as well as photos of Treacy and his comrades in arms

from the IRA in south Tipperary make the visitor aware of the turbulent era in which these men lived.



Figure 6.15. The grave of Seán Treacy, Kilfeacle Cemetery.

Source: Author

The porch of the pool is adorned with a crest of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA. Outside the pool a number of plaques make the visitor aware of the fact this Tipperary swimming pool is dedicated to the memory of Seán Treacy. The bust of Treacy is displayed over the main entrance of the pool while a plaque containing the inscription; “Seán Treacy Memorial Swimming Pool” is exhibited in a bed of flowers at the entrance of the car park to the pool.



Figure 6.16. The bust of Seán Treacy at the Seán Treacy memorial swimming pool.

Source: Author



Figure 6.17. Museum inside the Seán Treacy memorial swimming pool.

Source: Author



Figure 6.18. Entrance hall to the Seán Treacy Memorial swimming pool

Source: Author



Figure 6.19. Entrance sign to Seán Treacy Memorial swimming pool

Source: Author

In 1934 the Seán Treacy Pipe Band was formed in the village of Littelton, a few miles outside Thurles, in mid Tipperary. There had always been a tradition of pipers in Tipperary with the establishment of a piper's organisation in the village of Drombane as far back as the late 1800s. In 1934, however, it was decided to amalgamate all pipers interested in forming a band into the Seán Treacy Pipe Band. Today this renowned and dedicated group perform at GAA events, community and cultural occasions all over the country as well as the annual Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. One might question the band's motive for naming themselves after Tipperary Patriot Seán Treacy as opposed to a veteran Irish piper or member of their ancient guild, but one life-long member was left with little doubt that the name of Seán Treacy was a fitting and justifiable title:

‘The band was established in 1934 and we immediately set about choosing a name. As soon as the name Seán Treacy was proposed it was evident that this was a fitting title for us. It wasn’t long since Treacy’s death, only 14 years, and his legacy and reputation in Tipperary was still phenomenal. Treacy was an inspirational, national figure. To be associated with such a leading and prominent character in the Irish War of Independence is a great honour for us and everywhere we perform we do so with pride.’³⁵

The band consists of 20 talented members, half of whom are under the age of 20. This ensures that the name and legacy of Seán Treacy will be kept alive as the future generations of Tipperary pipers continue to adorn his name.

Conclusion

The Irish War of Independence has not suffered as severely in its revising as the 1916 Rising has. This is, it could be argued, due to the fact that the War of Independence was more widespread geographically and more prolonged than the Rising. There were also a far superior number of personnel associated with the War of Independence that there was with Easter week, so pointing the finger of blame at a certain person or event has proved difficult. From the facts outlined earlier in Chapter Four it is clear that Tipperary had a large role to play in bringing the British rule in Ireland to its knees. It comes as no surprise then that there has been no real condemnation of commemorative events associated with the War of Independence. From the evidence produced in this chapter it is clear to see that Tipperary has remembered those men and women who fought to secure an independent country. This, it could also be argued, is due in no small part to the sterling efforts of The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee which has ensured that the memory of dead old IRA veterans in Tipperary still live on today. There is however, a sparse record of commemorating the events of the war through monuments and

commemorative ceremonies in certain parts of the county, north Tipperary being a good example. This, it could be argued, is largely due to the geography of the events of the War of Independence in Tipperary. Most of the key events of the war happened in the south of the county. However some important and decisive events in the War of Independence took place in north Tipperary, such as the Modreeny ambush in June, 1921. This was the last open confrontation of guerrilla warfare tactic against British forces in Tipperary. The ambush inflicted serious losses on the British side and was a moral boosting exercise for the depleted republican flying column. Sadly, there are no annual commemorative events held at the ambush site, there are no songs written to keep alive the names of those involved, and there is no roadside monument to alert the public to this historic place. Hopefully something can be done to correct this soon. With the centenary of the first shots of the Irish War of Independence rapidly approaching, Tipperary can look to the future with optimism, remembering all those who endured and fought to secure Irish independence.

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Chapter 7
Conclusion

This study has explored how the mythologies surrounding County Tipperary's participation in the Irish Revolution of 1916-21 have been commemorated in recent times. I have specifically focused on the Easter Rising of 1916 and the War of Independence of 1919-21 and explained how the militant activities of the men and women from this era, in defiance of British rule in Ireland, led to the subsequent making of memory in modern Ireland. Chapter Four outlined the accomplishments of the Easter Rising and the succeeding Irish War of Independence, in which militant republicans from Tipperary played a principal role. The chapter first explored the historiography of the Irish Revolution and concluded that the period from 1916-1921 qualified to be classed as a revolution. The narrative of Chapter Four traced the week-long battle of Easter Week 1916, when the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army took control of public buildings in Dublin City in defiance of British rule in Ireland. While the Rising was easily defeated, the British response was heavy-handed and resulted in the execution of the ringleaders, including Tipperary man Thomas MacDonagh, a response which turned public opinion in favour of the insurgents' cause. The evidence demonstrated how support for a revamped Sinn Féin led to their overwhelming majority victory in the 1918 General Election, claiming 73 out of a possible 105 seats, symbolising the Irish desire for freedom. Chapter Four continued to document the prominent role Tipperary played in the War of Independence, and how the igniting spark of the war proved to be the Soloheadbeg ambush in January, 1919. The militant activities of the various Tipperary flying columns had major implications for the outcome of the war and indeed on British Army personnel in Ireland. Tipperary republican leaders like Dan Breen, Seán Treacy and Seán Hogan, amongst numerous others became wanted men with the British offering substantial rewards for their capture. Evidence also confirmed the hardships

of war, with heavy casualties inflicted on both sides, and occasionally on the unsuspecting public.

Chapters Five and Six devoted careful attention to the making of memory through the discourses, events, monuments and spaces associated with the various public spectacles that were staged from 1916 to the present day in order to mark the memory of revolutionary activity in Tipperary. These chapters also focused on how the actions of Tipperary rebels were commemorated in song and stories retold among later generations. Chapter Five drew attention to the imbalance of commemorative events marking the Easter Rising, from the first commemorations to the present day. From 1916-1966 the making of memory in honour of the men and women of 1916 was extensive. The year 1966 was especially significant, marking a poignant date in the republican calendar with the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising. The Irish state sponsored strong emotions towards commemorating and honouring republicans in a time when republican songs were learned by most young children at school. The chapter revealed how a small Tipperary village, Cloughjordan, honoured Thomas MacDonagh in April 1966 and that around the country the burgeoning fields of cultural memory and heritage were beginning to flourish. However, further discussion highlighted the impediment of commemorative activity due to the outbreak of IRA violence again in 1969. The IRA terror campaign, and their insistence on claiming the mythology of 1916 to justify their campaign of terror, embarrassed the Irish Government, and indeed towns and villages throughout the country, into ignoring the men and women of 1916 from 1972 to 2006.

In 1991, the year marking the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising, discussions highlighted the lack of commemorative activity. This time state

television failed to show the republican dramas they had previously aired in 1966 e.g. *An Tine Bheo*. Indeed this time also there were no days off school for Irish students. Instead *RTE* aired a series of discussions with historians on the objectives of the Rising and if it had been morally right or wrong. How times had changed. Chapter Five then concentrated on modern day Ireland and verified how the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and IRA decommissioning ensured the revival of Easter commemorations in 2006 when the state once again saw fit to commemorate those who fought and died for Irish freedom during Easter 1916. Opinions were also divided on the appropriateness of remembering in the 2006 Easter Celebrations Irish men and women of non republican backgrounds who died during the Easter Rising. Those who died in British uniform, civilians killed by crossfire or members of the Dublin fusiliers were fittingly included in the 2006 celebrations. The first official Government commemoration of the Battle of Somme, arguably the Great War's bloodiest battle, also placed an emphasis on Ireland's mixed heritages and the necessity to commemorate the 200,000 men from all parts of this island who died on the war fields of Europe. The chapter determined that Ireland can no longer have two histories, separate in conflict. Chapter Five also bestowed special attention to Thomas MacDonagh, and how the poet and patriot has been commemorated extensively around north Tipperary. From poetry, to public buildings and from statues to hurling clubs the chapter gave prominence to MacDonagh's name and argued his legacy will live on for future generations to learn of his role in the fight for Irish freedom.

Chapter Six explored the making of memory in honour of the men and women who fought for Irish sovereignty during the War of Independence in Tipperary from 1919-1921. The first outcome determined from this chapter was the discrepancy of

commemoration geographically throughout county Tipperary. The south and west of the county were the central focus for commemorative events or memorials marking the events of a guerrilla warfare which raged for three years. North and mid - Tipperary were recognised as peripheral areas in remembering the War of Independence. The abundance of memorials and commemorations in the south and west of the county is due to the work of a committee established about eighty-five years ago, 'The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee'. This voluntary committee has been notable in attracting public awareness to the activities and the personnel associated with the Irish War of Independence. The committee have seen fit to mark the grave of every IRA volunteer who participated in the war. In addition, they have erected some impressive roadside monuments commemorating important dates and fallen volunteers. Vast crowds gather annually in Tipperary to commemorate the Soloheadbeg ambush, the starting point of the War of Independence. One of Tipperary's bravest republicans, Seán Treacy, is well-remembered compressively around his home town of Tipperary and the making of memory in his honour displayed in the chapter is testament to this fact. Chapter Six also considered the recent revisionist history debate with the reinternment and state funerals of the Mountjoy ten at Glasnevin Cemetery in 2001. The spontaneous rounds of applause which greeted the funeral cortège of 10 executed War of Independence volunteers was a resounding indication that this argument is dead. These people were applauding the fact that these men had given their lives for Irish freedom and by no means meant they supported any further IRA modern day violence. Chapter Six also determined how the activities of the War of Independence in Ireland has been beamed to large scale international audiences recently with such films as *Michael Collins* and *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*. These two films attracted sell out audiences

throughout the world and brought the hardship, suffering and sacrifice involved in securing Irish freedom to an international audience.

Throughout the course of this work, opportunities for further study have been identified, particularly in the genre of cultural memory. Tipperary, as proven has played a significant role in the Irish Revolution of 1916-1923 but the county was not alone in the fight for Irish freedom. Other counties have also been prominent and the commemorative events and roadside monuments dotted around the Irish countryside in memory of IRA volunteers is testament to this fact. Further learning on the topic could invoke a more widespread study on the Irish Revolution and its commemorative heritages. The province of Munster or Dublin City could indeed warrant scholarly attention. Irish rebellion is also vividly traced in our nation's distinctive poetry and balladry. Further references to Ireland's commemorative revolutionary songs, ballads and poems would make a worthwhile and stimulating research topic. The effective commemorative activities of The 3rd Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Commemoration Committee, based in Clonmel, certainly warrant scholarly attention. Any of the above mentioned subject matters would make for valuable and invigorating pieces of historical research.

Lowenthal recently remarked that 'heritage is everywhere – in the news, in the movies, in the marketplace'¹. He continues to state that to 'neglect heritage is a cardinal sin, to invoke it is a national duty'². Heritage is not the sole link with the past however. History, tradition and memory join us with what has passed. Memory continually refurbishes our awareness of the past³. Remembering the past is crucial to our sense of identity. During her time as President of Ireland, Mary Robinson once

commented that commemoration 'is a moral act'.⁴ Recently commemorations have gone a long way to heal the rift that has divided Ireland's mixed traditions for centuries. The decision in July 2002 of Sinn Fein's Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alex Maskey, to lay a wreath to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Somme in 1916, along with Bertie Ahern's coalition government's decision to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the same event in 2006 has brought a new refreshing respect and re-evaluation to Ireland's mixed heritages. President Robinson's comments would appear to hold meaning at local, national and global level. The recent meeting of Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and Northern Ireland's First Minister, Ian Paisley, on the historic site of the Battle of the Boyne indicates that Ireland is beginning to acknowledge its shared and complex past. This ground breaking exercise involved Ian Paisley presenting Bertie Ahern with a musket, (see Appendices 7.1), believed to have been carried by King James, the Catholic leader, at the Battle of the Boyne.⁵ This presentation was in exchange for a wooden bowl that Mr Ahern presented to the Paisleys in St. Andrew's in Scotland to mark their 50th wedding anniversary. Coincidentally, the fallen walnut tree from which the wood was taken to carve the bowl was still visible just a short distance away on the battlefield site as the two leaders addressed those in attendance. Mr. Ahern and Mr. Paisley then planted a walnut sapling that was nurtured from the fallen walnut tree and they did so 'in a spirit of friendship and mutual respect'.⁶ In their respective speeches both the Taoiseach and the First Minister spoke of shared history, past troubles and a bright future. They pointed out that Roman Catholics and Protestants fought side by side in both armies at the Boyne. Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dermot Ahern, summed up the mood as guests from both sides of the border wished each other a safe journey home. Mr Ahern remarked on how the visit by Dr. Paisley marked:

‘an incredible thawing of relations. We are beginning to understand each other and each other’s traditions. We might not embrace them fully, but we understand them. It is very different now and we are thankful for that’.⁷

Commemorations allow people to honour the dead, to pay tribute to some great deed of excellence, or to acknowledge some kind of common suffering. Commemorations can also act as benchmarks of how far, or alternatively how little, societies have come since the events in question. Furthermore, commemoration can develop and inform a society’s understanding of its history. In a country with such a controversial past, commemorations have had to often take a cautious and vigilant stance. Now that commemoration has brought a new and refreshing understanding to Ireland’s troubled past, we can look forward to celebrating all aspect of Ireland’s mixed heritages peacefully.

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Appendices

Appendix 3.1. Questionnaire distributed to individuals attending ceremonies commemorating the Easter Rising and War of Independence in Tipperary

Heritage and Memory: A Survey of Modern Ireland's Remembrance of the 1916 Rising and War of Independence

My name is David Lawlor. I am a Humanities postgraduate student at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and am currently conducting research for a Master of Arts thesis entitled 'The Irish Revolution of 1916-1921 and Modern Remembrance: A Case Study of the Commemorative Heritages of County Tipperary'. I am in the process of carrying out research on peoples' attitudes to how we remember the past in modern Ireland. Whilst your comments will be helpful for the purpose of writing up my thesis, under no circumstance will your name be used in my text.

My questions will only take a few minutes.

Occupation:.....Place of Residence:.....

Place of Birth:.....Gender:.....

Age profile (Please tick): 11-15 (), 16-20 (), 21-25 (), 26-30 (), 31-35 (), 36-40 (), 41-45 (), 46-50 (), 51-55 (), 56-60 (), 61-65 (), 66-70 (), 71-75 (), 76-80 (), 80+ ()

- (1) Why have you attended today's ceremony?
.....
.....
.....
- (2) Please list any 1916 or War of Independence memorials that you are familiar with:
.....
.....
.....
- (3) Ireland celebrates the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising in 2016. Of what significance is this date to you?
.....
.....
.....
- (4) Is Tipperary doing enough to remember those who died fighting in the struggle for Irish Independence? Please give reasons for your answer.
.....
.....
.....

(5) In your opinion, which Tipperary person(s) played the most influential role in the armed struggle from 1916-1921? Please give reasons for your answer.

.....
.....
.....

(6) Can you name the seven signatures on the Irish Proclamation?

.....
.....
.....

(7) Can you list any songs or poetry associated with Tipperary from the 1916 Rising or War of Independence?

.....
.....
.....

(8) Are you familiar with the ongoing debate between 'Revisionist' historians and 'Nationalist' historians on the struggle for independence? Please tick the appropriate box:

Yes No

(9) Do you agree that the taking up of arms was necessary to achieve independence between 1916-1921?

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree/Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer:

.....
.....
.....
.....

(10) Would you support an armed struggle as a means of creating a united Ireland by 2016? Please tick the appropriate box:

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree/Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey



Appendix. 4.1. A plaque commemorating Thomas MacDonagh's birth place in Cloughjordan

Source: Author



Appendix 4.2. The School in which the Thomas MacDonagh's father taught in Cloughjordan

Source: Author



Appendix 4.3 The Grave of Dan Breen, Donohill, Co. Tipperary

Source: Author



Appendix 4.4 Flowers left on Dan Breen's grave by the Third Tipperary Brigade Old IRA Committee

Source: Author



Appendix 5.1. Interior of the Thomas MacDonagh Memorial Library, Cloughjordan

Source: Author



Appendix 5.2. Some of Thomas MacDonagh's personal belongings displayed in Cloughjordan Library

Source: Author



Appendix 6.1 The Seán Treacy Cup

Source: Author



Appendix 6.2. North Tipperary roll of honour as seen on Bamba Square monument, Nenagh

Source: Author



Appendix 6.3. Poster for Ken Loach's film 'The Wind That Shakes The Barley'

Source: www.thewindthatshakesthebarley.com



Appendix 6.4. Dan Breen (left) presents the county cup, the 'Dan Breen' to Thurles captain Mickey Byrne after the 1955 county hurling final

Source: www.thurlessarsfields.com



Appendix 7.1. Rev. Ian Paisley presents Taoiseach Bertie Ahern with a musket on their historic meeting at the Battle of the Boyne site in May, 2007

Source: www.antaoiseach.com

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Roche Williams, (Local Historian), Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary.

Danny Grace, (Local Historian), Knigh, Puckane, Co. Tipperary.

Tom Cleary, (Chairman Kilruane MacDonagh GAA Club) Ballycapple, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.

Ger Gavin, (Chairman Nenagh Eire Óg GAA Club), Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.

Jack Hickey, (Land Owner) Rosegreen, Co. Tipperary.

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