

Tourmakeady Ambush 1921

Comóradh Luíochán
Thuar Mhic Éadaigh

Selected articles with additional content by
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated in particular to the memory of Irish Volunteers Michael O'Brien and Padraig Feeney, who lost their lives in the aftermath of the Tourmakeady Ambush ("the Ambush") on 3rd May 1921.

It is also dedicated to all the brave Irish Volunteers of the Srah, Ballinrobe, Cross/the Neale, Cloonacastle and Ballyglass Companies of the South Mayo Brigade who took part in this daring Ambush on British Crown forces.

Finally, it is dedicated to the men and women on both sides of Lough Mask who assisted the volunteers in their escape and who fed and sheltered them at great danger to themselves. Many of these people endured much pain and loss because of their involvement in the Irish War of Independence, their bravery is honored and remembered in our Centenary Commemoration of 1921.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the vital role that Tourmakeady's annual Parish Magazine, "**Waterfall Thuar Mhic Eadaigh**" ("the Magazine") has played as an invaluable source of historical articles on the Tourmakeady Ambush for this book. The value of the work done each year by the Magazine's voluntary committee is immeasurable to the community of Tourmakeady and its past and present members should be immensely proud of their achievements. The Magazine published every Christmas is supported and funded from advertisements placed by local businesses and sales of the Magazine itself.

The Magazine has had many contributors over the years, but special thanks to Tomás O'hEánachain, May Lally, Thomas Lally, Eibhlín Bn Uí Eánachain and Tomás O'Toole specifically for their excellent articles on the Ambush, The Plunket Years and Cóláiste Chonnacht. These articles contain the written oral history of these events as it was passed down through the generations, making them an invaluable source.

We wish to thank Micheál Lally, son of Comdt. Tom Lally of Srah who wrote what we regard as the definitive book on the Tourmakeady ambush, the book's full title is "**The Tan War**" **Ballyovey, South Mayo**.¹ Many extracts are referenced here, and the firsthand accounts given by Tom Lally on all the events he was part of in this period have proved invaluable. For anyone with an interest in a well-researched book on the War of Independence in this part of Mayo, we recommend this book. A new edition is being updated by Ultan Lally and is due for reprint in early 2022.

We wish to thank Eibhlín Ní Mháille, a niece of Anthony Joyce who has graciously allowed the inclusion of her uncle's first-hand account of events, as she recorded it in the early 1970's. This is a personal account given by Anthony, who was a proud member of Srah Company and took part in both the Kilfaul Ambush and the Tourmakeady Ambush. The account is reproduced in full in Chapter 9.

We also wish to thank Pat Kennedy's grandson, also called Pat, from Rahard in Ballinrobe who has graciously allowed the inclusion of his grandfather's personal account of events, as it was recorded by John Colleran at Cloonliffen School in 1966. This appeared originally in the **Bridge Parish Magazine** in Ballinrobe (acknowledged here) and was reprinted in the Magazine in 1992. It is reproduced in full in Chapter 10.

Another article titled *Mayo's Tourmakeady Ambush: Shrouded By 'Fog of War'*² and written by Joe Gannon was a huge help and is the basis for much of the content of Chapters 2-5. The Wild Geese Irish social network is a leading internet destination for

¹ Lally, M. (2008) "The Tan War" Ballyovey, South Mayo

² Gannon, J. (2018). Mayo's Tourmakeady Ambush: Shrouded By 'Fog of War'. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://thewildgeese.irish/m/blogpost?id=6442157%3ABlogPost%3A230871>

those looking to explore and celebrate Irish history and heritage. Based in Connecticut, USA, Joe Gannon is a talented writer, editor, web producer, researcher, and a devotee of both the online world and military history. We thank him for graciously agreeing to have his article on the Ambush used in the book. Also, sincere thanks to Mark McAllister, a kind neighbor who painstakingly edited the book and provided encouragement throughout.

Thanks to Kevin O'Toole and Seán Ó hÓgáin for passing on the information they received on the Ambush from Tomás O'Toole, Kevin's father. Tomás had many documents and pictures that have been included. Seán, a nephew of Tomás, wrote an excellent account of the Ambush, published in the *Cathair na Mart: Journal of the Westport Historical Society* in 2002/2003 that has also proved invaluable.

Thanks to all the people that shared information and pictures on the group FaceBook page *Tourmakeady Ambush Commemoration* and engaged in such interesting discussion. Also, thanks to our Commemoration Committee members who shared information and found information leads where some great information was sourced.

We were extremely fortunate to have spoken to Tom Maguire, son of Brigadier Tom Maguire, O/C of the South Mayo Brigade. Tom Jr. gave us accounts of the Ambush and its aftermath that he received directly from his father Tom and his mother Christina. It was an honor to listen to his descriptions of historical events, communicated in an articulate, reasoned and often humorous manner. We sincerely thank Tom and his daughter Báirbre for their gracious help, and we hope to see the Maguire family in Tourmakeady again in the not-too-distant future.

Finally, a special thanks goes to **MJ Conroy** of Cong for sponsoring the production of this book to mark the Centenary of the Tourmakeady Ambush. Without their generous assistance, this effort would not have come to fruition. **MJ Conroy** is a family business started in 1932 by Mick (Michael) Conroy of Creevagh, Cong, father, and grandfather of the current directors of the Company. Mick was a member of the Cross/The Neale company and a relative of Michael O'Brien. He was a lifelong friend of all the volunteers in that company and a friend of Tom Maguire.

RÉAMHRÁ

Is mór an onóir agus de phrobléid domsa cuireadh a fhail le réamhrá a scríobh don leabhair atá le foilsiú i gcuimhne ar Luíochán Thuar Mhic Éadaigh i 1921. Traoslaim le gach duine a raibh baint nó part acu leis an iarracht seo. Déarfainn go bhfuil lorg na hirise “Waterfall” ar an obair, mar gur thug an iris sin taithí scríobhnóireacht don oiread daoine sa bpobail anuas tríd na blianta, agus a bhfuil roinnt mhaith acu ar shlí na fírinne anois. Ach d’fhag siad sampla agus treoir chomh mór sin ina ndiaidh go bhfuil cóipranna na hirise iad fein anois mar chuid de stair na haite.

Bhí Tuar Mhic Éadaigh mar chuid de mo stair féin ar feadh an chuigiú chuid de mo seachtó cúig bliain ó 1995 – 2010. Tháinig mé chuig an gceantar i dtosach mar oibrí de chuid Chomhairle Chondae Mhaigh Eo tar eis Ardteiste nab liana 1964. Chuaigh mé do Mhaigh Nuar i bhFómhar na bliana sin, agus nuair a d’fhill mé i 1995, ní sluasaid a bhí i mo lámha ach cailís. Chuir me aithne de réir a chéile ar phobail álainn a raibh cruatan an tsaoil fulaingtr acu le cúpla chead bliain mar gheall ar ghorta, daoine caite as a seilbh, agus imirce, ach a raibh buntáistí an tsaoil acu freisin de bharr dea-oideachas bunscóile agus meánscoile, fostaíocht Ghaeltarra, agus cóngarachacht do bhailtí móra ar nós Baile An Róba, Caisleán an Bharraigh agus Cathair na Mart.

Níl dabht ar bith ach gurb é an la is mó i saol Thuar Mhic Éadaigh nó an 3ú lá de Bhealtaine 1921, an la a rinneadh luíochan ar fhórsaí na Breataine a thug ainm na haite isteach i gceannlinnte nuachta an domhain. Ní gá dom cursíos a dhéanamh ar imeachtaí an lae sin mar go bhfuil siad luaite sa leabhair seo ar bhealach i bhfad níos fearr agus níos cruinne nó mar a d’theadfainn a dhéanamh.

Bíonn deacrachtaí agamsa i gcónaí nuair atáim ag scríobh faoi chursaí cogaiochta, mar go mbreathnaim orm féin mar fhear síochanta. Ach ní raibh mé mar sin ón tús. Bhí dúil fola chomh mór sin ionam nuair a bhí mé thart ar deich mbliana d’aois gur dhúirt mé le m’athair agus máthair oíche amháin; “Nach mór an trua e nach bhfuil Dubhchrónaigh ar bith fanta le marú. Bhí mé ag léamh leabhra ar nós: “Michael Collins and The Making Of The New Ireland,” chomh maith leis an méid a scríobh Dan Breen agus Tom Barry faoi Thiobráid Árainn agus Corcaigh. Bhí leabharlann beag sa teach sa mbaile a d’fhág uncail liom, Joe Staunton a fuair bás óg. Bhí se ag muineadh scoile i Seanadh Fearacháin tráth den tsaoil agus is i mBaile Gairis a bhí sé nuair a bhasaigh sé sular tháinig mise ar an saol.

Bhí leabhra eile aige ar nós “The Three Musketeers,” le Alexander Dumas agus bhreathnaigh mé ar an gCoilíneach, Breen agus Barry ar na musketeers nua. D’imigh an fonn maraithe díom de réir mar a bhí ciall ag teacht le haois. Chríochnaigh na scealta faoi chogadh na saoirse chomh maith le cúrsaí staire i Scoil Naísiúnta an Chlochair roimh cogadh na gcarad agus ní raibh a fhios agam mórán faoi sin. Ní raibh mórán choimhlinte fiú amháin aimsir toghacháineeachta i gceantar s’againne mar go raibh TD mar chomharsan againn, Joe Blowick, nár bhain le Fianna Fáil nó Fine Gael agus a bhí ina Aire de chuid Cllann na Talúin le linn dhá chomhrialtais an Choistealigh.

Faoi thionchur lucht na siochánta domhanda agus naisiúnta ar nós Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Daineal Ó Conaill agus John Hume, bhí mise go huile is go hiomlan in aghaidh an fhoreigín faoin am a thosnaigh na Trioblóidí ó thuaisne ag deireadh na seascaidí. Ach níor stop se sin mé ó meas agus ómós a bheith orm mar gheall ar fhulaingt agus iobairtí na daoine óga ar stailceanna ocrais. Cibé céard faoin ár gcuid mothúcháin féin bíonn orainn breathnú ar an stair mar a tharla sé. Feiceann muid piñata na ndaoine a d’fhulaing chomh maith le crógacht na ndaoine de chuile Phairtí Polaitíochta in Éirinn agus i Sasana ar éirigh leo próiseas na siochána a bhunú agus a choinneail ag imeacht. Níl se tagtha chun chríche fós, ach nach e sin ata i gceist i bpróiseas, gluaiseacht fada mall le cúpla ceim chun tosaigh agus cúpla chéim ar gcúl ó am go ham.

Thart ar bhliain tar éis Luiochan Thuar Mhic Éadaigh nuair a bhí cogadh na gcarad ar siúl bhí athair mór liom John Staunton ina sheasamh taobh amuigh den seipéal i mBaile na Córa in eineacht le fir eile ag caitheamh a gcuid piopaí. Bhí a bheirt mhac ba shine, Tom agus Paidi a bhí sna hÓglaigh i mBalla Álainn imithe don Depot i mBaile Átha Cliath le clárú sna Gardaí Siochána nua bhunaithe. Chuala sé comharsa leis ag rá: “Ceard tá iontu (na Gardaí) ach “bloody Irish Black and Tans?” Ghoill an raiteas sin do smior a chuid chnámha, ach chruthaigh furmhór na nGardaí gurb é a mhalairt a bhí fíor le naocha naoi mbliana anuas. Ag breathnú ar chursaí staire dúinn, bíonn orainn gach ghné den saol a chuir san áireamh.

An tAthair Pádraig Stundún

INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, May 3rd, 1921 “Irish Volunteers” from South Mayo carried out a daring ambush in Tourmakeady village against members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (“the RIC”) and members of “The Black and Tans”. The Irish Volunteers were a military organization established in 1913 by Irish Nationalists. It was ostensibly formed in response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteers in 1912 and its declared primary aim was “to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to the whole people of Ireland”. see www.irishvolunteers.org.

The Black and Tans were constables recruited into the RIC as reinforcements during the Irish War of Independence. This nickname came from the improvised uniforms that they wore initially which was a mixture of dark green, which appeared “black” and British Army khaki or “tan”. This book contains carefully chosen articles and material from a variety of sources that recount versions of the events of that day and the aftermath.

There are two personal accounts given by Irish Volunteers Anthony Joyce and Pat Kennedy (both took part in the ambush) that are included in full. We believe that including the accounts of participants is essential in telling what is not necessarily the “full story”, but significant elements of the “full story” from a variety of perspectives. It is therefore important that segments of the accounts of the Ambush given by James Goulden, son of RIC Sergeant Goulden, and Lieutenant Ibberson are also included.

Most of the Tourmakeady community were predominantly Irish/Gaelic speaking, members of the Catholic Church except for a few villages that were populated by people loyal to British rule. There was, during this period, a very influential Irish College in Tourmakeady called “Coláiste Chonnacht Tuar Mhic Éadaigh” that was very instrumental in the revival of the Irish language among Irish Nationalists.

Many of the leaders of the 1916 Rising in Ireland, including Padraig Pearse, his brother Willy, Eamon De Valera, Eoin Mac Néill attended, and Sinead Flanagan taught Irish in the college. This cultural revival of the Irish Language contrasted greatly with the lives of the ascendant class that lived in the village of Tourmakeady.

“Every house, with one exception in the area belonged to a Protestant and by the standards of those days, therefore, to a 'loyalist'. The first house, the hotel, was owned by a Mrs. Stewart (wife of an R.I.C. sergeant); on the left was the 'old Protestant School; on the right in the trees, the rectory; next on the right, the 'grand' gate leading to the lodge occupied by a Protestant steward, Tom Whitty, and the housekeeper, Maggie Middleton. Across the bridge was Moloney's shop (Catholic) and the post office run by Willie Billington and his recently widowed mother. Across the road was the shell of the old barrack. Further on was an empty house on the left owned by Miss McDonald of Drimbawn House.”³

³ Goulden, J. (1956) Tourmakeady ambush, Co. Mayo, 3rd May 1921. Retrieved June 29, <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/bmh/BMH.WS1340.pdf>

The Landlord system of property ownership was at the root of most of Ireland's problems for hundreds of years. There had been a campaign by newly arrived local landlord Baron Plunket in the second part of the 19th Century to convert locals from Catholic to Protestant, through evictions and intimidation. The attempt failed but it left a generation of people with vivid memories of the cruelty that was inflicted on them by the ruling class of a foreign power. The hunger to remove this foreign power from the country grew stronger among the local people as each decade passed.

There was also trouble in 1880 with another Landlord named Lord Erne on an estate near Ballinrobe, a neighboring town to Tourmakeady. Captain Boycott, the land agent for Lord Erne's estate was making International news for enforcing unfair evictions. This episode led to the entire community of The Neale, Cong and Ballinrobe turning against the Land Agent, resulting in a new form of resistance and protest now known as a "Boycott". Again, the hunger to remove the ruling establishment and the government that backed them was intense.

This book tries to capture some of the folklore around the events of the ambush as it was relayed afterwards through poetry and song and word of mouth to the descendants of some of those involved. This can be regarded as a version of oral history. It is not claimed that the books contents will capture all the sources or give the definitive account of what happened. It is just a piecing together of selected versions of the events. Any offence that may be caused by omission or lack of emphasis is certainly unintended.

Our motivation for writing this book is to honor the memory of Michael O'Brien and Pdraig Feeney, the two Volunteers killed in the aftermath of the ambush. It is from the ultimate sacrifice made by these men and the brave deeds of others that Ireland won her Independence from Britain.

This book is our contribution to the Centenary commemoration of the Tourmakeady ambush. It is an honor to be part of the committee that was set up to organize various events and initiatives throughout the year to remember all these brave Irish Volunteers. Central to these will be the unveiling of a Commemorative Monument in Srah in their honor. €10,000 has been raised from sales of the first 1,000 copies. This has already gone towards the financing of this initiative. Sales of this 2nd edition will do likewise.

We were very mindful throughout of what Pat Kennedy said in his account of the ambush

"... it is as factual as it can be at this distance in time from the event but is not written for the student of guerilla warfare. Rather it is a story of high endeavor against great odds by men of principle and noble purpose who did not count the cost and asked for no reward; and little or no reward they got."

It is all of us, the free citizens of Ireland today that have reaped that reward.

Ar dheis dé go raibh a n-anamacha dílse

CHAPTER 1 - SOUTH MAYO IN THE PERIOD (1831 – 1921)

Land and Language

Our Celtic ancestors are known for two things, their bond to the land and their love of their native language, the Irish language. The Tourmakeady area from Derrypark over to Srah was and is still a strong Irish Speaking Gaeltacht area. In the early part of the last century, an article in *Claidheamb Soluis* on 19th May 1909 stated:

“Tourmakeady is a very suitable place for the study of Irish phonetics and there is probably no other district in Ireland where the sounds of the language are purer or freer from English influences. Subtle distinctions of sound, lost in other places, are there preserved. The district is also a mine of idiom, and Archbishop McHale used to declare that the best Irish in Ireland is spoken there, and in the surrounding country. It is certain that it is unsurpassed for purity.”

The Irish people’s experience during the Famine years and the actions taken by many landlords throughout the 19th Century have left an unbreakable bond between the people and land ownership. The fact that the Land League originated in Mayo is no coincidence with Michael Davitt of Straide being a co-founder of the Irish National Land League in 1879.

Many Tourmakeady people were strong supporters of the Land League campaign, as we can see from an article in the Waterfall Magazine in 1995:

“The more courageous ones would not take everything lying down and were dead bent on getting rid of the landlords. Some of them were in the Land League and walked miles to the meetings in the local towns to hear Michael Davitt speak to the thousands of followers who were told to defend their homesteads and their families by every means at their disposal”⁴



Michael Davitt - founding member of National Land League of Ireland

Two issues, namely land ownership and the cultural revival of the Irish identity through its native language were two of the driving forces behind a new hunger in the Irish people to seek their Independence from British rule. First, let us see how Landlords treated their tenants on estates either side of Lough Mask.

⁴ Lally, M. (1995). Waterfall Magazine Archive. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.discoverjoycecountry.com/activity/waterfall-magazine-archive/>

The Plunket Evictions in Tourmakeady 1831 - 1863

The Plunket's came to Tourmakeady in 1831 when the first Baron Plunket, the bishop's father, built a shooting lodge on land purchased from a local landowner. In 1833 a member of the family acquired land from George Henry Moore at Gortfree and Tourmakeady Lodge was built. Thomas Plunket became Church of Ireland Bishop of the United Dioceses of Tuam, Killala and Achonry in 1839. He got actively involved in the proselytizing campaign - the Irish Church Mission Society. He was aided by his sister, Catherine.

He purchased some of the neighboring estates and by 1858 his property covered an area of over 10,000 acres (see map below). The proselytizing campaign was concentrated in the poorer regions of Ireland, mainly from Donegal to Kerry. The Achill Protestant colony was one of its earliest successes under its founder, Edward Nangle. The work was funded by parochial aid from England. Most of the Church of Ireland bishops did not agree with the methods of the Irish Church Mission Society.

Bishop Plunket was one of the first bishops to actively support the campaign of the Mission Society. Shortly after becoming bishop, he decided to come and live in Tourmakeady as he preferred the splendid scenery of Lough Mask and the surrounding mountains to that of Tuam.

He established three new Protestant churches in the dioceses, including one in Tourmakeady, built in 1852, and appointed the Rev. Hamilton Townsend as Church of Ireland Rector. He immediately opened two schools in the parish: his sister, Catherine was patron of one of them - by now she had her own estate of nearly 1,000 acres.

When Catherine set up the Protestant school, many tenants were threatened with eviction unless they agreed to send their children to her school. During the famine years Catherine ran a soup kitchen for those who turned Protestant. She was known as Cáit a Bhrotháin (Cate of the Soup) and the term Sooper was applied to those who changed their religion.

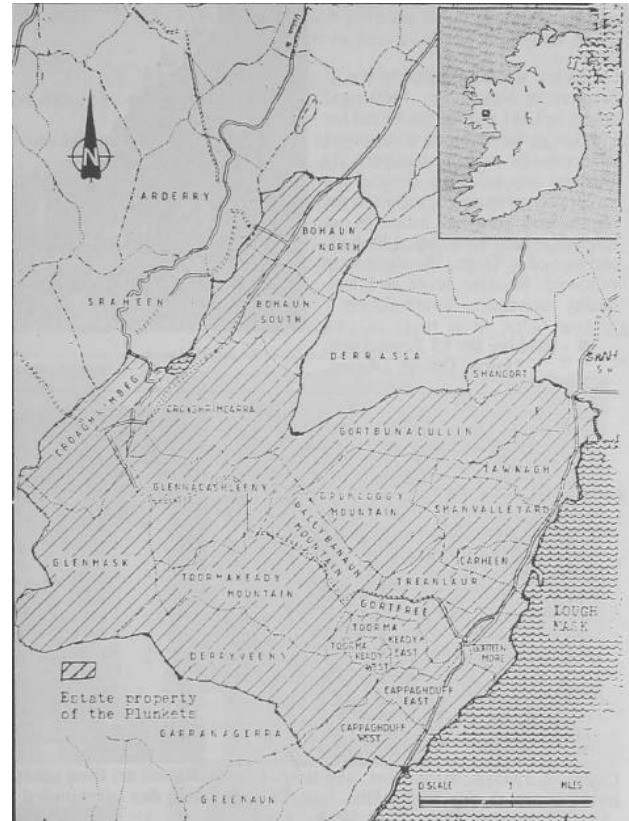
By 1855 there were five Protestant schools in the parish and the only alternative school was one established by the Franciscan Brothers, who had to depend on the donations of the poor to keep the school open. The Brothers had been given 30 acres of land by George Henry Moore during the Famine.

Under no circumstances would the Catholic Parish Priest of Partry Fr. Peter Conway allow the Irish Church Mission Society schools to exist peacefully within his area. His curate, Fr. Ward accused Bishop Plunket of being a proselytizer and this resulted in newspapers taking up the case. Fr. Ward was prepared to take the fight to Plunket and in a letter to the *Dublin Telegraph* in December 1854, he gave a list of the names of 104 tenants evicted by Plunket upon his acquiring the estate.

Those people included people of 90 years of age and newborn babies. George Henry Moore gave land to most of those evicted on his own estate and even on his own demesne. During Moore's ownership of the Tourmakeady estate no tenant had ever been evicted. But when Plunket acquired it, Catholics were replaced by Protestants in a number of cases.



Bishop Plunket



Plunket's Estate Property

When Fr. Ward was transferred to Williamstown he was replaced by Fr. Lavelle, a native of Murrisk, who made it clear from the outset that there would be no let up in the campaign against Bishop Plunket and his sister, Catherine. Within three weeks of his arrival in the parish he launched a campaign to counteract the influence of the Plunket school. Preaching at Mass, he warned that parents who allowed their children to attend schools were exposing them to evil and danger. During the following weeks large numbers of children were withdrawn. Court cases between Fr. Lavelle and Bishop Plunket were frequent at Ballinrobe petty sessions or the Assizes at Castlebar. Again, violence and assaults were common.

Plunket carried out his biggest evictions in November 1860. During the preceding days large numbers of police were drafted into the area. Troops came from the surrounding towns and a company of the 24th Infantry from the Curragh. The local police did not take part. The people were terrified, and the scenes of the helplessness and defeat and sadness were indescribable. Such troop movement had never been seen in the area. The eviction process lasted for three days.

The conflict between Fr. Lavelle and Bishop Plunket became known as "*The War in Partry*". Plunket had replaced some tenants with converts from other parts of Mayo and Catherine had repeatedly carried out evictions too. There were other reasons for evictions also apart from the school affair, such as sub-letting of land, non-payment of rents, burning land - a form of reclamation - the removal of stone from Plunket's property, as well as being associated with Fr. Lavelle's campaign.

But the eviction of the 13 families in November 1860, and others in 1861 and '62 backfired for Plunket as he received widespread condemnation in the newspapers. By 1863 he was evidently tired of the prolonged campaign of unrest in the region and sold his estate to an English industrialist, Mr. Mitchell and moved to Tuam. His sister soon followed. Relative peace and tranquility returned to Tourmakeady.⁵



Fr. Patrick Lavelle in Cong

Fr. Patrick Lavelle, whose own mother and sister were later to be evicted from their home in Murrisk, was transferred to Cong Parish in 1869. He died in 1886 and is still fondly remembered in Tourmakeady and Cong with Plaques erected in his memory at both Church grounds.

⁵ Bn Uí Eánachain, E. (1993). Waterfall Magazine Archive. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1993_issue07/page/n31/mode/2up

At Tourmakeady Church, the plaque on the wall reads:



“I gcuimhne an Ath. Pádraig Ó Maolfabhail (Fr. P. Lavelle 1825–1886). Sagart Pobail anseo (1858–1869) a throid go calma ag cosaint a phobail”.

In Cong Church, the plaque reads:



“Pray for the soul of Patrick Lavelle who in dark and evil days successfully fought the battle of faith and fatherland”

Fr. Tomás Ó Fiaich, who from 1959 to 1974 was Professor of Modern Irish History in Maynooth College and later became the College President wrote an excellent historical journal in 1976 entitled “The Patriot Priest of Partry” where he wrote of the Cong Church plaque: “It is not an unsuitable epitaph. He would certainly have looked on his struggle with Bishop Plunket as a defense of the faith and his struggle with Archbishop Cullen as a defense of the Fatherland. But no words are more appropriate than the phrase *fought the battle*. Courageous, hot headed, impulsive, pugnacious, unyielding, call it what you will – I suppose it was a combination of the lot – he was certainly a dauntless fighter who believed that in the circumstances of Ireland in the 19th Century the priest’s place was with his people in the struggle for justice and national independence”⁶

This description captures the essence of Fr. Lavelle’s efforts. Fr. Tomás Ó Fiaich later became a Cardinal and Primate of All-Ireland.

⁶ Ó Fiaich, T. The Patriot Priest of Partry" Patrick Lavelle: 1825-1886 Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25535481>

Captain Boycott and the Lord Erne evictions of 1880

“The word, boycott, meaning to join with others in refusing to have any dealings with some other individual or group, is derived from an incident that occurred at Lough Mask House near Ballinrobe, County Mayo, Ireland in 1880.

Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott was an unpopular English landlord who moved to the Ballinrobe area in 1873 after an inheritance allowed him to take a thirty-one-year lease on three hundred acres near Lough Mask. He also became an agent on the nearly one thousand five hundred acres estate of Lord Erne. There were 38 small tenant farmers on Lord Erne's estates near Lough Mask and Castlebar.

Captain Boycott was reportedly extremely strict with his tenants. Locally he was considered a petty tyrant. Tenants had been used to collecting fallen wood and taking short cuts across the farm. Boycott curtailed these privileges that had previously been enjoyed. He showed no leniency when rents were in arrears.

Times were hard in 1879 and 1880 and there was again famine. Boycott, with instructions from Lord Erne, was prepared to allow a 10% reduction in the rents. Most of the tenants insisted on a 25% reduction. Boycott obtained eviction notices against eleven tenants for failure to pay their rent. On September 22, 1880 the local process server, David Sears, accompanied by an escort of "constabulary" succeeded in serving several notices. Then some local women started to harass Sears and his escort by throwing mud and manure at them while yelling and shouting at them. The ladies managed to intimidate them to the point that they took shelter in the Boycott house and were unable to serve the rest of the notices.

The next day Sears was preparing to make another attempt to serve the notices, but a large group of people gathered and marched towards Lough Mask House. Egged on by Father John O'Malley, the parish priest at the Neale, they arrived on the Boycott farm and "advised" all of Boycott's servants and farm workers to leave and not return. By the evening of September 23 Boycott and his family were alone on the farm.

Once the process started it did not stop. The letter boy refused to deliver the mail. The shopkeepers of Ballinrobe refused to wait on the Boycott family. All the local Catholic population refused to provide any services. Whenever any member of the Boycott household tried to leave the property they were booed and hissed. Boycott applied and was granted police protection. This, in and of itself, was not uncommon in parts of Ireland where there was unrest. The issue at this point remained a local one.

The tenants appealed to Lord Erne to dismiss Boycott and replace him with another agent. Lord Erne, who was elderly and at a distance, refused. The locals kept up their isolation of Boycott. A letter from Captain Boycott to the "Times" drew attention to his dilemma. In part he said:

"... people collect in crowds upon my farm and order off all my workmen. The shopkeepers have been warned to stop all supplies to my house. My farm is public property, I can get no workmen to do anything, and my ruin is openly avowed as the object of the Land League unless I throw up everything and leave the country"

The situation became an item in the English press and in response a group of about 50 Ulster Loyalists volunteered to come to Boycott's aid and bring in his crops. Most of these men were from counties Monaghan and Cavan. They joined forces at Mullingar, in Westmeath.

The Ulster volunteers (emergency men) took the train as far as Claremorris where they had expected to be met by carts that would take them to Ballinrobe. The local cart drivers refused to provide their services and the volunteers, escorted by military troops, were forced to march the fourteen miles from Claremorris to Ballinrobe. They set off late in the afternoon. Darkness fell early at that time of the year. Hindered by driving rain and various delays they marched for five hours before they reached Ballinrobe. They were greeted by crowds of cat calling, jeering, and booing locals. There was little shelter or food available for them.

The town of Ballinrobe was completely overrun with outsiders including at least 1,000 soldiers, newsmen from around the world and the Ulster volunteers. On the morning of November 12, the troops, with swords raised, escorted the volunteers out of town as the locals again turned out to jeer. The crowds thinned as the volunteers left town and continued through the drizzling rain the three miles to Lough Mask House.

Over the next two weeks, tortured by continuous cold and torrential rains, the volunteers brought in the harvest of turnips, mangolds, potatoes and corn. On Saturday, November 27th they were escorted back to Ballinrobe where they again spent the night. The next day they were escorted to Claremorris to take the train back to Ulster.

Boycott himself quietly decided to go back to England. Captain Boycott, his wife and niece were forced to ride in an Army ambulance as no local drivers could be found to take them to the train in Claremorris.

"The total cost of the Boycott relief expedition was \$10,000." (New York Times 1880)

The name boycott was given to this form of social and economic isolation by the American journalist, James Redpath, who covered the story for the American press. He credited Father O'Malley with having come with the idea of using the word."⁷

Bishop Plunket and Captain Boycott had made International news for their treatment of farm tenants. They both would leave South Mayo and were not missed by the locals.

⁷ Land Blanck, M. (2010) Captain Boycott. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <http://www.maggielblanck.com/Mayopages/Boycott.html>

The Gaelic League: Coláiste Chonnacht 1905 - 1921

A century ago, something new in the revival of Irish started with the setting up of Coláiste Chonnacht in Tourmakeady. The Gaelic League, under the direction of Dr. Douglas Hyde and with the assistance of clergy, teachers, businesses, and professional people from the west of Ireland, had been looking for a suitable location to set up an Irish Summer college.

Micheál Breathnach from Cois Fharráige was the first Ard Ollamh. He was a distinguished scholar and a leader with new ideas, ideas that were shared by many others. He saw the preservation of our language and culture as being essential to our emergence as a nation. His opinions were shared by Patrick Pearse, who was very much involved in setting up teaching standards and was in charge of examinations.

In an address to the earlier students he said, "*Is féidir leis an tíoránach sglábhaidhe a dhéanadh d'ár gcuirp, ach ní féidir leis sclábhaidhe a dhéanamh d'ár dtoil. Sin é, muna ngbéillimid ár dtoil a thabhairt do. Agus más é toil mbuinntir na hÉireann a bheadh saor gaedhealach, ní féidir le náimhde ar bith gcoinneál gallda nó í ngéibhinn.*"

Translated to English, he said "*A tyrant can enslave our bodies but he cannot enslave our minds unless we allow him to do so. If the people of Ireland have a will to be Gaelic and free, they can never be enslaved.*"



Certificate class, 1914, included are front row: Br. Brendan, Professor, centre of front row, Mrs. Walsh, nee Malone, cook in College. (Bartley), Mrs. Mary Devor, nee Maura Sheoighe (Bonnet), Máire O'Toole, Irish teacher. 2nd row, from back: Sínead O Flanagain later Mrs. De Valera (black bow on blouse).

Coláiste Chonnacht was recognized by the British board of education as a training College for teachers and others to qualify to teach Irish in the certificate course and to teach through the medium of Irish in the bilingual course.⁸

Coláiste Chonnacht was founded as a summer school by Conradh na Gaeilge. The principal was Micheál Breathnach and his assistant was Máire Ní Tuathail. The school became known as '*Cliabhran Conradh na Gaeilge*' - the cradle of the Gaelic League.

⁸ Ó Tuathail, T. (2003). Waterfall Magazine



Certificate in Irish Teaching from Cóláiste Chonnacht

Among the people who visited the school was Dubhglas de Híde, later to become the first President of Ireland. Padraic Pearse and Eamonn De Valera were also frequent visitors. Kuno Meyer, the renowned German Gaelic scholar, Padraic O'Domhnalláin, and other Irish writers also visited the school frequently. Eamonn De Valera was later to marry Sinead Flanagan who had been a teacher at the school.

Máire Ní Thuathail

Máire Ní Thuathail, who was Assistant Principle in Cóláiste Chonnacht was sister of Tomás O'Toole, who owned O'Tooles Shop in Cappaduff. Máire played a prominent role in the cultural history of Tourmakeady in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1905 she began to teach at Coláiste Chonnacht. She had previously taught Irish in Connemara and had taught Pádraic Ó Conaire his first Irish letters at the school in Annaghvaan which Pádraic attended as a child when living at Rosmuc. Pádraic Ó Conaire dedicated his novel *Deoraíocht* to her, '*Duitse, a Mháire Ní Thuathail, an scéal seo, mar is tú a mhúin na litreacha Gaeilge i dtosach dom?*'



Pádraic Ó Conaire with Máire Ní Thuathail

Máire and Tomás had a very strong Nationalist background through their mother's family in Connemara. Their mother was Sabina O'Malley, her ancestors the O' Malley's of Kilmilkin were a prosperous family in the Maam Valley. Sabina's brother, Michael O'Malley of Muintir Eoin had a son Pádraic Ó Máille, who was a founder member of Sinn Féin in County Galway and Leas Cheann Comhairle of the 1st Dáil. Máire and Tomás O'Toole were closely related to Pádraic Ó Máille, they were his 1st cousins.



Pádraic Ó Máille, Leas Cheann Comhairle of the 1st Dáil

On 23rd April 1921, just over a week before the Tourmakeady Ambush, Pádraic Ó Máille was involved with the Connemara Flying Column in an ambush on the RIC at his home in Muintir Eoin where an RIC man was killed. Afterwards, in an act of reprisal the RIC burnt down the Ó Maille's house and the Flying Column fled into hiding to "Teachín na Regulars" in Tóin na Léin, close to Shanafaraghaun on the shores of Lough Na Fooey.⁹ A similar reprisal would occur in the weeks ahead, as we will see in a future chapter.

⁹ McNamara, C (2021) The West Connemara Flying Column and the Irish Independence Struggle
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=485629549131257>

Tomás O'Toole's family link to Pádraic Ó Máille was well known to the British forces in Ballinrobe. This association, plus the fact that the O'Tooles were known Nationalist sympathizers themselves, would create unforeseen consequences.

“By April 1921 Pádraic Ó Máille TD was fully committed to the armed struggle. The O'Malley home, Muintir Eoin, was a safe house, and the HQ for the IRA West Connemara Brigade under Petie Joe McDonnell. It was only about seven miles from the nearest RIC station, close to Maam Bridge, which was perhaps tempting fate to remain so close. Despite its ‘success’ in killing two RIC constables in Clifden the previous month, the brigade lacked fighting experience.¹⁰



Front, sitting on ground from left to right: Jack Feeney, Leenane, Dick O'Toole, Tourmackeady, Dermot O'Hegarty (Dáil Secretary), and Gearoid O'Suilleabhain TD (Carlow-Kilkenny). Second row seated: Mrs Whelan, Clifden, Peter Joyce (Edgeworthstown), Thomas Francis Joyce, Griggins, Olive Joyce Rowlands, Ragoon, Eileen Acton Ó Máille (bride), Pádraic Ó Máille (groom), Prof Tom Fahy, UCG, Arthur Griffith TD, Sarah Ó Máille Farrell (sister), Michael Collins TD (Cork South), and Mrs Liz O'Toole. Row 3: Tommy O'Malley, Kilmilkin (cousin), Dr Michael Browne (later Bishop of Galway), Eamon Ó Máille (brother), James Joyce, Hazelrock, Sinead Ó Máille (sister), PK Joyce, Clifden, Bridget Lowry Ó Máille, Thomas Ó Máille (brother), Eibhlin Scanlon Ó Máille (his wife), Petie Joe McDonnell (Leenane), Irene Joyce, Jim Begley, Mary Joyce, Fr Dan Corcoran (later PP Clifden), and Fr Eamon O'Malley. Row 4: Nell Ó Máille, Dr Arthur Joyce, Annie Wallace, Renvyle, Mrs Una Joyce, Clifden, Paul Joyce, Griggins, Colm O Gaora, Carna, Tomas O'Toole, Peadar Ó Máille (brother), Peter Acton (brother of bride), and Con Collins TD (Kerry and Limerick West).

Wedding party of Pádraic Ó Máille and Eileen Acton September 1921¹¹

Pádraic Ó Máille had some very prominent leading members of Sinn Fein at his wedding party in September 1921, two were Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, just four months after the Tourmakeady Ambush. Also pictured in the wedding party are his two cousins Tomás O'Toole and Dick O'Toole from Tourmakeady. The affairs of the Nation and events in the West earlier that year were likely discussed there that day.

¹⁰ O'Gorman, R. (2013). Prepared to fight and to die' for Ireland. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.advertiser.ie/Galway/article/60130/prepared-to-fight-and-to-die-for-ireland>

¹¹ Galway Advertiser. (2013). Wedding party of Pádraic Ó Máille. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.advertiser.ie/Galway/article/60622/wedding-party>



The picture above was restored and colorized by Rob Cross and posted on twitter¹²

1st Dáil Eireann August 1921

The picture above shows Dáil Eireann meeting in the Mansion House on Dawson Street in Dublin. The August sessions centered around negotiating a framework for the meetings in London which eventually delivered the Treaty. Pádraic Ó Máille was the Leas Cheann Comhairle of the 1st Dáil. Tom Maguire was T.D. for Mayo South-Roscommon.

The restored picture used a painting by Thomas Ryan as its reference. That painting currently hangs over the entrance to the Dáil Chamber in Leinster House on Kildare Street.

¹² Cross, R. (2020). Dáil Eireann meeting in the Mansion House. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://twitter.com/RobCross247/status/1277714558195511296>

CHAPTER 2 - THE FORMATION OF THE SOUTH MAYO BRIGADE

Tom Maguire, from Cross, joined the Volunteers in 1913 and raised a Volunteer company there in 1918. Before the year ended, Ballinrobe was the center of a battalion formed by companies from Ballinrobe, Cross/the Neale, Ballyglass and Srah. At first, there was just one brigade organization for County Mayo, but in July 1920 it was divided into four brigades. Tom Maguire was appointed brigade commandant of the South Mayo Brigade with Michael O'Brien as brigade adjutant.



Brigadier Tom Maguire

“Tom’s ancestors were fighters for freedom from the battle of Aughrim to 1798 when his great-grandfather rode off to join the French who landed in Killala and his father who was active in the Fenians and the Land War.¹³

Michael Collins then dispatched Peadar MacMahon to County Mayo to help instruct the newly formed brigades. McMahan, a native of Ballybay, County Monaghan, had taken part in the Easter Rising and had been interred afterwards at Frongoch, sometimes called a virtual “school for revolution,” along with Michael Collins and other leaders of the Republican cause.

¹³ O'hEánachain, T. (1993). Waterfall Magazine (7th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1993_issue07/page/n9/mode/2up

As was the case in many parts of Ireland, the Volunteer organizations in Mayo were slow to begin large attacks, but as the Black & Tans began to arrive in late spring and early summer and the Dublin GHQ began to pressure Volunteer organizations everywhere to organize flying columns, the conflict was about to enter a new, more intense phase. Collins wanted to compel the Crown forces to defend themselves all over the island.

After the “Order of Ireland Act” was passed in August, the RIC / Black & Tans, and later in the year the Auxiliaries, began to raid homes all over Mayo. This resulted in the destruction of many homes around the county, some belonging to members of the Volunteers or Sinn Fein, but others of totally innocent civilians. It also caused Maguire and most of the leaders and many other members of the Volunteer organizations to go “on the run.” The desired goal of the government policy was the destruction of the Volunteer organization and the suppression of public support for them, but as had been the case when they executed the leaders of the Easter Rising, it had the opposite effect.

Volunteers who were “on the run” became full time soldiers in the flying columns forming around the island, and citizens who were outraged at the abominable conduct of the Black & Tans became the sea amongst whom Mao would later say the guerilla fighter must swim. As 1920 came to a close, however, there had been no major attacks in the county. The Crown forces in Mayo believed their tactics were working, but they were wrong. In late 1920, the South Mayo Brigade formed its “Flying Column.” The column moved from place to place by night and often stayed in Caher or in Mellett’s of Cloonenagh.

The Kilfaul Ambush on 7th March 1921

On January 6, 1921, the staffs of the four Mayo Volunteer Brigades met and pledged to begin to attempt larger scale attacks in their areas. It was easier said than done, however, as their armaments were limited and knowing when a RIC or army patrol might be vulnerable and finding the right location to set up an ambush took intelligence information they often lacked. Maguire’s brigade, like the others, was at first mainly armed with shotguns, which were useless at long range.

Their only fairly modern military rifles were six Mauser model 71 rifles, part of the Howth gun running shipment in July 1914. The single shot rifles were already obsolete but were cheap and better than anything else they had.



Mauser model 71 rifle

The first major incident that occurred between the South Mayo Brigade and British Forces was a “Drive” by British forces from Ballinrobe Barracks that resulted in the roundup of over thirty volunteers from the Partry Company who were taking part in drilling maneuvers. It happened at a hidden field near Coill Fáil or Kilfaul in Partry.

“On the week of the 20th of February over thirty volunteers were captured in a field called Claideach near Kilfaul by a detachment of the 2nd Border Regiment barracked at Ballinrobe. The Volunteers were marched up to the Partry RIC Barracks where their lorries were parked. The English soldiers began to jeer at the men saying they were only a “raggedy army” because most of them wore bainin jackets ... The Volunteers pleaded that they were practicing for a football game but the military alleged that they were planning to carry out an attack on the military. The Volunteers of the Partry Company were conveyed to jail in Galway and interred there until after the truce”¹⁴

Irish Independent 1905-current, 22.02.1921, page 5

HAUL OF PRISONERS.

Military swooped on the village of Partry, Ballinrobe, on Sunday, surrounding a field where, it is alleged, young men were drilling, and took close on 40 prisoners.

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It was important for the other companies of the South Mayo Brigade to strike back at British forces in response to the imprisonment of their fellow Volunteers in the Partry Company. It did not take long for Tom Maguire, Michael O’Brien and the Srah and Ballyglass volunteers to strike back.

Maguire got information that two Crossley Tenders would carry a squad of the 2nd Battalion, the Border Regiment, north from Ballinrobe to Castlebar on Monday 7th March. The main road, N-84 today, did not afford many good ambush sites, but Maguire set one up about a mile north of Partry, at Kilfaul. He gave Martin Conway, from Srah, and two other Volunteers the Mausers and instructed them to target the driver of the lorry stopping it, where it would be surrounded. Conway was a hunter and considered a very good shot. When Maguire asked Conway if he could get the driver, he said, “I’d get him if he was a snipe.”

¹⁴ Lally, M. (2008) “The Tan War” Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 71

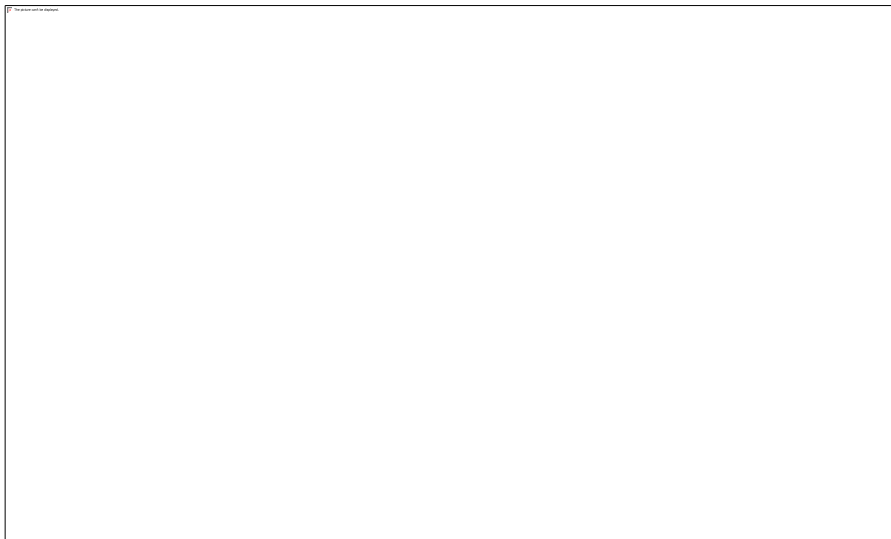
¹⁵ Irish Independent (1921). Pg.5



Grenade

He did get the driver, stopping the Dennis 3-Ton Lorry, and the ambush was a rousing success. With the Volunteers being at close range behind the roadside walls, their shotguns were effective. The commanding officer of the soldiers, Captain Chatfield, was badly wounded in the knee and several other soldiers were hit, with one, Corporal Bell, dying of his wounds five days later.

British casualties might have been worse, but one of the Volunteers had been given a number of grenades to throw, and did, but in the excitement of his first action he forgot to pull the pins. Maguire recalled how they were “rolling down the road like pebbles and not exploding.” Maguire's column had the British badly outnumbered and surrounded, and they shortly surrendered. None of the volunteers were hit and they captured 10 Lee Enfield rifles, the best infantry weapon the British army had. After they collected their weapons, Michael O'Brien did some first aid on the wounded enemy, and they were left unharmed. It shows the generous character of Michael O'Brien in battle.

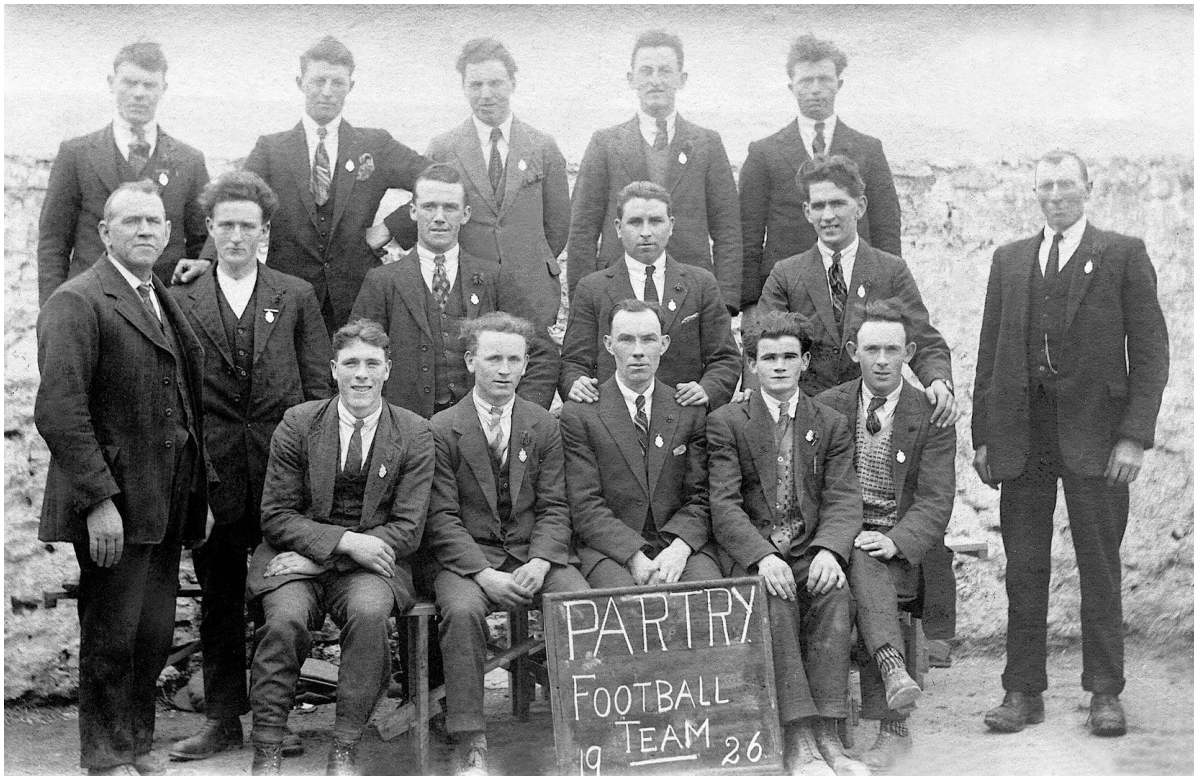


Dennis 3-Ton Lorry

In some parts of the island by March 1921 prisoners were being summarily executed by the Volunteers in retaliation for the many Volunteers now being officially executed by the British. Perhaps because Mayo had not been very active in the war to this point, and the Volunteers there had not suffered as many losses, it did not happen at Kilfaul, nor at Carrowkennedy two months later when the West Mayo Brigade captured a large number of RIC and Black & Tans.

“The Partry engagement is significant for the following reasons:

- It was the first engagement with British Forces in Mayo since the Insurrection of 1798. As it happened, some of the men who fought at Coill Fáil in Partry were related to the men of 1798.
- It marks the beginning of the War of Independence, 1919-21 in County Mayo. The campaign was to continue in the county with an engagement at Tourmakeady and the subsequent skirmish in the Partry Mountains ...
- British records state that Cpl. Bell, ‘C’ Company, 2nd Batt., the Border Regiment who was killed as result of the wounds received at Coill Fáil, was the only English Soldier killed in action in South Mayo during the War and, as it happened, Adj. Michael O’Brien, who applied first aid to Cpl. Bell on the roadside at Coill Fáil, was the only Irish Soldier killed in action in South Mayo during the War of Independence ...”¹⁶



Partry Football Team 1926 - Photo courtesy of Rosaleen McGahern

Back: Eddie Gibbons, Dick Feeney, Seán Kelly, Pete O’Malley, Barney Ferris. *Middle:* Pat Reilly, Thomas Heneghan, Martin Garry, Garda John McGahern, Garda Martin Reynolds, John Joyce.

Front: Pake Sheridan, Stephen Casey, Garda Michael Smyth, Shoddy Staunton, Mike McHugh

Many of the men pictured above were members of the Partry Company of volunteers that were arrested in the roundup of over thirty men who were taking part in drilling maneuvers at Kilfaul. They claimed they were training for football. They were imprisoned in Galway Jail and remained there until after the truce in June 2021.

¹⁶ Lally, M. (2008) “The Tan War” Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 79

South Mayo Brigade – Kilfaul Ambush Volunteers

Brigadier Thomas Maguire (Cross)

[South Mayo Brigade] OC FC

Brigade Adjutant Michael O'Brien (Kildun)

[South Mayo Brigade] AL FC

[Srah Company]

Capt. Tom Lally **OC AL FC**

(Srah)

Patk Gibbons **FC**

(Drimcoggy)

Patk. Casey

(Shangort)

James Heneghan

(Shangort)

Thomas Lally

(Shangort)

Tom T Lally

(Shangort)

Anthony Joyce

(Derrasa)

Michael Costello **FC**

(Derassa)

Martin Conway

(Srah)

Patk. Gibbons

(Gortnacullin)

Seán Donoghue

(Drimcoggy)

Seán Heneghan

(Srah)

Willie Rabbitt

(Srah)

Patk. Gillan

(Treenlaur)

Michael Walsh

(Carheen)

Michael Lally

(Shangort)

James Gibbons

(Gortnacullin)

James Joyce **OP**

(Derassa)

[Ballyglass Company]

Capt. Patk Keavney **OC**

(Kilgreena)

Patk Fallon

(Balla)

James Reilly

(Balla)

Patk Keville

(Balla)

David Rochford

(Balla)

John J Murphy

(Ballyglass)

Ed Gilligan

(Ballyglass)

Martin Varley

(Ballyglass)

Patk Murphy

(Ballyglass)

Patrick Varley

(Ballyglass)

Michael Farragher

(Ballyglass)

John Prendergast

(Rathnacrevagh)

Michael Staunton

(Castlecarra)

Malachy Casey

(Castlecarra)

Thomas Burke

(Castlecarra)

Patk Fitzgerald

(Mooneen)

Martin Staunton

(N/A)

Patk Colaghan

(Westport)

[Ballyglass Company]

Michael McGing

(N/A)

Patrick Staunton

(N/A)

Martin Walsh

(N/A)

James Corbett

(N/A)

John J Sullivan

(N/A)

Thomas Dolan

(N/A)

Thomas Toole

(N/A)

Peter McHugh

(N/A)

John Atkinson

(Peenogue)

Patk Rohan

(Ballyglass)

Henry Browne

(Springfield)

Peter Heveran

(Ballinaglee)

William Glynn

(Towerhill)

John Killion

(Carrahall)

John Wade

(Balla)

James Fallon

(Ballymakoe)

Michael Browne

(Ardbooley)

James O'Malley

(CarraJames)

[Srah Company contd.]

John Conway **OP**
 (Derassa)
 Thomas O'Malley **OP**
 (Srah)
 Willie O'Malley
 (Gortnacullin) **OP**

[Ballyglass Company contd.]

James Nally
 (N/A)
 Patk Brennan
 (Weatherfort)
 Ed Hurst
 (N/A)
 Thomas Finnerty
 (N/A)

[Ballyglass Company contd.]

Patk Gavin
 (The Woods)
 David Deasey
 (Mayo Abbey)
 Michael Nally
 (Mayo Abbey)
 Michael Scahill
 (N/A)
 Ed Kelly
 (Clogher)

[Ballinrobe Company]

Capt. Patk. May **OC FC**
 (Ballinrobe)
 Richard Mellett
 (Cloonenagh)

OC = Officer Commanding
FC = South Mayo Flying Column
OP = Out-post duty
AL = Verified addition to list

The names listed above are from Military Archive reports on Pensions document [A26 1 Brigade 2 Western Division \(South Mayo\)](#)¹⁷ see copies below. Two names are added to the list

There were 23 volunteers from the Cross/the Neale Company and 14 volunteers from the Ballinrobe company on their way to the Ambush that day but did not reach Partry on time to take part in the "Engagement"

¹⁷ Military Archives (2021). Toormakeady Ambush. Retrieved April 4th, 2020, from <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923/brigade-activities/operation/toormakeady-ambush/>

No. 2. Batt. Ballinrobe.

Operation :- Engagement with British Forces at Partry March 1921.

Participants,

Patk. F. May, Main St., Ballinrobe.
 Richard Mallett, Lake View, "
 Patk. Gibbons, Gurtascullin, Srah, Clarmorris.
 Mtn Conroy, Srah, Clarmorris.
 John Hanaghan, "
 Willie Habbitt, "
 Ml. Costello, Carrassa, Srah, Clarmorris.
 Pat Gibbons, Drumcocky, "
 Paddy Gillan, Treacaur, Toornakoady "
 Ml. Walsh, Carroen, "
 Anthony Joyce Carrassa " (U.S.A.)
 Patk Casey, Shagurth, Srah, Clarmorris
 Jas Hanaghan " "
 Thos Lally, " " "
 Ml. Lally, " " "
 Thos Lally " " "
 Jas Gibbons, Gurtascullin, " "
 Senn Donougho, Drumcocky, " "

The following were on outpost duty.

Jas Joyce Carrassa, Srah, Clarmorris.
 John Conroy, " " "
 Thos Malley, " " "

Willie Malley Gurtascullin, Srah "

The following were seen of the ambush but did not get there in time

John Jennings, Sabag, Ballinrobe.
 Maurice Jennings, " "
 Willie Gordon, " "
 John Sullivan, " "
 Thos Mallett, Ailkerria "
 Thos Cahalan Cahir, "
 Ml. Duffy, Cushlough, "
 Jim Duffy, " "
 Jim Malaney, Clonacastle "
 John Kennally, Clonagowla "
 Patk Kennally, " "
 Thos Kennally, " "
 Eddie McCormack, Roxboro, "
 Ml. Moran, Ballytreasa, "

Military Service
 Pensions Collection

No.2 Ballinrobe Battalion with the Srah and Ballinrobe Company Volunteers that took part in the "Engagement" at Kilfaul in Partry

14

No. 4, Batt. Contd.

OPERATION :- Engagement with British Military at Partry March 1921.Participants.

Patk Fallon, Balla
 Jas Wally, "
 Patk Loville, "
 David Boshford, "
 John J. Murphy, Ballyglass, Clarendon.
 Ad Gilligan, " "
 Mtn Varley, " "
 Patk Murphy, " "
 Park Varley, " "
 Ml. Farragher, " "
 Patk Keaveney, Killgroona Ballyglass
 John Frendergast, Rathnacrevach, "
 Wl. Stanton Castlecarra, "
 Malachy Casey, " "
 Thos Burke, " "
 Patk Fitzgerald Moonen, Castlebar .
 Mtn Stanton, U.S.A.
 Patk Colaghan Westcott.
 Jas Wally Australia.
 Patk Cronan, Weatherfort, Ballyglass
 Ed Hurst, U.S.A.
 Thos Finnerty "
 Ml. McGinn Unknown.
 Patk Stanton, "
 Mtn Walsh, "
 Jas Corbett U.S.A.
 John Quinn, "
 John J. Sullivan, "
 Thos Dolan, "
 Thos Toole, "
 Peter McHugh, "
 John Atkinson, Peanogno, Ballyglass
 Patk Nohan, Ballyglass, Clarendon.
 Henry Browne, Springfield, Carnoon
 Peter Hevaran, Ballinaglee, Ballyglass
 Mtn Glynn, Toserhill "
 John Killion, Carrahall "
 John Wade Balla
 Jas Fallon Ballymakoe, Balla
 Ml. Brown, Ardbooley Balla (Garda)
 Jas O'Malley, Carrigmas, Selearra.
 Patk Gavin, The Woods "
 David Deasey, Mayo Abbey Clarendon.
 Ml. Wally " "
 Ml. Scobhill, Angl nd.
 Ad Kelly Glochar, Ballyglass.

Military Service
 Pensions Collection

No. 4 Balla Battalion with the Ballyglass Company Volunteers that took part in the
 "Engagement" at Kilfaul in Partry

The Volunteers had the support of the community to stand against the Crown Forces. Tom Lally of Srah related that after the Partry Ambush:

“People had lost faith in Crown Forces and began to depend more on the Volunteers. A few weeks after the ambush as I was cycling to Ballinrobe and passing McDermott’s the stone cutter, he called after me, ‘I have been on the lookout for you for some time’, he said. Then he invited me into the house, ‘I want you to know that you can count on my support whenever you need it, my greatest regret is I can’t be with ye as I am too old’, then he took out five pounds from his pocket and gave it to me. ‘I want you and the lads to have this’ he said. Five pounds was an awful lot of money at that time, but it wasn’t just the money, it was his words of encouragement that meant so much.”¹⁸



Tom Lally of Srah with Peg Lally

¹⁸ Lally, M. (2008) “The Tan War” Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 101

Reprisal: The killing of Thomas Horan

In the aftermath of Kilfaul, however, a local farmer, Thomas Horan, who had nothing to do with the ambush, was shot and killed by a British soldier in his home in front of his young daughter.¹⁹

This was seen as a reprisal killing by the British forces, shooting an elderly man that had no part in the ambush. There was a belief locally that Horan was chosen because of an incident that occurred weeks earlier. This increased the resolve of the South Mayo Brigade to take the fight to the British forces, this they did in the Tourmakeady Ambush eight weeks later.

“Fr. O’Malley believed Horan was killed because he had made a claim for fowl looted by the British military while searching in his village six weeks earlier, and thus brought himself to the attention of the RIC.”²⁰



Tom Horan’s Cottage in Srah

¹⁹ Gannon, J. (2018). Mayo's Tourmakeady Ambush: Shrouded By 'Fog of War'. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://thewildgeese.irish/m/blogpost?id=6442157%3ABlogPost%3A230871>

²⁰ B04/08-ii/04 (1921) Fr. O’Malley to Archbishop Gilmartin. Diocese Archive

2nd WITNESS.

Mary Horan states:-

I am 15 years old and the daughter of Tom Horan-. About half four on Monday 7th March I was sitting on the hob in the kitchen and my father was sitting in a chair on the other side of the fire.

Three men came in dressed in policeman's clothes. They said "Good-day, sir." three times and my father answered "Good-day" twice. I heard a bang, and he fell into the fire. My father was at home all day till after dinner when he went out and brought back a load of turf.

(Sd) Mary Horan.

2nd Witness statement of Mary Horan, 15 years old daughter of Tom Horan

4th WITNESS.

Dr. Edward Murphy states:-

I am a medical practitioner and reside at Tourmakeady. About 8 o'clock on Monday 7th March I was sent for to attend Tom Horan. I found the patient alive but unconscious. I found two wounds on the head, from their nature I think the bullet entered from the back at short range and came out at the forehead, as a portion of the brain was protruding. In my opinion death was due to laceration of the brain followed by shock and Haemorrhage.

(Sd) E. Murphy.
M.B.B.CH.

4th Witness statement of Dr. Murphy, local Doctor who attended to Tom Horan

REMARKS ON COURT OF ENQUIRY.

There was considerable reluctance to give evidence. I interviewed a number of people on the spot and the evidence obtained seems ~~not~~ reliable enough to justify a verdict of "Murder."

Mrs Rabbett is known to be a relation of prominent local Sinn Feiners.

Mary Horan's evidence corresponds with the account given to Lieut. J.S. Sparey immediately after the murder.

Further investigations to try and discover the murderer, beyond the scope of this Court, seem necessary.

Castlebar.
Co. Mayo.
16-3-1921.
W.A.

A. M. Murphy Major.

2nd Battalion The Border Regiment.

Result of British Army inquiry into Tom Horan's "Murder" in Srah

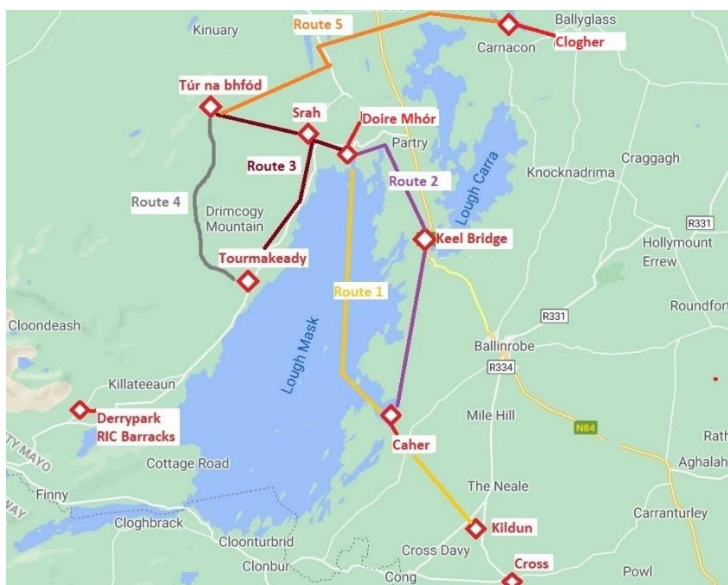
CHAPTER 3 – THE TOURMAKEADY AMBUSH

For Maguire’s flying column Kilfaul had not only been a boost for their morale, but it had also increased their long-range fire power with the added Lee-Enfields. It would be another two months, however, before they were able to successfully ambush the Crown forces again. Though many outlying RIC stations had been abandoned, there was one at Derrypark, near the southwest shore of Lough Mask, that had been heavily fortified during the land wars and was still open.

Knowing it was resupplied once a month and had not been in a few weeks, Maguire formed a plan to ambush the next resupply convoy. There is only one road along the western shore of Lough Mask (R-300 today). Maguire and O’Brien scouted it and chose the village of Tourmakeady, 6 miles north of Derrypark, expecting the column would likely go through there on the way out or the way back. It was unusual to set up an ambush in a village, and Tourmakeady was a mainly Protestant village, but perhaps Maguire thought the RIC would not expect an ambush there for that reason.

On Saturday, April 30th, Maguire began to move the flying column from the Caher area on the eastern shore of Lough Mask to the west to set up the ambush. This was a dangerous operation as Lough Corrib to the south and Lough Carra to the north created bottlenecks where the column could easily be intercepted if the British got wind of their movements.

To make the group smaller and less conspicuous, half the men were sent by rowboat over Lough Mask (Route 1) while the other half went over land around the north of Lough Mask (Route 2). The boat trip proved harrowing, as boatman of the two boats lost their bearings during the very dark night. It took them three hours to reach their destination at the northern tip of Lough Mask, at the bridge over at Doire Mhór. There they reunited with the rest of the column that had traveled the over land.



Map of routes taken by Volunteers

Route 1 – Caher pier to Doire Mhór by Boat
(Ballinrobe men cross Lough Mask at night)

Route 2 – Caher to Doire Mhór by Land
(Cross men via Keel Bridge cross country)

Route 3 – Srah to Tourmakeady by Road
(Full Brigade march to Tourmakeady)

Route 4 – Tourmakeady to Túr na bhfód
(Volunteers head across Drimcogy mountain)

Route 5 – Túr na bhfód to Clogher
(Tom Maguire carried to Clogher House)

They remained in the mountains close to Srah for two days before moving out for an ambush at Tourmakeady. How would they know the convoy was coming? Maguire said that Patrick Vahey, a 16-year-old Volunteer who worked at Birmingham's shop in Ballinrobe where the RIC got their provisions on the days they went to Derrypark, was a scout that would bring them word when they came into the shop. It took at any rate two hours to purchase and load the supply provisions, so he would have time to cycle to Tourmakeady to let them know the convoy was coming.



Patrick Vahey was just 16 years old when he cycled to Tourmakeady

Maguire decided on Monday night to proceed with the ambush the next morning, and since this ambush would be in a village, they could only set it up once. Maguire's column left before dawn from Srah Bridge and arrived in position at Tourmakeady early on Tuesday morning 3rd May 1921.

On arrival, the volunteers assembled at the fair green and ate what they had. Maguire divided his forces into four sections and placed three of the sections into their locations with his own section taking up a central location at Tourmakeady Post Office.



Birmingham's, Bridge St.²¹

²¹ Blanck, M. (1900) Bridge Street, Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <http://www.maggieblanck.com/Mayopages/OPBR.html>

“Adj. Michael O’Brien was placed with his section of men behind a hedge at the west of the fair green north of Tourmakeady Bridge ... the section was made up of men mostly from the Srah and Glenmask but like the other sections would have at least 4 members of the flying column. Tom Maguire referred to this section as: *IRA No. 1 Section at Fair Green.*”

Comdt. Tom Lally of Srah was placed with his section of men behind the wall facing the Hotel, at the crossroads or junction north of Tourmakeady Bridge. The Volunteers in this section were facing the Srah-Tourmakeady road, except they were just beside it. This Section was made up mostly of members of the Srah company ... Maguire refers to this section as: *IRA No. 2 Section at Junction.*

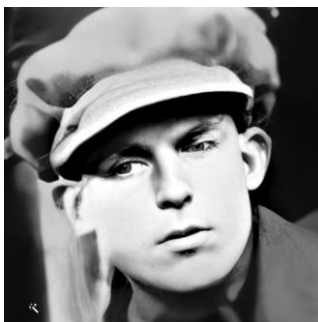
Captain Patrick May was placed with his section of 11 men at the gateway to Drimbawn House, south of Tourmakeady bridge ... It was intended that this section would attack the first military vehicle of the Convoy, a Ford car. Tom Maguire refers to this Section as *IRA No. 3 Section at Drumbane Gate.*

General Tom Maguire’s section, the main section, was located in a central position beside the Post Office, south of Tourmakeady Bridge. After he had placed the other three sections in position, he now had a number of operations to carry out ... He had some of his men take over the Tourmakeady Post Office and control and guard it for over five hours until the convoy arrived at approximately 1pm”²²

All the loyalist occupants of Tourmakeady village had to be gathered and held under guard, both to forestall them giving notice to the convoy and for their own security also. They were put in the Robinson's house, south of where the ambush was set up.

Willie Billington (the postmaster) was allowed to stay in the Post Office to answer his phone (under guard, no doubt) to avoid giving anyone the idea something was wrong. His wife, seeing Maguire giving orders to set up the ambush, asked Volunteer Jack Ferguson who that man was.

In typical cheeky Irish style, Ferguson replied that it was Michael Collins. Mrs. Billington then offered “Mick” a cup of tea, and “Collins” accepted her offer.



Volunteer Jack Ferguson

Maguire’s plan was to shoot the driver of the lead vehicle to stop it as they did at Kilfaul, not set up a roadblock. It was a risky plan since they would continue on their way if the shot was missed. May’s southern group was to do that, which would stop the vehicle in front of the other groups. The column only had a handful of rifles, perhaps 6 or 8,

²² Lally, M. (2008) “The Tan War” Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 115

with most of the rest having shotguns, but if the fight was kept at close range those could be effective.



A Ford Model T Touring Car

As the tense group of Volunteers lay in wait for the RIC convoy, the sunny, warm May weather belied the deadly conflict that was about to take place. As they waited, the Volunteers took custody of a number of people who passed by or went to the post office. When a local priest came along in his horse and trap, however, he was allowed to pass.

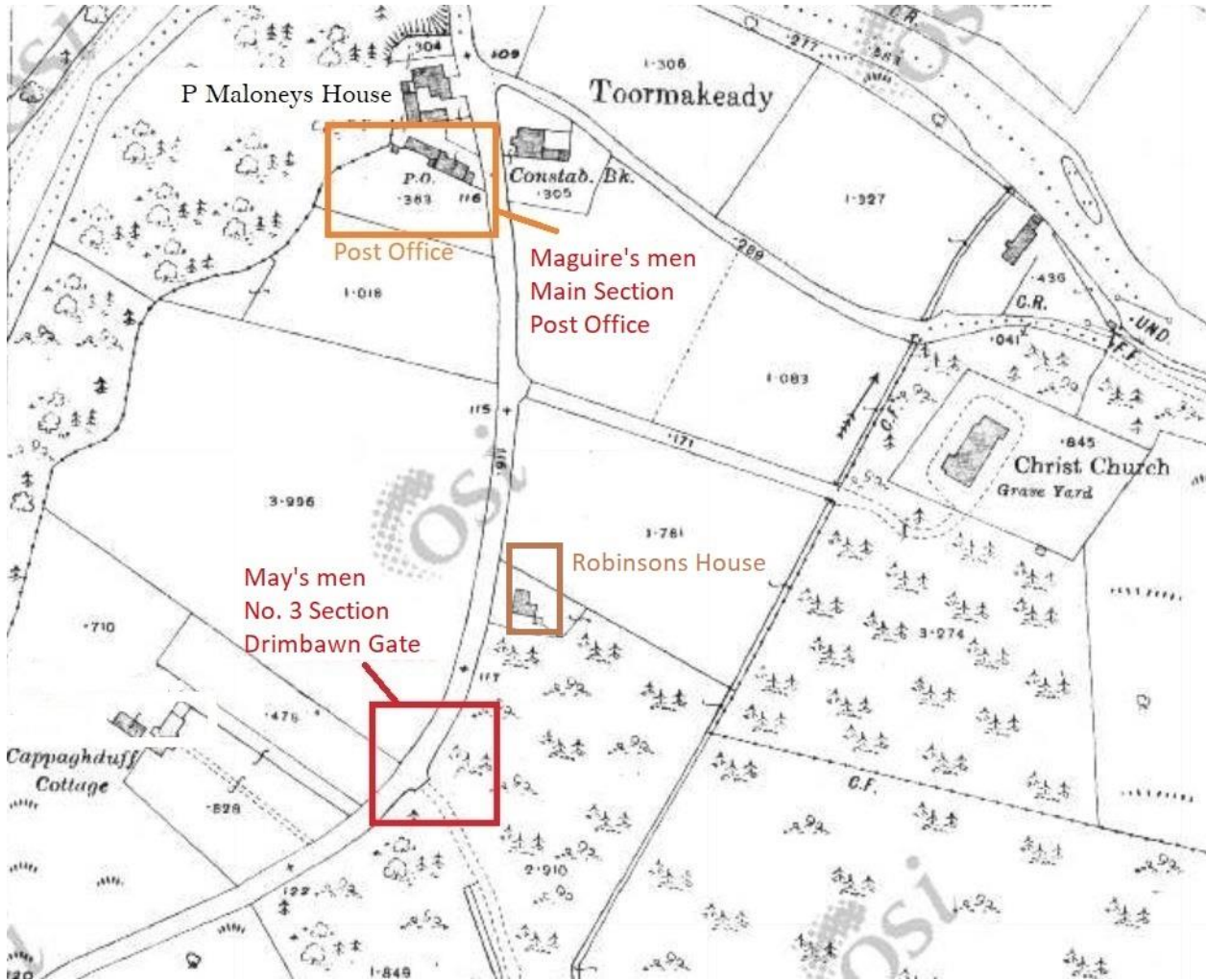
Drimbawn Gate

Young Patrick Vahey then arrived to confirm that the convoy was on the way. The word was passed down that “they are coming.” Maguire had thought there might be three vehicles in the convoy, but there were just two: A Ford Touring Car leading and one Crossley Tender. As the Ford approached May’s men at the Drimbawn gate, they opened fire.²³

“Pat Kennedy and Michael Mellette remember the names of most of the men picked by Paddy May for his position on the south end at Drimbawn Gate. Besides the two of them there were the Duffy brothers, Clogher, the two Jennings brothers, Rahard. Tom Fahy and Terry O’Brien, Ballinrobe, Michael Shaughnessy, Cross (the only man with a rifle), Edward Cameron, Corthun and Patrick Hennelly, Cloongowla. They went into the shrubbery behind the wall at Drimbawn or Mitchell's Gate, as it was also called and waited. Their outposts took passers-by who came the way and put them with the other prisoners. The expected car came about noon. The driver and most of the passengers were probably killed in the first volley. The car crashed into the wall almost opposite Michael Shaughnessy, the man with the rifle. There was some return fire from the car, but it was quickly silenced. The driver, a black & tan and the other three or four police were dead. Six rifles and ammunition were taken from the car and the volunteers withdrew. Instead of the usual two lorries only one lorry came that day.”²⁴

²³ Gannon, J. (2018). Mayo's Tourmakeady Ambush: Shrouded By 'Fog of War'. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://thewildgeese.irish/m/blogpost?id=6442157%3ABlogPost%3A230871>

²⁴ Kennedy, P. (1966) Twelve men who fought in 1921. Retrieved March 25th, 2021, from <http://www.historicalballinrobe.com>



Map of Post Office and Drimbawn Gate

The initial part of the plan succeeded, as the first volley killed the driver, Constable Christopher O'Regan. The car crashed and the other three Constables in the car attempted to return fire, but the shotguns were deadly at that close range and all three were quickly hit. RIC sergeant John Regan and Constable Hubert Oakes, a Black & Tan, were killed. Constable Pat Flynn survived by feigning death. The Volunteers collected their weapons, getting either three or four rifles, depending on the source.



Michael Shaughnessy had a rifle at Drimbawn Gate

Fair Green and Hewitt's Hotel

Meanwhile, things had not gone as well with the attack on the nine constables in the Crossley Tender. They stopped near Hewitt's Hotel as they heard the firing on the Ford and immediately came under fire themselves. Constable William Power was killed, and Constable John Morrow suffered a wound to his arm that would later cause its amputation. But the survivors were well-armed and led by Head Constable Frawley. They used rifles & grenades to drive off the Volunteers who were behind the wall in front of the hotel, which allowed them to take cover inside the stone building. That building is still there and is now O'Toole's shop/pub and Post Office.



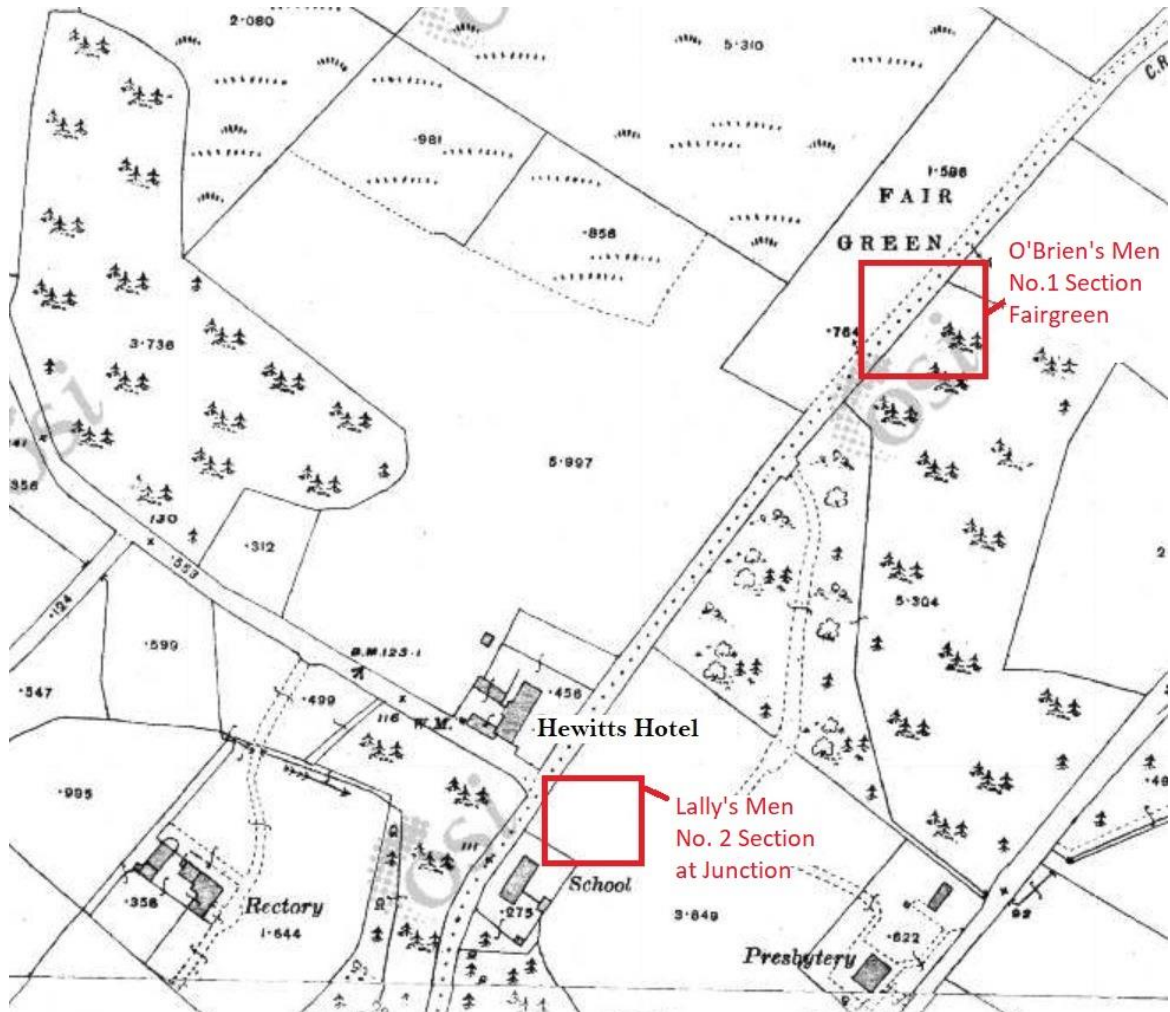
RIC Constables on motorcycles outside the Hewitt Hotel in Tourmakeady

According to Comdt. Tom Lally of Srah:

“There were a number of us behind the wall at the junction. The first vehicle went past as planned and then we waited for the second. It stopped after passing the fair green. The police jumped out and found good cover behind the lorry. As it happened, Martin Conway and myself had good shots and both of us had rifles but the distance was too great from where we were for anyone using a shot gun.

After a short while we came out onto the road to get into better positions, we continued to fire in the direction of the lorry. We held them there for some time but then they began to throw grenades in our direction. When that happened, there was very little hope for us and we were all forced back behind the wall. They were then in a position to make their way across the road and get into the hotel”²⁵

²⁵ Lally, M. (2008) “The Tan War” Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 118



Map of Fairgreen and Hewitts Hotel

Once inside the hotel, the constables had a virtual fortress; making the decision by Maguire to retreat with the column an easy one. He told the local men to return to their homes as he retreated with about 25 men westward, into the Partry Mountains. They moved out on the only road leading west out over the mountain ridge.



Gun used by Michael Lally (Shangort) in the Tourmakeady Ambush



Gun was taken from Border Regiment troops at Kilfaul by Michael Lally

“He ordered most of the local men home but kept some of the Srah men as guides and headed up the Partry mountains and north towards Túr na Bhfód (where I understand they were to get some food). From there they were able to observe, through field glasses, enemy lorries coming from Ballinrobe.”²⁶

Most accounts agree on the basics of the ambush, but accounts diverge widely regarding the British attempts to capture Maguire’s retreating column that followed. Maguire made one serious mistake as the column left Tourmakeady. He failed to cut the lines of the post office phone. Though some accounts of the aftermath of the ambush claim that the British in Ballinrobe were alerted to the attack by a wireless set at Derrypark, which RIC sources say didn’t exist, it seems most likely that the word was received in Ballinrobe from the surviving RIC members by the post office phone. Had he cut the phone line the day’s action probably would have been over.



Road out of Tourmakeady to Drimcoggy Mountain – they turned right to cross the mountain to Túr na bhfód

²⁶ Lally, T. (1990) Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n11/mode/2up

South Mayo Brigade – Tourmakeady Ambush Volunteers

Brigadier Thomas Maguire (Cross)

[South Mayo Brigade] OC FC

Brigade Adjutant Michael O'Brien (Kildun)

[South Mayo Brigade] FC AL

Comdt. Tom Lally (Srah)

[Ballinrobe 2nd Battalion] OC FC AL

[Srah (E) Company]

Capt. Patk Gibbons OC FC

(Drimcoggy)

Patk. Casey

(Shangort)

James Heneghan

(Shangort)

Thomas Lally

(Shangort)

Tom T Lally

(Shangort)

Thomas Heneghan

(Shangort)

Anthony Joyce

(Derrasa)

John Heneghan

(Derassa)

Michael Costello FC

(Derassa)

James Lally

(Gortnacullin)

Martin Conway

(Srah)

Tom Costello

(Gortnacullin)

Patk. Gibbons

(Gortnacullin)

Seán Donoghue

(Drimcoggy)

Larry Keane

(Drimcoggy)

[Cloonacastle (B) and Robeen (C) Company]

Jim Mullaney

(Cloonacastle)

Thomas Connelly

(Clooncormack)

Patk. Nally

(Kilthrone)

Patk. Curran

(Liskilleen)

Patrick Vahey SC AL

(Clooncormack)

Luke McHale

(Carnalecka)

Patk Hession

(Ballinrobe)

John Hogan OP

(Newbrook)

Martin Walsh OP

(Robeen)

Martin Walsh OP

(Robeen)

John Lyons OP

(Cloonacastle)

[Ballinrobe (A) Company]

Capt. Patk. May OC FC

(Ballinrobe)

Pat Kennedy

(Rahard)

Thomas Burke

(Cahir)

Thomas Healy

(Cahir)

Thomas Cahalan

(Cahir)

Edward Jennings

(Rahard)

John Jennings

(Rahard)

John Sullivan

(Rahard)

Michael Mellett

(Cloonenagh)

Michael Duffy

(Clogher)

James Duffy

(Clogher)

Edward Cameron

(Cortoon)

Thomas Fahy FC

(Ballinrobe)

Terry O'Brien FC

(Ballinrobe)

Mattie Flannery FC

(Ballinrobe)

**[Srah (E)
Company contd.]**

*James Durkin AL
(Gortnacullin)
Seán Heneghan
(Srah)
Willie Rabbitt
(Srah)
Patk. Gillan
(Treenlaur)
Patk. Gillan
(Treenlaur)
Michael Walsh
(Carheen)
Michael Lally
(Shangort)
James Gibbons
(Gortnacullin)
Michael Heneghan
(Derassa)
Paddy King FC
(Glenmask)
John King
(Errif Valley)
Michael Butler
(Sraheen)
Willie Duffy
(Glenagoshleen)
Philip Hallinan AL
(Glenmask)
Patk Holleran
(Glenmask)*

**[Ballinrobe (A)
Company contd.]**

*Michael Malley
(Lavalla)
Jack Hennelly
(Cloongowla)
Thomas Hennelly
(Cloongowla)
Patk. Hennelly
(Cloongowla)
Padraig Feeney SC AL
(Ballinrobe)*

Comdt. James Burke (Kildun)
[Cross 1st Battalion] OC FC

**[Cross/The Neale
Company]**

Capt. Ml. Corless OC FC
(Coolavalla)
Michael Moran OP
(Kildun)
Jack Collins FC
(Dringeen)
Thomas Butler FC
(Ballytrasna)
Thomas Conroy FC
(Ballytrasna)
Thomas Kavanagh FC
(Dringeen)
Ml. Shaughnessy FC
(Houndswood)
Thomas Carney FC
(Dringeen)
Thomas Murphy FC
(Dringeen)
Jack Ferguson FC AL
(Ballinrobe)
Michael Butler
(Ballytrasna)
Ml. Moran OP
(Ballytrasna)
Martin Lydon
(Ballytrasna)
Michael Collins FC
(Dringeen)

[Kilmaine Company]

Lt. James O'Brien OC FC
(Kilmaine)
Thomas Noone
(Kilmaine)

OC = Officer Commanding

FC = South Mayo Flying Column

SC = Scout duty

OP = Out-post duty Keel Bridge

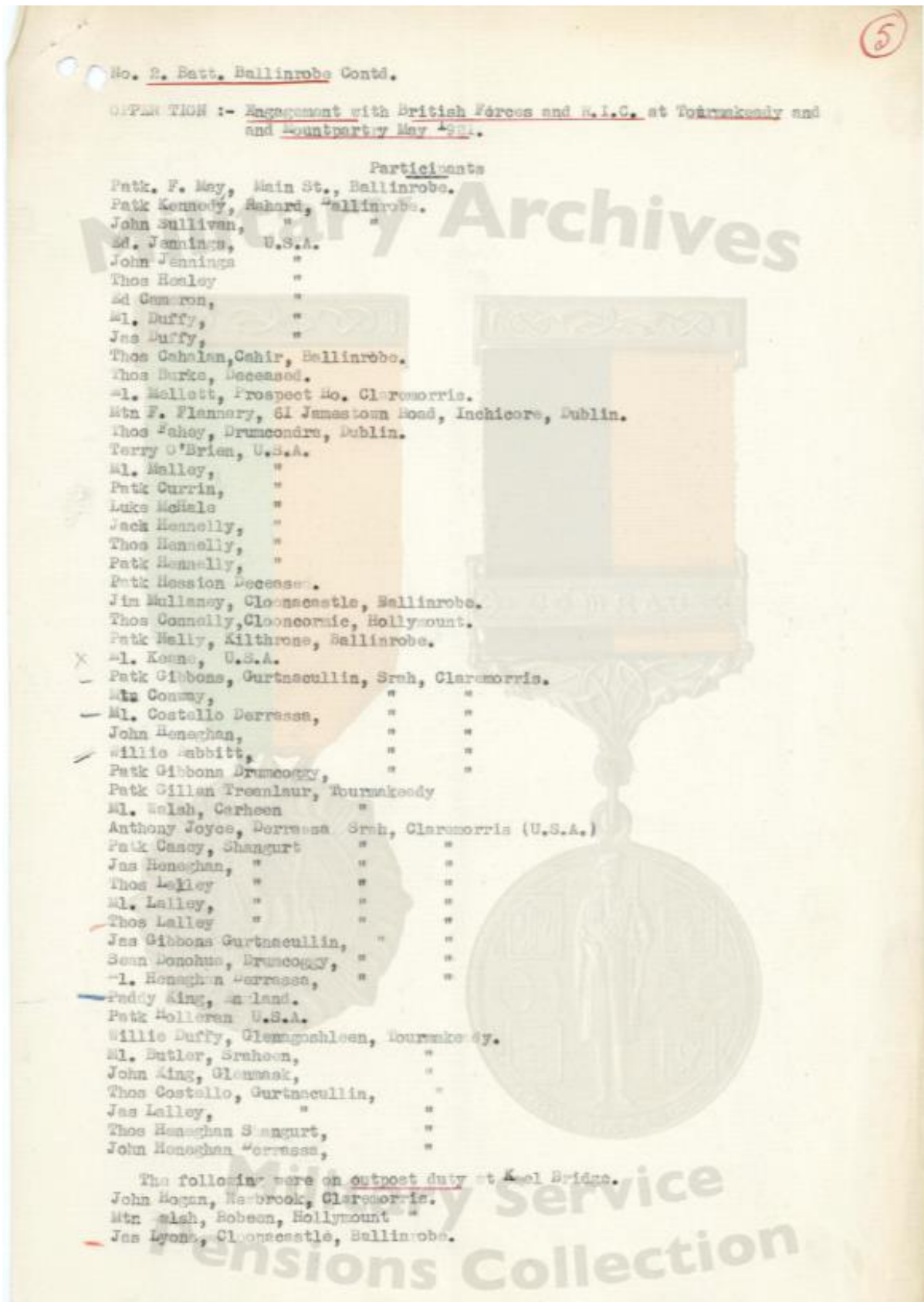
AL = Verified addition to list

The names listed above are from Military Archive reports on Pensions document [A26 1 Brigade 2 Western Division \(South Mayo\)](#)²⁷ see copies below. Seven names are added to the list.

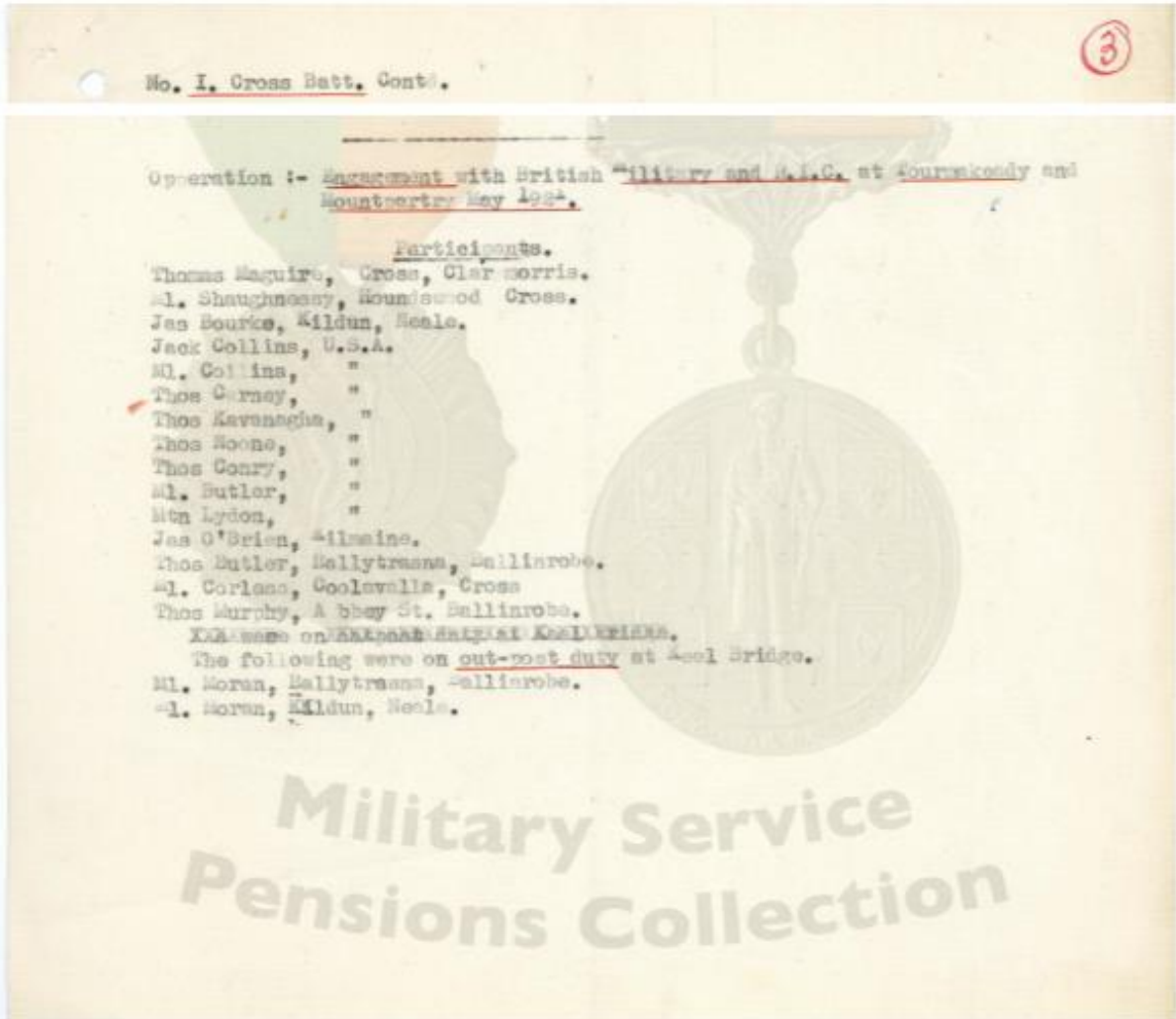
There may have been other volunteers that took part in the Ambush that were not on the South Mayo Brigade Company list [MA-MSPC-RO-253](#)²⁸ of the Military Archive report.

²⁷ Military Archives (2021). Toormakeady Ambush. Retrieved April 4th, 2020, from <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923/brigade-activities/operation/toormakeady-ambush/>

²⁸ Military Archives (2021). Toormakeady Ambush. Retrieved April 4th, 2020, from http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files//PDF_Membership/8/MA-MSPC-RO-253.pdf



No.2 Ballinrobe Battalion Volunteers that took part in the "Engagement" at Tourmakeady and Mountpartry (Tur na bFód)



No.1 Cross Battalion Volunteers that took part in the "Engagement" at Tourmakeady and Mounpartry (Túr na bFód)

CHAPTER 4 - BRITISH TROOPS ARRIVE WITH REINFORCEMENTS

Around the time the column left the road, heading north, cross country over the Partry Mountains, members of the Border Regiment were getting ready to leave Ballinrobe under the command of Lt. Ibberson. He also sent telegrams requesting help from another company of the Border Regiment in Castlebar and the RIC in Westport. The escape route over the mountains was then, as it is now, quite tree-less and barren, affording little cover.



A mixed convoy of RIC and British Military

Ibberson split his force into three sections. He ordered Lt. Craig to move up the mountains from the Srah with 20 men and two Lewis guns to block any move of the Volunteers in that direction, while he and Lt. Smith moved down past Tourmakeady and swung around and came up from the south, hopefully sweeping Maguire's flying column into Craig.

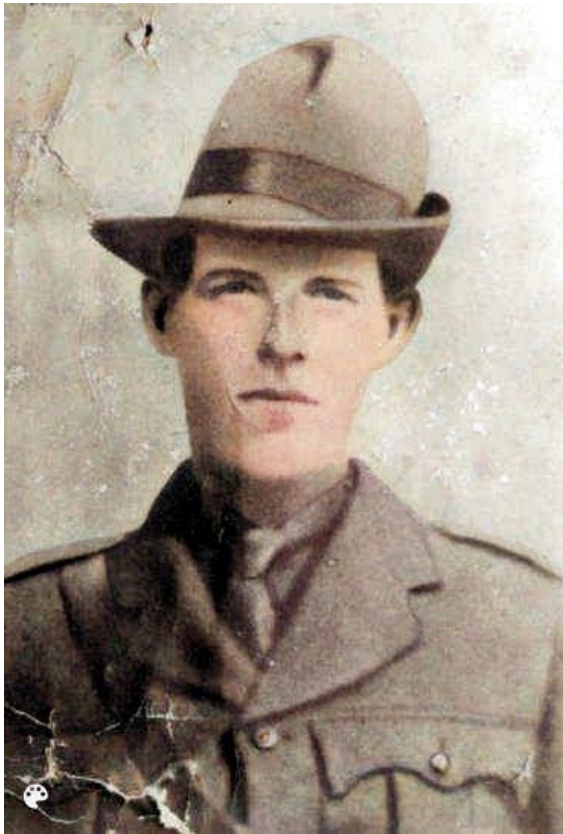
From high in the Partry Mountains, Maguire claimed later, he saw "dust clouds" from an estimated 24 British lorries on the Srah – Tourmakeady road, but that seems very unlikely. It was a bit before 3:30 p.m. as Ibberson started his pursuit. He had guessed correctly on Maguire's escape route; it was a good plan.

Like many good combat plans, however, it didn't go exactly the way he laid it out. Part of that was Ibberson's own fault. He was a cross-country runner and had much more stamina than the soldiers with him. Rather than slow down to allow them to keep up with him on that warm day, he left them panting behind him. He later said that seeing the bodies of the dead constables filled him with "anger and desire for revenge," which may have caused him to make the mistake of leaving his men behind. He even stripped off his tunic and puttees as he hurried onward.

Michael O'Brien falls in battle

Ibberson caught up with Maguire's column and fired some rounds at them, possibly wounding Maguire, though Maguire claimed he was hit by Lt. Craig's Lewis gun, which opened on them shortly after that. Whoever fired the round, Maguire suffered a severe wound to the right arm. It was at that point that Ibberson, emboldened by the fact that Lt. Craig had the column pinned down with the Lewis gun, launched his reckless solo attack.

Maguire, the O/C of the South Mayo Flying Column, was lying on his back, bleeding from a bullet wound in his right arm. There were about 30 members of the column spread around the hillside near him. Kneeling above him, his second in command, Michael O'Brien, from Kildun, was pressing a bandage to the wound trying to staunch the flow of blood.



Adjutant Comdt. Michael O'Brien

As Maguire looked over O'Brien's shoulder, he saw a tall man approaching in his shirt sleeves. It looked like Michael Costello, a Volunteer from Srah. Thank God, he thought, hoping Costello had brought more reinforcements with him to fight off the British troops he knew were closing in on them. Suddenly he realized his error. This was not Costello at all. It was a British soldier who had removed his tunic. Maguire cried out "look out" to O'Brien and the rest of his men at the same time as the soldier, Lt. Geoffrey Ibberson of the 2nd Battalion, The Border Regiment, yelled "Come, my Borders; Hands Up, Surrender!"

However, his cry of "Hands Up, Surrender!" was a bluff, as he had out run the Battalion he was ordering and was without any support. O'Brien, his hands soaked with Maguire's blood, grabbed his rifle and lifted it to fire. Lt. Ibberson lifted his at the same moment and the two fired almost simultaneously. As the supine Maguire looked on helplessly, he wondered if what had started out as an ambush by the South Mayo Flying Column was about to end with its annihilation.

Seconds after he and O'Brien fired at each other, Ibberson watched O'Brien slump to the ground mortally wounded across Maguire's legs. Ibberson's round passed through O'Brien and hit Maguire in the shoulder. Though he had killed him, Ibberson would later praise the heroic actions of Michael O'Brien in exposing himself and sacrificing his life trying to assist Maguire. The young officer had little time to enjoy winning his duel with O'Brien, however, as another volunteer Lt. Seamus O'Brien opened fire with his shotgun, riddling him with buckshot in the arms and chest. His Lee-Enfield hit the ground, and he staggered down the mountainside.²⁹

"... Lieut. Ibberson's account says that when he spotted them, he thought that there might have been 60 men or, at most, probably 40, He also said that he fired at four men higher up in the hill who had run up a gully called Beal An Fhiodain and escaped. Martin Conway (Watt) and Pat Gibbons (Thady) were fired on at this point."³⁰



Volunteer Paddy Gibbons (Thady) from Drimcoggy



Paddy Gibbons War of Independence Medals

While Ibberson's actions were certainly heroic, they were also foolhardy, and his actions in leaving the rest of his squad behind and singlehandedly attacking the column probably harmed their goal of capturing or killing Maguire's column. The rest of Ibberson's men never made contact with Maguire's men and returned to the town, and that was certainly his fault.

²⁹ Gannon, J. (2018). Mayo's Tourmakeady Ambush: Shrouded By 'Fog of War'. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://thewildgeese.irish/m/blogpost?id=6442157%3ABlogPost%3A230871>

³⁰ Lally, T. (1990) Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n12/mode/2up

Ibberson stumbled down to the cottage of an elderly couple who took him in a jaunting car to one of Craig's lorries and he was driven to Ballinrobe. He'd make a full recovery and was later promoted and awarded the MBE for his actions that day.

“Lieutenant Ibberson was, however, able to get a way down towards the village of Túr na Bhfód where he crossed a high stone wall and made his way to the house of Mrs. Costello (Brid Mhaitis). She bandaged him. He must have been a very strong man. Visiting Túr na Bhfód was Tom Joe's (Horan) father-in-law, Paidin Figheadoir (Lydon) from Gortmore who had a horse and cart and was in the house. Ibberson asked him to bring him down to the lorry at Srah bridge and after some argument he did so.”³¹

“Ibberson made his way down to the village. Kate Costello and my sister Julia were searching for Michael Costello and myself. They ran towards Ibberson, thinking he was Costello – they were both tall red-haired men. He ordered them, in a very stern voice, to go to the village and get him help. The girls were scared. He took off his bandolier and wrapped his hands around his belly. Bríd Mhaitis (Costello) bandaged him and Horan's took him to Srah.”³²



The ruins of Costello (Bríd Mhaitis) homestead where Lt. Ibberson was bandaged

³¹ Lally, T. (1990) Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n11/mode/2up

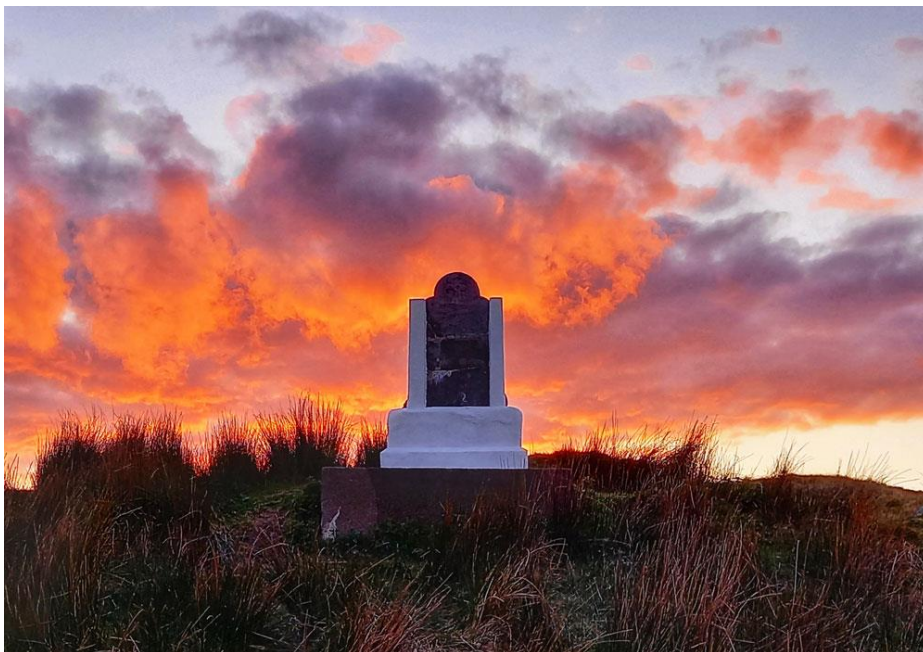
³² Joyce, A (1974) One Man's account ...



Michael O'Brien's Celtic Cross Headstone in Cong Abbey Graveyard



Stain glass window erected in memory of Michael O'Brien in Cong Church



Monument to the memory of Michael O'Brien erected at Tur na bFód in May 1948

CHAPTER 5 – BOTH SIDES WITHDRAW

Darkness falls

Lt. Craig's squad, with their Lewis gun, pinned Maguire's column down into the evening. Tom Lally would eventually take command when Maguire became weakened from loss of blood. The column retained enough firepower to keep Craig from moving on them over the open ground of the ridge, however. As the sun went down, Craig withdrew.

Lally expected the British would be swarming over the area in the morning, and so had most of the Volunteers stash their weapons on the hill and scatter to save the column. Maguire was carried down the mountain. He would spend the next few days in cottages at night, and then stashed under brush and bushes in gullies in the area during the day, when the danger of cottages being searched was too high.



Comdt. Tom Lally from Srah



Sean Donoghue from Drimcoggy

Tom Maguire Jr. has told us that his father confirmed to him that Michael Shaughnessy came on him after he was shot. Tom Maguire (whose wound to the arm was now seeping liquid not blood) thought he himself had little chance of survival and wanted his men to get to safety. Maguire said to Michael "Move on and check if there are any other men injured, I'm finished anyways". Michael's reply was "I won't leave you Tom". Shaughnessy most likely assisted Tom Lally and Michael Costello in getting Maguire down to Lally's house. Tom later said that he was placed in the *Cailleach* in the house and his wounds were patched up with sheep's wool by Michael Costello.

"The volunteers were able to get away through them that night. Tom Maguire was carried down to Lally's house in Derassa (Pat Bhidí Malone) and hidden in a stook of rye straw. Michael Costello rendered first aid ... Thomas Lally of Srah, later a Sergeant in the Garda, was prominent in bringing Maguire out of danger and stayed with him afterwards. He is most likely the man who carried Maguire on his back to Lally's of Derassa.

A girl called Ellen Kavanagh from Tawnagh (later Ellen Lally of Srah) was sent for Dr. Murphy who was lodging in Hewitt's Hotel. She was told to say that a woman in Tawnagh (Meini Donoghue) had fallen off a ladder and wanted a doctor. Dr. Murphy came to Donoghue's and he was brought to Gortbunacullin to Pat Heneghan (Mhicilín) who brought him to Derassa and there he dressed Maguire.³³



**Ellen Lally (nee Kavanagh)
of Srah**



**Margaret Costello (nee Donoghue) with
her husband Volunteer Tom Costello**

“Because Tom Maguire was in such a weak condition, Judy Joyce of Derassa decided that the best cure for him was a mixture of beastings of milk, Judy sent her daughter Julia around the whole area to find a cow that had just calved. Eventually, one was found and the cure was made up. Judy Joyce saw to it that the Brigadier received this nourishment twice a day, during the days and nights that he spent hiding in the Derassa area. When the struggle was over, Julia left for the United States.”³⁴

“Maguire was kept around Derassa for some days, being hidden by day in the bracken where he heard soldiers passing close by on a few occasions. Pat Kerrigan was to shift him by sidecar. Maguire was faint and was unable to travel by side car.

After a few days he was brought to Meeneghan’s in Derreendafderg and from there, after a few more days by horse and cart to Clogher. There they tried to borrow a motor car from Miss Fitzgerald Kenny. It was refused and they then moved to the herd 's house on the Fitzgerald Kenny estate. While there Miss Fitzgerald Kenny visited him and fed him tea and eggs. After a short stay he was taken to Castlecarrá to the house of Terry Cochran where he was attended to by Dr. O’Boyle of Balla who spent two hours cleaning his wounds.

³³ Lally, T. (1990) Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n11/mode/2up

³⁴ Lally, M. (2008) “The Tan War” Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 144

However, the doctor did not think much of Maguire's chances and told the people of the house that Maguire was finished because he had lost too much blood. When the doctor called back again a week later, he said Maguire would be fighting fit in few weeks.”³⁵

It has also been confirmed by Tom O’Toole from Ballintubber that a relative of his owned the house that Tom Maguire was brought to from Meeneghan’s in Derreendafderg by horse and cart. The house was in the grounds of Clogher House, it was the house of Mike O’Toole, a herdsman for James Fitzgerald- Kenny on his estate. The house and the Fitzgerald-Kenny House are now in ruins but are still visible directly over the wall opposite the entrance to Ballintubber GAA pitch in Clogher. It was said by Pat Kennedy, that the next night, Maguire was brought to the home of Terry Cochrane in Castlecarra. On Tuesday night a week after he was wounded, Dr O’Boyle from Balla came to attend to him there.

Tom Maguire Jr. recounted another humorous story that he was told regarding the response the Volunteers and Maguire got from Miss Fitzgerald- Kenny when they asked to borrow their car to take Tom Maguire to another safe-house. She responded “You are some soldiers if you need a car to be driven about, real soldiers don’t need cars”



Clogher House on the Fitzgerald- Kenny Estate before it fell into ruin

During that time, reprisals were made against his family and the families of others in his column. Despite hearing British searchers coming so close a few times that they could hear them talking, the brave Republican people of the area managed to save Maguire from capture at great risk to themselves, moving him from home to home.

³⁵ Lally, T. (1990) Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n12/mode/2up



Red roof shed in middle was Lally's house (Pat Bhidí Malone's) in Derassa where Tom Maguire was cared for

Was the Tourmakeady Ambush a success?

Tom Maguire survived his wounds, and he would also live to be 101 years old, not dying until July 5, 1993. He would later marry Padraig Feeney's sister, Christina. As an old IRA leader and the last surviving member of the 2nd Dáil, he became an icon of the Republican movement and remained a staunch opponent of partition to his dying day.



Tom Maguire recuperating

From the moment the action at Tourmakeady was over, the propaganda machines of both sides went into action. Maguire and the Volunteers exaggerated the number of British troops they had faced, saying they had fought off 600, and the number they killed or wounded. The British also exaggerated the number of Volunteers killed and wounded. The true figures would appear to be four RIC constables killed and one seriously wounded, and one soldier seriously wounded. There were two Volunteers killed, Michael O'Brien and Padraig Feeney, and two were wounded, Tom Maguire and Seamus Burke.



Tom Maguire at 95 years old with a Lee-Enfield Rifle

In the overall scheme of the goals of both sides, the battle was certainly a victory for the Republican side. In the aftermath the British exaggerated the size of the South Mayo flying column, but that had the effect of making the Republican forces seem even stronger than they were to the British government. The actual effects on the ground were that they closed the RIC barracks in Derrypark, Cuilmore and Kinnury and reinforced the RIC in Ballinrobe, Westport and Castlebar.

This was all in line with the strategy Michael Collins was trying to put in place during the spring and early summer of 1921, putting pressure on the Crown forces all over the island. At Westminster, as reports of more and more Republican attacks came in that spring from areas of the island that had been relatively quiet, in which the army and RIC exaggerated the number of Volunteer attackers to mitigate their own failures, the impression that the war was not winnable was building. That was the ultimate success of attacks like the one by the South Mayo flying column at Tourmakeady.

CHAPTER 6 - THE AFTERMATH OF THE AMBUSH

Casualties suffered by British Forces in the Ambush

It is important to remember that no Irish Volunteers were killed or injured during the Tourmakeady Ambush itself. It was in the aftermath of the ambush that Padraic Feeney and Michael O'Brien lost their lives and Tom Maguire and Seamus Burke were injured. The ambush took place at two locations in the village, Drimbawn Gate and opposite the Fair green with a prolonged gun battle taking place between there and Hewitt's Hotel.

The first engagement was at Drimbawn gate when the Ford Model T with its occupants were ambushed. The following casualties occurred:

Constable Christopher O'Regan (Driver)	RIC	Killed in action
Sergeant John Regan	RIC	Died of wounds
Constable Hubert Oakes	B&T	Killed in action
Constable Pat Flynn	RIC	Wounded in action

The second engagement was opposite the Fairgreen when the Crossley Tender with its occupants were ambushed. The following casualties occurred:

Constable William Power	RIC	Killed in action
Constable John Morrow	RIC	Wounded in action

The survivors in the Crossley Tender were well-armed and led by Head Constable Frawley, they made it into Hewitt's Hotel. They used rifle grenades to drive off the Volunteers who were behind the wall in front of the hotel, which allowed them to take cover inside the stone building.

Once inside the hotel, the constables had a virtual fortress, making the decision by Tom Maguire to retreat with the column an easy one. He told the local men to return to their homes as he retreated with about 30 men westward, into the Partry Mountains. The Volunteers had recovered several RIC/Black and Tan weapons at Drimbawn Gate.

"Thornton forgot to hook back the wires and the lorry we waited on, never showed up. After this we were in disarray."³⁶

Had the Volunteers cut the Post Office telephone lines properly, would they have escaped without any further engagement with the RIC, Black & Tans or British Army? We will never know, but it was surely a costly oversight.

³⁶ Joyce, A (1974) One Man's Account ...

First Reprisal after the Ambush: Pádraig Feeney is shot in Tourmakeady

We have recently had the privilege of speaking to Tom Maguire Jr. who is Brigadier Tom Maguire's son and is also a nephew of Pádraig Feeney. Tom, who is now in his 80's and in great health and spirit has generously passed on some oral history he received firsthand from his father Tom and mother Christina on the series of brutal events they lived through in May 1921 and the period after. It also sheds new light on the sequence of events that led to the brutal killing of Pádraig Feeney.

Feeney, a 22-year-old Volunteer was a scout and intelligence officer for the Ballinrobe company. His home on Glebe St. gave him a great vantage point to watch troop movements in Trucks around the town. Pádraig also monitored mail deliveries to the Barracks and often gained access to the contents, critical information for the Volunteers. Many Volunteers frequented the Pub, his late father James Feeney who was an old Fenian himself from Churchfield in Tourmakeady had bought it after returning from England. It was also an ideal location for Pádraig's role in information gathering and scouting.

The reason why Pádraig was not included to travel with the Volunteers already assembled for the ambush that day was primarily because if anything happened to him, his sister Christina, only 18 years old would be left on her own in the Feeney Pub on Glebe St. Both of their parents had passed away (her mother had died less than a year previous) and their other brother had already gone to the USA.

It was later in the morning when Pádraig observed that the Troops were loading up supplies at Birmingham's shop for the journey to Derrypark barracks. He could not resist joining his fellow Volunteers in Tourmakeady. He left Ballinrobe by bicycle to alert the column that the RIC convoy was coming (like Pádraic Vahey had earlier). Unfortunately, he arrived late in Tourmakeady after the ambush had taken place. He was captured and taken prisoner by the RIC and Black & Tan survivors located in Hewitt's Hotel.

In Hewitt's Hotel at this very time was Dr. Murphy who was based in Tourmakeady (later moved to Cong) and his wife Mrs. Murphy. The Murphy's were lodging in Hewitts at that time. All the occupants of Hewitt's, including Pádraic Feeney, had been bundled into a room by RIC & Black and Tan troops in the aftermath of the Ambush.

Tom Maguire Jr.'s mother Christina told him that Mrs. Murphy, some years after May 1921, was now living in Cong and invited his mother Christina to her house to visit. Mrs. Murphy told Christina that she was present in Hewitt's on the day her brother Pádraig has killed. She said that while they were detained in the room two members of the G-Division of the RIC (plain cloths) came into the room. The G-Men's role was in special forces to fight directly against the Volunteers in their aim for a new Republic.

The two G-Men called Pádraig out of the room and Mrs. Murphy asked, “why are ye taking that young lad outside?”. They responded saying they just wanted to talk to him. A short time later Mrs. Murphy and the other occupants heard the shots outside.

Tom Jr. said for him, these are the facts of what happened as told to him by his mother and given to her by a person she trusted who was there, namely Mrs. Murphy. Tom said that in later years, he met Tomás O’Toole, now owner of Hewitt’s Hotel. Tomás told him that his information was that Pádraig was heavily assaulted by the G-Men when he was brought outside, to the degree that he was severely injured from the assault.

Pádraig was then told to run (a common tactic at the time) and Pádraig ran with difficulty up the road towards the Rectory Gate. There were two Black and Tan’s outside with the G-Men, one then went down on one knee on the road and fired a shot at Pádraig who was hit and fell. He managed to get up on his feet again and tried to get away. The other Black & Tan said to the shooter “I thought you were a good marks man; you didn’t get him”. He knelt again and fired a second shot, this shot killed Pádraig Feeney.

Tomás O’Toole was visited frequently over the years by people with some involvement or link with the Ambush. One of those people was James Goulden (son of RIC Sergeant Henry Goulden). The account Tomás gave to Tom Maguire Jr. is like a statement made by James Goulden in 1956 to the Bureau of Military History (BMH). Tomás may have seen this statement as he was very well informed on the ambush. This is some of James Goulden’s account of how Pádraig Feeney was killed.

“I never heard that any firing was done from the hotel, but I know that blankets were obtained there for the wounded and that Patrick Feeney (captured after the attack opened) was locked up there and escaped. One of the Englishmen told me that he shot him ... He said Feeney got out by the yard and ran up towards the rectory gate. He knelt on the road and fired at him and missed or appeared to miss. He killed him with the second shot.

On the in turn of the gateway of the rectory is a bullet mark in the cement. The late rector (Rev. D. Manning) told me that this hole had been plastered more than once but the locals had picked out the plaster and when I saw the place last, the hole was still visible, as it may be still. I had no doubt then, nor have I any now, that this is what happened.”³⁷

Anthony Joyce, a volunteer from Túr na bhfód saw what took place but could not help:

“They saw young Feeney run up from Hewitt’s and they riddled him with bullets. He was told to stay home that day but he wanted to be part of the action. We were very close to where he fell but got word to stay under cover. I was very afraid that day. After this we were in disarray. The men who were with me in a field above the rectory gate when Feeney was shot were: Tom Lally (Srah), Jim Heneghan (Sheamais) Patrick Casey, Patrick Gibbons (Mhicil), Mike Lally (Mary Durkin).

³⁷ Goulden, J. (1956) Tourmakeady ambush, Co. Mayo, 3rd May 1921. Retrieved June 29, <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1340.pdf>

For some time, the noise was deafening. We couldn't move and couldn't help."³⁸

Padraig is known to have had customer bills from the pub in his pocket, yet in Constable Frawley's testimony given afterwards, he said Padraig only had cheese for lunch in his pocket. This raises doubts on the accuracy of Constable Frawley's testimony.

If Padraig was being assaulted outside of Hewitt's Hotel, did he break free from the G-Men or was he told to run up the road? There were two Black & Tans in Goulden's statement that were listed as travelling in the Crossley Tender. Constable Oakes was in the Ford Model T and he had been killed in action earlier at Drimbawn gate. This left Constable Coghlan and Constable Wright, both had made it into Hewitt's Hotel after the ambush at the Fairgreen. If Goulden's statement is accurate, it was either Coghlan or Wright that fired the fatal shot at Padraig Feeney on the road near the rectory gate.

"The pattern already established in such situations would seem to lend itself towards Feeney being shot as a reprisal. He was not the first and would certainly not be the last unarmed IRA and RIC man shot in such circumstances in Mayo"³⁹

Feeney's body was brought in a truck to Castlebar by the RIC/Black na Tans. A local man, in his 80's now has confirmed in conversations that his mother told him many times that she witnesses a body being dragged through Tourmakeady on the afternoon of the ambush, past the Franciscan Monastery, tied to the back of one of the trucks.⁴⁰ This woman was 21 years of age at the time of the ambush, but that shocking incident stayed with her for the remainder of her days. These were the first incidents to occur in Tourmakeady in the aftermath of the ambush on 3rd May 1921. They were not the last.

Christina Feeney had lost her beloved brother Padraig and was now in effect an orphan. She had more pain to endure a day later when Padraig's remains were brought back to Ballinrobe by hearse. Tom Maguire Jr. recounts a harrowing story that shows the inner strength that his mother Christina possessed.

In order to meet the hearse carrying Padraig's remains, Christina had to walk out from Ballinrobe to the Racecourse gate. The hearse stopped there, and she got into the hearse. They drove into Ballinrobe and when they came to the top of Bridge Street and attempted to turn right up Main Street, the military had lined soldiers right across the road, blocking the hearse from driving up the Street to the Church.

Christina got out of the hearse and walked straight through the line of soldiers, and the hearse followed her through that broken line. At this time, she was just 18 years old, an orphan and homeless, yet she had the towering strength to walk through that line.

³⁸ Joyce, A (1974) *One Man's Account* ...

³⁹ Price, D. (2012) *The Flame and the Candle*. The Collins Press

⁴⁰ Lydon, P. (2020) Interview relating to Oral History around the Tourmakeady Ambush 1921

There was further controversy at Ballinrobe Catholic Church when the remains of Constable Power, Constable O'Regan and Padraig Feeney were taken to the church. The following was reported in the local newspapers.

“Patrick Feeney’s body was placed in front of the main altar of the church in Ballinrobe. The RIC dead rested before the side altars of the same church. When the British protested against the place of honor being given to a rebel, the Canon refused to make any alteration in the distribution of the dead. Daily papers however announced the following ‘The Archbishop of Tuam and Canon Dalton, PP, called at Ballinrobe Barracks and expressed their deep sympathy with the police, describing the victims as men of excellent character’.”⁴¹



Ballinrobe Catholic Church⁴²



Monument to the memory of Padraig Feeney in Tourmakeady

⁴¹ Ó hÓgáin, S. (2003) Cathair na Mart: Journal of the Westport Historical Society. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <http://westmayo.ie/the-tourmakeady-ambush-may-1921-part-1/>

⁴² Blanck, M. (1900) Main Street, Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <http://www.maggiëblanck.com/Mayopages/OPBR.html>

Second Reprisal after the Ambush: Two Volunteers captured and beaten

On the evening of the ambush on the May 3rd, British Forces launched a major “Drive” operation to locate and capture any volunteers that took part in the ambush. Two local volunteers, 17 years old Paddy King and Phillip Hallinan, both from Glenmask, were spotted by an overhead plane and captured while attempting to get home. Their homes were located over the mountain range in Glenmask, at the back of Túr na Bhfód where the Volunteers had fought off the British Forces earlier that day.

“Two of the volunteers were captured in the mountains above Tourmakeady. Paddy King and Patrick Hallinan from Glenmask. They were lucky to escape death but they were badly beaten by the Tans in Tourmakeady, as were other locals including Thomas Heneghan (Eoin) and Thomas Heneghan (Johnny) from Tawnagh.”⁴³

“After the fight in the hill in Túr na Bhfód, those two lads were making their way home through the hills. They were exhausted and lay down and fell asleep. As they slept, a small plane was flying around, and they spotted them with their binoculars. In no time at all the two unfortunate lads were surrounded and arrested. They were handcuffed and marched to the lorry that was waiting on the Tóin na Saile road. My husband was a small boy of seven years and in the hayfield with his father and brother. He can remember seeing the lorry coming down the road in the distance and they could hear the cries and shrieks of those two young lads as they hammered and beat them to a pulp in the back of the lorry.”⁴⁴

“The prisoners were brought into the wood by two officers and were ordered to remove their boots, kneel down and prepare for death. They were questioned about the ambush. King and Hallinan maintained the British officers withdrew a short distance as if tempting them to escape, thus offering the soldiers a chance of shooting them. Eventually, they were dragged by the hair and thrown into a waiting military lorry and taken to Ballinrobe RIC barracks.”⁴⁵

The two men were later imprisoned in Renmore Barracks in Galway awaiting court martial. Comdt. Tom Lally of Srah was very instrumental in getting the two men acquitted. He knew Col. Blossy Lynch of Partry and convinced him to exert positive influence on the Military authorities, Lynch agreed to do so. In dangerous circumstances, Tom discreetly met RIC Sergeant Henry Goulden to ask him to give the necessary character witness for the two men. Goulden, in difficult circumstances, generously agreed. The men were acquitted in the court martial and released. Having luckily survived with their lives, King and Hallinan would both emigrate. Tom Lally had enlisted the help of two unlikely allies, Col. Lynch and Sgt. Goulden, their actions saved the men’s lives.

Paddy King would in 1966 return from the UK to Ireland to celebrate his father James King’s 100th Birthday. James supported the Land League and had also been a Fenian. James now was a Volunteer, who assisted his son Paddy in the Tourmakeady Ambush.

⁴³ Lally, T. (1990) Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n12/mode/2up

⁴⁴ Lally, M. (1996). Waterfall Magazine Archive. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <http://www.discoverjoycecountry.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/waterfall1996.pdf>

⁴⁵ Price, D. (2012) The Flame and the Candle. The Collins Press



Volunteer Paddy King of Glenmask

TOURMAKEADY AMBUSH RECALLED

Mr. King, who was a scout for the famous "West Mayo Flying Column," vividly recalled the Tourmakeady Ambush. Some 15 men taking part in the ambush had been sheltered in Mr. King's house which was used as a preparation base.

During the night of the ambush a wounded man, Seamus Bourke, arrived exhausted in driving rain at the house. After rendering first-aid to his wounds Mr. King offered him his mare to ride to safety but Bourke refused to take the mare and insisted on walking across the mountains.

"I remember him walking out into the rain, badly wounded and I watched him head up into the mountains. He went across to Hobans of Erriff where he was safe", Mr. King recalled.

Between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. the following morning the men returned to the house after the ambush and Mr. King led them across the hill to safety after they had had a hurried meal. "They were from all parts of Mayo and Galway," said Mr. King "and I only met one of them afterwards."

OWN SON CAPTURED

Among those captured during the ambush was Mr. King's own son, Pat, then 17 years old. He was interred in Renmore Barracks and Galway Jail for his part in the ambush in which many lives were lost.

"Times were hard during the troubles. I didn't sleep a wink for a full ten days during the ambush time. But I'd go through it all and more again," Mr. King added proudly.



James King, who had held a flag staff in his youth at a Land League meeting in Aughagower, was a scout in the Tourmakeady Ambush. James recalled sheltering 15 Volunteers on the night before the ambush in his house which they used as a base. It was the first port of call for Seamus Burke from Kildun who was shot in the hip and wounded in the gun battle with British Forces that took place on the mountain above Túr na bhfód. It is said that Seamus O'Brien and Michael Shaughnessy were the men who carried him across the mountain to King's house.

"During the night of the ambush, a wounded man, Seamus Bourke arrived exhausted in driving rain at the house. After rendering first-aid to his wounds, Mr. King offered him his mare to ride to safety, but Bourke refused to take the mare and insisted on walking across the mountain. 'I remember him walking out into the rain badly wounded and I watched him head up into the mountains. He went across to Hoban's in Erriff where he was safe' ... 'Times were hard during the troubles. I didn't sleep a wink for a full ten days during the ambush. But I'd go through it all and more again' ..."⁴⁶

Dr. Madden from Westport was led to Hoban's house by a woman from Cumann Na mBan, where the doctor removed the bullet from Seamus's hip and bandaged him up. The three volunteers were led out of the Erriff Valley by John King who had earlier himself taken part in the Ambush. Seamus Burke eventually got home to Kildun and recovered. He later married Katie O'Brien, Adj. Michael O'Brien's sister.

⁴⁶ Mayo News (1966) 100 – Not out



Volunteer John King from Erriff Valley



Capt. Paddy May from Ballinrobe



War of Independence medal received by John King of Erriff Valley

Third Reprisal after the Ambush: Tomás J O'Toole's shop is set ablaze

On the evening of the ambush on the 3rd May, British Forces launched vicious reprisals in the Tourmakeady area. Tomás J O'Toole's shop in the village of Cappaduff, two miles South of Tourmakeady, was targeted. The single-story building with all its stock and belongings were set ablaze by British Forces in reprisal for the Ambush that had occurred earlier.

Tomás J O'Toole had recently had a new addition to his family, a daughter named Peggy, who was only a month old. When his house and shop was set on fire, the blaze spread so quick that baby Peggy had to be passed out a window of the house to escape the fire. The building was gutted in the fire, but all the occupants luckily escaped.

Amazingly, the only item in the building to survive the fire was the picture below. The very same picture still hangs on the wall of what was the shop back then, which is now the dwelling house of Kevin O'Toole and his wife Cathy. They refurbished the building in the 1980's. Kevin is a grandson of Tomás J O'Toole.



Sacred Heart of Jesus Picture

After the fire, at Ballinrobe Quarter Sessions Court, Tomás J O'Toole claimed compensation from the County for the destruction of his business premises and stock. At the end of October 1921, he was awarded compensation. Tomás rebuilt the shop and turned the former one storey building into a two storey one.

Dick Cloherty, a nephew of T J O'Toole's who was living in the shop was reputedly on the run from the Black and Tans and may well have been hiding munitions in the shop in Cappaduff. The British Forces must have known this and targeted the building for this reason. Also, another reason to target the O'Toole's was their family links to Pádraic Ó Máille, who himself was involved in another ambush on British Forces just a week earlier near Maam and whose own home at Muintir Eoin was burned down in an act of reprisal. It was a huge setback, but they eventually recovered.

After rebuilding the Shop in Cappaduff, T.J O'Toole's business recovered very well in the years after the War of Independence was won. So much so that in 1929, T.J O'Toole was able to purchase Hewitt's Hotel in Tourmakeady (occupied by British Forces during the ambush of 1921) and expand his thriving business.

It is a strange coincidence that T.J O'Toole's grandson, Kevin and his wife Cathy still run that business today with a Shop, Pub and Post Office located there. A century later, Cathy, who is a relative of Michael O'Brien, is married to the owner of the former Hewitt's Hotel, the very location where Michael O'Brien and his men ambushed British Forces in the Irish War of Independence in 1921.



O'Tooles business in Tourmakeady

Fourth Reprisal: Co-Op Store and Gate lodge House are burnt

Also, on the night of the ambush the Co-Op store, which in 1921 stood where Tourmakeady Grotto is currently situated, was set ablaze. The empty house in Cappaduff that was occupied by Volunteers earlier that day known as the Gate Lodge was also burnt as a reprisal. There is very little detail available on these reprisals, but they are commonly known to have taken place.

Fifth Reprisal after the Ambush: Feeney's pub in Ballinrobe is looted and burnt

This reprisal was particularly savage when you consider that hours earlier, the Black & Tans had already shot Pádraig Feeney in reprisal in Tourmakeady. The Tans were now attacking his grieving sister Christina and burning her out of house and livelihood, rendering her homeless and effectively an orphan at 18 years of age.

Tom Maguire Jr. told us how they raided Feeney's pub on Glebe Street, Ballinrobe on the night of the ambush. Feeney's pub was located directly across the road from where O'Donnell's shoemakers was, it had two doors, one for the dwelling house and one for the pub. The Black & Tans burst in the door of the pub and looted the premises and then set it on fire. They also stole the Feeney's car owned by Pádraig Feeney, who they had earlier killed. Some of the premises was saved because the heat from the blaze burst some of the barrels of Beer and this quenched some of the fire as it took hold.



Glebe St Ballinrobe

Tom said his mother didn't speak much of these events until her later years, most likely because of the trauma involved. He also felt that the reason people like his mother and the men involved did not speak of their experiences was that they had to let the past go and build new lives for themselves. A big section of their young lives had already been taken up by the events of the War of Independence. They had to move on from it.

The night Christina Feeney (wife of Tom Maguire) passed away, Tom Jr. had to tell his father Tom of her passing. Tom Maguire, a man of huge strength himself said to his son "She stood up to them all". Throughout Christina's life, she had stood up to them all, the Military, the Tan's and later on the Free State. A truly remarkable woman.

Sixth Reprisal in the days after the Ambush: The O'Brien home in Kildun burnt

Michael O'Brien's family home was also burned in an official reprisal. However, to his eternal credit, when RIC Sgt. Henry Goulden was ordered to command that his squad burn the O'Brien cottage, he refused and resigned from the force.

A detailed statement was made by the son of RIC Sergeant Henry Goulden to the Bureau of Military History (BMH) in 1956. In it, James Goulden, who was born and reared in the RIC Barracks in Tourmakeady, gives a lot of details on his memories of the Ambush and events afterwards.

“My father was ordered, sometime later, to take a party to burn the house belonging to O'Brien's mother in Cross. He refused to obey the order and resigned.”⁴⁷



RIC Sergeant Henry Goulden, stationed in Tourmakeady (1907 to 1919)

Despite this singular act of compassion by an RIC Sergeant, Katie O'Brien and her mother had their house burnt out following the ambush in Tourmakeady and Michael O'Brien killing. It was a double tragedy for the O'Brien family and the loss of her son Michael broke his mother's heart. Tom (later Fr. Felim), his only brother, was away in Westmeath attending Multyfarnham Franciscan Friary when he received the news of the double tragedy.

We were unable to get any first-hand accounts on how this reprisal was carried out, we are however sure it took place with serious consequences for the O'Brien family. Just like Christina Feeney, it was a double tragedy that they had to cope with at that time.

⁴⁷ Goulden, J. (1956) Tourmakeady ambush, Co. Mayo, 3rd May 1921. Retrieved June 29, <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1340.pdf>

Seventh Reprisal in weeks after the Ambush: The Maguire home in Cross burnt

Tom Maguire's house was targeted by the Black & Tan's over a number of weeks, where they tried to burn down the house. The reason they kept returning was (Tom had told his son) the neighbors kept quenching the fire when the Black & Tans left the scene. Eventually, after the number of times it was set alight, their home was a ruin.

While this was going on, the local National School Teacher in Cross who was a bachelor, took in Tom Maguire's mother and two of his aunts and gave them a safe roof over their head's. Tom's father and uncle had to live in a tent during this period.

The Maguire family had a carpentry business in which Tom, his father and his uncle worked in. They made timber wheels for horse carts and pony traps. This was a flourishing business prior to the War of Independence. The entire carpentry workshop depended on the use of special templates that were used to cut the timber correctly. There were also specialist tools that were used to fell timber and cut it when seasoned. During this period of intimidation, the Black & Tans stole the valuable templates and some of their carpentry tools. They also stole valuable pup's and sold them in Ballinrobe.

Despite all this, Tom Maguire managed to rebuild the house, with only the gable of the old house remaining. That gable still faces the main road and is part of the rebuilt house in Cross Village. In later years, his mother told Tom Jr. of the hardship endured by the family. "You know Tom, we were hungry" she said. It say's everything about the price the participants in the War of Independence had to pay for their involvement.



Tom Maguires rebuilt home in Cross Village

CHAPTER 7 - LOCAL HISTORY ON THE SOUTH MAYO BRIGADE

South Mayo Flying Column



The South Mayo Flying Column was formed in early January 1921 with Brigadier Tom Maguire as its leader and Adj. Michael O'Brien as its second in command. The men in the "Flying Column" moved around to different locations to carry out training drills, sleep and be fed in local safe houses. There are a few locations we know of that were used, they were at Moran's in Kildun, Mellett's of Cloonenagh, Caher, the Machairí in Srah and also in the village of Derassa and the mountain range above the village.

Back Row Standing - Left to Right

Brigadier Tom Maguire (Cross)
 Mattie Flannery (Ballinrobe)
 Tommy Fahy (Ballinrobe)
 Jack Collins (Dringeen)
 Mick Collins (Dringeen)
 John Butler (Ballytrasna)
 Terry O'Brien (Ballinrobe)
 Martin Conroy (Ballytrasna)
 Comdt. Tom Lally (Srah)
 Capt. Paddy May (Ballinrobe)

Middle Row Sitting - Left to Right

Paddy King (Srah)
 Tommy Cavanagh (Dringeen)
 Seamus Burke (Kildun)
 Michael Shaughnessy (Houndswood)
 Michael Corless (Coolavall)
 Lt. Seamus O'Brien (Kilmaine)
 Tommy Carney (Dringeen)
 Paddy Gibbons (Srah)
 Tom Murphy (Dringeen)

Front Row Laying down

Michael Costello (Srah)
 Jack Ferguson (Ballinrobe)

The picture above was taken in the grounds of Moorehall in the summer of 1921, a few months after the Tourmakeady Ambush. The ASU was stationed there during the treaty negotiations. The space left in the standing row at the back of the picture is deliberate and was done as a tribute to the fallen adjutant Comdt. Michael O'Brien who was killed in action earlier in the summer. This was done at the suggestion of Tom Maguire.

Two Brigade leaders with links to 1798 – Maguire and O'Brien

Brigadier Tom Maguire



“Tom Maguire (1892-1993) was an Irish republican and commandant general in the Western Command of the IRA during the Irish War of Independence and Civil War. He led the South Mayo Flying Column. He led the column in many ambushes and actions including the Kilfall ambush on 7th March 1921 and the Tourmakeady ambush on 3rd May, 1921. He was elected a TD for Mayo South-Roscommon in 1921 as a Sinn Féin candidate. During the Civil War, his younger brother Seán Maguire was executed by the Free State government at the age of seventeen. He later drifted away from the IRA and became more involved with Sinn Féin in the 1930s.”⁴⁸

Tom was a military man to his core and had a strong military tradition and lineage in his family linking back to his great-grandfather Liam Márchis, who fought on the Irish side with the French in the 1798 rebellion against the British.

“The tradition is that, when the French landed in Killala in August 1798, he travelled from Headford to Cong, borrowed the horse of his uncle the Abbot of Cong – an O'Malley – and galloped off to meet them. He joined Humbert around Castlebar and remained with him until Ballinamuck”

This is very significant as it was Brigadier Tom Maguire who led the next Irish Force that would stand against British Forces on Mayo soil at the Kilfaul Ambush on the 7th March 1921 (123 years after 1798). The military pedigree was there for generations.

⁴⁸ Military Archives (2021). Tourmakeady Ambush May 1921. Retrieved April 4th, 2020, from <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/reading-room-collections/uinseann-mac-eoin-collection/search-the-collection/>

In Tom's interview with Uinseann Mac Eoin for *Survivors* he alludes to his Military calling

"I always had what I call military leanings. I loved reading about battles, both at home and abroad."⁴⁹

Tom also had a keen eye for spotting the natural talents of the Volunteers under his command. For the Kilfaul ambush he identified Martin Conway of Srah as a keen marksman with a rifle and selected him to fire on the driver of the British Truck.

"... I had got to know Martin better. He was very fond of fowling along the Partry's, an excellent shot. So I chose him as the one to pick off the driver"⁵⁰

Tom Maguire's description of the Tourmakeady Ambush and its outcome are very concise and to the point. Also, his description of surviving his own injury from the battle on the mountain and the fatal shooting of his Adjutant Michael O'Brien is very telling.

"Five of them were killed and more wounded; we suffered no casualties. The ambush position was right in the middle of Tourmakeady where the road bends sharply and a gateway enters a house. A flanking wall commands the road. We had a couple of fellows, good shots, placed there. They stopped it. There was a lorry close behind. When it heard the shots it tried to stop but it had already entered the ambush position. Some of them were hit too ... Dismissing the local men we retired at once westwards into the hills.

A few hours later ... we were contacted by a party of British Troops ... we withstood their attack with Lewis Guns and rifle fire all day ... At one point I got hit. They were concentrating a terrible barrage on us just then. My Adjutant, Michael O'Brien, crept over and tied me up but I was bleeding profusely. A party of them, led by Liet. Ibberson, moved to outflank me. He was not in uniform, his frock-coat was off ... Suddenly taking aim he fired at O'Brien, who had just finished attending to me. He hit and fatally wounded O'Brien, who was in the act of picking up his rifle again ...

A couple of us were wounded and one killed. I had bullet wounds ... I was carried upon one fellow's back, my arms hanging down. The first house they came to I was brought in and laid down. I was comfortable there but feeling very weak. Very early in the morning two volunteers arrived. 'Are you able to move?' they asked. I had never taken spirits before but that morning I was given a double egg flip mixed with whiskey and it did me the power of good ... It was the will to survive. I suppose if we had been beaten after Tourmakeady, I would have died."⁵¹

This survival instinct was something that stood to Tom Maguire all his life and he lived to the age of 101 years. He took the Anti-Treaty side after the treaty was signed in December 1921, yet in the same interview with Mac Eoin, he made this observation:

"When I heard of the deaths of people on the Free State side like Griffith, Collins, Sean Hales, I could not be glad. You felt these are people who fought the British and now they are gone. Britain is really the victor."

⁴⁹ Mac Eoin, U (1987) *Survivors*, pg. 278.

⁵⁰ Mac Eoin, U (1987) *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Mac Eoin, U (1987) *Ibid.*



Tom Maguire and his wife Christina Maguire (nee Feeney)

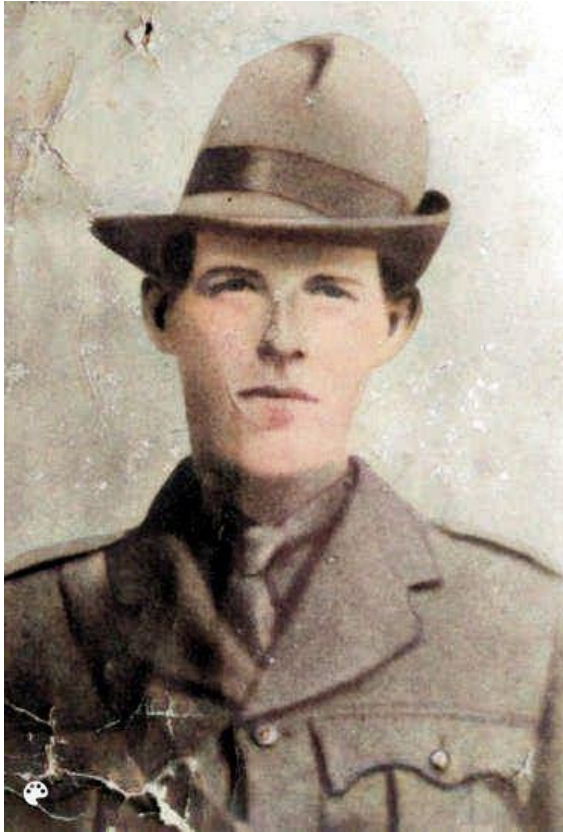
In our conversation with Tom Maguire's son, Tom Jr. generously gave us an insight into his father's Military instincts. There was one battle strategy that Brigadier Tom Maguire had read about and was trained to use; it was ensuring that you remained camouflaged in the landscape you fought in. When Maguire and the Volunteers were on the mountain in Túr ná bhfód, there were two planes flying overhead, trying to identify their location. Tom Maguire's clear order and instruction to the men under his command was "Do not to look up at the plane".

The reason for this was, if the men looked up, the enemy in the plane would see movement and the bright contrast of the man's face appear on the ground and identify their position. The color of the Volunteers caps and uniforms roughly matched that of the Mountain heather so by not looking up, they remained camouflaged and out of sight to the British planes. The instruction proved to be highly effective.

Another tactic Tom Maguire used to ensure his own survival in the hours and days following his serious injuries from gunshot was again to use the landscape to your advantage when concealing yourself from the enemy. The mountain streams carry floods in wintertime, the torrents of water undermine the banks. This left large overhangs of the sod over the streams and created the perfect hiding place for Tom. This is where the local people hid Tom Maguire for long stretches of time and in his own view is what saved him from capture by British Forces.

Brigadier Tom Maguire was a military man to the core and very skilled at survival.

Adjutant Michael O'Brien



Adjutant Comdt. Michael O'Brien

Just like his comrade Brigadier Tom Maguire, Adjutant Michael O'Brien had a great military pedigree stretching back generations. In the Irish rebellion of 1798, the Irish Army was led by General George Blake of Garracloon. According to local tradition, General Blake and the French Army were joined in the battle by men from Ballinrobe, Kildun, Partry and Sragh. These locations would remain strongholds of Irish resistance.

“Local tradition has preserved the names of some of them – the Lardners and Conroys of Ballinrobe, Dermot [Darby] O'Brien of Kildun, William Maguire of Garracloon, Timlin and Martin Mór O'Morrin of Partry and Devaney of Sragh ...”⁵²

It is no coincidence that Michael O'Brien's fathers name was Darby, also an O'Brien and a Maguire entering the battle together, rebelling against British rule in Ireland. Just as their ancestors had fought in 1798 at the “Races of Castlebar” Michael O'Brien and Tom Maguire fought side by side at Kilfaul and Tourmakeady in early 1921.

In the Kilfaul ambush, Michael O'Brien and the other volunteers were involved in a gun battle with a truck load of British Troops. In the gunfight, one British Soldier was severely injured, a Corporal Bell, who would later die from his injuries. Once the gunfight was completed, Maguire and O'Brien followed honorable fighting protocols

⁵² Hayes, R (1937) *The Last Invasion of Ireland*, M H Gill and Son

and refrained from any reprisals on enemy troops that were injured. Instead, they collected their valuable weapons and Michael O'Brien did some first aid on the wounded enemy, and they were left unharmed. They would also arrange for a local Priest Fr. O'Malley to come to the scene to administer last rites to one of the injured British soldiers, who pleaded that he was Catholic and wished to have a priest attend. It shows the honorable character of O'Brien and Maguire in the heat of battle.

In the battle with British Troops on the mountainside at Túr na bhfód in the aftermath of the Tourmakeady Ambush, Michael O'Brien again would prove heroic in coming to the aid of Tom Maguire in the middle of the gunfight. Maguire described vividly how brave O'Brien acted just before he lost his life:

“my Adjutant, Michael O'Brien, crept over and tied me up but I was bleeding profusely ... Suddenly taking aim he fired at O'Brien, who had just finished attending to me. He hit and fatally wounded O'Brien, who was in the act of picking up his rifle”.

The British Soldier that fired the fatal shot, Lieutenant Ibberson, gave direct testimony on the injury of Tom Maguire and the killing of Michael O'Brien:

“After firing three or four rounds at the leader he fell on the slope facing my position, whereupon the whole Column took cover. After about a minute a man came forward from cover. I fired one round at him before realizing that he had come to the aid of the wounded leader. He helped his leader back under cover and then came back to collect a weapon left where the leader had fallen ... The man, however, who was attending to the wounded leader picked up his rifle and had a snap-shot at me. I dropped and he missed me. I then shot him and he rolled over.”⁵³

Though he had killed him, Lt. Ibberson would later praise the heroic actions of Michael O'Brien in exposing himself and sacrificing his life trying to assist Maguire. Both friend and foe confirmed the bravery of Michael O'Brien in battle.

Like so many other Irish women, Katie O'Brien, Michael's only sister, provided vital support to the volunteers of the South Mayo Brigade. As Napoleon Bonaparte once famously said '*An army marches on its stomach*', the same was true for the members of the "Flying Column". The O'Brien's of Kildun and the Moran's of Kildun were cousins on Katie's mother's side. Katie and the Moran's fed the Volunteers during the weeks that led up to the Tourmakeady Ambush:

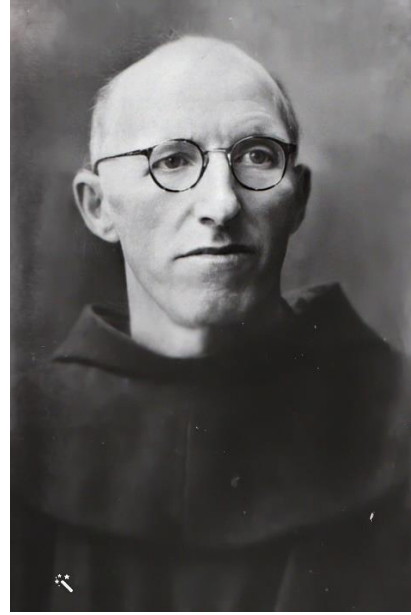
“They were fed from Moran's house and all the cooking was done by Mary Moran and Katie O'Brien (Katie was a niece of Audie Moran). These two women baked nineteen loaves of bread every day for two months (mid-March 1921 to end of April 1921)”⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibberson, G. (1956) Tourmakeady ambush, Co. Mayo, 3rd May 1921. Retrieved June 29, <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1307.pdf>

⁵⁴ Lally, M. (2008) "The Tan War" Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 164



Katie O'Brien from Kildun



Fr. Felim O Briain from Kildun

In the aftermath of the Tourmakeady Ambush, it was Katie who had to identify her slain brother in Ballinrobe. Katie would later get married to Seamus Burke who was with her brother on the mountain in Tourmakeady and was shot and injured in the hip during the same battle. Katie and Seamus had an only daughter Bríd Burke.

It was in January 1921 that Michael O'Brien went on the run full time with the South Mayo Flying Column. That same month, his only brother Thomas, chose a different path to Michael, leaving the homestead to pursue an academic career. Thomas would later join the Franciscan Order and would be known under the name Fr. Felim O Briain OFM. Now a Franciscan Priest, he later became a Professor of Philosophy and Theology in University College Galway and held the distinction of delivering lectures in Philosophy to students in his native language, Irish. Fr. Felim often celebrated mass in May at Túr na bhfód where his brother Michael fell in battle.

In the early 1950's Fr. Felim O'Briain was centrally involved on behalf of the Galway Diocese in the purchase of Galway Jail which was later knocked and rebuilt into what is now Galway Cathedral. It was in this same Galway Jail that in 1921, over 30 men from the Partry Company of volunteers were imprisoned by the British for drill training in Kilfaul, setting off the dramatic events of early 1921 in South Mayo.

This author's grandmother, Kate Conroy of Creevagh, Cong was a cousin of the O'Briens and remained close friends with Katie and Fr. Felim throughout her life, visiting Katie's house in Kildun on Sunday afternoons. Fr. Felim would often be down from Galway on these Sundays to visit his home in his long Franciscan robe and sandals. My grandmother was so taken with Fr. Felim and the Franciscan beliefs that as a married woman she joined the Secular Order of Franciscans (Third Order) and when she passed away she was dressed in a Franciscan robe and laid to rest with a hood on her head. In her youth, my grandmother had also been a member of Cumann na mBan.

Cross/The Neale Company of the South Mayo Brigade

The Military Archive shows that 23 volunteers from the Cross/the Neale were on their way to participate in the Kilfaul Ambush on 7th March 1921 but “did not get there on time”. Maguire and O’Brien were there. Following the engagement with the British at Kilfaul, the “Flying Column” members were largely based at the back of Michael Moran’s house in Kildun, situated between the Neale and Cross. Michael Moran was a prominent volunteer in the Company and was related to Michael O’Brien, also from Kildun.

“While they were in Kildun, they were looked after by Lt. Michael Moran, whose mother Mary prepared food for the men, as did Katie O’Brien, sister of Michael O’Brien, Adjutant of the South Mayo Brigade. During the following weeks, they spent their time drilling and making attempts, sometimes with local companies, to carry out attacks on the constabulary and military.”⁵⁵

Having trained continuously in the weeks leading up to the planned Tourmakeady Ambush on 3rd May, the flying column with additional volunteers from Cross/the Neale and Ballinrobe Companies assembled at Moran’s in Kildun on the 30th April. After being fed in the evening, the two local Priests Fr. Campbell and Fr. Carney heard their confession at Michael Moran’s homestead. It shows how important the spiritual dimension of life was held by the Volunteers, their faith and beliefs were the last thing they attended to before departing on the dangerous mission to Tourmakeady. We have been reliably told that Michael O’Brien was over at his own mother’s house in Kildun when confessions were taking place and when he got back to Moran’s, the two Priests had left. Thirty-eight volunteers left Moran’s yard together that evening heading for Tourmakeady, sadly Michael would not see his native village of Kildun again.



Moran’s Cottage in Kildun

⁵⁵ O’Malley Donnellan, M. (2019) Cong & Cross, A Nineteenth Century Overview. AT&T Print



Old IRA Cross/The Neale/Cong in the 1950's in Cong Abbey

Back row L-R: John Joyce, Luke Varley, Michael John Shaughnessy, Mick Warde, Michael Farragher, Tom Morrin, Jim Laffey, Peter Gannon, Paddy Lydon, Patrick Connor, Michael Conway, Patrick Keane, Jimmy Heneghan, Tommy Mannion **Third Row L-R:** Harry Buckley, Tommy Conroy, Michael Feerick, Jim Shaughnessy, John Rogers

Second row L-R: Michael Shaughnessy, Jim Flynn, Martin Murphy, Paddy Haire, Martin Casey, Tommie Collins, Michael Moran, Bernard Sears, Walter Murphy, Patrick Conroy

Front Row L-R: Peter Waldron, Michael Ryan, Tommy Keady, Patrick Moran, Seamus Burke, Mick Conroy, Jim Maye, Willie Coyne, Patrick Varley, John McCormack, Paddy Collins



**Patrick Conroy Volunteer from
Creevagh, Cong**



**J Moran and Pake Conroy at a Wreath
laying Ceremony at Michael O'Brien &
Michael Morans Gravestones in Cong**



Mick Jim Moran's War of Independence Medal



70th Year Commemoration at Michael O'Brien's gravestone on 3rd May 1991 in Cong Abbey graveyard

Left-Right: Jackie O'Brien, Christina Farragher, Mae Kelly, Michael Keane, Lelia Luskin, Thomas Conroy, Tommy Kelly and David O'Brien

“In his memoir's Tom Maguire related that *'The South Mayo Flying Column had been out early on frosty mornings having been supported by friendly people'*. The friendly people were the people off Kildun; Republican families like the O'Brien's, the Moran's, the Haire's and the Burke's. The Flying Column of over twenty volunteers was camped a few hundred yards behind Moran's house. Moran's of Kildun had become Headquarters for the Flying Column from mid-March 1921 until they set off for the Partry Mountains on 30th April 1921, where they took part in the ambush on the following Tuesday.”⁵⁶



O'Brien Hall Committee in The Neale⁵⁷

The 'O'Brien Memorial Hall' in The Neale, it was opened in 1958 about 80 yards below the 'bad turn'. It was built by a local committee of volunteers. Third from the left at the back of the commemorative picture taken of the Committee is Watty Moran, son of Lieutenant Michael Moran (Mick) and grandson of Mary Moran, who fed the Flying Column in their hideout at the back of Mick's house in the aftermath of the Kilfaul Ambush and in preparation for Tourmakeady.

⁵⁶ Lally, M. (2008) "The Tan War" Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 107

⁵⁷ JCWLH (2020) A National Heritage Week 2020 Project, retrieved on 19th April 2021 from

<https://joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Loughs-Carra-Mask-and-Corrib-resources-borders-and-passageways.pdf>

Srah Company of the South Mayo Brigade

In Micheál Lally's book "The Tan War" his father Tom Lally of Srah described many of the events on the mountain after Tom Maguire was wounded and Michael O'Brien had been killed. Tom also detailed how he became involved in the old IRA and the formation of the Srah Cumann and their activities. Some of these are recounted here.

The Srah Cumann was the only company of the IRA in Tourmakeady, there also was a company in Partry. In our opinion the Rabbitte family of Srah, had a big influence on the formation of a company in Srah. Michael Rabbitte was from Mountdaisy, Castlebar and was appointed as principal of Srah N.S in 1898 when the school opened. He was a nationalist and a native Irish speaker. He was also a member of Conradh na Gaeilge and was influenced by the opening of Colaiste Chonnacht in Tourmakeady in 1905.

He set up a branch of Conradh na Gaeilge in Srah school in 1914 and his son Willie Rabbitte and Tom Lally were the first people to receive an Fáinne Óir in 1915. Willie or Liam Rabbitte was very committed to the cause. He was in college in Dublin, and he knew what was going on round the country. After the Easter Rising Dick Walsh of Balla a member of the Irish volunteers and of the I.R.B. (Fenian) was setting up branches of the Irish volunteers in South Mayo. The national volunteers under John Redmond had been in existence since 1913. When Redmond advocated that volunteers should join the British army on the outbreak of the first World War there was a split in the volunteers. The Irish Volunteers were set up and they were involved in planning the 1916 Rising. In 1916, after the rising Dick Walsh had a meeting in Srah school and it was then that he swore Willie Rabbitte and Tom Lally into the IRB.

A week later, dressed in Fianna Éirinn uniforms, they marched from Srah bridge to the school where Willie read the 1916 proclamation in honour of the executed of the 1916 Rising. In general, the people were dissatisfied with the progress of home rule and the history of land agitation and the fight against the proselytising of the Plunkets and the Fenian tradition of Fr. Pat Lavelle made Srah an ideal area to get recruits for Sinn Féin and the volunteers. The influence of Coláiste Chonnacht and Conradh na Gaeilge also played a part. Patrick Pearse had been in Coláiste Chonnacht and he is said to have been doing shooting practice while staying in John Walshe's house in Carheen.

In 1917, there were 60 members in the Srah Company of volunteers. By 1918 when the threat of conscription which brought all the nationalists in Ireland together including the Catholic Church, to fight it, the number had grown to a 100. These members were mostly past pupils of Srah N.S except for Mylie Joyce, Shanvalleyard, Paddy and Willie Gillian, Treenlaur and Michael Walsh, Carheen, whose mother was Lally from Srah. They had their headquarters in Srah school until 1920, they moved to an abandoned house at the back of Srah at Machairí due to increased police activity.

The drilling was also held in Machairí at the back of Srah. The officers were Willie Rabbitte Company Captain, Tom Lally, Lieutenant, and Patrick Gibbons (Thady). Srah company had two World War 1 Veterans Tom Costello (US Army) and his brother Michael (British Army) who helped with the drilling. Their arms dump was on the lands of James Heneghan Shangort. Some of the drilling took place in the mountain out from Túr na bhfód. It seems the Fenians did some drilling here in the 1860s and 1870s also.



Willie Rabbitte from Srah

Later members acted as Sinn Féin police especially after the R.I.C barracks in Tourmakeady and Partry were closed in 1920. The fair day the 29th of June 1920 was their first major public order duty. There was also a Sinn Féin court which was held in Pat Horan's (Joe) cart house and Sean Heneghan's shed was where prisoners were held.

There was also a company of Cumann na mBan in Srah. They were affiliated with Westport while the men were in the Ballinrobe area. There were about 20 members who provided invaluable services of carrying dispatches, feeding the volunteers and they were also trained in first aid. Unfortunately, we don't know all their names, here are the names we do have:

Captain Margaret Costelloe (nee Donoghue) Drimcoggy
 Ellen Lally (nee Kavanagh) Srah
 Catherine Heneghan (nee Gibbons) Srah
 Bridget Newell (nee Lally) Derrew
 Julia O'Malley (nee Joyce) Srah
 Catherine Horan Túr na bhfód
 Bidy Costelloe (nee Heneghan) Srah

“Members of the Srah unit of Cumann na mBan were very important in the preparation for the Tourmakeady Ambush because they organized accommodation and prepared food for approximately 50 Volunteers who were expected in Mount Partry (Srah) on the Saturday night before the ambush. Many of these women were forced to leave home after they had taken part in the struggle for Irish Freedom. Most of them ended up in the United States and never returned, hence, their names do not appear in the Ballinrobe list which formed part of the Pension Papers of the 1930's”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Lally, M. (2008) “The Tan War” Ballyovey, South Mayo Pg. 106

Many of the Srah volunteers also immigrated and over 20 members had emigrated by the end of 1920 before military operations began. They continued to help the movement by sending money and supplying arms.

In 1920 there was a major re-organization of the volunteers/IRA in the country. Mayo was no different. The county was divided into 4 battalions North, South, East, and West. Srah was in the South Mayo Brigade area. Pressure was coming from headquarters and each brigade area had to carry out military operations. It was hard to carry out military operation at this time as there was a severe shortage of guns and ammunition.

The vast majority of the Srah volunteers only had shotguns. Many of the flying column members only had shot guns. There were four members of the Srah company in the flying column, they were Liam Rabbitte, Tom Lally, Pat Gibbons(Thady)and Michael Costelloe.

In February 1921, 30 volunteers from Partry were arrested while drilling in Claidleach and sent to Galway jail. The volunteers in Srah and Ballyglass wanted to do something in revenge for these arrests. Fifty volunteers from Srah and Ballyglass under Tom Maguire from Cross, O/C of South Mayo Flying Column and some members from Balla, ambushed a convoy of British soldiers travelling from Ballinrobe to Castlebar. One soldier was killed and 2 injured, 8 rifles were captured. It was a successful engagement.

The Killfaul ambush was the 1st military action of the Srah Company. The following members took part in it. The Srah Company were on the east side of the road under the command of Michael Ó Brien, of Kildun. The Ballyglass boys were on the other side of the road under Tom Maguire.

Captain Tom Lally (Srah)
 Captain Paddy May (Ballinrobe)
 Richard Mellett (Ballinrobe)
 Patrick Gibbons (Gortnacullin)
 Martin Conway (Gortnacullin)
 John Heneghan (Srah)
 Willie Rabbitte (Srah)
 Michael Costelloe (Tournavode)
 Patrick Gibbons (Drimcoggy)
 Paddy Gillan (Treenlaur)
 Michael Walshe (Carheen)
 Anthony Joyce (Tournavode)
 Patrick Casey (Shangort)
 James Heneghan (Shangort)
 Thomas Lally (Shangort)

Tom Lally [Thomas] (Shangort)
 Michael Lally (Shangort)
 James Gibbons (Gortnacullin)
 Sean Donoghue (Drimcoggy)

On outpost duty:
 James Joyce (Tournavode)
 James Conroy (Tournavode)
 Tom Ó Malley (Srah)
 William Ó Malley (Gortnacullin)

Martin Conway was chosen by Maguire to take out the driver as he was the best marksman they had. He is reported to have said he would get the driver “*if he was only the size of a snipe*”. Three British soldiers were wounded one fatally. The volunteers got the priest Fr O Malley for the wounded soldiers and Michael O Brien rendered first aid. Fr. O Malley came at great risk to himself as some of the retreating British soldiers were firing indiscriminately at anything that moved. They abused Fr. O Malley not realizing he was going to the aid of their dying comrade.

Unfortunately, Thomas Horan from Srah was shot at his fireside in reprisal by a group of auxiliary police that evening. He was completely innocent, and it is thought he was targeted because he had complained about crown forces killing some of his fowl a few weeks previously. The villagers in Partry and Srah were terrorized by British patrols seeking revenge.

The Black and Tans and the police were continually carrying out raids searching for the volunteers and arms dumps. Tom Lally’s father, John, had to abandon his house for a few months due to continual harassment.

The flying column were now permanently on the run. The IRA had a hide out at the top of Tawnagh in a place where there used to be a still for poitín making (teach na Stile) One night it went on fire and the next day some of the neighbors came to inspect it and see if anybody had died. One old man was poking around the ashes with his stick and he is reported to have said “Níl aon cnámha ann ar chuma ar bith”. There are no bones anyway.

The South Mayo brigade were constantly trying to organize some other ambushes, but their plans did not work out and the Tans and police were carrying out more reprisals and there was a great fear among the people. It was then decided to attack the supply convoy to Derrypark RIC barracks. They were supplied fortnightly from Ballinrobe usually a car and two lorries were in the convoy. Tourmakeady was chosen as the site of the ambush. One reason for this was nearly all the residents were Protestants/loyalists and they would be less likely to be attacked by police in a reprisal.

Word got out that the convoy would be travelling on the 3rd of May. The flying column made their plans and they travelled to Srah on Saturday the 1st of May.

They stayed in houses in Túr na bhfód, Derrasa and Shangort and Gortnacullin. On the morning of the 3rd of May they left the houses to be in place for the ambush. The convoy was expected around 12 pm.

The following Srah company members were listed in the military archives as being involved in the Tourmakeady ambush on 3rd May 1921; there may have been more that we do not know about:

Tom Lally (Srah)	Thomas Lally, Shangort,
Patrick Gibbons (Gortnacullin)	Tom Lally [Thomas] (Shangort)
Martin Conway (Gortnacullin)	Michael Lally (Shangort)
Willie Rabbitte (Srah)	James Gibbons (Gortnacullin)
Michael Costelloe (Túr na bhfód)	Sean Donoghue (Tawnagh)
Patrick Gibbons (Tawnagh)	Tom Heneghan (Shangort)
Paddy Gillan (Treenlaur)	John Heneghan (Derrassa)
Michael Walsh (Carheen)	James Lally (Gortnacullin)
Anthony Joyce (Túr na bhfód)	Tom Costelloe (Túr na bhfód)
Paatrick Casey (Shangort)	Sean Heneghan (Srah)
James Heneghan (Shangort)	Larry Keane (Drimcoggy)

Larry Keane's brother Tom from Drimcoggy was in the volunteers but we are not sure if he was involved in the ambush. The Military archive was the only data available to us. The events of the ambush itself are detailed elsewhere in the book.

After the ambush, when Tom Maguire retreated to the mountains, they headed for Túr na bhfód where the men had stayed the night before and where there would be more support. Tom Maguire had sent most of his men home because he knew the police would be searching for suspected volunteers and if men were missing from their homes the police would then know they were involved.

It seems some of the locals went back up to the hill to help their comrades and the British thought there were more volunteers on the hills than there actually was. One local man Tommie Lally from Tawnagh took his father's shotgun and headed up the mountain. He had not come home by nightfall and word had gone out that a volunteer had been killed. His mother Bridget Lally and his sister Annie went up on the mountain looking for him. They met Tom Lally who assured them Tommie had not been killed.

There was a great fear of reprisals and the people of Srah abandoned the village for a few nights in fear. There was a few, old and invalided people who could not travel and they were brought to one house where their relatives thought they might be left unharmed. It is hard to imagine the fear felt by those people as they had already witnessed the shooting of Tom Horan a few months earlier.

Eibhlín Ní Mháille in *Stair na Sraithe*, vividly describes the fear that was there in the Srah people with the threat of reprisals in the days following the Tourmakeady Ambush:

“Word was spread one day that every home and out house with their contents would be burned to the ground. This was to happen immediately. The Villagers met with the priest to plan their escape. Women and Children were to go to Shangort and Gortnacullin. Volunteers and scouts had their own hideouts and duties. Men went to Rua Ramhars, Crompan and Cloch na Finne. A few went to Derra. My aunt Molly Joyce and her grandmother went to Horan's in Gortnacullin. Mary Lally Meenaghan [mother of Mickey in Srah] also went to their relatives. She clearly remembers carrying a bag of cloths from her baby twin sisters and how afraid her mother was. She lifted the babies over the stiles and handed them

to her mother. Mary [Murray] Heneghan [mother of Nancy and Tommy of Srah] went to Shangort also, and Maken Lally went to Dermody's.

The most amazing part of this history is not the people who left but those who stayed behind because they could not leave as they were invalided, and one woman was bed ridden. They pleaded with their people to leave them to their God and with their beds. It wasn't easy.

Seánin Pheadaí Heneghan's mother and Grandmother were left in their home, the grandmother being bed ridden. Those women were the grandmother and great-grandmother of Kathleen Heneghan of Mount Daisey. Mickie Meeneghan's great-grandmother was old and immobile. Her son Tomásín Lally carried her in her chair on his back, across the road to the Heneghan women.

Down the bóithrín a short distance Nora Lally [nee Staunton] was having a birthday. She was in her late 90's. This lady was Tom Lally's [Philips] mother ... They began the move to Heneghan's but only managed to get to Walshe's house across the road. They decided to go no further. It wasn't possible to continue due to the women's health and immobility. Hoping that the Tan's would believe their story and leave the women to die in peace – they covered her in a white sheet, lit a number of candles and began to pray. This was supposed to be a wake.

Each night the displaced families looked down on their homes and waited for the flames to rise. Three days passed and nothing happened. They believed the threat had been averted and returned to defend their homes. They told us that they never felt safe until they saw the end of the Tan's ...⁵⁹

The Srah company were not involved in any further military action after the Tourmakeady Ambush and the Truce came in July. The Srah company were lucky there was not a big split in the company between pro and anti-treaty sympathizers. Luckily, there was not much military action in South Mayo during the Civil War.

Like the members of Cumann na mBan, many Volunteers emigrated after the war and there is no list of all the members of the Srah Company of the old IRA. They all played their part in gaining independence for our country. We should be grateful for the courage and bravery they displayed in the fight for our independence. Their families and all the people who supported them also played their part. As Tomás Ó Criotháin said of the Blasket Islanders “Ní bheidh a léithid ar aist ann”.

We conclude with a verse of Michael Heneghan's (curly) song:

Cath Thuar Mhic Éadaigh

Saol fáda le séan ag na buachaillí tréan

A rinne ár gcás a réiteach

‘s a dhibir fir Shéain as Eireann go brách

Ba súarach é a ndlí is a mbéasa

Sé an Volunteer a chruthaigh go fíor

‘s a choinnigh a chuid fir le chéile

Níor fháadar sa tír aon bheairic poillíos

‘s deamhain cléit acu í dTuar Mhic Éadaigh.

⁵⁹ Ní Mháille, E (1980) *Stair na Sraithe*



Srah Old IRA in 1966

Back Row L-R: Jim Heneghan, Tom Lally, Sean Casey, Sean Heneghan, Pat Heneghan
 Front Row L-R: Michael Costello, Pat Gibbons, Jim McCarthy, Miley Joyce



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Gathering outside Hewitt's Hotel in 1924 in memory of the Men of the South Mayo Brigade

Ballinrobe Company of the South Mayo Brigade

It was Volunteers from Ballinrobe Company, led by twenty-year-old Captain Paddy May that were selected by Brigadier Tom Maguire to position themselves at Drimbawn Gate in Tourmakeady to ambush RIC/Black & Tans travelling in the vehicle leading the British Forces convoy going to Derrypark Village. They hid in the shrubbery behind the wall at Drimbawn Gate and waited. Between noon and 1 pm, the first vehicle arrived.

In Pat Kennedy's personal account, he names most of the men picked by Capt. Paddy May for ambush at Drimbawn Gate. They were Michael Mellett, Pat Kennedy, brothers Michael and James Duffy, brothers Edward and John Jennings, Tom Fahy, Terry O'Brien, Michael Shaughnessy, Edward Cameron and Patrick Hennelly. There were other members of the flying column with them, but we do not know their names.

Pat described the ambush "The driver and most of the passengers were probably killed in the first volley. The car crashed into the wall almost opposite Michael Shaughnessy, the man with the rifle. There was some return fire from the car, but it was quickly silenced. The driver, a black & tan and the other three or four police were dead. Six rifles and ammunition were taken from the car and the volunteers withdrew."

We had the good fortune of speaking to Des May, a grandson of Capt. Paddy May. Des told us that his grandfather seldom spoke to his family about his part in the War of Independence and the period afterwards. This is the most common factor we have encountered in speaking to family members of those involved. Des did have one incident from the ambush that Capt. Paddy May shared with his own son Des, relating to the ambush shooting and its immediate aftermath.

Capt. Paddy May said that after the shooting was finished, a number of RIC men had been killed. One of the RIC men lay seriously injured from gun wounds. Paddy, seeing the man was close to death, whispered an act of contrition into his ear. The RIC man passed away shortly afterwards where he lay. It was a compassionate gesture for a 20-year-old volunteer to make, to pray over the enemy you had just encountered in battle.



Capt. Paddy May and Capt. Tess May (nee Moran) from Ballinrobe



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Bridge St. in Ballinrobe 1924 in memory of the Men of the South Mayo Brigade



Market St. in Ballinrobe – RIC Barracks on the left side of street

CHAPTER 8 - WHERE THINGS STAND A CENTURY ON

Reflecting on changes

In chapter one, it was observed that “*two issues, namely land ownership and the cultural revival of the Irish identity through its native language were two of the driving forces behind a new hunger in the Irish people to seek their Independence from British rule*”. There were undoubtedly other important issues that were driving forces behind the War of Independence, but in this part of South Mayo these were the two most evident.

It is appropriate to briefly reflect, 100 years later, on what changes have occurred in relation land ownership and the strength of our native language, Irish. Have these issues been resolved?

We then take a brief look at the Irish political system and how it stands a century later. What would the Volunteers think of Ireland’s democracy today?

Firstly, a brief reflection on how the War of Independence ended and how the Irish Free State came into being is appropriate.

A brief timeline of the ending of the War of Independence

In May 1921, the Tourmakeady Ambush took place. Countrywide, the War of Independence was being fought between Irish and British Forces. Outlined below is a brief timeline of the events that led to the end of the War of Independence and the approval of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

A General election was held in May 1921 for the Southern Parliament and Sinn Féin wins 124 of the 128 seats but its elected members do not take their seats. In July 1921, a truce was called to end hostilities in the War of Independence. In September, the Dáil accepts De Valera’s nominations for a team to negotiate a settlement with the British. In October, negotiations began in London.

In November, the Irish delegation’s memorandum is submitted for consideration, repeating the demand for ‘external association’ together with concessions on trade and naval defence. The British response to the Irish memorandum rejects any settlement which does not acknowledge some role for the Crown in Ireland.

On 3rd December, counter proposals are presented by the British and brought to Dublin for full consideration by the Cabinet in Dublin. The *oath of allegiance*, as worded in the British document, is rejected – even if the consequence is a resumption of war – while it is reiterated that no document can be signed without reference back to the Dáil.

On 6th December, an ultimatum is delivered by Lloyd George to the delegates in which they are faced with the option of either signing the text of the Treaty as it stands or refusing to sign and face the consequence of an immediate resumption of war. The ‘Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland’ are signed by both delegations.

On 8th December, De Valera issues a public statement that he cannot recommend acceptance of the Treaty. The Cabinet however decides by 4 votes to 3 to recommend the Treaty to the Dáil on 14th December.

The Treaty debates in Dáil Éireann begin and go on until 6th January 1922. On 7th January 1922, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was approved by Dáil Éireann with 64 supporting, 57 opposing.

The Irish Free State is born

On January 7, 1922, when the Dáil passed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the result was the birth of Saorstát Éireann, the Irish Free State. What should have been a cause for celebration was anything but. There was finger-pointing and recriminations on both sides of the debate. The country was split—Republic versus Free State—and it would remain that way for decades.

On 10th January 1922, De Valera is defeated in the vote for the Dáil presidency by 60 votes to 58. He and all anti-Treaty deputies walk out, and Arthur Griffith is elected President of Dáil Éireann. The Dáil is adjourned until 11 February.

On 14th January 1922, the Provisional Government was established with Michael Collins as Chairman. A pact between Collins and de Valera was agreed a few months later in which the campaign in the upcoming general election would be fought jointly by both the pro- and anti-Treaty forces and when the people had made their decision a coalition government would be established.

On June 16th, 1922 the election is held. The general election results were announced on 24th June: pro-Treaty Sinn Féin (58 seats); anti-Treaty Sinn Féin (35 seats); Labour (17 seats); Farmers (7 seats); Independents (7 seats) and ex-unionists (4 seats).

On 27th June, the Four Courts was captured by an anti-Treaty garrison. The following day, 28th June the ultimatum was given to the Four Courts anti-Treaty garrison to surrender and it was ignored, resulting in the shelling of the building by pro-Treaty forces using artillery borrowed from the British. The opening shots in the Civil War had been fired. In less than one month, on 22nd August Michael Collins was killed in Béal na Bláth.

This book does not cover the tragic events of the Irish Civil War. It was a monumental tragedy for both sides and its effects on the Irish people of that generation was enormous.

Where is Land ownership 100 years on?

There was ongoing reform of the Landlord system of land ownership in Ireland as far back 1881, mainly due to pressure from the Irish Land League. The Land Commission was first set up in 1881 under British Rule, the acts were called the Land Acts. Their function was to facilitate and eventually subsidise transfers of land ownership from large landlords to small tenants.

After Independence was won in 1922, further Land acts were introduced by the new Irish Free State Government, with expanded powers of compulsory purchase, through a huge loan from the British government.

Its principal function was the breaking up of large estates, so-called “untenanted ranches”, and the redistribution of land, mainly to local smallholders. From 1923, the moneys outstanding under earlier Land acts were paid to the British as "land annuities", accruing in a Land Purchase Fund. This was fixed at £250,000 annually in 1925.

The Land Commission’s work obliged it to establish who had legal title to the properties, an extraordinarily complex task. Its work was a huge success and it resulted in no more Landlords in the Irish Free State, the land was now owned by the Irish people.

There is absolutely no doubt that this change, going from being vulnerable tenants of Landlords with the constant threat of eviction to being owners of the land they farmed was one of the biggest achievements of winning independence from British Rule. The Volunteers who took part in the War of Independence would likely be very satisfied with the freedom to own your land and the rights that pertain to landowners under Irish laws a century on.

Cá seasann an Ghaeilge 100 bliain níos déanaí?

Baineann stair fhada le teagasc na Gaeilge i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh ó bhronn an Dr. Ó hÉalaí, Ardeaspag Thuama teach ar Chonradh na Gaeilge sna 1900idí luatha le Coláiste Chonnacht, Coláiste Samhraidh Gaeilge, a bhunú. Tháinig borradh faoin gcoláiste seo idir 1905 agus 1950 agus tugadh ‘The cradle of the Gaelic League’ air.

Thagadh scoláirí ó gach cearn d’Éirinn agus ó roinnt Ollscoileanna Eorpacha le Gaeilge a fhoghlaim sa choláiste. Áirítear Sinéad Ní Fhlannagáin agus a fear céile Éamon de Valera, Pádraig Mac Piarais agus a dheartháir Liam, na deartháireacha Dillon Myles agus James, Tomás Ó Cléirigh agus go leor eile i measc na scoláirí náisiúnach ba cháiliúla a d’fhreastail ar an gcoláiste.

Roimhe sin, bhunaigh na Proinsiasaigh scoil i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh sa bhliain 1848. Mhair sé sin go dtí 1927 nuair a ghlac Rialtas na hÉireann ceannas ar an scoil agus togadh scoil nua – Coláiste Muire, Tuar Mhic Éadaigh.

Bhí Coláiste Muire ar cheann de sheacht gcoláiste ullmhúcháin a bhunaigh Saorstát Éireann leis an nGaeilge a athbheochan sa chóras bunscolaíochta. Ba mheánscoil lán-Ghaeilge do chailíní amháin é Coláiste Muire i dtosach agus é mar aidhm an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh d'ábhair oidí na Scoileanna Náisiúnta. Bhí Siúracha na Trócaire i mbun na scoile agus freastalaíodh ar dhaltaí cónaithe agus ar dhaltaí lae áitiúla.



Coláiste Muire Tuair Mhic Éadaigh

Is iomaí duine mór le rá a d'fhreastail ar Choláiste Muire i gcaitheamh na mblianta. Ó shaol na polaitíochta, ba dhalta cónaithe í Máire Geoghegan Quinn sa scoil sular toghadh í mar Theachta Dála do Ghailimh Thiar níos déanaí. Ceapadh í mar Aire cúpla uair, tréimhsí mar Aire Gaeltachta agus Aire Dlí agus Cirt san áireamh. Chaith sí seal mar Choimisinéir Eorpach sa Bhruiséil ina dhiaidh sin.

Sa lá atá inniu ann freastalaíonn Coláiste Muire ar bhuachaillí agus ar chailíní araon agus tá sé ar cheann de dhá mheánscoil lán-Ghaeilge i Maigh Eo. Is as ceantar Thuar Mhic Éadaigh tromlach na ndaltaí ach tagann daltaí ó Chathair na Mart, Caisleán an Bharraigh, Baile an Tobair agus Coill an Bhaile chomh maith. Is í an Ghaeilge teanga na scoile agus múintear na hábhair trí mheán na Gaeilge. Is scoil lán-Ghaeilge í Scoil Náisiúnta an Triain Láir freisin, a fhreastalaíonn ar cheantar Thuar Mhic Éadaigh.

Is ábhar mór dóchais é dul chun cinn na nGaelscoileanna i mbailte agus i gcathracha ar fud na hÉireann. Ina theannta sin, tugann an obair iontach a dhéanann TG4 mar stáisiún teilifíse lán-Ghaeilge ugach mór don teanga agus ár dteanga dúchais, mar aon leis an spórt, na healaíona agus an ceol traidisiúnta á gcur chun cinn acu. D'éirigh thar barr le Comórtas Peile na Gaeltachta 2017 a reáchtáladh i gclub CLG Thuar Mhic Éadaigh. Craoladh na cluichí ar fad ar TG4 agus tharraing daoine ó Ghailtachaí ar fud na tíre ar an mbaile. Tá Gaeltacht bhriomhar, láidir Thuar Mhic Éadaigh ag dul ó neart go neart.



Ionad Spóirt - CLG Tuair Mhic Éadaigh

Aithnítear Tuair Mhic Éadaigh, mar aon le ceantar Dhúiche Sheoigheach, mar Limistéar Pleanála Teanga faoi Acht na Gaeltachta 2012. Faoi bpróiseas pleanála teanga, ceapadh Oifigeach Pleanála Teanga lánaimseartha i mí Bealtaine 2020 le Plean Teanga 7 mbliana a chur i bhfeidhm sa cheantar i gcomhpháirt le Coiste Pleanála Teanga agus leis an bpobal. Is éard atá sa phlean ná moltaí praiticiúla a chabhróidh le pobal an cheantair an Ghaeilge a choinneáil beo agus cur leis an líon daoine a bhaineann úsáid as an nGaeilge mar theanga chumarsáide rialta.

Tá ról tábhachtach ag an bpobal sa phróiseas seo agus tá sé mar aidhm ag an bpleanáil teanga pobal bríomhar, muiníneach Gaeltachta a chaomhnú agus a chothú sa cheantar agus líon na gcainteoirí laethúla Gaeilge a mhéadú 20% faoi mbliain 2025. Tá sé mar aidhm chomh maith labhairt na Gaeilge a normalú i measc daoine óga sa cheantar le cinntiú go gcuirfead í ar aghaidh ag an gcéad ghlúin eile mar theanga pobail. Is leis an bpobal an Ghaeilge agus is leis an bpobal an plean teanga – bímis bródúil as ár dteanga dúchais.

Tá ag éirí den chuid is mó leis an aidhm, ar throid na Conraitheoirí agus na Náisiúnaithe go láidir ar a son go luath sa 20ú haois, chun féiniúlacht láidir náisiúnta a chruthú trí mheán ár dteanga dúchais. Tá dóchas againn go mbeadh na hÓglaigh bródúil as an méid atá bainte amach ó thaobh na Gaeilge de 100 bliain tar éis 1921.

Where is Irish Democracy 100 years on?

The current Government of the Republic of Ireland came into office in June 2020. For the first time since the founding of the Irish Free State, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, have come together as partners in the same coalition Government, along with the Green Party. This indeed is historic and effectively ends the political divisions of the Civil war. It is very fitting that this occurred prior to the Centenary of the end of the War of Independence.

An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin T.D. made a very symbolic gesture on taking office to reflect this change. Mr Martin decided that one of his first acts to symbolise the end of Ireland's era of Civil War politics was to be the hanging of the portraits of Éamon de Valera and Michael Collins side-by-side in the Taoiseach's office.

The Taoiseach said it was interesting to have Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in Government together as so many important centenary commemorations occur over the next few years involving the War of Independence, the Civil War and the early years of the State. Michael Martin said this of his decision:

"I think it will be interesting in terms of the Civil War (anniversaries). I have had discussions with some people already in relation to that - I spoke to the President (Michael D Higgins) about that in the Aras yesterday. It is going to have to be sensitive - it will have to be honest and done with a maturity that will educate and provide insights to the younger generations.

I think it was Sean Lemass who said that it was often the generations who followed the protagonists who became the most bitter. Many of the protagonists themselves were not bitter - they regretted it. Lemass' tribute to W.T. Cosgrave in the Dail was an extraordinary tribute of generosity.

I think that is where we have to go. History to me is about revelation, it is about insight - you cannot look back judgmentally - you cannot import the values of today back 100 years ago. We have to learn from it - and understand it. Not cover it up or camouflage it - history belongs to no party."⁶⁰

It is our sincere hope that this book tells a version of the story of the Tourmakeady Ambush and its aftermath that is sensitive, honest, and mature and will in some way educate and provide insights to the younger generations of today.

⁶⁰ Irish Independent (2020). Ralph Reigel, retrieved 29th June 2020, <https://www.independent.ie>



An Taoiseach Micheál Martin in his office at Government Buildings with the pictures of Michael Collins and Eamonn De Valera hanging side by side. Picture: Moya Nolan⁶¹

We would like to think that most of the Volunteers that took part in the Tourmakeady Ambush would be pleased that the Republic of Ireland they fought so hard for was eventually achieved and is today a healthy, functional, and peaceful democracy. The two political parties that were born out of the split in the Irish civil war, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil are now in Government together and Sinn Féin is the main party of opposition.

There were detailed personal accounts given by two brave volunteers that took part in the Tourmakeady Ambush. Their names are Anthony Joyce of Srah Company and Pat Kennedy of Ballinrobe Company. We have reprinted their accounts as they were recorded. It is fitting that two Volunteers from each side of Lough Mask have their version of the ambush included in full in the chapters that follow.

Tom Maguire's son asked specifically that we convey to the people of the Derassa and the Srah area, the deep gratitude his father Tom had for the way the people cared for him and protected him when he was shot and injured. Tom Maguire held these people in the highest esteem and was proud of their heroism. Tom and his family remained lifelong friends with some of them, returning to visit Lally's house in Derassa (Pat Bhidí Malone's) and Martin Conway (Watt) in Srah, for the customary tea and cake nearly every year.

The current generation has much to be proud of, the way our ancestors stood against the largest empire on the planet at that time and won their right to govern their own country. Let us honour those men and women with dignity and respect in this Centenary year and never forget the pain they endured during the Irish War of Independence.

⁶¹ Irish Examiner (2021). Daniel McConnell, retrieved 1st March 2021 <https://www.irishexaminer.com>

CHAPTER 9 - ANTHONY JOYCE'S PERSONAL ACCOUNT ONE MAN'S ACCOUNT

“It brings out all that is good in a man and has given to history many of the noblest of its characters” Kevin Barry writing about having ideals.

(Kevin Barry Irish Heroes for Children - Carmel Uí Cheallaigh 2020)



Anthony Joyce from Túr na bhFód (1900 - 1985)

“This is my uncle Anthony Joyce’s account of his involvement with the Srah Company Old IRA and his subsequent engagement in the Portroyal Ambush, The Tourmakeady Ambush and on the mountain where Michael O’Brien lost his life. The account is as close as possible to my uncle’s narrative and I write it without comment or prejudice.

I first asked my uncle about this time in history at his home in New York in 1962 and his answer then was: “This is not the time Eileen”. In 1973/74, he visited us in Srah – his first trip home since he left in 1924. After a few visits to his beloved Túr na bhFód, seeing the ruins of his homestead and the hills and hollows where he and his mates had drilled and lay hidden, he began to talk about the days of 1917 – 1924.

By now Túr na bhFód was a deserted village. The Costello family were last to leave there in early 1960. Anthony was very clear on anything that happened where he was involved and in his opinion, The Tourmakeady Ambush should have been planned by local men because they knew the terrain best. He carried a double barrel shot gun in all three places. Recalling all this was a mammoth emotional task for him. I asked if he could name the lads who trained in the Srah Machairí with him and he said: “I think about them every day. I’ll start with Túr na bhFód”.

Túr na bhFód

Michael Costello

John Conway

James Joyce

Anthony Joyce

Derassa

Martin Heneghan – (Pheadair)

Michael Heneghan

Michael Heneghan – (Micheál Antoine)

Tom Lydon

Shangorth

Jim (Shéamais) Heneghan

Patrick Casey

Tom Heneghan (Tomás Antoine)

Tom Lally (Tom Thomais)

Pat Lally (Tom Thomais)

Mike Lally (Mary Durkin)

Jim Lally (Mary Durkin)

Srah

John Heneghan – (Seanín Pheadaí)

Tom Lally (Leader)

Mike Lally

Martin Saunders

Tom O'Malley

Martin Conway (Watt)

Willie Rabbette

Tom Rabbette

Gorthnachullin

Jim Gibbons (Johns)

Steven Gibbons (Johns)

Patrick Gibbons (Mhicil)

John Costello

Tom Costello

Mike Durkin

Tom Durkin

Drimcoggy

Pat Gibbons (Thady)
 Tom Gibbons (Thady)
 John Donoghue
 Michael Keane
 Myles Joyce
 Martin Lally (MI Frank)
 Tom Lally (MI Frank)
 Mike Walshe
 Larry Keane
 Tom Keane

**Srah Old IRA at 3rd May Commemoration in the late 1950's**

Back row L-R: Michael Lally (Srah), Tom Rabbitt, Martin Costello, Pat Horan, Pat Heneghan, Jim Heneghan **Front row L-R:** Jim Lally, Jim McCarthy, Michael Lally (Shangort), Tom Lally, Myles Joyce, Sean Heneghan.

Then pointing towards Srah school, he asked if I knew that it was Willie Rabbette who started training in Srah? “You know he was in College and he had information about what was happening in other places. We did most of our drilling in the Machairí. On fine nights we went out to the scoiltí and laragán and did maneuvers out there. Tom Lally and Pat Gibbons (Thady) drilled us. Michael Costello was a valuable man because of his experience in the British Army. Tom Maguire and Tom Lally were our leaders.”

“The Portroyal Ambush was planned. In early March 1921, fifteen or twenty of us lay waiting for a lorry that we thought was carrying Black and Tans. Instead, the first lorry carried soldiers who were being court martialed. O’Brien recognized their dress and ordered us to stop firing. A few were wounded and I think one man died later. They turned back towards Partry, firing backwards at us with their long-range rifles. Sure we weren’t prepared at all. All we had was a small number of shot guns. It wasn’t easy to make our way home across bogs, rivers, and streams. We came through Derassa and slept at home that night.”

“I believe that that same night, the Black and Tans and a few sergeants came out from Westport. They shot Tom Horan while his young daughter looked on. That was shocking, a poor innocent man. They threatened the people of Srah, saying their homes would be burned. The women and children fled to relations in Gorthnachullin and others went to Shangorth and Dereendafderg. I heard old Rabbette almost drowned in a boghole. Old man McGuire and a few old, frail women stayed behind. There are two reasons given for the killing of Tom Horan. First, that he had reported them (Black and Tans) for wantonly killing his fowl and ransacking his sheds. Secondly, that it was a reprisal for the ambush at Portroyal. I cannot say which is true”.

“An Ambush in Tourmakeady was being planned for much later but to prevent more innocent people being killed, the date for this Ambush was brought forward to May. We were asked to volunteer for Tourmakeady then and continued with our training for the next two months. Early on the morning of the 3rd May, we arrived in the Fairgreen. Michael O’Brien was our commander there. Tom Maguire and his men were further back. Men who worked in the sawmills were locked up in Robinsons with others. They hadn’t a clue what was happening. Later, O’Brien got us sandwiches in Billingtons and we lay in wait behind the aitinn (whins) in the Fairgreen. A man called Máirtín Thornton, to the best of my knowledge, knew that the RIC and families were having pay and their supplies delivered that day to Derrypark Barracks. He cut the wires and rigged up a connection to Billington’s post office. When the army called from Ballinrobe to find if all was clear, they were given the OK. They wanted to bring Sergeant Goulden that day but he refused to come!”

“When they reached the Drumbawn, they began to fire. We got orders from O’Brien to cover in the aitinn. They wanted the first car of scouts and some sergeants to go to where Maguire was set up, past Robinsons. Maguire did most of the shooting there. The engine of the car was punctured, and it went off the road. Two sergeants got killed there and a good number were injured. The second carload came, and we fired too soon. The Black and Tans took over Hewitts, looted the place and went upstairs, broke windows and threw hand grenades out. I don’t think anyone died there. A few got injured. They saw young Feeney run up from Hewitts and they riddled him with bullets. He was told to stay home that day but he wanted to be part of the action. We were very close to where he fell but got word to stay under cover. I was very afraid that day. Thornton forgot to hook back the wires and the lorry we waited on, never showed up.”



Hewitt's Hotel Tourmakeady

“After this we were in disarray. The men who were with me in a field above the rectory gate when Feeney was shot were: Tom Lally (Srah), Jim Heneghan (Sheamais) Patrick Casey, Patrick Gibbons (Mhicil), Mike Lally (Mary Durkin). For some time, the noise was deafening. We couldn't move and couldn't help. Later that evening Maguire told the local lads to get home safely. Some went over the high road and across Gortnachullin. Tom Lally asked me to stay because I was well used to the hills. We took a rest in places and slept for a few minutes here and there. When we got to a rock over Túr na bhFód we all rested. Maguire told me to go on home and get something to eat. Tom Maguire, Tom Lally, Michael O'Brien and his cousin were there.”

“My poor mother was frantic, not knowing if I had been in Tourmakeady! I had barely enough time to finish a cup of tea when someone on watch shouted that they were coming in Srah road. The road was lit up from their lorries. Then we got word some were making their way through Doirín na gCoileach. I grabbed my gun and ran for the hills alone. By now planes were flying overhead and everywhere was lit up. I joined the men at the back of the rock. It was almost bright by now. We could see them coming through Gortnachullin mountain. Ibberson was annoyed because his men couldn't keep up with him. They say he was an athlete. He left them behind and came towards where we were, in his shirt sleeves.



Anthony Joyce's home in Túr na bhFód

He must have recognized Maguire and shot him. He got him in the arm and stomach. Michael O'Brien bent to help Maguire and picked up his rifle – not realizing the catch was on. Ibberson got him first.” (A long silence followed). He continued: “It was Michael O'Brien's cousin shot Ibberson. I don't think that's well known. The planes were flying all over. That's how they got King and Halloran from Glenmask. They gave those young men an awful léasadh (beating). Some older local men were badly treated as well. They were taken to the Barracks in Ballinrobe and beaten to a pulp.”



Lt. Seamus O'Brien from Kilmaine



Michael Costello from Derassa

“Ibberson made his way down to the village. Kate Costello and my sister Julia (my mother) were searching for Michael Costello and myself. They ran towards Ibberson, thinking he was Costello – they were both tall red-haired men. He ordered them, in a very stern voice, to go to the village and get him help. The girls were scared. He took off his bandolier and wrapped his hands around his belly. Bríd Mhaitís (Costello) bandaged him and Horan’s took him to Srah.”

“Some men carried Maguire a distance away. They put him on a door and took him to Lally’s in Derassa. Dr. Murphy came to him and tried to stop the bleeding. (Story has it that local women including my Grandmother prepared whey to sustain him.) After a few days he was taken in stages through Derra, Ballintubber and Ballyglass.



Julia O'Malley (nee Joyce) and Kate Geraghty (nee Costello) from Túr na bhFód

We hid out the mountain. Michael O'Brien's body was taken down on the ass's back. The Black and Tans jeered as they passed the houses. Next day, John Conway and myself went to Fadgens – a safe house in Ballintubber / Ballyhean direction. They looked after us well there. Things got much quieter then and we came home. A few days later I went out to where O'Brien was shot and found what I think was Ibberson's bandolier. I gave it to one of our leaders.”

“After Partry Ambush, Túr na bhFód was a hot spot but after Tourmakeady and events on the hill, it was even more so - highly suspicious. I remember one day Costello and myself were oiling guns. Kathleen Horan ran in to say soldiers were moving up Doirín. We were ploughing that day. We took the guns and buried them under the sod my father was turning. We loosened the horses and went out the hill. My father wasn't afraid at all. After O'Brien's death and the Tourmakeady Ambush, Túr na bhFód was searched very often. All the houses were raided, and the women and children scared. They walked the parks and Aill a Duibhes several times a week. Other houses in Shangort and Derassa had a hard time too.

My Mother was one of the women who baked for us regularly. The Black and Tans pushed her around the house and put the rifle under her chin demanding to know where I was and asked her to name the lads who had slept there the previous nights. They ransacked the house and took the cakes or anything else they could find. She remained strong but when I would get home, she would breakdown. That was so hard to take. We slept out in the barns and sheds.”

“Some weeks on, a truce was called. Five or six of us went to Ballinrobe and continued training with the Ballinrobe lads. We met at the racecourse and I recall on a very wet evening the Black and Tans went back and forth in their lorries and stared in at us. We were dismissed early and on our journey home by foot, a rich Yank came along. He invited us all into Cannon's pub and treated us to drinks and sandwiches. That night we went to a dance in Casey's House in Portroyal, dried out and came home by moonlight. That was a great dance!”

“That harvest myself and my friends went voluntarily to the Barracks in Ballinrobe and trained there. I continued with this until the civil war broke out and then I resigned and got ready for the USA. Julia and myself left Cobh for Ellis Island in September 1924. My sister Mary and her husband James Langan had claimed us, three of my brothers were already there.”

I thought he had finished when he said: “I forgot other names who came to help us from time to time, Dick Clogherty, Paddy Gillian and Luke Carney from Castlebar. Tom (Phóils) Heneghan's barn in Carán was used for scouting. Mark Killalea and a Killroy man slept there.” (These names were very familiar to me. We had heard them from the Srah historians.)

“Any regrets” I asked? “None whatsoever for any action I was involved in. We all believed in what we were doing. Something had to be done to stop our people being tortured. We also believed we would have a bright future in Ireland. Today there is absolutely no need for such action. My one regret, on a personal level, is the anguish I caused my mother. She was distraught after we were refused absolution at a station mass in my own house just before the Tourmakeady Ambush. We got up and marched out. It didn’t bother me or lessen my faith but my mother was broken after that.”

Eibhlín Ní Mháille April 2021



Military Cannon from the 1798 rebellion – it was found in Srah at Crumpáun by Mickey O’Malley (nephew of Anthony Joyce, Volunteer 1921)

Srah’s link to the 1798 rebellion

Both Tom Maguire and Michael O’Brien had ancestral links to the military men that fought in “*the Races of Castlebar*” in 1798. The village of Srah is also linked to that battle:

“Local tradition has preserved the names of some of them – the Lardners and Conroys of Ballinrobe, Dermot [Darby] O’Brien of Kildun, William Maguire of Garracloon, Timlin and Martin Mór O’Morrin of Partry and Devaney of Sragh ...”⁶²

An article written by Tomás O’hEánacháin traces the canon being brought to Srah village by an escaped rebel named John Gibbons of Westport who fled to the Partry mountains after Ballinamuck.⁶³ The cannon is proudly held today by Michael O’Malley in Srah village, and it maintains the link Srah holds with the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

⁶² Hayes, R (1937) *The Last Invasion of Ireland*, Pg 268

⁶³ O’hEánachain, T. (1998). *Waterfall Magazine*. Retrieved April 16th, 2021, from <https://www.discoverjoycecountry.com/activity/waterfall-magazine-archive/>

CHAPTER 10 – PAT KENNEDY’S PERSONAL ACCOUNT

In 1966, during the 50th Anniversary commemoration of the easter 1916 rising, Pat Kennedy, a volunteer from Rahard in Ballinrobe was asked to give a first-hand account of his part in the Tourmakeady Ambush. The account was recorded by John Colleran, the Principal of Cloonliffen School. It gives a version of events that is of critical importance, as it comes directly from a volunteer who took part in the ambush and fought against British forces at Drimbawn gate on that day. Here is Pat’s version of the events.



Pat Kennedy from Rahard

An eye-witness account from a Ballinrobe Volunteer

In Cloonliffen National School, Ballinrobe it was known that a past pupil, Pat Kennedy, living in the school district, had fought in Tourmakeady, and he was asked to unveil the copy of the proclamation, and give the children the story of the fight, as he remembered it. As the story went on the children were astonished to find that not only was there one past pupil who fought in Tourmakeady, but that there were at least twelve whose names can still be remembered, and that one of them, Michael Mellett lived in Ballinrobe, as indeed, he does still (account written c. 1966).

Twelve who fought beside them

This story is written in honor of those twelve men and the men from other districts who fought beside them, and in the hope that it will bring to mind the names of the latter, many of whom are now forgotten. It is as factual as it can be at this distance in time from the event but is not written for the student of guerilla warfare. Rather it is a story of high endeavor against great odds by men of principle and noble purpose who did not count the cost and asked for no reward; and little or no reward they got.

Ballinrobe 1916

The republican movement began in Ballinrobe in 1916, probably soon after the rising. A branch of Fianna Eireann was set up by Michael Farragher, painter, New St., Tom Coyne, Abbey St., and Henry Flynn, New St. Pat Kennedy, Rahard remembers seeing in 1916 these three men going up Main St, each with a lighted torch. They went round by Cornmarket, New St, Glebe St. and back to Abbey St. He found they were honoring the men of Easter Week. Next time, they went out Pat Kennedy joined them.

During the 1914-18 war years recruiting meetings for the British army were often held in the town, and in 1918 there was a strong threat of conscription. This was opposed by priests and people, and was a powerful force in bringing about the formation of local companies of the Irish Republican Army, soon to be known by everyone in the country as the I.R.A.



Image Courtesy of: National Library of Ireland, EPH E103

Sometime in the first half of 1918 Joe Forde; shop assistant in Curley's Drapery, and George Bell addressed a meeting of men in Donnellan's Wood, on the Carnalecka Road, past the graveyard. Joe Forde was a native of Athenry and may have had some connection with Liam Mellows 1916 men. George Bell was from Roundfort. They asked any man who was prepared to fight, against conscription to meet them there a few nights later.

Only three men turned up Pat Kennedy, Michael Jennings and Anthony Doordan, all of Rahard. These were the first men in the Ballinrobe Company, which before the end of the year grew to the strength of over thirty men. Joe Forde and George Bell were the first to wear volunteer uniform in Ballinrobe and were arrested for doing so.

Second Company Formed

Soon a second Company was formed in Cross by Tom Maguire and before 1918 ended, Ballinrobe was the center of a battalion of four Companies - Ballinrobe Company, Cross Company, Ballyglass Company and Srah Company. During 1919 recruiting and training continued. Arms were collected or taken in raids.

Most households gave £1 to buy arms and ammunition. Till 1920 there was only one brigade in all Mayo, but in that year the country was divided into four brigades.

Each Company elected its own captain, but the higher officers were appointed by the Headquarters Staff in Dublin. At that time Dick Mulcahy was chief of staff. Tom Maguire was appointed Brigade Commandant or Brigadier of South Mayo Brigade Adjutant. But it is not by their military titles these are remembered by a grateful people, but by the more intimate Tom Maguire and Michael O'Brien.

Early Plan of Attack

One of the early plans of the South Mayo Brigade was for an attack on Cross Police Barracks. It might well have succeeded, and only misfired at the last moment. For their part the police began to be more active. They discovered arms buried in the graveyard in Ballyholly. Some volunteers were arrested and beaten to try to get information from them. Prominent men in the I. R.A. began to feel it was not safe to sleep at home, and so, in late 1920 began the 'flying column'. These men moved from place to place by night.

Safe Heavens

They often stayed in Cahir and in Mellett's of Cloonenagh, and indeed, anywhere they thought they might be safe and welcome. Michael Mellett of Cloonenagh remembers being awakened at home in bed by police prodding him with rifles. The house was surrounded. At the time a man from the mountains was employed as a helper on the farm. This man wore a bainin [an Irish designed wool jumper, often white] and when the police saw this they thought they had a capture. After a while he said he should go out to look at the sheep, and the police let him go to look at the sheep. It was a ruse to go across to Cahir and warn the flying column.

Conference 1921

On the 6th January 1921 the staff of the four Mayo brigades held a conference. It was agreed that until that time no major operation had taken place in the country against the Crown forces, and it was decided that each brigade should mount such an operation as soon as possible.

First Engagement since 1798

Ballinrobe was then garrisoned by the Border Regiment, and a lorry of these troops used to go on a routine journey to Castlebar. A plan to ambush this lorry was prepared, and on the 7th March 1921 men of the Ballyglass and Srah Companies went into position on the Partry Road at a townland called Kilfaul just north of Portroyal. The lorry under the command of Captain Chatfield came along. Fire was opened (by Martin Conway), the driver was hit, and the lorry stopped. Many of the soldiers got out by the

back of the lorry and returned the fire. After a short, sharp engagement they retreated towards Ballinrobe leaving their lorry and its contents behind. This was the first engagement against British military in Mayo since 1798.

Intense Activity by Police and Soldiers

Following this there was intense activity by police and soldiers in the district. They shot a man in Srah (Thomas Horan) sitting by his own fireside; a man who had nothing to do with the ambush. Besides the Black-and Tans the A.I.C. was also strengthened by a group known as the Auxiliaries. These were ex-British army officers and good fighters, but under little discipline. They had done some terrible deeds in Galway. It was thought that they would come in to Ballinrobe after a fair in Shrulc. Men were put in position, but the Auxiliaries did not come. Police in small outlying stations began to feel unsafe, and some of these barracks were closed.

Derrypark Police Station

One isolated station which was not closed was Derrypark at the south-west of Lough Mask. It was built like a fortress in the time of the land troubles. The ground on which it stood was elevated, commanded the approaches on all sides, and was most difficult to attack, especially with such weapons as the I.R.A. then had. Once a month, on the first, second or third day of the month, supplies were brought out from Ballinrobe to Derrypark. The R.I.C. and Black & Tans brought the supplies and usually travelled in three vehicles, a car in front and two lorries following.



Derrypark Police Station

Convoy Attack at Tourmakeady P.O.

The staff of South Mayo Brigade made plans to attack the convoy. The route to Derrypark was surveyed, and a stretch of road with its center point at Tourmakeady Post Office was chosen for the attack. The post office would be occupied, and as soon as the

lorries came, telephone communication could be cut. Lines of return for the men to their homes were mapped out. Usually, the Ballinrobe police, on the morning of their run to Derrypark, placed an order for rations in a wholesale shop in Ballinrobe. It took at least two hours to fill the order. As soon as the order came in a volunteer, in the employment of the firm, would send word out town, and a scout would bring the message to those waiting in Tourmakeady.

Saturday 30th April 1921

On the night of Saturday, 30th April 1921 men, arms and equipment were assembled in Cahir. At nightfall they went across to Cushlough. Boats were waiting at Pete Burke's and eleven men from the Cloonliffen school area were roared over from there. These men were Tom Burke (in command of the boat party) Tom Healy, and Tom Cahalan, each from Cahir, Pat Kennedy, the brothers Edward and John Jennings and John Sullivan from Rahard, Michael Mellett, Cloonenagh, Edward Cameron, Corthun and the brothers Jack and Jim Duffy of Clogher.

The twelfth man from the area went on foot with the rest of the column, as it was called. He was Paddy May of Kilkeeran, Captain of the Ballinrobe Company and third in command of the group who volunteered for action. The O.C. was Brigadier Tom Maguire and Commandant Michael O'Brien was second in command.

The party in the boats took about three hours to cross the lake. The boatmen found it very difficult to get their bearings in the dark, and a light which should have been shown to guide them in was missing. The boatmen who were from the north-west side of the lake thought there might be Black-& Tans about.

They landed near Derryvore Bridge on the Partry Srah Road. Meanwhile, the main body crossed the River Robe at Cushlough and went through Creagh, across country towards Keel bridge. This was the most dangerous point of their march and the road each side of the bridge had been well scouted. The all clear was given, they crossed the bridge, and left the main road at the by-road for Aughnish. From there they again travelled cross-country, over very rough going, especially at night.

They came out on the Partry-Srah road near Derryvore Bridge and met the party who had crossed by boat. Scouts from Srah told them that the road to Srah was clear, and they marched by road to Srah. From there they went to houses higher up the mountain overlooking Srah and went to bed. It was then dawn on Sunday, 1st May, and a beautiful morning.

Next day Sunday 1st May

During Sunday they lay low for fear of their presence becoming known to the police and military. On Monday guns and ammunition were inspected, and each man's cartridges were fitted to his gun. These shot gun cartridges had been re-filled with buckshot and some of them would not fit the guns.

Pat Kennedy remembers seeing a man on the mountain-side drying cartridges in the sun on a sheet of corrugated iron. Nearly all the men were armed with shotguns which, of course, were only useful at short range. The officers decided to go into ambush on the next morning, Tuesday the 3rd day.

Tuesday 3rd May

At one or two a.m. the men fell in on the Srah Tourmakeady road near the bridge south of Srah Post Office. They marched to Tourmakeady and reached the fair green before daybreak. Besides his equipment each man had a small ration of food. This they decided to eat before going into position. The men were divided into three sections, one unit of sixteen men for each of the expected vehicles and spaced apart at the distance usually between the lorries and the car. The plan was to let the car through till it reached the most southerly group, any by then it was hoped that each of the other two groups would have a lorry in position to be attacked.

The center group took up position in and around Tourmakeady Post Office. The men south of them were at Drimbawn Gate on the east or lake side of the road, behind a double wall, with a wood at their backs. They had a good view of anything approaching from the north or Srah side.

The men in the most northerly position were on the west side of the road behind a fence on the south side of the fair green. Across the road on the lake side was a double wall and a policeman stood a poor chance of getting over it if within range of the guns of this unit. Three men were placed inside the wall at the road junction opposite Hewitt's Hotel, as it was then. It is now Tomás O Tools' shop. A few contact men were placed between the groups, and that was all little more than fifty men.

Prisoners

The guests in Hewitt's Hotel, among them the local doctor (Dr. Murphy, later of Cong) and his wife, and some policemen's wives were taken to a safer place and put under guard in the house of P. Moloney. It was essential that none should escape, especially any of the policemen's' wives, and the guard was ordered in their presence to shoot anyone who tried to get out before the fight started. These prisoners were joined by others who happened to come to the post office or who saw any of the volunteers along,

the road. The local curate came along in his horse and trap, was not stopped, and noticed nothing unusual.

Sections formed

Tom Maguire, as officer in command gave first pick of his sixteen men to Paddy May, the youngest of the three senior officers; Michael O'Brien got second choice, and the O.C. took the remaining men to the center position at the post office. Mrs. Billinton was postmistress at the time. One of the men placed inside the post office was Jack Ferguson, on the run from his home in Leitrim. Seeing Tom Maguire going about among his men outside, the postmistress asked Jack Ferguson who was the man outside.

"Michael Collins " he answered. "Do you think Mr. Collins would like a cup of tea? she asked: and "Mr. Collins" did have a cup of tea.

Pat Kennedy and Michael Mellette remember the names of most of the men picked by Paddy May for his position on the south end at Drimbawn Gate. Besides the two of them were the Duffy brothers, Clogher, the two Jennings brothers, Rahard. Tom Fahy and Terry O'Brien, Ballinrobe, Michael Shaughnessy, Cross (the only man with a rifle), Edward Cameron, Corthun and Patrick Hennelly, Cloongowla. They went into the shrubbery behind the wall at Drimbawn or Mitchell's Gate, as it was also called and waited.

Their outposts took passers-by who came the way and put them with the other prisoners. The expected car came about noon. The driver and most of the passengers were probably killed in the first volley. The car crashed into the wall almost opposite Michael Shaughnessy the man with the rifle. There was some return fire from the car, but it was quickly silenced. The driver, a black& tan and the other three or four police were dead. Six rifles and ammunition were taken from the car and the volunteers withdrew. Instead of the usual two lorries only one lorry came that day.

When the police in the lorry heard the firing ahead of them, they pulled up, and jumped out almost opposite the group under Commandant O'Brien at the Fair Green. Fire was opened on them, and they returned the fire from behind the lorry and whatever cover they could get. The police then made a dash along the road towards Hewitt's Hotel. There they came under fire from the three men posted behind the wall at the road junction. These men were driven out of their position by rifle grenades and the police slipped into the Hotel. Tom Maguire came up with help from the center position, but the police were now safe in the Hotel.

Withdrawal to the Mountains

After examining the Drimbawn Gate position he withdrew his men up the mountain, making northwards along the upper slopes towards Srah. In the heat of the moment the telephone in the post-office was either for-gotten or not properly put out of action, with the result that the police and military in Ballinrobe and the other towns around were on the Road for Tourmakeady within the hour.

The men on the mountains could see the lorries passing the Keel Bridge; and the clouds of dust rising from the then untarred roads as the British soldiers drew nearer. After some had reached the foot of the mountain, twelve lorries were counted coming over a rise on the Party/Tourmakeady road. High on the mountain in a fold of the ground, overlooking Srah the volunteers waited for them. About twenty-five or thirty men with Tom Maguire at one end of the line and Michael O'Brien at the other lay in cover waiting to come down the slopes.

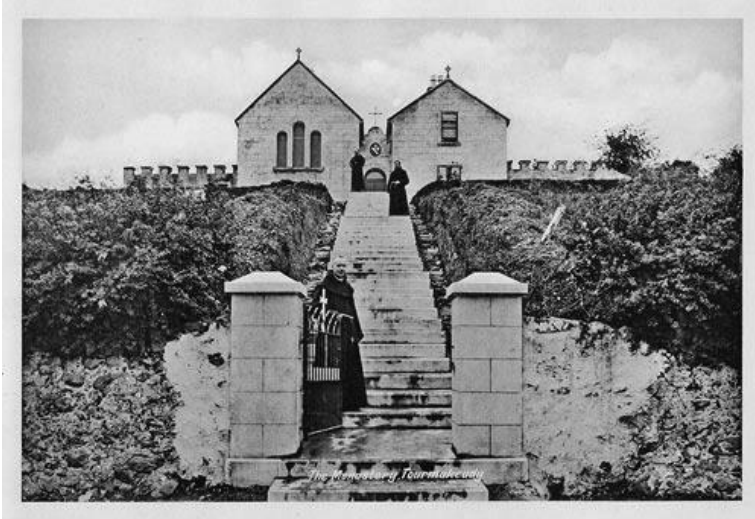
Padraig Feeney

That morning in his father's shop in Glebe St., Ballinrobe, young Padraig Feeney got word that the police had ordered their supplies for Derrypark Barracks. There was hardly enough time to get word to the volunteers in Tourmakeady, but he set off on his bicycle.

It is thought that the police convoy must have passed him on the road, and that he must have known his message was too late. Perhaps he wanted to join his comrades and help them but ran into the police instead.

At any rate he was a prisoner in Hewitt's Hotel soon after the ambush. After a time, police came into the room and called him out. A woman asked them where they were bringing the boy and they told her he would be alright. A few moments later shots were heard, and Padraig Feeney lay dead. It is likely that he was the first volunteer to lose his life that day. He was only twenty-two

When the action at Drimbawn Gate was over some half dozen men, among them Pat Kennedy and Michael Mellett withdrew towards the lake through the wood and set off northwards by the lake. Soon they came under fire from police in Hewitt's Hotel. They got through safely and crossed the road towards the mountains at the Franciscan Monastery, which was there at the time, opposite where Tourmakeady Convent is now.



Franciscan Monastery Tourmakeady

They moved north along the mountain till they reached a village above Srah called Tur na bFod where they had slept the night before. Here they met a man with a rifle named Michael Costello, a native of Srah and an ex-British Army man. They did not know him at the time, but he had fought as a member of Srah Company in the ambush at Kilfaul, Partry on the 7th March two months before.

A lorry of soldiers stopped at Srah on the road below and the soldiers began to climb the mountain. A man in shirt and trousers was in front of them as they climbed past the volunteers up the mountain side. The volunteers who had taken cover in the bed of a stream moved up the gully and crossed the ridge to the west side of the mountain. Michael Costello brought them to a police barracks called Kinnury in which there were eight police.

Food

They lay in cover around the barracks till dusk in the hope of attacking the police if they came out, but none did. After dark they made their way along the mountain till, they reached the Ballinrobe/Westport road near the Goat's Hotel. About one or two a.m. they called to a farmhouse that had light showing. The woman of the house gave them a meal of bacon and eggs which they will never forget.

Escape Route for some

From there they went across bogs and fields to Ballintubber and went on north of Lough Carra till they came to Ballyglass. By this time one man was falling asleep on his feet. Three of them stayed in a house there; the other two Pat Kennedy and Eámon Jennings went on to Newbrook Cross, through Newbrook, Robeen, across the Robe River at Robeen Bridge and on to Cloonacastle to the house of a friend.

It was a remarkable feat of endurance by any standards. Back in Tourmakeady soon after Pat Kennedy and party had seen the soldiers going up the mountain Tom Maguire and his men came under heavy and accurate fire from rifles and machine guns.

Attack and Wounded

So heavy was it, that their coats were covered by bog mold thrown up by bullets ploughing into the mountain in front of them. Tom Maguire was hit and badly wounded in several places. The wound most in need of attention was in his upper arm which was broken and bleeding dangerously.

Michael O'Brien came across, from his end of the line to apply a tourniquet and bandages. At the same time the wounded leader saw a man in shirt and trousers, without a cap, with a bandolier over his shoulder, and carrying a rifle coming towards them. He looked like Michael Costello, even, to the color of his hair. When quite close it was seen he was a stranger. The stranger shouted "hands up"; Michael O'Brien reached for his rifle, and was shot dead by the man, Lieutenant Ibbotson of the Ballinrobe Garrison.

Almost in the same instant the rifle dropped from the lieutenant's hands, the bandolier was cut from his back and his arms torn with buckshot. Despite this he made his way back to his men.

Holding position

All the long evening the volunteers held their position' against attack by the military. Even after dark search lights were used but at last the soldier were called back to their lorries and returned to barracks. Tom Maguire was carried on the back of a comrade to the nearest house. The men who were carrying the body of Michael O'Brien lost their way and had to leave it behind where it was found the next day by the soldiers.

Injuries

A message was sent to Dr. Murphy in Hewitt's Hotel and he came to attend the wounded man but could bring no instruments or medical supplies for fear of exciting suspicion. He set the broken arm using pieces of board from a box, strips of what suitable cloth he could find and broken wool for wadding.

Next day, Wednesday, the patient was carried out of the house and put lying on straw in the dry bed of a stream under some overhanging bushes. That night he was taken to another house farther north on the mountain and next day, Thursday a holiday, he was placed in a hollow on top of a sharp hillock. It rained all day, and during the day he heard soldiers passing underneath on the mountain. He was hidden in the open again on Friday and Saturday.

On Saturday night volunteers took him on an improved stretcher across country to Ballintubber, and to the house of a herdsman named O'Toole on the estate of James Fitzgerald Kenny of Clogher. Next night he was brought to the home of Terry Cochrane in Castlecarra. On Tuesday night a week after he was wounded, Dr O'Boyle from Balla came to attend him.

The wounds, which by now were in a bad way, were cleaned and dressed. After a few nights the doctor returned with a support for the wounded arm. Part of it was a bread grater, and part a sort of iron elbow the doctor had got made in the forge. It worked well, and with the help of his sister who had come to nurse him the wounded man was soon past danger point and on the mend. To-day he is happily, still alert and active.

Cloonliffen School Men

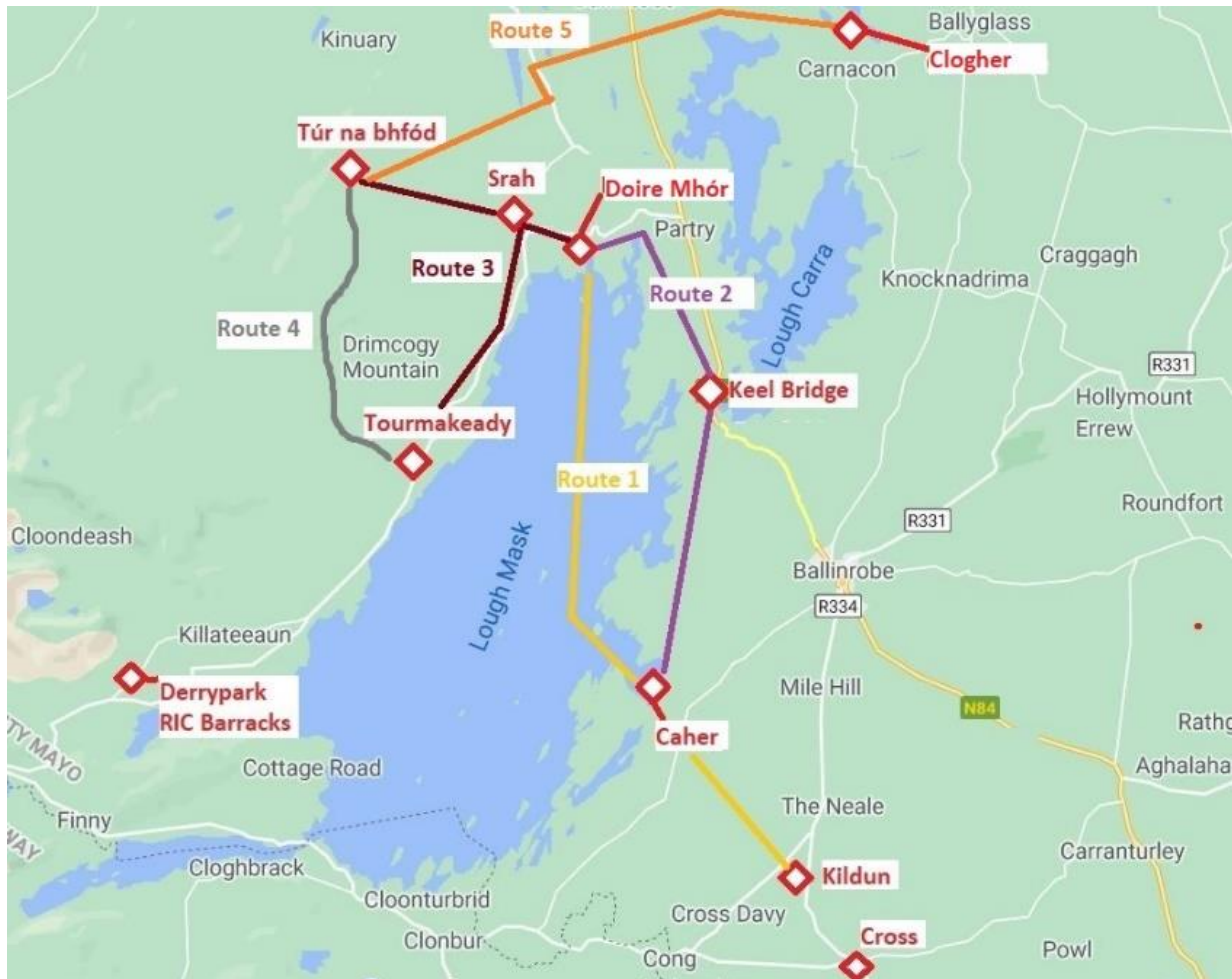
And what of his men and the twelve men from Cloonliffen school area? One man died young at home. Only three of the rest found a living in Ireland. The story of the other forty, or so of the column may be much the same. What of the land for which they risked so much?

To-day the country is torn by selfishness and greed. Almost everyone wants more money for less work. It is too much to hope that we may be led to give more of our time and energy to build a nation worthy of those brave men who fought that we might be free?⁶⁴

This account was written by John Colleran, a National School Teacher in Cloonliffen School in 1966. It was given to him orally by Pat Kennedy a volunteer from Rahard, Ballinrobe who fought in the Tourmakeady Ambush. This is re-produced here with kind permission of his grandson Pat Kennedy, his grandson.

⁶⁴ O'hEánachain, T. (1992). Waterfall Magazine Archive. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.discoverjoycecountry.com/activity/waterfall-magazine-archive/>

APPENDIX 1 – MAPS OF THE AMBUSH



Map of routes taken by Volunteers

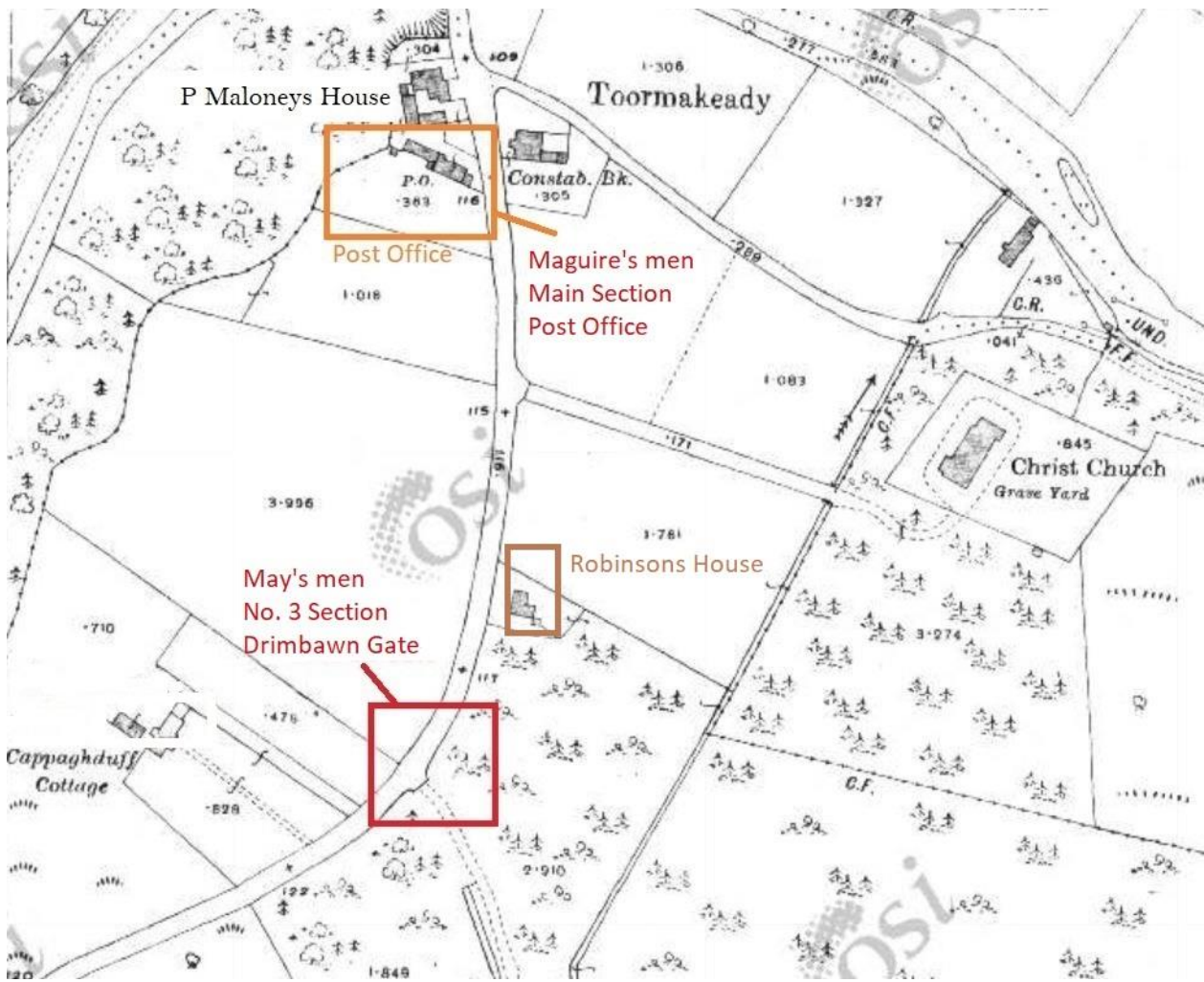
Route 1 – Caher pier to Doire Mhór by Boat
(Ballinrobe men cross Lough Mask at night)

Route 2 – Caher to Doire Mhór by Land
(Cross men via Keel Bridge cross country)

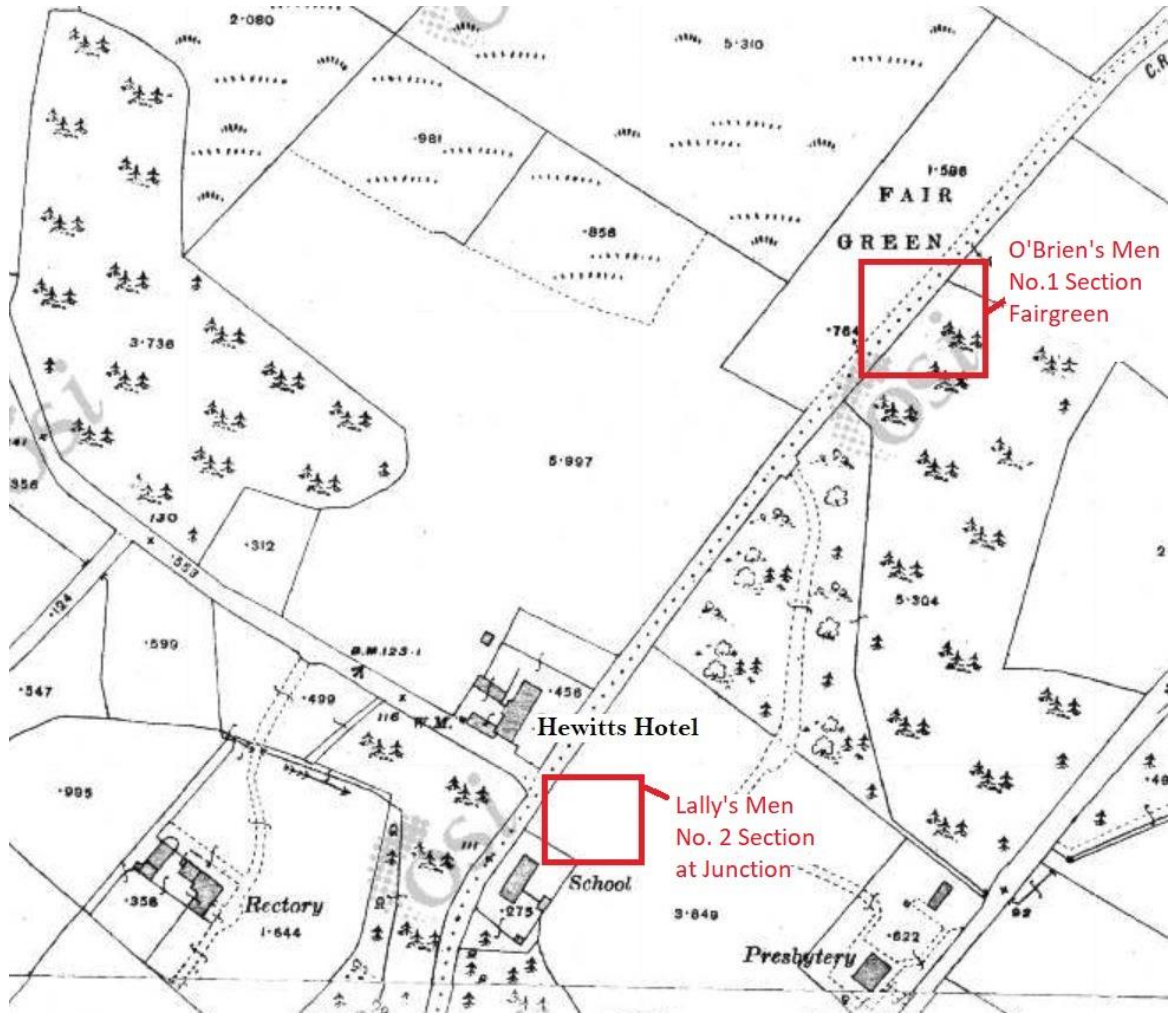
Route 3 – Srah to Tourmakeady by Road
(Full Brigade march to Tourmakeady)

Route 4 – Tourmakeady to Túr na bhfód
(Volunteers head across Drimcogy mountain)

Route 5 – Túr na bhfód to Clogher
(Tom Maguire carried to Clogher House)



Map of Post Office and Drimbawn Gate



Map of Fairgreen and Hewitts Hotel

APPENDIX 2 - STAIR SAN FHILÍOCHT AGUS SAN AMHRÁN

Is minic gur fearr croílár na staire in aon chultúr a ghabháil sna dánta agus sna hamhráin a cumadh tar éis imeachtaí tábhachtacha. Tá sé seo fíor go háirithe maidir le hÉirinn toisc go ritheann cultúr fileata na gCeilteach inár gcuid féitheacha go léir. Is stór iad na dánta agus na hamhráin seo a mhaireann tástáil an ama.

Beannaíodh ceantar Thuar Mhic Éadaigh le filí dá theangacha síos na blianta, chomh cumasach céanna inár dteanga dhúchais Gaeilge nó i mBéarla. Tá obair dhá cheann de na filí Micheál Ó hÉanacháin (Curly) ón Gortbunacullin, Seán Ó Donnachadha, Tomás Ó Donnachadha agus Liam Ó Máille as Drimcoggy san áireamh anseo mar sin againn a fháil ar an leagan áitiúil na mbard an luíocháin an 3 ú Bealtaine 1921. Tá Chomh maith leis laoi scríofa in onóir Michael O'Brien, ba é Seamus De Burca as Cill Dún a scríobh é, a bailíodh i Scoil Loch Measca.

Cath Thuar Mhic Éadaigh (Dán)

Ar maidin Dé Máirt ar chnoic Thuar na bhFód
 Chuala mé an buabhall séidte,
 Bhí púdar is gráin is piléir go leor
 Á gcaitheamh ar dhroim na sléibhte;
 Gan magadh ná greann tháinig pian i mo cheann,
 'S mo chuid fola ag dul trína chéile,
 Gur shíleas ar ndó nach mbeadh aon duine beo,
 As seo go Tuar Mhic Éadaigh.

Tríd Dhoire Mhór tháinig go leor
 D'arm Sheáin Bhuí gan fáilte,
 Nárbh fhearr dóibh ag ól i Liverpool thall,
 Ná ar mhullach na sléibhte fágtha;
 Dúirt oifigeach mór a bhí dílis don choróin
 Nach bhfágfadh sé beo mac máthar,
 Ach chuaigh piléirí luaidhe ina phutóga broghach
 'S ní fheicfear é arís san áit seo.

Tháinig eagla ar mo chroí 's é ag tíocht chun mo thí,
 Ag iarraidh na dí is é ag pléascadh,
 Ach bhí seanchanna stáin amuigh ar an tsráid
 'S thug mé deoch dó as linn na ngéabha;
 D'agair sé arís go bhfaighinn rud éigin mín
 Le cur ar a chroí is plástar,
 Ach fuair mé ceamhas den líon a raibh deilgne thríd,
 'S nár dhoiligh dó an oíche a shárú.
 Ar dhroim Ráth an Óir bhí an briseadh ba mhó,
 Ag caitheamh ar lom an tséidte,
 Ach ag tíocht an tráthnóna bhí muide ag gnóthachán,
 'S na saighdiúirí gránna feachta;
 Más Sasanach é nó fear as South Wales,

B'fhearr dó nach bhfeicfeadh sé an áit seo,
 Ní raibh aige le fáil ach púdar 's gráin,
 Nár chruaidh iad le dhul ina chaoile.

Ar an Leargán lom gan claí gan chaoilicí tom,
 Sea chuala mé glaoch an Sinn Féiner:
 'Buailigí go cruaidh 's ná failligí an uair;
 Beidh againne an lá seo ar aon chor.'
 Is gairid gur ghluais na Sasanaigh anuas,
 Ag tiomáint go gear ar Éirinn,
 'S ar Lloyd George a chur iad anall,
 Ag cumhdach poilíos dá mb'fhéidir.

Saol fada le séan ag na buachaillí tréan,
 A rinne ár gcás a réiteach,
 'S a dhíbir fir Sheáin as Éirinn go brách,
 Ba suarach é a ndlí is a mbéasa;
 Is é an Volunteer a chruthaigh go fíor
 'S a choinnigh a chuid fear le chéile,
 Nár fhága sa tír aon bheairic poilíos,
 'S deamhain cleite acu i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh.⁶⁵

Micheál Ó hÉanacháin (Curly)

⁶⁵ O'hÉanachain, M. (1989). Waterfall 1989 (3rd issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://archive.org/details/waterfall1989/page/n41/mode/2up>

Cath Thuar Mhic Éadaigh (Dán)

An tríú lá de Bhealtaine sa mbliain aon scór 's a haon,
Cuir roimhe míle naoi gcéad 's beidh dát na bliana
'Nar tugadh Cath Sliabh Partraí a mbeidh cáil air go deo.

Chruinnigh Arm Shasana ina gcéadta as gach áit,
Bhí an RIC 's Black and Tans ag tíocht chomh tiugh le cáith,
Gur shrois siad Tuar Mhic Éadaigh, áit nár ligeadh mórán leo,
Ar maidin bhreá an lae úd 's iad ag triall don bheairic mhór.

Thit na cúig smístí is mó lean nár thit an scór,
'S is iomaí duine a gheiteadar ag tíocht tríd Dhoire Mhór,
'S ní bhead a shíleadar go raibh dainséar ins an áit,
'S gurbh é an Dochtúir Uasal Murphy a chuir orthu an mharbhfháisc.

Scaipeadar thart timpeall na sléibhte i ngach áit,
Aníos ó Chinn Uírí go mullach Tóin na Sál,
Thart aníos an Learagán 's anuas an Criogán Mór,
Ach mo bhrón gur thit an Brianach bocht amach ó Thuar na bhFód.

Ag Carraig an Toim Shailigh sheas Mag Uidhir a bhí tréan,
'S d'ordaigh dá chuid saighdiúirí bheith á gcosaint féin,
Bhí siad ag spáráil a gcuid piléir 's ag guidhe ar Rí na nGrás,
Má ba é a thoil bheannaithe iad a shábháil ón mbás.

Tháinig ruathar piléir ó na saighdiúirí a bhí teann,
Bhí a gcuid machine guns socraithe fúthu ins an ngleann,
Bhí na hÓglaigh ag caitheamh piléir go tréan anonn 's anall,
Gur shíl an t-arm Gallda go raibh na céadta acu ann.

Ansin chas Caiptín Ibberson thart timpeall ar a gcúl,
Á rá, 'Hands up you murderers!' go dtugadh iad chun siúil,
Ach fuair sé ruathar piléir a chrapaigh é go deo,
Agus rinne sé togha Sinn Féiner dhe gur shroich sé Baile an Róba.

Chuaigh sé isteach chuig Bríd Mhaitias a bhí trioblóideach go leor,
'S d'ordaigh a chuid créachta a cheangal go haibéil is go beo,
Stróic sí léine ceailleacó le cur ar a bholg mór,
'S rinne dochtúireacht na mná sin é gur shroich sé an baile mór.

Nuair a chuala an t-arm Gallda nach raibh a gceannfort le fáil,
Thuig siad 'gus smaoinigh siad go loifí orthu ar ball,
Dúirt an t-oifigeach leo: 'Crapaidh suas go haibéil is go beo',
Go dtiocfaidís arís ar maidin le reinforcements go leor.⁶⁶

Liam Ó Máille

⁶⁶ Ó'Máille, L. (1990). Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n37/mode/2up

Loch Measc imeasc na Sliabh (Dán)

An ndeacha tú i riamh an bothar on tSraith go Thuar Mhic Éadaigh.
A leithead de radharc álainn ní fhaca fein ariamh.
De áilleacht cnoic is sleibhte, crainnte coillte is scáth na ngeága.
Ach baineann sé an barr dhó – Loch Measc imeasc na sliabh.

Loch Measc na n-oileán gleoite is Coláiste Muire Thuar Mhic Éadaigh.
Tá scoláirí a'fail leánn ann a thugan leo an barr,
Scolaireachta chuile bhliain as, ábhar bróid do mhuinteoirí,
'S é taobh ar thaobh sa bpictiúir seo Loch Measc imeasc na Sliabh

An Loichín aoibhinn alainn tá maorga íochtmhar cáirdiuil
A thugann strainséirí is bádoirí on mor roinn chuicí aniar.
Le iascaireacht is siamsa má thagann tú i mbliana,
Ní dheanfá choíche dearmad ar Loch Measc imeasc na Sliabh.

Tá na caoirigh ar thaobh sléibhe ann méileach uan ar an léana.
An chrotach casaoideach bagarthach is glaoigh an chircín fraoigh.
Tá an sionnach rua faoi altán is an giorria faoin torrtóg ann.
Ag cuidiú leis an áilleacht sin ag Loch Measc imeasc na Sliabh.

Ag dul trí Thuar Mhic Éadaigh dhom sea thosaigh mé ag smaoineach.
Ar an té sheas fód le Dubhcharónaigh i mbliain naoi deág fiche a h-aon,
Fágaim slán is beannacht dóibh, flaitheas Dé go dtugtar dóibh
Ar thit ar thaobh Loch Measc ata suite imeasc na Sliabh.

An Brianach calma dána nar ghéill ariamh do námhaid,
A thit ar thaobh an tsléibhe ann, an lá a thugadh an cath mhór,
Ais an buachaill óg ó Fiannaí a thit ó dheas de ghroighean an aonaigh.
A Thuar Mhic Éadaigh tá tú stairiúil is Loch Measc imeasc na Sliabh.

Ashford iontach uaibhreach atá suite anseo linn cóngarach.
Is droichead nua na tsnámha faoina ngluaiseann an loch anair.
Cá h-íonadh an tiarna Artúir titim fein i ngrá leis.
An Loichín aoibhinn álainn seo atá suite imeasc na Sliabh.

Tá caint mhor ar Chill Airne is Gleann Dá Loch le fána,
Radharcanna Chill Mantáin is an ceantar sin máguairt
Ach sé tus agus críoch mo dhánsa mo rogha féin da bhfaighinnse
Ba é Loch Measc is Thuar Mhic Éadaigh é ata suite imeasc na sliabh.

Tomás Ó Donnchadha

The Partry Mountains (Poem)

Along the Partry Mountains we had a dreadful day,
 In war we were surrounded all upon the third of May;
 My mind it was completely gone, it seemed to me a dream,
 That bullets flew like hailstones at Bealamoundian stream.

Tulaigh Ard and Cárán are now on record,
 Our heroes won the battlefield, all praise to the Lord;
 They fought like loyal Irishmen along the mountainside,
 May God protect them every day and always be their guide.

The bullets they were whizzing round, flying like the hail,
 I often heard success favours the sons of Granuaile;
 They drove away the enemy, in terror they did go,
 Which yields a lot of credit to the boys of South Mayo.

At the top of Garraí Éamoinn it would grieve your heart full sore,
 To see the soldiers raiding the side of Criogán Mór;
 But fortune proved unkind to them as one of them got a pill
 A mighty bold Sinn Féiner was close behind the hill.

Upon the side of Laragon, the Volunteer did say:
 ‘Cheer up my gallant countrymen, it’s now we have won the day;
 The soldiers we have conquered on the slopes of Rainaor,
 God is on the run with us and will for evermore.’

It is now we join in praise and thank the Lord on high,
 That saved the proud Sinn Féiners when danger it was nigh;
 They proved themselves Saint Patrick’s sons no danger
 did they fear.
 Long live the Tourmakeady boys and the Irish Volunteers.

The Volunteers were everywhere successful on that day,
 Excepting poor O’Brien who fell all in the fray;
 He died for dear old Ireland, the bravest of the brave,
 May the Lord have mercy on his soul, he lies in his grave.⁶⁷

Micheál Ó hÉanacháin (Curly)

⁶⁷ O'hÉanachain, M. (1990). Waterfall 1990 (4th issue). Retrieved June 29, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/waterfall1990_issue04/page/n7/mode/2up

The Tourmakeady Ambush (Poem)

You Volunteers of Ireland, come listen to my theme,
I'll describe a famous battle and some heroes I will name;
It took place on Partry hillside all on the third of May,
When a little group of Erin's youth great valor did display.

'Twas on a summer morning two lorries did appear,
They raced along so swift and strong that all might shake with fear;
I stood on a brae not far away across from Derryvore,
I heard the Huns as all their guns were loosed upon our shore.

By Srah they came like fire and flame where from came smoke and shot,
Those drunken wretches laughed and smiled when they saw the peasant lot;
Who like the deer would fly with fear across the dykes and bogs,
Until they found some hallowed ground or oftentimes a fog.

Those cars did roar along the shore of beautiful Lough Mask,
Those villains swore they would do more to finish their gruesome task;
When lo! behold! at Gorteenmore where all looked calm and solemn,
A shot rang forth which changed their sport from the famous flying column.

At Drimbawn Wood Maguire stood who made many a firm stand,
And with him Paddy Gibbons who came second in command;
There stood the brave O'Brien who now mingles with the blessed,
He was not slow his aid to show when his foreman's wound he dressed.

It was now to hide on the mountainside those heroes bent their way,
And as they trod across the bog their laughter it was gay;
Until they came to a sparkling stream on the slopes of 'Tóin na Sáil',
Where they did rest to quench their thirst and refresh them one and all.

Now to disperse they did converse the English troops evade,
How well they knew they'd be soon in view over every hill and glade;
The orders made they soon obeyed and as they marched along,
Those stalwart men through hill and glen did chant a soldier's song.

But now alas! It came to pass, I'm sorry to relate,
A section of that gallant band met with a cruel fate;
Their leaders brave were not to blame – in search of some abode,
Some food to find from neighbor's kind drew nigh on 'Túr na Bhfód.

The machine gun fire swept the mire till evening came on,
When Ibberson gave orders to surround them everyone;
But that villain's star did not go far when he got a double pill,
From the mighty bold Mick Durkin who was scouting on the hill.

'Twas then, mavrone!, the wild ochone was heard along the vale,
For each afflicted mother learned the sad and mournful tale;
Their fervent prayer did soar aloft to the Virgin pure on high,
God did grant them victory when death they thought was nigh.

Now to conclude I will allude the reason for my song,
I thought I would if but I could their memory prolong;
These noble sons made England's sons to feel and understand,
That rebel steel would make them reel on the hills of holy Ireland.⁶⁸

William O'Malley

⁶⁸ O'Malley, W. (1989). Waterfall Magazine Archive. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.discoverjoycecountry.com/activity/waterfall-magazine-archive/>

Ireland's Noble Son (Ballad)

Our Glorious friend, Oh, woe of woes,
Lies dead on this hillside,
That faithful, true and honest boy,
Our joy, our hope and pride,
That gallant youth so full of truth,
Who feared not tyrant's lead,
Can it be true, O Rósin Dubh,
Your darling son lies dead

This eve at five, the third of May, in 1921,
He bids farewell to hill and dell
His work on earth is done;
But his spirit still lives on each hill
In rustic cot and town;
His deeds and name are decked with fame,
With honor and renown.

Seán Ó Donnachadha (Volunteer in the Tourmakeady Ambush)



Brave Michael O'Brien (Ballad)

It was a Tuesday afternoon just on the third of May.
The noble soul Michael O'Brien from earth did pass away.
He fought and fell for Róisín Dubh neath a Tourmakeady sky,
Then his spirit joined that noble band whose deeds shall never die.

He was a gallant soldier of the famous I.R.A.
That host of knightly warriors who have stunned the world to-day.
With deeds of Irish valor, of chivalry and renown,
In battling for our freedom against the forces of the Crown.

On New Year's Day at sunset, O'Brien went "on the run,"
And side by side with Tom Maguire, he planned the English Huns
Should yield to them in battle in the cause of Éire Óg
Then he buckled on his armor, bright, to meet the Saxon rogue.

Now the English were determined that O'Brien should never fight,
they sought him day by day, and likewise at dead of night.
With soldiers and constabulary, and Auxiliary Black and Tans,
But many a comrade's vigil had failed their hellish plans.

His metal was first tested at the battle of Portroyal.
Where the "Flying Column" wanted to reverse the English smile,
The foe he soon was sighted and the battle began.
Then one volley from our gunners and the fight was fought and won.

But our Tourmakeady conquest it was a grand surprise -
Six hundred British Tommie's against thirty of our boys.
The Irish blazed into their ranks and many a foe went down
And O'Brien was there to do and dare, against the English crown.

And when the fight was fiercest, he crept across the plain.
To aid his dearest comrade, who was wounded and in pain.
"Hands up", cried England's officer, but he proudly answered "No,"
And he fell for Irish freedom as he faced the ancient foe.

But when into their hands he fell they did like brutes behave,
and true to their tradition they pursued him to the grave.
They marred his Christian burial, his career they did impeach,
But his heroic soul, unconquered, shone out beyond their reach.

And now, you friends and comrades, and all who held him dear,
As we loved him during life, let us not forget him in prayer -
To raise our hearts for Michael O'Brien, that God in Heaven above
May open wide his golden gates and clasp him to his love. ⁶⁹

James Burke

⁶⁹ Burke, J. (1938). Duchas School Folklore Collection. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4427871/4352606>

APPENDIX 3 - TURAS SIÚIL

Tá baile Thuar Mhic Éadaigh suite ar an bhruach thiar de Loch Measca i gCo Mhaigh Eo. Tá an príomh bhóthar ag síneadh ó thuaidh i dtreo na Sraithe agus ó dheas i dtreo Páirc an Doire. Í Mám Trasna is féidir casadh soir i dtreo Fionnaithe agus an Fháirche go Baile an Róba. Má theann tú ar aghaidh díreach is féidir dul i dtreo an Lionáin nó an Teach Dóite. Tá bothár ag dul siar i dtreo Cathar na Mart i lár an bhaile tríd na cnoic.

Tá rian an oighir aois le brath go soléir i sléibhte Partraí go h-áirithe sna Deirceanna. Tá a mhalairt le feiceáil ar an taobh eile den loch, tá machairí réidh d' aol chloch ag síneadh ó Baile an Róba go teorainn Co na Gaillimhe. Is ceantar fíor áláinn i ceantar Thuar Mhic Éadaigh.

Bhí stair corraithe ag an gceantar ó aimsir an Ghorta go Cogadh na Saoirse . Bhí Tuar Mhic Éadaigh agus paróiste Baile Óbha mar lár ionad an feachtas a bhí ag an Irish Church Mission Society, brú a chuir ar na Caitilicigh bóchta a chreideamh a athrú. Bhí an tiarna talún áitiúil an Tiarna Pluncéad, Ard Easpag Protastúnach Thuama i gceannas ar an eagraíocht seo. Chuir Ard Easpag Caitliceach Thuama, Seán Mac Éil in aghaidh an fheachtas go tréan agus chuir sé sagairt mhisniúil le troid ina aghaidh, an tAth Mac a Bháird agus go h-áirithe an tAth Pádraig Ó Maolfheabhail. Bhí an Tiarna Pluncéad agus a dhreifiúr Cáit diongbháilte ar thaobh an Irish Church Mission. Bhí siad sa gcuart chuile dara lá leis an tAth Ó Maolfheabhail. Maraíodh Protastúnach Alexander Harvison i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh agus chuir Pluncéad agus a dhreifiúr fainic ar a gcuid tionontáí a bpáistí a chuir ag na scoileanna protastúnacha a bhunaigh said nó go ndí-shealbhófaí iad.

I 1860 dí-shealbhaíodh 160 tionóntá le cabhair an airm agus na poilíní, cé nach rabhadar taobh thiar ina gcíos . Dí-shealbhaíodh na tionóntá as Goirtín Mór agus Gort Fraoigh roimhe sin. Cuireadh Protastunaigh ina n-áit. Ba finíneach é an tAth Ó Maolfheabhail agus bhí cumann láidir fininí i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh.



THOMAS, 2ND BARON PLUNKET (1792-1866)
BISHOP OF TUAM, KILLALA AND ACHONRY 1839-66

Tomás Pluncéad

Ar an taobh thoir de Loch Measca i gceantar na hÉile bhí cogadh na Talún faoi lán seoil freisin. Bhí achránn idir na tionóntaí agus an Caipitín Boycott ag tús 1880. Bhí achránn idir tionóntaí an Tiarna Ard Oilean agus maraíodh gníomhaire leis agus a gharmhac ar an gCloch Bhric. Le stair mar seo ní ionadh ar bith é go raibh na pobail thart ar Loch Measc chun tosaigh i gCogadh na Saoirse.

Níl sé soléir an raibh gluaiseacht na poblachta bunaithe i mBaile an Róba roimh 1916. Bunaíodh Fianna Éireann i mBaile an Róba i 1916. Mhárseáil triúr fear in éide na Fianna suas an príomh shráid le toirsí lásta ag comóradh cinnirí an Éirí Amach. Cuireadh tús le óglaigh na h-Éireann (IRA) ag cruinniú i gCoill Úi Dhomhnalán taobh amuigh de Bhaile an Róba agus ag deire 1918 bhí tríocha fear sa gcumann.

Bhunaigh Tomás Mac Uidhir na h-óglaigh ar an gCrois. Chuaigh sé fhéin sna h-óglaigh náisiúnta i 1913. Rugadh é ar an gCrois i 1892 an ceathrú duine de aonar déag clainne. Bhí a athair gníomhach i gCogadh na Talún agus sna Fininí. Nuair a thosaigh an feachtas in aghaidh coinscríobh (conscription) in 1918 chuaigh go leor isteach sna h-óglaigh. Chuir MagUidhir iacall orthu dhul ar siuloidí fada agus d'fhág go leor acu na h-óglaigh da bharr. Bhí scéal ann gur chuir an sagart ceist ar fear an raibh sé sna h-óglaigh agus dúirt sé go raibh ach nach raibh sé in ann coinneáil suas le MagUidhir. I 1920 rinneadh ath-eagrú ar na h-óglaigh i gCo Mhaigh Eo. Roinneadh na h-óglaigh sa chontae i gceithre bhriogáid. Bhí Mag Uidhir i gceannas ar bhriogáid Maigh Eo Theas. Cuireadh tús le na “Flying Columns” mar gheall ar brú ó na póilíní ag an am seo. Bhí ar cuid de na h-óglaigh dul ar a gcoiméad (on the run). Bhí thart ar cuigear fichead sa “Flying Column” i ndeisceart Mhaigh Eo. Bhí a mbunáite ó Baile an Róba agus an Chrois, bhí ceathrar ón tSraith ann.

Ionad Spéise a 1

Teampall Protastúnach

Fosclaíodh an teampall Protastúnach i mí Mean Fómhair 1853. Bá é an Tiarna Tomás Pluncéad, Ard-easpag Thuama Eaglais na h-Éirinn a thóg é. Bhí sé ina chonaí i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh ó 1831 nuair a thóg sé teach, Lodge Thuar Mhic Éadaigh sa cheantar. Bhí baint aige leis an Irish Church Mission a bhí ag iarraidh ar Chaitlicigh a chreideamh a athrú.



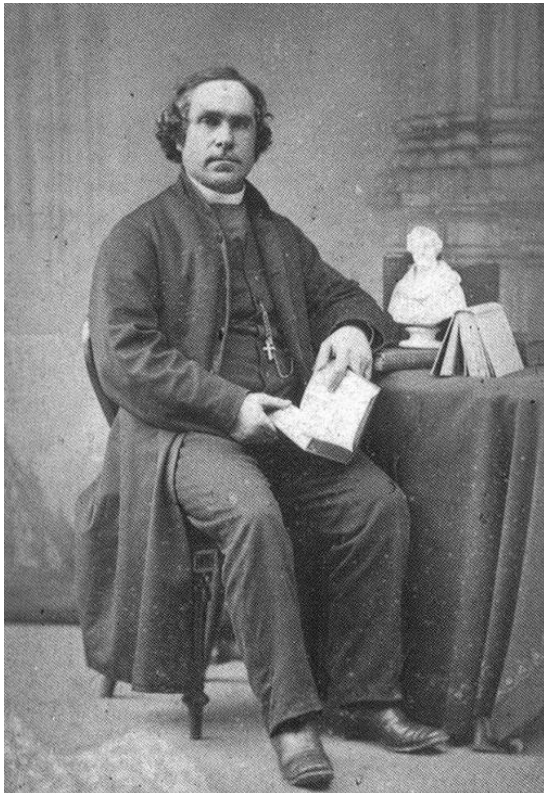
Teampall Protastúnach

Bá é an Irish Church Mission an príomh eagraíocht a bhí i mbun feachtas athrú creidimh in Éirinn. Baillíodh airgead ar fud Sasana dóibh. Bhí feachtas laidir ar bun acu i gceantar an Chlochán, Acaill agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh. Ní raibh mórán scoileanna sna ceantaracha seo ag an am agus dhirigh siad isteach ar na páistí agus a chuid tuismitheoirí. Bhí na daoine beo bocht agus tugadh bia dóibh freisin da n-athródh siad creidimh as seo a thainig an focal “souperism”.

Bá seo an chuis leis an achrann idir na sagairt aitiúil agus an Tiarna Plunkett.

Tugadh an” Cath i bPartraí “ar an aighneas go mór mhór nuair a cuireadh an t’Ath Ó Maolfeabhail go Tuar Mhic Éadaigh. Bhunaigh an Church Mission scoileanna Protastúnach agus chuir Plunkett agus a dhreifiúr brú ar na daoine a bpáistí a chuir chucu. Rinneadh bagairt go ndí-shealbhófaí iad mura gcuirfeadh siad a bpáistí chucu. D’oscail an ard-easpaig Chaitliceach Seán Mac Éil scoil na mainistreach i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh chun cur i gcoinne na scoileanna Protastúnach.

Ba é an tAth Peadar Mac a Bhaird a thosaigh an fheachtas in aghaidh an Tiarna Plunkett. Scríobh sé sna páipéir gur cuireadh caitlicigh an pharóiste faoi leigear ag na ministéirí Protastúnach “invaded by swarms of Jumpers striving to seduce the poor at their dying moments “agus scríobh sé faoi an scoil Protastúnach go raibh dramaí a léiriú ann “of theatre where is enacted scenes of abuse and calumny against the Virgin Mother of God”. Scríobh sé freisin gur dhibir an Pluincéadach na tionántaí Caitliceach a bhí aige agus gur chuir sé Protastúnaigh ina n-áit. Dí-shealbháíodh na tionóntaí as Goirtín Mór agus Gort Fraoi ag an am seo. Thainig an tAth Pádraig Ó Maolfeabhail leachtóir aitheanta ó Coláiste na Gaeil i bParás in áit an tAth Mac a Bhaird i 1858.



An tAth Ó Maolfeabhail

Fear coinspóideach trodach ab ea an tAth Ó Maolfeabhail a d’fhág a phost i bParás mar gheall ar bhagairt dlí. Níos faide anonn nuair a bhí sé lonnaithe i gCunga ghoid sé Crois Chunga ón Royal Irish Academy i mB.A.C. Chuir sé an crois faoina chóta agus shiul sé amach leis.

Thosaigh Ó Maolfeabhail ag seanamóireacht in aghaidh na scoileanna Protastúnach nuair a thainig sé . Chuir sé an-bhrú ar na daoine na páistí a thogáil as na scoileanna. Níor fágadh ach cúpla páiste sna scoileanna, páistí –oibríthe Pluincéad a chaillfeadh a bpostanna dá dtógfadh siad na páistí as na

scoileanna. Rinne sé bagairt ar na muinteoírí agus na leitheoirí bíobla agus ba mhinic é sa gcuirt dá bharr.

Ní raibh an Church Mission dímhaoín ag cur in aghaidh Ó Maolfheabhail. Dúirt siad go raibh sé le brath sna scéalta sna páipéir ón am ar thainig sé go raibh meadú mór ar foréigin in aghaidh lucht an mhisean. An foiréigean uilig spreagtha ag an sagart. Bhí faitíos ar na Protastúnaigh agus togadh cas cúirte in aghaidh Richard Goodison an Líonáin go ndearna sé iarracht ar Ó Maolfheabhail a mharú. Dúirt sé sa gcuirt go raibh na daoine ag bagairt air faoi ordaithe an sagart. Toghadh ceithre bearaic poilios sa gceantar de bharr an achrann. Bhí rudaí ag dul chun donais chuile lá. Buaic pointe an achrann na marú Alexander Harvison Protastunach a bhí ag obair don Tiarna Pluincéad.

Tar éis tráthnóna ag cuairteoireacht bhuail Harvison isteach sa mbéar Tigh Hewitt ar an 31ú Eanáir 1860. Ar a bhealach abhaile thart ar ¼ míle ón mbéar caitheadh é le piléar agus maraíodh é. Ní bhfuarthas amach ariamh cén údar a bhí leis an marú. Dúradh gur thainig sé ar oibrigh eile leis an Tiarna Pluincéad ag poacheáil ar thalamh an Tiarna Pluincéad agus dearnadh bagairt ar dá bharr sin. Is léir go raibh faitíos air mar bhí se ag iompar gunna. Ar an oíche céanna a tharla an dúnmharú scaoileadh sé chaora as an (póna) pound. Nuair a chuala na fir a bhí ag faire na caoirigh na piléar ritheadar agus nuair a thainigeadar ar ais bhí na caoirigh imithe as an bpóna. Bhí an tAth Ó Maolfheabhail sa gcuairt mar gur leag sé an póna (pound) ceanna a bhí togtha ag an Tiarna Pluincéad suas in aghaidh Teach a Phobail T.M.É. Lá amháin bhí caoirigh ag meileach sa bpóna le linn an aifrinn. Chuaigh an tAth Ó Maolfheabhail agus na daoine amach agus leagadar an póna. Tugadh an sagart chun cuirte dá bharr.



Theach a Phobail Tuar Mhic Éadaigh

Deanadh socrú síochána idir an sagart agus an Tiarna Pluincéad in earrach na bliaina 1860. Níor mhair sé i bhfad mar i mí na Samhna 1860 dí-shealbhaigh Pluincéad dhá theaghlach deag (160 duine) ar fad. Bhí a mbunáite ina chónaí i nDoire Mhianaigh. Mhar an dí-shealbhú 3 lá rinneadh é le cabhair na poilios agus saighdiúirí. Tugadh leithscéalta mar dhóigh fraoch agus ionsaí ar leitheoirí bíobla mar chuis don dí-shealbhú ach an príomh chuis ná go rabhadar báil le an tAth Ó Maolfheabhail. Tharraing an dí-shealbhú droch cháil ar an Tiarna Pluincéad agus an Irish Church mission. D'fhág an Pluincéadach Tuar Mhic Éadaigh sa mbliain 1863. Fuair sé bás i dTuaim I 1866. Tá sé curtha taobh amuigh den teampall Protastúnach i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh.

Pointe Eolais 2

Sean Bheairic an R.I.C i bPairc a' Doire

Mar a bhí 1920 ag dul ar aghaidh bhí sé ag fáil níos deacra don IRA ionsaí a dhéanamh ar na forsaí Sasanach mar gheall ar obair na póilíní agus na dubh-chronaigh ag deanamh sior chuardach agus ag bagairt foréigean ar na daoine. Ní raibh sé sábháilte do na h-óglaigh fanacht ina dtíthe fhéin agus b'éigean dóibh dul ar a dteitheadh. Bunaíodh na “Flying Columns” agus cuireadh dlúas leis an feachtas míleata ar fud na tíre dá bharr. Rinne briogáid Mhaigh Eo tuilleadh ionsaíthe de bharr tathaint ó cheannáras na nÓglach i mB.A.C. D'aontaigh ceannairí na ceithre cathlán i Maigh Eo go n-éagródh siad ionsaíthe ar forsaí na cróinneach i Maigh Eo chomh luath agus ab fheidir.

Tar éis cruinniú de Briogáideanna Mhaigh Eo i mí Éanáir 1921 tharraing cumann na Sraithe agus an Baile Glas plean, suas le luíochán a dhéanamh i mí Márta 1921 i gCoill Fáil.



Flying Column ag Halla Uí Mhordha

Séard atá i gceist le luíochán ná go dteann daoine i bhfolach agus go ndéanann said ionsaí gan coinne. Bíonn go leor ullmhúcháin agus pleanáil le deanamh. Bíonn eolas le bailiú ar ghluaiseacht an namháid agus ar a gclár ama. Bíonn súil le coinneáil ar an láthair agus bealach ealaithe a phleanáil. Bíonn airm le bailiú, fir le eagraí, beatha, loistín agus córas iompair a réiteach. Bíonn sé seo le dhéanamh sa gcaoi go mbeadh na h-óglaigh sábháilte, na bealaí isteach agus amach a dhéanamh sábháilte agus gnáth dhaoine a choinneáil ón lathair agus deanamh cinnte nach bhfaighfeadh an námhaid aon rogha go raibh ionsaí le deanamh orthu. Bíonn na linte cumarsáide le gearradh freisin.

Bhí reisimint na Borders lonnaithe i mBaile an Róba. Ba mhínic iad ag tastil idir Baile an Róba agus Caisleán a Bharráigh ar an 7ú lá de Mharta 1921 thainig fir na Sraithe agus Baile Glás chomh fada le Coill Fáil ar an príomh bhóthair idir Caisleán a Bharráigh agus Baile an Róba go dtí lathair an luíochán. Nuair a thainig leoraí na saighdiúirí chomh fada leis an lathair d'ionsaigh na h-óglaigh é. Roghnaigh an ceannphort Tomás Mag Uidhir, Mairtín Ó Connacháin ón tSraith leis an tiománaí a chaitheadh mar ba é an fear gunna ab fhearr a bhí acu, tá sé ráite gur dhuirt sé go n-aimseódh sé é dá mo naosc a bhí ann. Nuair a bhí an tiománaí curtha ó mhaith bhí na saighdiúirí eile i sáinn. Léim na saighdiúirí amach ó chul an leoraí agus thug said na bonnacháí leo i dtreo Baile an Róba. Maraíodh saighdiúr amháin agus goinneach beirt. Fuair na h-óglaigh ocht raidhfil san ionsaí. Rinne na Sasanaigh an-chuardach agus



Teach Tomás Ó h-Óráin

bagairt ar na daoine i bPartraí agus ar an tSraith tar éis an luíocháin. Maraíodh Tomás Ó h-Óráin fear neamh-chiontach ar leic a theallaigh féin an tráthnóna sin os comhair a iníon.

Ba é seo an chéad ionsaí ar forsaí Sasanach ó 1798 i ndeisceart Mhaigh Eo . Bhí faitíos ag teacht ar na póilíní agus dúnadh go leor de na staisiún bheaga a bhí acu .Dunadh Partraí agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh i 1920.



Beairic mór I Pairc an Doire

Bhí beairic laidir póilíní i bPairc a' Doire a togadh i 1880 tar éis dun-mharbhú Mham Trasna .Daingin laidir ab ea é agus bhí dhá phoílín deag lonnaithe ann i 1921 . Ba é an t-aon bearaic poilíní a bhí fagtha i gceantar Loch Measca cé is moite de Bhaile an Róba.Thiocfadh leoraithe le solathair amach as Baile an Roba go Pairc a' Doire uair sa gcoicís. Bhí na h-óglaigh ag pleanáil ionsaí ar dheanamh ar na leoraí ag dul go Pairc a Doire.

Pointe Eolais 3

Sean Oifig an Phoist

Roghnaíodh baile Thuar Mhic Éadaigh mar láthair an luíocháin. Bhí oifig an Phoist lárnach sa bplean. Bhí seilbh le glacadh ar Oifig an Phoist agus an líne teilifón le gearradh. Bhí bealaí ealaithe leagtha amach do na h-óglaigh. Bhí scéal le cur chuig na h-óglaigh faoi cén t-ám a mbeadh na póilíní ag fágail Baile an Róba. Bá ghnáth do na póilíní na soláthair a ordú i Siopa Birmingham i mBaile an Róba. Thógfadh sé dhá uair a chloig leis an ordú a lionadh agus thugadh sé sin deis an scéal a thabhairt go Tuar Mhic Éadaigh.



Tomás Mag Uidhir

Cuireadh tús le pleananna don luíocháin ar oíche De Sathairn 30ú Aibreán 1921. Bá iad Tomás Mag Uidhir, Michael Ó Brian agus Pdraig Ó Miadha na h-oifigí agus thainigeadar le chéile i mbaile Coislocha taobh amuigh de Bhaile an Róba le baill den” Flying Column”. Roinneadh an grúpa ina dhá chuid, grúpa amháin faoi stiúr Tomás de Burca ag taistil trasna na locha i mbáid iomartha agus bhí an grúpa eile ag coisíocht.

Bhí na báid réitighthe ag Teach Peadar de Burca. Bhí aon fhear deag ó cheantar Cluaín Lifín sna báid agus thóg sé trí uair a chloig orthu an aistir a dhéanamh. Bhí sé deacair dóibh a slí a dhéanamh sa ndorachadas agus bhí solas le bheith lásta ag Doire Mhóir chun treoir a thabhairt dóibh ach níor lasadh é. Thrasnaigh an buion eile an Rób i mbaile Choislocha agus trí Creagh go droichead an Chaol.

Ba é seo an chuid ba chointúirtí den aistear mar bhíodh súil coinnithe ag na póilíní ar an droichead. Tar éis droichead an Chaol a chuir díobh chasadar ar chlé trí Eachnís trasna na tíre go Doire Mhór áit a bhuaileadar lena gcomradaithe a thaistil ar an loch. Dúirt óglaigh na Sraithe leo go raibh an bóthar sabhailte. D’fhanadar i dtithe sna bailte thart ar an tSraith, ceapadh go raibh baile na Sraithe féin ro-chontúirteach mar bhí sé suite ar an bPríomh bhóthar. Bhí ochtar deag de ghrupa sa “Flying Column” agus ba fir ó chumann Baile an Róba agus an Chrois na fir eile.

Is minic a ndéantar dearmad ar an curam tabhachtach a bhí ar baill de Chumann na mBán i gCogadh na Saoirse. Bhí ar na mná i gCumann na mBán na Sraithe loistín agus beatha a eagrú agus le teachtaireachtaí a scaipeadh.



Cumann na mBán

Bhí Lá Bealtaine 1921 ina lá álainn ach b'éigin do na h-óglaigh fanacht i bhfolach ar fhaitíos go bhfaighfeadh na poilios amach go rabhadar sa cheantar.

Ar an Luain rinneadh glanadh agus seiceáil ar na gunnaí agus an arm lón. Dúirt Padraig Ó Cinnéide ina chúntas go bhfaca sé fir ag triomú piléir sa ghrian ar píosa “tín”. Is beag raidhfil a bhí acu agus bhíodar ag bráth ar gráin ghunnaí a lionadh le grán trom agus scaití ní raibh siad feiliúnach. Ní raibh aon mhaith sna ngran ghunnaí muna mbeadh tú in aice leis an sprioc.

Scríobh Michael Ó Brian ina thuaraisc deire go dtí an ceann-ceathrú. Níl aon airm againn. Tá na bóithre anseo an-fheiliúnach do mhianáil ach níl aon mianaigh againn. Tá 3 beairic poilios anseo a dfhéadfaí a ionsaí da mbeadh pleascáin againn. Níl fiú airm lón againn do na gráin ghunnaí.

Fuair na h-oifigí reidh don luíochán an maidin dár gcionn. Chaithfeadh sé go raibh eolas acu roimh reidh go mbeadh na leoraithe ag teacht ó Bhaile an Róba an lá sin. Tá sé soiléir nach raibh fhios acu cé mhead leoraí a bheadh ann nó cén t-am a bheadh siad ag fágáil Baile an Róba.

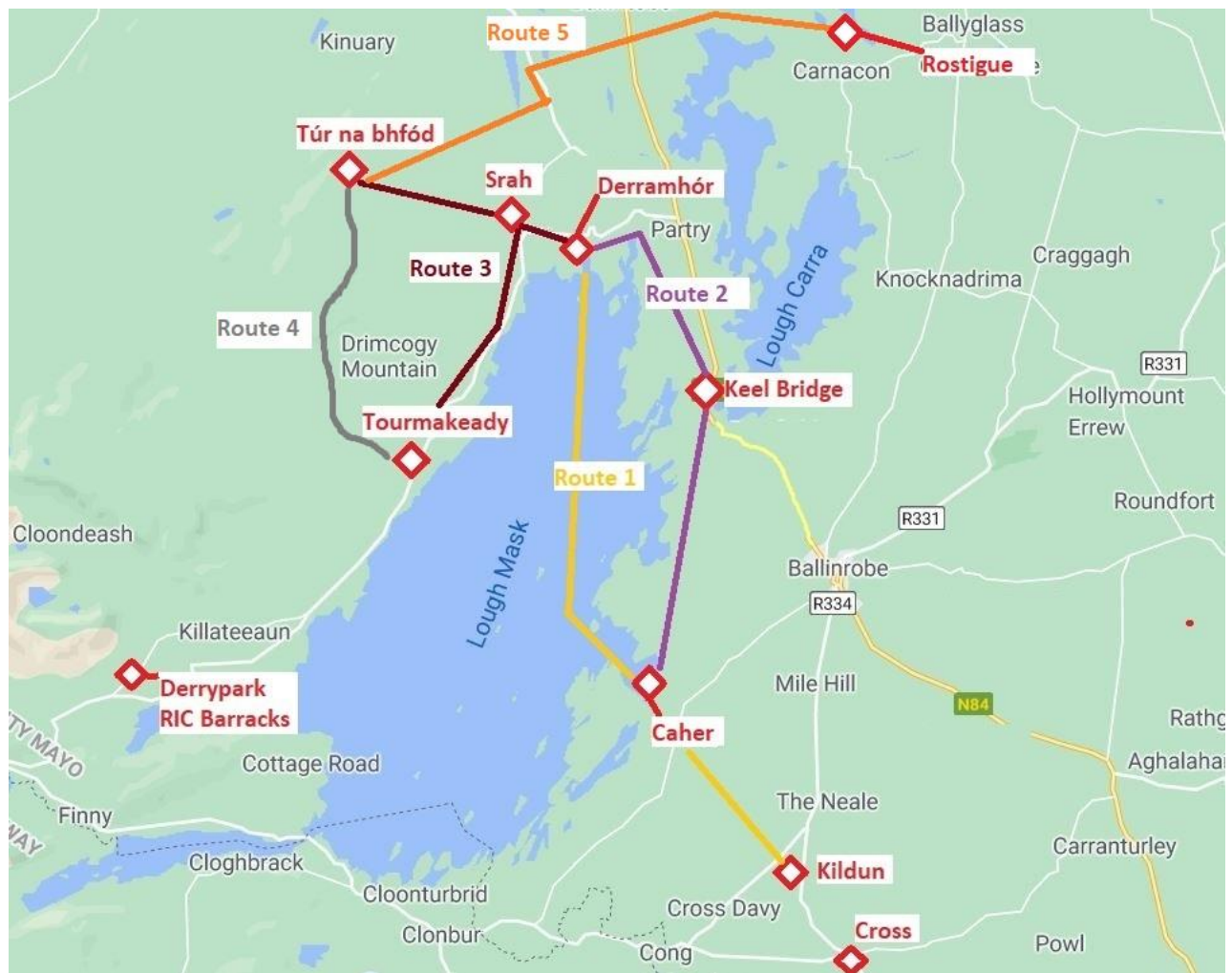
Go moch ar maidin roimh breacadh an lae bhailigh na h-óglaigh ag droichead na Sraithe. Mhairseáil siad go Tuar Mhic Éadaigh. Shroicheadar Páirc an Aonaigh roimh breacadh an lae. Bhí ruine bia acu ansin agus dáladh gunna agus airm lón ar gach óglach. Nuair a bhí a mbeile ite chuaigh siad go dtí an áit a bhí leagtha amach dóibh.

Pointe Eolais 4

Geataí Droim Bán

Roinn Mag Uidhir a forsaí i dtrí phríomh ghrúpa. Bhí cúpla raidhfil i ngach ghrúpa agus bhí sé féin le cúpla fear ag Oifig an Phoist. Bhí an chéad ghrúpa ag geataí Droim Bán faoi Pádraig Ó Miadha (Baile an Róba). Bhí an dara ghrúpa faoi Tomás Ó Maolalla (An tSraith) trasna an bhothar ó óstan Hewitt agus bhí an 3ú ghrúpa faoi Michael Ó Brian (an Eil) ag Páirc an Aonaigh. Bhí thart ar 60 fear sa troid ach bhí siad ag brath ar ghrán gunnaí den chuid is mó.

Bhí Mag Uidhir agus cúpla fear ag Oifig an Phoist. Coinníodh an máistir poist san oifig ar feadh na maidine. Chonaic bean an máistir poist Mag Uidhir taobh amuigh agus d'iarr sí cérbh é. Michael Ó Coilleáin a duradh léi. D'iarr sí meas tú ar mhaith leis an tUas Ó Coilleáin cupán tae.



Bealach idir an tSraith agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh

An plean a bhí ann ná ligean don chéad carr taistil chomh fáda le geataí Droim Bán agus bhí súil go mbeadh an dá leoraí eile ag stopadh ar aghaidh na buíonta eile. Togadh na daoine a bhí in Óstán Hewitt agus sa mbaile go teach Tom Robinson (Molloy) d'elaigh bean amháin ach beireadh uirthí agus tugadh ar áis chun an tigh í. Coinníodh iad ansin sa gcaoi nach dtugfadh said foláireamh do na póilíní.



Geataí Droim Bán

I mBaile an Róba coinníodh súil ar na póilíní agus na dubh-chronaigh. Nuair a tharraing car agus leoraí suas go siopa Birmingham léim Pádraig Ó Finneadha ar a rothar chun inseacht do Mag Uidhir nach mbeadh ach dhá feithicil ag taistil agus an t-am a bheadh siad ag fágáil Baile an Róba. Níor eirigh leis an scéal a thabhairt do Mag Uidhir in am. Ach bhí lead óg darbh ainm Pádraig Ó Fathaigh ag obair i siopa Birmingham agus d'eirigh leis an teachtaireacht a thabhairt do Mag Uidhir díreach roimh an luíochán.

Shroich an chéad carr Tuar Mhic Éadaigh ag a h-aon a chlog agus ligeadh dó dul chomh fáda le Droim Bán. Ionsaíodh ansin é. Maraíodh an tiománaí Constabla Ó Riagáin ar an toirt agus dubhchronach darbh ainm Oates. Goinneadh an Sarsint Ó Riagáin agus an Constabla Ó Floinn. Maraíodh an Sairsint Ó Riagáin ina dhiadh sin. Gabhadh sé raidhfil san ionad sin.

Chomh luath is a chuala na póilíní sa leoraí na piléar á scaoileadh ag geataí Droim Bán stopadar. Bhí siad leath bealaigh idir phairc an Aonaigh agus na h-óglaigh ag cros bhóthar Hewitt. Scaoil na h-óglaigh piléar leo maraíodh an Constábla De Paor agus goinneadh an Constábla Marrow sa lámh (chaill sé an lámh). D'eirigh leis an tiománaí dul chomh fáda le Óstán Hewitt. D'eirigh le na póilíní a bhealach a dheanamh isteach san Óstán (léimeadar isteach tríd an fhuinneog). Bhí an triúr óglach ag an

mballa ag an gcros bhothar ag caitheadh leo ach scaoil na Sasanaigh gránáid raidhfil leo agus b'eigean dóibh culú.

Thainig Mag Uidhir agus na fir a bhí leis chomh fáda leis an Óstán ach ní raibh aon bhealach aige an Óstán a ionsaí. Ní raibh an bóthar gearrtha nó aon rud deanta le forsaí Sasana a stopadh ag teacht i gcabhair ar a chomh-leacaithe. B'eigean culú, thug na h-óglaigh aghaidh ar Thuar na bhFód áit a raibh bia agus foscadh le fáil. Níl fhios céard a tharla leis an line teilefón in oifig a phoist, ar deanamh dearmad é a ghearradh nó nar gearradh i gceart í ach cuireadh glaoch teilefón uaidh ag leathuair tar éis a h-aon go oifig an phoist i mBaile an Róba. Bhí saighdiúirí agus dubh-chrónaigh ar an mbothar go Tuar Mhic Éadaigh lastigh de uair a chloig.

Pointe Eolais 5

Óstán Hewitts

Thainig scéal an luíocháin chuig an mbeairic mileata i mBaile an Róba. Lt. Geofferey Ibberson ón Border Regiment a bhí i gceannas. Tharraing sé suas plan le na h-Óglaigh a ghabháil, bhí sé den tuairim go gculódh na h-óglaigh go dtí na sléibhte. Bhí Lt Smith agus Craig ar dualgas leis agus bhí 3 feithicil acu dhá leoraí Crossley agus leoraí 3 thonna. Chuaigh an leoraí sin díreach go dtí an tSraith bhí scór saighdiúr agus dhá mheasin ghunna (Lewis guns) ar bord. Bhí an dá Chrossley le dul go TMÉ agus suas bóthar Thoin na Sáile. Bhí na saighdiúirí le dul i dtreo Thuar na bhFód go sáinneodh siad na h-óglaigh sa gcnoc. Nuair a thainig Lt Smith agus Ibberson chomh fáda le Tuar Mhic Éadaigh chonaiceadar na mairbh agus na póilíní gonta. Chuir sé seo fonn díoltas ar Ibberson. Bhí an buion le Smith 300 slat chun cinn ar Ibberson agus a bhuion siúd.



Nuair a bhí an troid thart ag geata Droim Bán chulaigh na h-óglaigh ansin i dtreo na locha agus bhogadar ó thuaidh. Scaoil na póilíní in Óstan Hewitt leo ach d'éirigh leo a bhealach a dheanamh chomh fáda leis an tSraith Bhuailadar le Michael Ó Coistealbha ar an tSraith óglach áitiúil a bhí ina iar-shaighdiúr Shasanach agus a bhí pairteach í luíochán Coill Fáil.

Thainig leoraí saighdiúirí chomh fáda leis an tSraith agus stopadar ar an mbóthar taobh thíos do na h-óglaigh seo agus thosaíodar ag dreapadh an chnoc i dtreo na h-óglaigh. Chuaigh na h-óglaigh i bhfolach i leaba abhainn an tSeangoirt. Bhogadar soir i dtreo Dhoirin Dhamh Dheirg agus threoir Michael Ó Coistealbha iad chomh fada le beairic Chinn Iuirí. D'fhánadar ansin ar feadh an lae ag coinneáil súil ar na póilíní ansin. Ag titim na h-oiche chuladar ar ais taobh an chnoic agus thrasnaigh siad bóthar Cathar na Mairt ag an "Goat Hotel". Ghluaiseadar i dtreo Baile an Tobar. Ar an slí thugadar teach faoi deara le solas ar lasadh ann. Bhí sé dó a chlog san oíche faoin am seo. Thug bean a tigh beile iontach de uibheacha agus bagún dóibh, beile a bhí ag teastail go géar. Ar aghaidh leo ansin i dtreo Baile an Tobar agus taobh ó thuaidh de Loch Cearra go dtí an Baile Glas.



Michael Ó Coistealbha

Bhí Pdraig Ó Finneadh ro-mhall le scéal a thabhairt do Tomás Mag Uidhir agus gabhadh é agus cuireadh i ngeibhin in Óstán Hewitts é. Ansin glaodh amach é. D'iarr bean a bhí ansin orthu cá raibh siad ag dul leis an mbuachaill óg. Duradar lei go mbeadh sé ceart go leor. Cúpla nóiméad ina dhiadh sin cluineadh piléar a scaoileadh agus bhí Pdraig Ó Finneadh sinte marbh. I dtuaraisc sa "Mayo News" ar an 14ú Bealtaine 1921. Duradh gur thog bás Ó Finneadha uimhir na daoine a caitheadh "ag iarraidh éalú" go 75. Dúirt Siobhán Bn Uí Éanacháin Tamhnach gur bhuail sí leis an saighdiúr a chaith Ó Finneadha i Londáin sna 50 idí. Bhi sé ag tiomaint tascaí.

Taobh thuas de tSraith bhailigh an chuid eile de na h-óglaigh. Bhí sé i gceist ag Mag Uidhir dul i dtreo Baile an Tobair mar ní raibh aon cludach sa genoc ó na saighdiúirí. Bhí an chuid is mo de na h-óglaigh áitiúil ligtha abhaile ag Mag Uidhir cé is muite de cúpla fear a d'fhán len iad a threoirú. Bhí cuid de na h-óglaigh tar eis ealú i dtreo Pairc a Doire agus Finnithe.



Beairic RIC I mBaile an Róba

Chuaigh cuid de na h-óglaigh ó Baile an Róba ar ais sna báid agus shúil cuid eile acu trasna na tíre. Ba iad na fir as an Flying Column a bhí fanta le Mag Uidhir agus cúpla fear ó chumann na Sraithe a bhí len iad a threoiriú agus le na gunnaí a chuir i bhfolach sa taisce airm i SeanGort.

Rinne na h-óglaigh iarracht dalla mullog a chuir ar na Sasanaigh. Scaradar amach agus ligeadar orthu go rabhadar ag dul i malairt treo. Níor oibrigh an plean bhí na Sasanaigh ag diriú isteach orthu agus le cabhair na meaisíne gunnaí sainníodh iad sa gcnoc amach ó Thuar na bhfód. Bhí idir scór agus scór go leith óglach sainníthe i lag sa gcnoc ansin. Ní raibh sé ag breathnú go maith dóibh le tuilleadh saighdiúr ag teacht ó Cathar na Mart agus Caisleán a Bharraigh i rith an ama.

Pointe Eolais 6

Geata an “Rectory”

Toisc an lá bheith chomh brea bhí Ibberson ag aireachtáil an teas. Bhain sé dhó a chasóg agus na Puttees dá chosaí. Chuir sé an lámh gunna a bhí aige isteach ina phóca. De bharr seo bhí sé cosiúl le sibhialtach agus bin an fáth gur thainig sé aniar a dtuaidh ar Mag Uidhir agus Ó Brian. Nuair a bháin sé mullach an tsléibhe amach ní raibh Ibberson in ann patróil Lt Smith a fheiceáil áit ar bith.



Geata an “Rectory”

Nuair a bhain Lt Smith agus a phatróil mullach Tóin na Saile amach chonaiceadar beirt fhear sa genoc i dtreo Ghleann Measc. Bhí an beirt Pádraig Ac Conraoi agus Pilib Ó h-Aillináin, beirt óglach ó Ghleann Measc tar éis titim ina gcodladh sa genoc tar éis páirt a ghlacadh sa luíocháin. Thainig na saighdiúrí orthu i ngan fhias. Níor chreideadar an scéal a d’inis said doibh ag rá go rabhadar ag fiach sionnaigh a bhí ag tógáil uain orthu. Tá sé ráite go raibh raidhfíl ag Mac Anraoi ach gur bhain MagUidhir dhó é ag rá dá mbeirfí ar le raidhfíl go mbeadh a phort sinte. Tugadh chomh fada le Óstán Hewitt iad agus fuireadar droch bhualadh ó na dubh-chrónaigh. Tugadh go prisiún na Gaillimhe iad agus cuireadh an dlí orthu. Ligeadh saor iad nuair a labhair Sarsint Goulden agus an Maor Blossie Lynch ó Partraí amach dóibh. Gabhadh beirt eile ar an lá Tomás Ó hÉanacháin (Johnny) agus Tomás Ó hÉanacháin (Eoin) as Tamhnach agus fuair eadar drochléasadh chomh maith.

Thainig na h-óglach sa genoc faoi ionsaí ó na meaisín gunnaí a bhí ag na saighdiúrí ar thaobh na Sraithe. Lá brea gréine a bhí ann agus ní thitfeadh an oíche go leath-uair tar éis a deich. Dá mbeadh na h-óglach ina ann an fód a sheasamh go dtí sin bheadh seans acu éalú sa dorachadas. Ní thitfeadh an oíche go ceann seacht uair a chloig.

Lean Ibberson i dtreo Tuar na bhFód agus chonaic sé buion de ceathrar óglach soir uaidh. Scaoil Ibberson agus a phatrol le na h-óglach sin. Chuaigh na h-óglach i bhfoladh i leaba srúfáin agus tar éis cupla nóiméad leag sé súil orthu ar aist ag trasnú críogánn isteach i lag eile sa sliabh. Is ansin a thug sé

Mag Uidhir agus grupa óglaigh ag teitheadh i dtreo Doirin Dá Dheirg faoi dara. Thuig Ibberson go raibh seans ann go n-éalódh siad muna gcuirfí brú orthu treo a athrú agus iad a sháinniú idir forsaí Ibberson agus na measín gunnaí a bhí ag Lt Craig. Reathaí maith ab ea Ibberson agus thug sé do na bonnacháí é míle slí go áit sa gcnoc ina raibh amharc aige ar Mag Uidhir agus a chuid fear.

An bpointe seo scaoil Ibberson cúpla piléar i dtreo Mag Uidhir agus ghoinn sé é. Dar le Mag Uidhir goinneadh é leis an “Lewis gun”. Briseadh a lámh agus bhí sé ag cur fola go trom. Thainig Mícheál Ó Brian chomh fáda leis le bindealáinn a chuir ar a chreachtaí agus an fuil a stopadh. Fad is a bhí Ó Brian ag deanamh seo dathraigh Ibberson go dtí áit a mbeadh amharc níos fearr aige ar na h-óglaigh. Chonaic sé dareag fear i bhfolach i lag sa gcnoc agus chonaic sé Ó Brian ag cuir cor leighis ar Mag Uidhir. Shocraigh sé ar plean, dall a mullóg a chuir ar na h-óglaigh ag ligean air go raibh a phatroil in aice leis sheas sé suas ag beiceadh, “Come on my borders! Hands up! Surrender! Roimhe seo chonaic Mag Uidhir fear ard rua ina léine ag rith chucu le raidhfil ina lámh aige. Cheap Mag Uidhir gur Mícheál Ó Coistealbha as Tuar na bhFód a bhí ann ag teacht le cabhair a thabhairt dóibh. Nuair a thuig sé narbh é an Coistealach a bhí ann bhí sé ro-mhall. Píosa taobh thiar den fear bhí ochtar saighdiúr Breatanach tar éis iad féin a nochtadh ó lag sa sliabh. “Fainic a bhuachaill?” a bheic Mag Uidhir.



Michéal Ó Brian

“Hands up boys” a bheic Ibberson ag ardú a Raidhfil.

Chuala an Brianach Mag Uidhir agus é ag iarraidh bindealán a chuir air. Rug sé ar a raidhfil agus d’iompaigh i dtreo Ibberson. Bhuail piléar ó ghunna Ibberson é agus thit sé ar chosa Mag Uidhir ina staic marbh.

Scaoil na h-óglaigh a ghrán – gunnaí le Ibberson goinneadh sna lámha agus sa chliabhrach é. Chas sé thart agus síos an cnoc leis. Nuair a bhí 20 nó triocho slat curtha dhó aige bhuail piléar é ina mhás chlé, leagadh é ach d’eirigh sé aist agus choinnigh sé ag imeacht ag rith anonn is anall ag iarraidh na piléar a sheachaint. Bhí sé ag deanamh ar an spota a cheap sé go raibh Craig agus a chuid fear. Thainig sé amach ar an mbóthar i dTuar na bhFód. Faoin am seo bhí sé garó reidh le titim.



Crois an Brianach I Tuar na bhFód

Pointe Eolais 7

Túr na bhFód

Rinne Ibberson a bhealach go dtí an teach ba ghaire dhó. Chuir sé iallach ar bean a tigh Bríd Bn Uí Choistealbha (Bríd Mhaitias) cóir leighis a chuir air. Chuir sí bindealán ar a chreachtaí. Ansin chuaigh sé go teach Seosamh Ó h-Óráin áit a chuir sé iacaíl ar fear a bhí ar cuairt ann Padraig Ó Loideain as Gort Mór é a thabhairt ina chapall agus a charr go dtí an príomh-bhóthar áit a raibh Lt Craig agus an leoraí. Tugadh Ibberson go Baile an Róba áit a cuireadh cóir leigheas air. Bhí piléar suite gar dá chroí agus ba chuis imní é. An mhaidin dár gcionn tugadh go Baile Átha Cliath é ar an traen áit a cuireadh oibráid air. Thainig biseach iomlán air. Fuair sé gradam dá chrógacht sa gcath.

Scríobh Ibberson cuntas ar an luíocháin. Dúirt sé gur thainig na Sasanaigh ar chuntas scríofa ag Tomás Mag Uidhir chuig ceann ceathrú na n-óglaigh i mB.A.C. Thainig an Leicestershire Regiment ar an cáipéis nuair a stop siad agus chuardaigh siad an traen ó Ghailimh in Ath Luain. Fuaireadar an cáipéis ar an tiománaí. Bhí data 4/6/21 ar an tuaraisc. Dúirt sé go raibh cúpla rud mar an gcéanna ina chuntas agus cuntas Mag Uidhir ach go raibh an méid a bhí scríofa ag Mag Uidhir faoin líon saighdiúirí a maraíodh sa gcnoc aifeiseach agus gur chuis gaire do na saighdiúirí é mar dar le Ibberson níór gortaíodh saighdiúr ar bith ach é fhéin sa troid sa gcnoc.

Bhí rudaí ag breathnú go donna do na h-óglaigh. Bhí ceannphort na n-óglach agus an leas cheannphort curtha as an áireamh anois. Ba chuis imní é Mag Uidhir bhí sé gortaíthe go dona agus

bheadh sé le n-iompar den chnoc. Bhí ar Tomás Ó Maolalla ceannas a ghlacadh ar na h-óglaigh anois. Bhi an airm lón ag fáil gann agus ní raibh gor acu anois ach piléar a chaitheamh nuair a chonaic siad na saighdiúirí ag bogadh agus piléar a chaitheamh leis an ionad ina raibh na “Lewis guns” ar fhaitíos go mbogfadh siad nios gaire doibh . Ar dtús bhí na Sasanaigh ag iarraidh brú chun cinn in aghaidh lathair na n-óglaigh ach nuair a scaoil na h-óglaigh piléar le Ibberson shocraíodar síos san áit a rabhadar.



Choinnigh na Sasanaigh ag diriú a ngunnaí ar na h-óglaigh ,na raidhfíl agus na meaisín gunnaí. Ní raibh deifir ar bith ar na Sasanaigh bhí dalladh airm lón acu agus bhí cabhair ag tíoct ó Chathair na Mart agus Caisleán a Bharraigh. Ní raibh bia nó deoch nó airm lón ag na h-óglaigh. Bhí Mag Uidhir ag cailleadh go leor fola agus bhí an- tart air agus bhi se ag eiri lag.

Bhí na h-óglaigh ag fanacht go h-ímníodh le titim na h-oíche gan fhios acu cén uair a dheanfadh na Sasanaigh ionsaí orthu. Le titim na h-oíche bhí na Sasanaigh ag scaoileadh “Very lights” sa spéir le súil a choinneáil ar na h-óglaigh. Ansin chualadar feadóga a shéideadh agus lorráithe ag bogadh agus soilse ag bogadh amach as an cheantar. Níor chreideadar é bhí na Sasanaigh ag tréigan sléibhte Partraí agus ag dul ar ais go dtí na beairicí.

Fagadh roinnt saighdiúr ag gardáil na h-ionad ina rabhadar go dtiocfadh an mhaidin. D’fhág sé seo go raibh na h-óglaigh in ann ealú síos trí Dhoir Easa. B’éigean Mag Uidhir a iompar. D’iompar Tomás Ó Maolalla é ar a dhroim chomh-fhada le teach muintir Uí Mhaolalla i nDoir Easa.

Rinne an chuid eile acu a mbealach ó Dhoir Easa go dtí an “Goat Hotel” “sibín” ar príomh-bhóthar Cathar na Mart trí Bhaile an Tobair go dtí an Baile Glas.

Pointe Eolais 8

Siopa Uí Thuathail

Bhí sé thart ar mheán oíche nuair a shroich na h-óglaigh teach Uí Mhaolalla. Chuaigh an chuid is mó de na h-óglaigh ó cheantar Bhaile an Róba abhaile de shuil na gcós thart ar imeall an locha. Bhí Séamus de Búrca on Éil gonnta sa chos agus chuaigh sé amach thar an gcnoc go Gleann Measc áit a fuair sé capall agus tugadh uaidh sin go Cladach i gceantar Chathar na Mart é. Áit ar fhan sé ar feadh cupla seachtain gur thainig biseach air.



Séamus de Burca

Dioltas na Dubh-chrónaigh. Oíche an luíocháin briseadh na fuinneoga i dteach mhuintir Uí Fhinneadha, i siopa Bearnard Seoighe agus siopa Newton i mBaile an Róba. Duradh gurb é Sarsint Goulden a chuir cosc ar tuilleadh damáiste. Deanadh níos mó damaiste i gceantar Thuar Mhic Éadaigh dóadh teach folamh gar do gheataí Droim Bán. Dóadh siopa Uí Thuathail i Droim a Droighnean agus b'éigean páiste dhá sheachtáin d'aois a chaitheamh amach tre fuinneog thuas staighre is an teach ina dhearg lásrach. Dóadh siopa Uí Thuathail mar bhí fhios ag na poilíní gur poblachtaigh mora a bhí iontu. Dóadh an siopa a bhí ag an gcomhar chumann (co-op) san áit atá an scrin don Mhaighdean Muire anois. Níos deirinigh dóadh tithe ar an gCrois agus i Dabhach teach mhuintir Mag Uidhir san áireamh. Dar le mac Sarsint Goulden ina chuntas ordaíodh dá athair teach mhuintir Uí Bhrian san Éil a dhó freisin ach dhuiltaigh sé agus d'éirigh sé as na poilíní ina dhiaidh sin. Bhí sceon agus scanradh ar mhuintir na Sraithe bhíodar ag suil go ndófaí an baile. Thréigeadar an baile ar feadh cupla oíche le teann faitíos ag fágáil na daoine a bhí ro-thinn no ró-shean len iad a bhogadh i dteach amháin a bhí ar an gcúlshráid.

Ar maidin lá na mharach, 4ú Bealtaine thainig grúpa de na h-óglaigh áitiúil le Mag Uidhir a aistriú go áit níos sábhailte ach bhí sé ro-lag len é a iompar ina fhocla fhéin duirt sé “Níor ól mé uisce beatha roimhe seo ach an mhaidín sin tugadh dhá ubh meascatha i fuisce dhom, rinne sé an-mhaitheas dom, shíl mé bogadh ach nuair a chuaigh mé thart ar binn an tigh bhuaile leoithne gaoithe mé agus thit mé i mo chnap. Níor fhéad mé dhul níos fuaide”.B’eigean é a chuir í bhfolach taobh amuigh.

Le breacadh an lae d’fhag na Sasanaigh a mbeairicí le tuilleadh cabhair agus thugadar aghaidh ar Thuar na bhFód ar aist. Bhí gach cunamh acu bhí cistineacha so-ghluaiste agus eitleán mar chabhair acu. Rinneadh toraíocht i chuile theach, sciobóil agus garraí agus ceasnaíodh chuile dhuine faoi cá raibh na h-óglaigh .Sa gcnoc fuairadar corp Mícheal Ó Brian agus na gunnaí ina measc an gunna a bhí ag an Sarsint Ó Riagáin.

Chonaic na mná a bhí ag tabhairt aire do Mag Uidhir na saighdiúirí ag deanamh ar an teach a raibh sé ann. D’iompar siad amach é lena seálanna go leaba an srufáin a bhí in aice láimhe agus chludaigh siad é le tom aitinne. Coinníodh Mag Uidhir i nDoire Easa ar feadh sé lá agus bhí dian churdach ar siul chuile lá ag na Sasanaigh i rith an ama . Is beag nar rugadh ar dhá uair mar gheall ar an éitleán. An chéad uair nuair a bhí na mná á iompar as an teach chualadar an eitleán ag tíoct agus shuíodar síos ag caint is ag comhrú mar dhea agus Mag Uidhir i bhfolach faoina gcuid seálanna. An dara babhta chuir Tomás Ó Maolalla faoi claí sceach é agus rith sé féin anonn is anoll tríd an pháirc gur imigh an eitleán as radharc.

Chuir Mag Uidhir síos ar an gcaoi ar thainig sé slán. Bhí an dochtúir i dT.M.É báil leis an chúis agus bhí sé geallta aige go dtabharfadh sé aon chúnamh a bheadh ag teastáil am ar bith. Cuireadh cáilín óg áitiúil Eibhlín Ní Chaomhanaigh as Droim a Chogaidh go Óstán Hewitt ar thoir an dochtúir. Shuil sí isteach san Óstán cé go raibh sé lán le forsaí Breatainacha agus duirt sí leis an Dr Ó Murchú go raibh sé ag teastáil go raibh sean-bhean ar an mbaile Meiní Dhonnachú tar éis titim agus go raibh sí i ndroch-chaoi. Nuair a thainig sé chomh fada leis an teach d’inis Máiréad Ní Dhonnachú caiptin Cumann na mBán agus gariníon dón bhean dó cén fath a glaoth air agus thug sí é go teach muintir Pdraig Ó hÉanacháin (Mícilin) ansin tugadh go teach Uí Mhaolalla é i nDoire Easa é as sin. I bhfocla Mag Uidhir “nuair a thainig an dochtúir isteach d’fheach sé orm agus chuardaigh sé an teach do phíosáí adhmaid agus ólann agus fuair sé mála plúr glan agus d’fháisc sé suas mo chreachtaí”.



Tom Costello agus a bhean Margaret

APPENDIX 4 – CUMANN NA MBAN MEMBERS

Captain Mary Teresa May (Ballinrobe)

[Ballinrobe Company]

Nora Killela (Roscommon)
 Mgt Donnelly (Knockglass)
 Mrs. Joyce (Main St)
 Nellie Killela (England)
 Mary Burke (USA)
 Marie Shaughnessy (USA)
 Katie Connor (USA)
 Peg Colleran (USA)
 Nora Sheridan (USA)
 Bridie Moran (Main St)
 Mary A Burke (Abbey St)
 Mrs. Hession (Bridge St)
 Bridget Burke (Glebe St)
 Criss Maguire (Cross)
 Peg Maguire (Cross)
 Katie Maguire (Cross)
 Mary Moran (Kildun)
 Mrs. T Conroy (Ballyglass)
 Mrs. T Williams (Cong)
 Julia Hennelly (Ballinya)
 Bridget Corcoran (Kilkerrin)
 Mary Mellett (Cloonenagh)
 Bridget Mellett (Cloonenagh)
 Katie Mellett (Cloonenagh)
 Hollog Mellette (Cloonenagh)
 Ciss Mellett (Cloonenagh)
 M Sheridan (Carnalecka)
 Mrs. Farragher (Knocknakelly)
 Mrs. J Cunningham
 May Burke (Ballymorris)
 D Carney (Dringeen)
 Katie Murphy (Dringeen)

Kathleen Flannery
 Bridie Fitzpatrick
 May Costello
 Annie Cummins
 Katie Lyons
 Agnes Bradley
 Mrs. Sears (Creagh Rd)
 Mrs. Newton (Bridge St)
 Mary May (Kilkerrin)
 Mary Hogan (Cloonliffen)
 Mrs. Walsh (Cloonenagh)
 Annie Burke (Cahir)
 Mary Burke (Cahir)
 Nellie Cameron (Cortoon)
 Mrs. Nora Browne (Cahernagry)
 Molly O'Malley (Lisstava)
 Miss O'Riordan
 Miss O'Malley (Lisstava)
 Josephine O'Donnell (USA)
 May Connor (Loughmask)
 Mrs. McGrath
 Tess McDermott (Bridge St)
 Mrs. Mcgrath
 Nell Leydon (Abbey St)
 Mrs. Shaughnessy (Gortjordan)
 Miss Hallessy
 Mrs. Foy (Partry)
 Alice Walsh (Tourmakeady)
 Miss Gibbons (Derrew)
 Bridie Fox (Cong)
 Annie Moran (Cong/Glenmask)

Captain Maggie Costello

[Srah Company]

Bridget Heneghan (Gortnacullin)
 Mary Gibbons (Gortnacullin)
 Mrs. Catherine Carney (Gortnacullin)
 Mrs. Maggie Conway (Gortnacullin)
 Mrs. Annie Gibbons (Gortnacullin)
 Mary Keane (USA)
 Nora Costello
 Catherine Dever
 Mary Reddington (Srah)
 Julia O'Malley (Srah)
 Mrs. Catherine Heneghan (Srah)
 Mrs. N T Rabbitt (Srah)
 Mary Casey (USA)
 Bridget Horan (USA)
 Bridget Newell (Derrew)
 Mrs. Mary Heneghan (Shangort)
 Mary Lally
 Annie Casey (USA)
 Mary Casey (USA)
 Katie Costello (USA)
 Mrs. Bridget Costello (Tournavode)
 Mrs. Catherine Heneghan (Drimcoggy)
 Mrs. Nora Keane (Drimcoggy)
 Mrs. Annie Casey (Drimcoggy)
 Mrs. Mary Heneghan (Derrindaffderg)
 Catherine Staunton (USA)
 Mrs. Nora Gibbons (Tourmakeady)
 Mrs. Maggie Durkan (Tourmakeady)
 Mrs. Bgt. Donoghue (Tourmakeady)
 Mrs. Catherine Walsh (Tourmakeady)
 Rose Gillan (Tourmakeady)
 Shelia Gillan (Tourmakeady)
 Miss Chambers (Tourmakeady)
 Miss Mullin (Tourmakeady)
 Mrs. O'Toole (Tourmakeady)
 Mrs. Ellin Malone (Tourmakeady)
 Catherine Joyce
 Katie Heneghan
 Annie Feeney (USA)

Cumann Na mBan .

Ballinrobe Coy. First period

Rank	Name	Address
Capt	May (Nee Moran) Mary Teresa	Main St. Ballinrobe
1st Lieut	Killela Nora	o/o Warlow Roscommon
Adj	Donnelly (Nee Fearick) Margaret	Knockglass Ballinrobe
Q.M.	Joyce Mrs Bernard	Main St. "
NSI.	Flannery Kathleen	Deceased
	Fitzpatrick Katie	"
	Fitzpatrick Bridie	"
	Costello May	"
	Cummins Annie	"
	Lyons Katie	"
	Bradley Agnes	"
	Killela Nellie	England (Nun)
	Butler Mary	U.S.A.
	Shaughnessy Marie	"
	Connor Katie	"
	Colleran Peg	"
	Sheridan (Nee Langan) Nora	"
	Moran Bride	Main St. Ballinrobe
	Burke Mary A.	Abbey St. "
	Hession (Nee O'Malley) Mrs J.J.	Bridge St. "
	Burke (Nee Fearick) Bridget	Glebe St. "
	Sears Mrs	Creagh Rd. "
	Maguire (Nee Feeney) Criss	Cross Claremorris
	Maguire Peg	" "
	Maguire Katie	" "
	Newton Mrs	Bridge St. Ballinrobe
	Moran Mary	Kildun Neale
	Conry (Nee Shaughnessy) Mrs T.	Ballyglass Neale
	Williams (Nee Curran) Mrs T.	Cong Claremorris
	Hebbelly Julia	Pallinya Ballinrobe
	Corcoran Bridget	Killykeerin "
	May Mary K.	" "
	Hogan (Nee Walsh) Mary	Clooniffin "
	Walsh (Nee Lyons) Mrs	Cloonagh "
	Mellett Mary	" "
	Mellett Bridget	" "
	Mellett Katie	" "
	Mellett Hollogus	" "
	Mellett Ciss	" "
	Burke Annie	Cahir "
	Burke Mary	" "
	Cameron Nellie	Cortoon "
	Sheridan (Nee Gibbons) Molly	Carnalecka "
	Farragher (Nee Colleran) Mrs	Knocknakellier "
	Cunningham (Nee Hennelly) Mrs J.	Ballinrobe
	Browne (Nee Malley) Mrs	Deceased
	Malley Molly	Lisatava Hollymount
	O'Riordan Miss	Deceased
	X Malley Miss <u>2246214?</u>	Lisatava "
	O'Donnell Josephine	U.S.A.
	Connor (Nee Murphy) May	Loughmask Neale
	Shaughnessy (Nee Farragher) Mrs	GortJordan Kilmains
	McDermott (Nee Bradley) Tess	Bridge St. Ballinrobe
	McGah (Nee Maughton) Mrs	Unknown
	Hallesey Miss	Gortnaculla Kerry
	Foy Mrs	Partry Claremorris
	Gibbons Miss	Derrew Partry "
	Walsh Alice	Tourmakeady "
	Leyden (Nee Moran) Nell	Abbey St. Ballinrobe
	Burke (Nee Rielly) May	Ballygarra Hollymount
	Carney D.	Dringeen Cong Mayo
	Murphy Katie	" "
	Fox Bridget	Blakehill "
	Moran Annie	Cong Mayo

Ballinrobe Cumann na mBan members

Cumann Na mBan,		First Period
Rank	Name	Address
Capt.	<u>Costello Maggie</u> (Mrs)	Gortnacullin Srah
Ist Lieut.	<u>Heneghan Bridget</u>	" "
	Gibbons Mary	" "
	Carney Catherine (Mrs)	" "
	* Conway Mrs Maggie	" "
	Gibbons Mrs Annie	" "
	Keane Mary	U.S.A.
	Costello Nora	" "
	Gibbons Catherine	Deceased
	Dever Catherine	" "
	Reddington Mary	Srah Claremorris
	O'Malley Julia	" "
	Heneghan Catherine (Mrs)	" "
	Rabbitt Mrs N.T.	" "
	Casey Mary	U.S.A.
	Horne Bridget	" "
	* Newell Bridget	Darew Srah "
	* Heneghan Mary (Mrs) --	Shangort Srah Claremorris
	Lally Mary	* Deceased *
	Heneghan Mary	" "
	Casey Annie	U.S.A.
	Casey Mary	" "
	Costello Katie	" "
	<u>Costello Mrs Bridget</u>	Tournavode Touraskeady
	Heneghan Mrs Catherine	Brinoggy "
	Keane Nora (Mrs)	" "
	Casey Mrs Annie	" "
	Heneghan Mrs Mary --	Derrindaffderrig "
	Stanton Catherine	U.S.A.
	Gibbons Mrs Nora	Touraskeady
	Duncan Mrs Maggie	" "
	* Donoghue Mrs Bridget *	" "
	Balsh Mrs Catherine	" "
	Dever Catherine	" "
	Gillan Rose N.T.	" "
	Gillan Sheila	" "
	Chambers Miss N.T.	" "
	Mullin Miss N.T.	" "
	O'Toole Mrs	" "
	Malone Mrs Ellin	" "
	Joyce Catherine	Deceased
	Heneghan Katie --	" "
	Fecney Annie	U.S.A.

Srah Cumann na mBan members

APPENDIX 5 - COMÓRADH LUÍOCHÁN THUAR MHC ÉADAIGH **Tourmakeady Ambush Commemoration Committee**

One hundred years on from the famous Tourmakeady Ambush (Liathán Thuar Mhic Éadaigh), mounted by the South Mayo Brigade of the IRA on the 3rd of May 1921, the communities from which the Brigade were drawn, are remembering that much talked about event in the famous War of Independence in Ireland.

Also known as the ‘Tan War’, poorly armed and barely trained volunteers across the country had taken up arms to attack British Crown Forces in a bid to rid the country of the tyranny of colonial oppression. The Tourmakeady Ambush force was made up of Volunteers drawn from the South Mayo Battalions of Cross, Kilmaine, Ballinrobe, Srah, Clonbur/Thomastown and Clooncastle/Hollymount. They were under the command of General Tom Maguire of Cross, his Adjutant Michael O’Brien of Kildun, the Neale and Commandant Tom Lally of Srah. In the village of Tourmakeady, the volunteers attacked a convoy of two vehicles containing RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) and support military known as the Black and Tans, (owing to the uniforms they wore), who were delivering supplies to the RIC Barracks of Derrypark, about 7 miles south of the village.

On the 3rd of May 2021, a Committee of interested and committed volunteers from the catchment area will launch a ‘Year of Commemoration’ and will announce their series of commemorative initiatives and events to take place over the following twelve months, up to May 2022. Anyone interested in these activities can stay informed by visiting www.cltme.ie

Underpinning the planning, organization and delivery of these initiatives will be the Committee’s agreed core mission and policy, which is summarized as;

- collecting, preserving and curating relevant material, artefacts and folklore and making these available as widely as possible through hard copy and on-line media and locally located commemorative artwork and related displays
- marking and recognizing the difficulties, bravery, sacrifices, tragedies and sadness of those times
- helping present and future generations to understand and interpret those events and the people involved with clarity, accuracy and context

Given what happened subsequently with the outbreak of Civil War, the Committee are adamant that this ‘Centenary Year of Commemoration’ will be neutral and respectful of all sides and opinions and free of prejudice or party politics.

The initiatives in train to date include;

- Development of an on-line repository of memorabilia, photography, documents, documentary material, drone footage,
- Composition of musical pieces put to existing poetry,
- Writing and art competitions in the schools
- Delivery of a series of webinars by authors and historians
- Supporting the relatives and families to remember and pay tribute to those who died in the ambush and aftermath
- Erecting commemorative plaques, monuments, and signage and
- Publication of a book to mirror the on-line Repository of the stories, photography, documents

“The Committee are endeavouring to ensure maximum inclusivity and the widest reach possible to all interested parties both locally and around the world, particularly among the Diaspora” said Committee Chair, Tomás Ó hÉanachán of Tourmakeady. “We are now issuing a call for support in the form of ideas, volunteers, memorabilia, stories and, of course much needed funds. Anyone who can help us, is most welcome,” an Cathaoirleach added.

A ‘Go Fund Me’ campaign is underway to which contributions can be made through site name **Comóradh Luíocháin Thuar Mhic Éadaigh** and contact and/or queries are most welcome by email at tourmakeadyambush@gmail.com

Commemoration Committee Members

Tomás Ó hÉanachán (Chairman)
 Seán Ó Luideáin
 Michael Hegarty
 Anne Burke
 Cathy Mulroe
 Nora McHugh
 Naoise O’Toole
 Christine Walsh
 John Gibbons
 Pdraig Ó hÉanachán
 Marian Uí Mháille
 Conor O’Toole

Joe Greaney
 Fr. Stephen Farragher
 Michael Lynskey
 Donal Hughes
 Sean O’hogáin

Website and Multimedia

Sarah O’Toole
 Colm Heffron
 Labhras O’Tuathail

Events that took place in 2021

- Remembered the Tourmakeady Ambush with a Family Wreath laying ceremony at Michael O’Brien’s, Pdraig Feeney’s and Tom Horan’s Graves followed by a prayer service.
- A sod turning ceremony at Srah for planned monument to honor all the Volunteers
- New music was composed and performed by local musician Sheona Ní Mháille
- Drawings of the planned new Monument at Srah were unveiled
- Sold 1,000 copies of this Commemorative book to mark the Centenary of the Ambush and proceeds of book sales were used for the new Monument at Srah.

Buíochas ó chroí le gach duine a chuidigh le foilsiú an leabhair seo

Sincere thanks to all who contributed to the publication of this book