

# WICKLOW AND THE 1916 RISING



by

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## FOREWORD

I have pleasure in introducing the latest society publication. As part of the centenary celebrations for 1916, this booklet is dedicated to the memory of all those people connected to County Wicklow who took part in the events that led up to and surrounded the 1916 Rising. I am sure you will all agree that Martin Timmons has done a wonderful job in producing this booklet which will be of benefit to all with an interest in Wicklow's connections to a seminal event in Irish history. I would like to thank all of our patrons for their continued support for which the society is greatly indebted and also to Wicklow County Council for their generosity in sponsoring this booklet as part of the centenary celebrations. I hope that you will all have an enjoyable and informative read.

Derek Neilson, Chairman.

## INTRODUCTION

When I was invited to produce this booklet about Wicklow's connections to the 1916 Rising I knew that not much had happened militarily in the county. However, I was aware that there were some people with Wicklow connections involved in many of the events that related to the Rising. I have now compiled some 20,000 words on the subject that I hope will be of use as a reference for anyone unfamiliar with Wicklow's connections to the Rising as its centenary approaches. I am indebted to many people who aided me in my research. I would particularly like to thank Michael Kelleher and Robert Butler and the staff of Bray Public Library along with the staff of the County Library at Ballywaltrim. I would also like to thank the staff of the UCD Library; the staff of the UCD Archives and the staff of the Military Archive. I am grateful to Aisling Byrne of County Wicklow Partnership for her support. I also wish to express gratitude to Diarmaid Ferriter, Ann Marie Byrne, Eva O'Cathaoir, Henry Cairns, Owen Gallagher, Paul Corry, Derek Neilson, Claire Chambers, John Medlycott and, most especially, Denis Scanlon.

Martin Timmons. (December, 2015).

# WICKLOW AND THE 1916 RISING

## PART ONE-BACKGROUND TO THE RISING

### CULTURAL NATIONALISM

The nineteenth century in Ireland was a period of great change and upheaval as it encompassed many significant historic events; the Act of Union, Catholic Emancipation, the Great Famine, the Land War and repeated efforts to achieve Home Rule. By the latter part of the century dissatisfaction with Ireland's subordinate role in the United Kingdom was becoming increasingly manifest. The growth of anti-British feeling, in particular as a result of the devastation wrought by the effects of the Famine on the Irish psyche, led in part to the reinvention of Irish culture. Ancient myths and legends were used to create a sense of continuity from the ancient to the modern in an effort to replace all traces of English customs from Ireland.

By the second half of the nineteenth century even the Anglo-Irish ascendancy class were losing out in spite of the Union. Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, the Land Acts and the possibility of Home Rule left many of them feeling threatened. The seat of power was in London and all major social and cultural events centred on it. Many felt a remoteness from Westminster and felt that Ireland needed a parliament of its own. In view of the changes taking place there was a growing need for many in the ascendancy class to forge a connection with Ireland's past so as to make them feel part of a changing Ireland. This was to manifest itself in the growth of the Anglo-Irish led revival movement in literature and art. With the birth of the Gaelic Literary Revival the concept of cultural reinvention was used to foster an identity for Ireland that stretched back to the Celtic mists long before the coming of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland in the twelfth century with Yeats stating:

...now a new fountain of legends, and I think, a more abundant fountain than any in Europe, is being opened, the fountain of Gaelic legends....The Celtic movement, as I understand it, is

principally the opening of this fountain, and none can measure of how great importance it may be to coming times...<sup>1</sup>

The nationalist outlook of Yeats and the revival movement was profound although it was limited to artistic circles.<sup>2</sup> On the nationalist side the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), and the Gaelic League to promote national sport, language and dance were among the more important developments that helped to foster a sense of being Irish. Cultural nationalism was seeking to awaken contemporary Ireland to a 'historically embedded culture' which they felt was necessary for the survival of the nation.<sup>3</sup> The drift from cultural nationalism to armed revolution in Ireland could be seen as a natural progression. Prevarication over Home Rule, the growth of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in the north, the Irish Volunteers in the south and the rise of the labour movement all contributed to the outbreak of revolution. Without the growth of cultural nationalism, as epitomised by the influence of the Gaelic Literary Revival, the GAA, the Gaelic League and later Sinn Féin, (which had no direct involvement in the Easter Rising) the groundwork that helped create the milieu for the rebellion in 1916, would not have been in place.

### THE IRB AND THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was a small secret organisation founded by James Stephens in 1858 which was dedicated to the establishment of an independent Irish republic. It was closely linked with the Fenian Brotherhood in America and collectively members of both organisations came to be known as Fenians. After a dismal attempt at a rising in south Dublin in 1867 the IRB was restructured in 1873. In 1907 Tom Clarke, who had previously spent 15 years in British prisons for Fenian activity, arrived back in Ireland from America at a time when younger IRB

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<sup>1</sup> W. B. Yeats, 'The Celtic Element in Literature', in *W.B. Yeats: The Major Works*, (Oxford, 2001), 376.

<sup>2</sup> Donal McCartney, 'From Parnell to Pearse' in Moody, T.W. and F. X. Martin (eds.), *The Course of Irish History*, (Cork, 1984), 295.

<sup>3</sup> Richard English, *Irish Freedom*, (London, 2006), 238.

members were attempting to breathe new life into a declining organisation. Clarke gave his backing to the younger men and the IRB was soon to play a pivotal role in the formation of the Irish Volunteers and the 1916 Rising.

Before the outbreak of World War One most people in Ireland were preoccupied with the Home Rule Bill then passing through the British Parliament, and the resistance to it by the Ulster Unionists and UVF. Though some people regarded the UVF threat as a mere bluff, it was felt that the British might use the threat posed as an excuse to shelve the Home Rule Bill. To counteract the posturing of the unionists the Irish Volunteers were founded on 25 November 1913 following the publication of an article by UCD professor Eoin MacNeill in *An Claidreamh Soluis*, the official organ of the Gaelic League. He suggested that southern nationalists should form a volunteer movement on the lines of the UVF which had been founded in January of that year. MacNeill had then been approached by IRB organiser Bulmer Hobson (who was a Quaker from Belfast) and a public meeting was organised at the Rotunda in Dublin where the new force was established. Hobson needed MacNeill's integrity and moderate political outlook to present the Volunteers as a broadly based non-party national organisation. However, MacNeill was determined not to be a pawn and to lead a movement that included all strands of Irish nationalism. Irish republicans now joined with the more moderate supporters of Home Rule in recourse to military training as a result of the UVF threat.

The Irish Volunteers were formed for defensive action and attracted followers of Sinn Féin and the Gaelic League as well as members of the IRB and the GAA. The majority of the Irish Volunteers at the outset did not envisage a struggle against England and saw themselves as merely a political tool to ensure the passage of Home Rule. There were now two armed volunteer armies in the country, the UVF and the Irish Volunteers. The UVF had made clear its commitment to resist Home Rule at all costs, and had been given the illicit support of Andrew Bonar Law and the Conservative Party. By

May of 1914 some 75,000 Volunteers had been enrolled.<sup>4</sup> John Redmond, for long the undisputed leader of constitutional nationalism, became alarmed at the rapid growth of the Volunteers and, because of their independence, he was determined to bring the Volunteers under his control. Sixteen of the thirty members of the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers were members of the IRB.<sup>5</sup> Piaras Beaslai made the following observation:

Mr. Redmond, having tried in every way to discourage the growth of the Volunteers, became alarmed by their increasing strength and opened secret negotiations with Professor MacNeill and Colonel Moore with a view to gaining control of the organisation. Failing to secure this objective, he issued a letter to the press in June 1914 in which he declared that unless the Provisional Committee agreed to add twenty-five persons nominated by himself to their committee he would call on his supporters in the volunteers to break away from the central organisation and form their own county committees.<sup>6</sup>

The following resolution was passed at a meeting of the Baltinglass County Wicklow Volunteers on 14 June 1914:

That this meeting welcomes the Irish Volunteer movement as a necessary reply to the threat to deprive Ireland by force of the Parliament now on the point of being won back for her under the leadership of Mr. Redmond and the Irish Party, and we pledge our practical support to the Volunteers as the guardians of the liberties of Irishmen against any attack, and we request the Dublin Provisional Committee to reconsider their decision in order to meet the views of Mr. Redmond and the Irish Party.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Piaras Beaslai, 'How the Fight Began', in *Dublin's Fighting Story* (Dublin, 2010), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Beaslai, 'How the Fight Began', 27.

<sup>6</sup> Beaslai, 'How the Fight Began', 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 20 June 1914.

As the alternative was a split in the movement, Redmond's demands were conceded to, in June 1914, much to the resentment of the extremists in the IRB. Diarmuid Coffey who worked in the head office of the Volunteers stated:

Redmond and his party decided that the Volunteers had become too strong for the Irish Parliamentary Party to resist and had decided to try and absorb them....The men nominated by Redmond included [Joe]Devlin [J.D.] Nugent and Willie Redmond. Of these Devlin and Nugent simply wanted to take over the Volunteers as an adjunct to the A.O.H. and make them harmless to the Parliamentarians.<sup>8</sup>

About this time Lord Powerscourt gave his support and turned up at a parade of the Bray Company and attempted to present them with a Union Jack. This offer was declined and his connection with the Volunteers was therefore a brief one.<sup>9</sup> As a result of the Redmondite involvement there was a big increase in the paper strength of the Volunteers to about 170,000 by the outbreak of war in August. Piaras Beaslai stated that, "Those interested in politics rather than in training flooded the drill halls and meeting places, apparently aimed at strengthening the [Irish] party control of the movement".<sup>10</sup> The Home Rule Act was signed into law by King George V in September. However, the implementation of Home Rule was suspended indefinitely due to the outbreak of the World War One.

### **VOLUNTEERS IN WICKLOW**

The Volunteers were founded on 25 November 1913 and soon after, in early December 1913,<sup>11</sup> a Bray unit of Volunteers was established by P.J. Farrell and Joe Kenny, both of whom had attended the Volunteers inaugural meeting at the Rotunda in Dublin. Kenny remained as secretary until the split in the Volunteers. At the outset

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<sup>8</sup> Diarmuid Coffey, BMH WS 1248.

<sup>9</sup> Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Tralee, 1968), 54.

<sup>10</sup> Beaslai, 'How the Fight Began', 28.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Kenny, BMH WS 332.

Bray had only 10 members and was said to be operating in a hostile environment but later, as a result of the killing of civilians at Bachelors Walk in the wake of the Howth Gun Running, its ranks grew with members of the local Ancient Order of Hibernia (AOH) joining.<sup>12</sup> The Bray Volunteers were connected to the Dublin Volunteers and were not linked to the East Wicklow Volunteers. In January 1914, C.M.(Christy) Byrne of Glenealy founded the first Volunteers in East Wicklow.<sup>13</sup> In doing so Byrne said he acted on his own initiative without authorisation from anyone. C.M. Byrne was born in Dublin in 1887 and moved to Glenealy circa 1907. A member of the IRB he was an Irish language enthusiast and became well known in Wicklow through the GAA and the Gaelic League. He first served as the Ashford club's delegate to the Wicklow convention in Aughrim in 1907 and was the Leinster council representative on the central council of the GAA from 1908. He became chairman of the Wicklow County Board, GAA in 1910. His administrative role in the GAA and Gaelic League left him ideally placed to organise the Volunteers in Wicklow.

Byrne initially established companies in Ashford, Glenealy and Roundwood and stated that volunteer companies then spread 'like a prairie fire'<sup>14</sup> all over east Wicklow. Between April and May companies were formed in most areas between Bray and Arklow. By the summer of 1914 companies were active in Newtownmountkennedy, Arklow, Avoca, Rathdrum, Glendalough and Bardarrig.<sup>15</sup> On 14 June 1914 a Volunteer corps was established in Baltinglass where each member had to pay a weekly fee of two pence and the drill instructor, Martin Byrne of Ballyraggan, was paid a small fee for his services. The formation meeting was addressed by The O'Mahony who was a former nationalist M.P. from nearby Grangecon. He stated that the Home Rule Bill would be delivered in a few weeks after it received the approval of the King. Although it was late in starting the Baltinglass Corps had 158 members within

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Kenny, BMH WS 332.

<sup>13</sup> At this time Bray Emmets participated in Dublin GAA competitions.

<sup>14</sup> C. M. Byrne, BMH WS 1014.

<sup>15</sup> C. M. Byrne, BMH WS 1014.

two weeks of its inception. Drills took place three times a week with some two hundred men said to have turned out on one particular night.<sup>16</sup> By July there were companies in Blessington, Tynock, Stratford-on-Slaney and Kiltegan in west Wicklow.<sup>17</sup>

Marching and drilling took place all over Wicklow during the summer of 1914. Byrne described the Rathnew Company which was trained by Boer War Veterans as 'perhaps the finest company in Ireland'. Wicklow Town he described as having a fine company which was trained by an ex-Sergeant Major of the British Army. Like Rathnew, Newtownmountkennedy had had a history of local men joining the British Army. At this time men of all classes joined up and according to Byrne; 'the great majority of the male population of East Wicklow were either in the Volunteers or supporting them'.<sup>18</sup> Companies of volunteers were also in operation in Aughrim, Greenane, Shillelagh, and Delgany.

### **ERSKINE CHILDERS & THE HOWTH GUN-RUNNING**

Robert Erskine Childers who played a major role in the Irish revolutionary period was born in Mayfair, London, but spent his formative years at Glendalough House, near Annamoe in County Wicklow. He studied at Trinity College, Cambridge where he graduated in Classics and Law in 1893. He then joined the British Civil Service in 1895 as a clerk in the House of Commons. On the outbreak of the Boer War, he enlisted to serve in the City Imperial Volunteers (CIV) battery of the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC).<sup>19</sup> The HAC was an elite regiment consisting mostly of men who worked in finance area of the City of London. As an officer in the field, he distinguished himself before being discharged because of war wounds. In 1900, he wrote *In the Ranks of the CIV* about his personal experiences of the war in South Africa. He also collaborated

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Gorry, *Baltinglass Chronicles 1851-2001*, (Dublin, 2006), 157.

<sup>17</sup> *Wicklow Newsletter*, 1 July 1914.

<sup>18</sup> C. M. Byrne, BMH WS 1014.

<sup>19</sup> The HAC is the oldest regiment in the British Army and after the Swiss Guard, the second oldest military regiment in the world. The HAC performs ceremonial duties for the British Royal Family and visiting heads of state.

in the official volume *The HAC in South Africa* (1903) and he wrote volume five of *The Times History of the War in South Africa* (1907). After leaving Cambridge he became proficient in sailing and navigational techniques and spent much of his leisure time in a small yacht navigating the North Sea, English Channel and along the German and Baltic coasts. This knowledge resulted in his writing the highly acclaimed novel *The Riddle of the Sands* which was published in 1903. It was an espionage novel outlining the adventures of two British yachtsmen in the channels of the Borkum Sands in the Baltic. While visiting Boston in September 1903 with his Artillery Company, he met Mary (Molly) Alden Osgood, whom he married in January of 1904. As a wedding present, Molly's father presented them with a 51-foot yacht designed by Colin Archer and built in 1905, which was named *Asgard*. Although steeped in the British establishment tradition he was deeply interested in Ireland and by 1908 he became a supporter of the Home Rule Bill. His 'overnight' conversion apparently came as a result of lengthy talks with his cousin Robert Barton at Annamoe. In 1911, he published *The Framework of Home Rule* in which he advocated Dominion status for Ireland.

The UVF gun-running of 25 April 1914 troubled Childers as it did most of his Anglo-Irish friends. This was a highly efficient illegal operation that took place at Larne and Bangor in which 24,600 rifles and 3 million rounds of ammunition, secretly purchased in Germany, were landed with total success. Four months earlier, in December 1913, the importation of arms into Ireland had been banned but this did not deter the Unionists. Lessons were learned from this action in Home Rule circles but the main initiative in providing arms for the Irish Volunteers came from an unexpected source. The group involved were Anglo-Irish liberal minded Home Rulers most of whom lived in London and were of the upper and middle classes.<sup>20</sup> Erskine Childers soon became centrally involved with this group in a scheme that was to have a profound effect on the future of the Irish

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism*, (London, 1972), 506.

revolution. In the spring of 1914 Roger Casement<sup>21</sup> was instrumental in persuading his friend Alice Stopford Green,<sup>22</sup> a 67 year-old Irish-born historian and widow, to form an ad-hoc committee of liberal-minded Home Rule supporters in London who quickly raised a total of £1,523-19s.-3d. for the purchase of arms for the Irish Volunteers. Alice Stopford Green made the largest contribution donating £750 with the remainder provided by Erskine Childers, Mary Spring-Rice, Conor O'Brien, Hugh O'Brien, Lord Ashbourne, Lady Young, Minnie Ryan and Captain Berkeley.<sup>23</sup> This group were almost all Anglo-Irish Protestants who saw the purchase of rifles as purely symbolic and a propaganda coup in response to the UVF gun-running. As the venture was illegal, secrecy was vital and Darrell Figgis a journalist who was brought up in London and who had a good knowledge of the European continent was selected as the arms purchaser.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of May 1914 Figgis accompanied by Erskine Childers, both posturing as Mexicans,<sup>25</sup> went to Germany and secured 1,500 Mauser rifles and 45,000 rounds of ammunition. It was arranged that the arms and ammunitions be transported by a tug-boat named *Gladiator* from Hamburg to a point off the coast of Belgium. There they were to be met by two yachts, one the *Asgard* owned by Childers himself and the other the *Kelpie* owned by Conor O'Brien. The vessels were crewed by mainly Anglo-Irish or English gentry and included three women. A daring plan had been hatched by Bulmer Hobson whereby the cargo on board the *Asgard* was to be unloaded by the Volunteers in broad daylight at Howth Harbour.<sup>26</sup> By sheer good fortune the *Asgard* steered by Childers' semi-crippled wife Molly, arrived into Howth at the appointed time on Sunday 26

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<sup>21</sup> For more on Casement see page 23.

<sup>22</sup> Alice Stopford Green was born in Kells and was a daughter of the Protestant Archdeacon of Meath and widow of English historian J. P. Green.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Toomey, *The War of Independence in Limerick*, (2010), 91-92.

<sup>24</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, (London, 1971), 325.

<sup>25</sup> They had to pose as Mexicans owing to a German embargo on shipments of arms to European countries.

<sup>26</sup> Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, 326.

July 1914 and was quickly unloaded by the waiting Volunteers. Prior to the Howth gun-running the Volunteers had engaged in long marches every Sunday and their march to Howth that day did not attract undue attention. Lady Gregory in her diaries related the Howth incident as told to her by Molly Childers:

We went up the Welsh coast and lay outside Milford Haven, afraid of custom officers. Then for Holyhead and across to Ireland and sailed about the bay and outside Howth until the boat came, when Erskine said 'I am going to do it.' It was just the hour when the tide was highest. We saw someone run up to a height and wave to us a signal. It was a young officer whose name I cannot tell. Then we saw the volunteers coming down and when they saw us they broke into a run. The guns that had taken six hours to get on board were unloaded in a few minutes. As we left, there were cheers for the Lady at the helm-it had been put into my hand.<sup>27</sup>

Attempts by the authorities to disrupt the distribution of the rifles were unsuccessful but later that evening British soldiers opened fire on civilians at Bachelors Walk resulting in the deaths of three people. One of those killed was a 56-year-old widow who had a son in the British army. An account in the *Wicklow Newsletter* after the shooting of the civilians in Dublin informs us of 'feverish anxiety on the part of young men to join the Volunteers.'<sup>28</sup>

### THE KILCOOLE GUN-RUNNING

The 900 German rifles openly landed at Howth and immediately distributed to awaiting members of the volunteers was the first consignment of the German guns landed. The second consignment of 600 rifles was landed in meticulous secrecy six days later at Kilcoole in County Wicklow. They were landed from the yacht *Chotah* in the early hours of 2 August 1914. It was originally intended to land the arms at Kilcoole the previous Saturday, 25 July, the eve of the

<sup>27</sup> Lennox Robinson (ed.), *Lady Gregory's Journals, 1916-1930*, (London, 1946), 130.

<sup>28</sup> *Wicklow Newsletter*, 1 September 1914.

Howth operation, but James Creed Meredith sent a telegram at 2 o'clock that day to Sean Fitzgibbon to state that the yacht had been accidentally damaged in Wales. Sean T. O'Kelly remembered discussing the contents of the telegram with Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott in Clarke's shop in Dublin. It was decided to postpone the operation until the following Saturday night.<sup>29</sup> Because of the last minute postponement of the 25 July operation it was not possible to cancel all the arrangements made and the local press commented on the increase in activity around Kilcoole that night. Harry Nicholls was one of those involved in the first abandoned Kilcoole operation. He was summonsed by Sean McDermott to attend the Catholic Club at Brunswick (now Pearse) Street at three o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday 25 July for a job that he was told would take most of the night. Nicholls recounted what subsequently transpired:

...I duly turned up on Saturday afternoon and found that about 20 or 30 had gathered there, nearly all of whom I knew. When the number had been checked, we drove away in a charabanc<sup>30</sup> and finally pulled up in the Rocky Valley [Kilmacanogue]. We were then told there had been a hitch in the plans and the operation was off. To avoid rousing any suspicion, we spent two or three hours around the valley and then drove back and got off at the corner of Leeson Street and St. Stephens Green at nearly seven o'clock.<sup>31</sup>

The following week the operation went more efficiently. The Kilcoole arms consignment was originally carried on board Conor O'Brien's *Kelpie*,<sup>32</sup> from the Belgium coast and subsequently transferred off the Welsh coast to another yacht, the *Chotah* owned by a well known Dublin surgeon, Sir Thomas Myles. Sean

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<sup>29</sup> Sean T. O'Kelly, BMH WS 1765.

<sup>30</sup> An open top sightseeing bus which could carry about 25 people.

<sup>31</sup> *The Irish Times*, 29 July 1961.

<sup>32</sup> Conor O'Brien was a Protestant and a Nationalist. Diarmid Coffey a crew member on the *Kelpie* resided at Glendarragh in Newtownmountkennedy from 1949.

Fitzgibbon was in charge of the Kilcoole landing operation and in his witness statement gave the following account of the operation:

I examined the possibility of using various places on the Dublin coast and one Sunday, [James] Creed Meredith and I travelled down to inspect the coast at Kilcoole in a motor car placed at our disposal by Mr. Rosenthal, MD. We decided that Kilcoole offered the best opportunity of a landing and that it could be done secretly. I knew that [Bulmer] Hobson was arranging for the Howth landing to take the form of a demonstration in force of the Volunteers.<sup>33</sup>

Fitzgibbon who was not a member of the IRB, selected a number of Volunteers, but considering that he needed more dependable men to assist in the secret operation he approached Sean McDermott with a view to getting trusted IRB men to help. The landing operations were subsequently carried out by Fitzgibbon in close cooperation with McDermott and the IRB men he had selected. Prior to the Kilcoole gun-running, Joe Kenny, a member of the IRB from Bray, had drawn a rough sketch of the road from Kilcoole to Dublin at the request of Sean McDermott.<sup>34</sup> Sean Fitzgibbon in his statement continued:

Our plan was to bring a motor charabanc with volunteers on a Sunday (sic) afternoon under the pretext of a touring party, and we were enabled through the good offices of Mr. Rosenthal's chauffeur, a relative of whom was a lodge-keeper in the convent grounds at Kilcoole, to bring the charabanc there late on Saturday evening and remain in seclusion until the word was brought to us from the watchers on the beach that the yacht had arrived.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Sean Fitzgibbon, BMH WS 130.

<sup>34</sup> James McSweeney, 'The Fight in Bray' in *Dublins Fighting Story 1913-1921*, (Dublin, 2009), 351.

<sup>35</sup> Sean Fitzgibbon, BMH WS 130.

Harry Nicholls who was one of those involved in the first trip to the Rocky Valley on 25 July, gave the following account of the more successful second charabanc trip to north Wicklow a week later:

The following Saturday, 1 August, I had the same orders as on the other occasion and this time when we got to the Rocky Valley in the charabanc, we wasted a couple of hours and then, in small groups, had tea at one or other of the tea houses near Kilmacanogue and afterwards played cards until dark when we paid our bills and departed, ostensibly for home. However, our destination was Kilcoole and we got off at a gate lodge where there was a long avenue. It was very dark, and we had strict orders to keep quiet and show no lights. After a wait, which seemed very long, we got word to move down to the beach, helping to haul up boats, into the water up to our knees, and then carrying batches of rifles up to the road, where they were loaded into the charabanc. This was quite a strenuous job, on account of the nature of the beach, and we were all glad when it was finished. The charabanc and, I believe, some cars went off and we started to march back, having been told that a lorry would be sent to pick us up. However, we were near Kilmacanogue and it was fully light when a lorry arrived on which we packed and started for town. As we passed through Little Bray, we saw the charabanc which had broken down and many of the inhabitants of the houses were out and cheered us as we went past.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the volunteers who went to Kilcoole in the charabanc, others went by motorcar, by train and many Wicklow, Wexford and Dublin men went by bicycle. Among those who came by car were Eamon Ceannt, Sean McDermott and Cathal Brugha. Sean T. O'Kelly was among those who travelled by train from Dublin to Greystones and then walked to Kilcoole. Other who were present that night included Bulmer Hobson, Liam Mellows and his brother Barney Mellows. IRB members Luke Kennedy, Frank Daly and Sean

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<sup>36</sup> *The Irish Times*, 29 July 1961.

Tobin also took part that night, travelling from Howth Harbour on board a vessel called the *Nugget* which was owned by James McLoughlin and crewed by his brothers Nicholas and William and Michael Moore. The *Nugget* was the first Howth fishing boat to be fitted with an engine.<sup>37</sup> Luke Kennedy later gave the following account of activities that night:

Somewhere off Bray we contacted an open boat which was occupied by the Bray Centre and some of his Circle. There was no further incident until we got down off Kilcoole. We then saw something dark in the distance. This turned out to be the arms ship and we then put a line aboard her and towed her in towards the shore. The yacht's engines had broken down and we got her in as near as we could to the shore. Then a number of small boats came out from the shore and the arms were transferred to them. It was still dark. I remained on board the fishing boat and when all the arms had been taken ashore we took the yacht [Chotah] in tow and brought her into Dun Laoghaire [Kingstown] Harbour. The only people of note I remember seeing among those who took in the arms were Darrell and Mrs. Figgis. I was surprised to see a woman pulling an oar and their boat was heavily laden with very little freeboard.<sup>38</sup>

The arms were brought ashore from the yacht in small boats which made several journeys. While the cargo was being unloaded there were heavy showers of rain adding to the difficulties for the men, who also got wet wading waist deep in the sea in order to unload the guns. Sean T. O'Kelly recalled the landing as follows:

The guns themselves were very heavy and the ammunition for the guns was proportionately heavy... When the work of landing all the guns had been accomplished we unpacked most of them so as to make it easier to handle for distribution when

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<sup>37</sup> *Irish Republican News*, 20 July 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Luke Kennedy, BMH WS 165.

we landed in Dublin. They were packed in straw in bundles of I think five or six and we undid them from the straw...This operation took us some hours.<sup>39</sup>

In due course the charabanc was loaded and made off for Dublin. Joe Rosney who drove the charabanc involved in the operation and who was employed as a driver by the Thompson Motor Car Company in Dublin gave the following account:

On Saturday 31 July 1914, (sic) I was told to pick up a party from 144 Brunswick [now Pearse] Street for a run to Powerscourt Waterfall. We left the city and went via the Scalp to Enniskerry, thence to the Waterfall, Rocky Valley, and on towards the Glen of the Downs. Before we reached the glen we turned up a road to the left and remained there until about 11pm. We then proceeded to Kilcoole railway station, where we loaded rifles and ammunition. On our return journey to Dublin, in the middle of Bray, there was a loud crack as the back axle snapped. This happened at about 5am. The noise woke up some of the local inhabitants, one of whom I knew, Michael Fortune. Fortune gave us permission to store our load in his house, we then proceeded to the city and returned to Bray with a lorry and several taxis and brought our cargo to its destination.<sup>40</sup>

During the course of the Kilcoole operation, two patrolling RIC men came along and were placed under arrest. Sean O'Byrne who had cycled from Gorey to Kilcoole to take part, gave the following description:

When the Dublin volunteers were ready to leave... we were instructed by an officer from Dublin to keep the police prisoners for an hour after the departure of the bus. We kept

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<sup>39</sup> Sean T. O'Kelly, BMH WS 1765.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Rosney, BMH WS 112.

them for the hour and then cycled to Gorey, bringing our rifles with us.<sup>41</sup>

Among the local men involved on the night were Cornelius Salmon, a boatman from Greystones, and William Foley of Kilcoole. Although the Mauser rifles were of 1872 manufacture, and were therefore somewhat antiquated, there was now a significant amount of arms in the country. Even though the gun-running was mainly strategic it was worrying to John Redmond and the Irish Party who had not been consulted about the Howth and Kilcoole operations.

### THE SPLIT IN THE VOLUNTEERS

On 17 May 1914, after Home Rule had been placed on the statute books the *Wicklow Newsletter* reported that bonfires were lit in Glencullen, Ballycorus and Killiney while celebratory parades were held in Delgany and Bray,<sup>42</sup> indicating support for it in these two unionist influenced areas. On 3 August John Redmond offered the Volunteers to the British Government as a home guard defence force for Ireland. This offer was rejected as was the formation of an Irish division within the British army.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless the offer from Redmond resulted in an increase in support for the Volunteers from the unionist class as noted by the local press:

The Bray Battalion in particular has been considerably augmented in the last few days. The unit was almost completely non-existent, never had more than 45 men turned up for drilling in Byrne's yard off Castle Street. Volunteer numbers in the town quickly reached several hundred.<sup>44</sup>

After the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, Asquith's Liberal government agreed a political truce with the opposition Conservative Party under Andrew Bonar Law. Asquith decided that the controversial third Irish Home Rule Bill should nevertheless be put

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<sup>41</sup> Sean O'Byrne, BMH WS 986.

<sup>42</sup> *Wicklow Newsletter*, 17 May 1914.

<sup>43</sup> Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, 129.

<sup>44</sup> *Wicklow Newsletter*, 30 August 1914.

to the King, along with a new bill suspending its operation until the war's end. Both the Irish Home Rule Bill and the Suspensory Act received the King's assent on 18 September, 1914. Two days later, on 20 September, John Redmond leader of the Irish Party, who had a country retreat at Aughavannagh County Wicklow, made a famous speech at nearby Woodenbridge, in which he called for members of the Volunteers to enlist in the British Army. While motoring to Aughavannagh, Redmond, by coincidence, encountered the East Wicklow Volunteers parading at Woodenbridge. He stopped and made a short impromptu address. He said he was not going to make a speech but the few words he did utter were to have a far reaching effect as he pledged his support to the war effort by endorsing recruitment into the British Army, stating:

The interests of Ireland, of the whole of Ireland, are at stake in this war. This war is undertaken in the defence of the highest principles of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country and a reproach to her manhood and a denial of the lessons of her history if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and to shrinking from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which has distinguished our race all through its history. I say to you, therefore, your duty is twofold. I am glad to see such magnificent material for soldiers around me, and I say to you go on drilling and make yourself efficient for the Work, and then account yourselves as men, not only for Ireland itself, but wherever the fighting line extends, in defence of right, of freedom, and religion in this war.<sup>45</sup>

Redmond did not consult with anyone before he spoke and he urged the local Volunteers to go on drilling so that they could eventually account themselves as men in the firing line wherever that may be.<sup>46</sup> Redmond felt it was in the future interest of a united 32-

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<sup>45</sup> *Freemans Journal*, 21 September 1914.

<sup>46</sup> Kee, *The Green Flag*, 519.

county Home Rule settlement, to support the British war effort, by joining with the Ulster Volunteers who enlisted in the 36th (Ulster) Division. John Redmond also stated at Woodenbridge, 'It is a war for the defense of the sacred rights and liberties of small nations, and the respect and enlargement of the great principle of nationality.'<sup>47</sup> Redmond believed that the Volunteers, if they had the benefit of arms and training from the British would then become the basis of a new Irish Army after Home Rule was implemented.<sup>48</sup> He expected that when the Volunteers returned after what was expected to be a short war, they would form an army capable of blocking any attempt to exclude Ulster from the settlement. Author Katharine Tynan, who lived in Shankill, stated:

Mr. Redmond had made his famous offer of the Volunteers, and they were in high favour with loyal Unionists. I am not sure, in Shankill at least and the surrounding districts, that the favour was without reservations. I do not think there were reservations in the mind of Colonel Erck who drilled the Shankill Volunteers every Sunday afternoon. A sufficiently startling fact in itself in Irish Protestant Shankill-but then the Ercks had lived in England, which broadens the mind of the Anglo-Irish.... Some public-school and Sandhurst boys drilled the Volunteers, but in our district I think our two boys were the only ones of their class who joined ....One Sunday we went to see the drilling..... The Volunteers had had old soldiers to drill them up to this time. Now the professional instructors had been called up-greatly to the improvement of the language-and voluntary instructors were in request. For just a brief period the Volunteers were fashionable. It did not last very long.<sup>49</sup>

Militant nationalists immediately reacted against Redmond's support for the war and a split soon occurred. On 24 September four days after Redmond's Woodenbridge speech following a meeting of

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<sup>47</sup> *The Weekly Freeman*, 19 September 1914.

<sup>48</sup> Townshend, *1916 The Easter Rising*, 73.

<sup>49</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The Years Of the Shadow* (London, 1919), 144.

members of the Provisional Committee, Eoin MacNeill's wrote a letter to the Irish Volunteers which contained the following:

Mr. Redmond on addressing a body of Irish Volunteers on last Sunday, has now announced for the Irish Volunteers a policy and programme fundamentally at variance with their own published and accepted aims and pledges, but with which his nominees are, of course, identified. He has declared it to be the duty of the Irish Volunteers to take foreign service under a Government which is not Irish. He has made this announcement without consulting the Provisional Committee, the Volunteers themselves or the people of Ireland to whose service alone they are devoted.<sup>50</sup>

The bulk of the original Volunteers continued to support Redmond after the division in the organisation and they became known as the National Volunteers. Although they were the largest faction at the time of the split, their numbers quickly declined as many joined the British Army for the war effort.<sup>51</sup> By 20 June 1915 there were 71,494 Roman Catholic and 49,247 Protestant Irishmen serving in the British Army.<sup>52</sup> In West Wicklow there was a decrease in volunteerism but the majority there supported Redmond with the Stratford group declaring in favour of him. At a meeting in Baltinglass on 6 December 1914 the following motion was passed:

That we, the Baltinglass Volunteers assembled, hereby testify our allegiance to our worthy leader, Mr. John E. Redmond, and under his able commandship we organize our National Volunteers to train, arm and equip the Volunteer force for the defense of Ireland and the advancement of Irish rights and the maintenance of Irish self-government.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Eoin MacNeill Papers, UCDA LA1/H/1 (6-7).

<sup>51</sup> Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, 129.

<sup>52</sup> *Freemans Journal*, 2 July 1915.

<sup>53</sup> *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 12 December 1914.

The smaller IRB influenced group remaining in the Irish Volunteers, held a convention and re-organised in October 1914.<sup>54</sup> Eoin MacNeill became Chief of Staff, Bulmer Hobson, Quartermaster, and Michael (The) O'Rahilly, Director of Arms. Three other key posts were in the hands of IRB members namely Patrick Pearse, Joseph Plunkett and Thomas MacDonagh. It was this group that took possession of the Howth and Kilcoole rifles. As a result of the Redmond split and similar to the national situation, the volunteer movement almost collapsed in Wicklow. Some of the National Volunteer companies loyal to Redmond survived but saw little activity, their numbers being depleted by enlistment in the British Army. However, some of them, including a party of 24 from Baltinglass, who were all equipped with rifles, took part in a national review of National Volunteers in the Phoenix Park, Dublin on Easter Sunday 1915.<sup>55</sup> Several thousand volunteers took part with special trains arranged from different parts of the country. This review was the last show of strength by the National Volunteers as owing to events in Europe they had now no practical purpose in Ireland.

While many of the National Volunteers enlisted in the British Army many did not and by the outbreak of the 1916 Rising they had largely disappeared. Conversely, the Irish Volunteers were seeing an increase in their support. Some of the Irish Volunteers attended at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa in August 1915<sup>56</sup> where Patrick Pearse gave his famous oration. This was the first show of strength by the Irish Volunteers. Previously, in May 1915, the Supreme Council of the IRB had set up a military committee before establishing a full Military Council in December 1915 which included Patrick Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Eamon Ceannt, Sean MacDermott and Thomas Clarke. Another important development occurred in December of 1915 when the Supreme Council of the IRB decided on staging an insurrection as soon as possible.

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<sup>54</sup> Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism*, (London, 1972), 533.

<sup>55</sup> Corry, *Baltinglass Chronicles*, 158.

<sup>56</sup> C. M. Byrne, BMH WS 1014.

## PART TWO-PREPARING FOR THE RISING

### ROBERT MONTEITH AND CASEMENT'S 'BRIGADE'

Two of the main players involved in one of the most ill-fated episodes related to the 1916 Rising, Sir Roger Casement and Robert Monteith, had ties to County Wicklow. Although Casement was born in Dublin and raised in Antrim he had strong family connections with Ashford, where his cousins resided in Cronroe House, (now Bel Air Hotel) while Robert Monteith was a native of the county. In October 1914 Casement, a distinguished diplomat in the British civil service, who had received a knighthood in 1911 for exposing exploitation and atrocities committed by Belgium against native Africans in the Congo, and had, like many of his Protestant Anglo-Irish contemporaries taken up the Irish cause, travelled to Berlin. His mission was to persuade Germany to create a new Irish Brigade from among Irish born soldiers serving in the British Army who had been captured by Germany. They were to be trained with the intention of sending them to Ireland along with a supply of arms to fight in the planned uprising of 1916. In November 1914, more than 2,000 Irish Prisoners Of War were separated from their British counterparts and transferred to a barracks at Limburg. Casement travelled there on 3 December 1914 to attempt to recruit members for an Irish brigade.<sup>57</sup> However, soldiers from the Irish regiments proved reluctant to join. By June 1915 Casement saw the futility of the situation as he was not able to provide a show of force to the Germans. There was no way out as the British Navy were controlling the seas and he had to remain in Germany as a virtual prisoner. He now made a second attempt to make the brigade a reality. Although more successful this time, the still small number of men who volunteered for the venture meant that the term 'brigade' was a total misnomer. Casement was also unable to find a suitable training officer for the corps from among the recruits. Eventually in the absence of a more suitable candidate, Robert Monteith was sent by the IRB from Ireland to Germany via New York to take charge of the men.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Kee, *The Green Flag*, 543.

<sup>58</sup> Florence Monteith Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, (New York, 1959), 40.

Monteith was born in Wicklow on 1 March 1879, in Lodge House at the entrance to Woodstock Estate, situated between Newtownmountkennedy and Kilcoole in the parish of Newcastle. Woodstock (now Druids Glen Golf Resort) was then owned by the Tottenham family where Robert Monteith's father Joseph, a native of Cavan, was employed as a steward. Joseph married Mary Dillon of Kildare, and they had nine children. Robert was their third son and was baptised in the Church of Ireland parish church at Delgany. He enlisted in the British Army at the Delgany recruiting office in January 1895, stating that he was 18 years old when in fact he was only 16. He chose the Royal Horse Artillery, and travelled to England for training. Posted to India in October 1896, he qualified for the India General Service Medal 1895-1902. He was then posted to South Africa in January 1900 where he took part in the Boer War. Part of the column that relieved Ladysmith, Monteith, riding the lead horse of the six that pulled the gun carriage, was the second man to ride through the blockade for the 'Relief of Ladysmith'. Monteith was discharged from the British army in South Africa on 25 March, 1903, and sailed back to Ireland arriving in early April 1903. He secured a position in the civil service, with the Ordnance Survey in Dundalk, Co. Louth and at weekends cycled to Wicklow to visit his parents. Monteith met Mollie McEvoy,<sup>59</sup> a widow, and they married in the autumn of 1909. As she was a Catholic widow with 3 children, the marriage did not please his family. Her father, Charles Burke, was a Fenian and was murdered in Dublin when Mollie was young. When Monteith's contract with the Ordnance Survey in Dundalk ended he moved to live in Dublin where in 1912 he got an appointment at the Ordnance Survey Depot at Islandbridge. When the Irish Citizens Army (ICA) was being set up, Monteith was about to join, but then met Tom Clarke of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), who told him of the proposed formation of the Irish Volunteers. Because Monteith had military experience Clarke invited him 'to organise the Irish Volunteers ostensibly as a precaution measure, against Carson's men, but really for business'.

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<sup>59</sup> Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, 22.

This happened about three weeks before the Volunteers were formed at the Rotunda meeting.<sup>60</sup>

Monteith was elected Captain of A Company, First Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, and was given the position of drill instructor.<sup>61</sup> When Britain entered into the First World War in August, 1914, Monteith was offered a commission in the British Army. His initial offer was to re-join a mounted regiment, the second was to train the 'Pal's Battalion' of Trinity College in Dublin, which consisted of officers only. After he turned both these offers down, he was offered inducements, being told that Mrs. Monteith could have her own car and chauffeur and maids for her children, and that he would be given responsibility for army recruitment in all of Ireland. He again refused as he was now totally committed to the cause of Ireland.<sup>62</sup> At 11 a.m. on Thursday, 12 November 1914, Monteith was shocked when told of his dismissal from his post at the Ordnance Survey, under the Defence of the Realm Act.<sup>63</sup> This occurred as a direct result of his refusal to rejoin the army. Within hours of his dismissal, two men from the G Division of the Dublin Metropolitan Police came to his house and read him a deportation order which stated that:

R. Monteith, of 6 Palmerston Place, Broadstone, Dublin, shall not, except with permission in writing from me or other competent Naval or Military authority, reside after twelve o'clock noon, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of November, 1914, within the Metropolitan Police District of Dublin.<sup>64</sup>

He now had thirty-six hours to get out of Dublin. On Saturday morning Michael (The) O'Rahilly drove him by car to the designated border of the exclusion zone, Athy, Co. Kildare. Monteith then made his way to Limerick, where the Volunteers were waiting to greet him

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Monteith, *Casement's Last Adventure*, (Chicago, 1932), 6-8.

<sup>61</sup> Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, 29.

<sup>62</sup> Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, 33.

<sup>63</sup> Monteith, *Casement's Last Adventure*, 28-29.

<sup>64</sup> Monteith, *Casement's Last Adventure*. Revised Edition, (Dublin, 1953), 39.

as their new instructor.<sup>65</sup> Two days later on 16 November the *Irish Times* carried the following report:

A meeting was held last night at St. Stephens Green, in front of the arch in memory of the soldiers killed in the Boer War, for the purpose of protesting against the action of the authorities in dismissing from the Ordnance Department a man named Monteith (who holds a position in the Sinn Féin section of the Irish Volunteers), and in ordering him to leave the Metropolitan Police District. The meeting was largely attended, and was continued although rain began to fall before it was long in progress. A contingent of Volunteers, armed with rifles was present.<sup>66</sup>

The headline for the above article was; *Violent Speeches in Dublin*, and among those who made militant speeches were, James Connolly, Countess Markievicz and Michael 'The' O'Rahilly. Seven months after going to Limerick, on Sunday 2 July 1915 Monteith wrote to his wife in Dublin informing her that Tom Clarke and the IRB were making plans to send someone to Germany to command and instruct the newly formed Irish Brigade there. Roger Casement had done the initial work, but out of the more than 2,000 Irish prisoners of war he had only managed to get 55 to join his venture. These volunteers were joined by James McGooley who had travelled from America making a total of 56 men. Casement again became disillusioned at his lack of success and in June 1915 wrote: 'I am at the end of my tether because I see no way out. I have been in that frame of mind for months...The truth was forced on me in January and February that I had misjudged greatly and made a mistake.'<sup>67</sup> At this stage Casement was unwell in a German hotel and sought help from Clann Na Gael and the IRB. Tom Clarke made a trip to Limerick on the day after O'Donovan Rossa's funeral to talk to Monteith about going on this mission to help Casement with the floundering Irish Brigade.<sup>68</sup> To

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<sup>65</sup> Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> *Irish Times*, 16 November 1914.

<sup>67</sup> Kee, *The Green Flag*, 544.

<sup>68</sup> Monteith, *Casement's Last Adventure*, 45.

get him out of Ireland they used a ruse that he and his family were emigrating from Ireland to the USA. Prior to departure the following permit was issued from Headquarters Irish Command, Parkgate, Dublin, on 29 August 1915: 'Permission is hereby granted to Robert Monteith to remain in Dublin until his departure for Liverpool which he leaves by the S.S. New York, sailing on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1915.' On that day he sailed via Liverpool to New York where he arrived on 9 September.<sup>69</sup> His wife and family followed a few weeks later. He spent two weeks in New York with his family before going to Germany. All the arrangements for the trip had been made by John Devoy. He left New York on 7 Oct 1915 as a stowaway on a Scandinavian ship. A routine search of the ship by the British took place as part of the Atlantic blockade, but Monteith avoided detection and was able to get through to Germany on 23 October 1915 and then met Casement in Berlin. On 28 October Casement informed the Germans he was appointing Monteith as provisional Commanding Officer of the Irish Corps.

On 27 November 1915, the German Foreign Office reluctantly agreed to assign the command of the Irish Brigade to Monteith. He was not, in their opinion, qualified enough for them to deal with on equal terms despite believing that he had been a Sergeant-Major in the British army, whereas he had in fact only been a Corporal. Monteith was a good aid to Casement who was troubled by his inability to attract more recruits and by his failure to convince the German government to make a declaration of sympathy with Irish national aims.<sup>70</sup> He was also troubled by the situation of the men he had recruited to commit treason which he now saw as pointless. By December of 1915, thirteen months after his arrival in Germany, Casement, had admitted total defeat in his objectives. He wrote to his superiors saying he was too ill to act as envoy anymore and that no more instructions should be sent to him. The men now under Monteith were stationed at Zossen some 17 miles from Berlin, where

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<sup>69</sup> Monteith, *Casement's Last Adventure*, 49.

<sup>70</sup> Kee, *The Green Flag*, 540.

they went on route marches but were not allowed to carry rifles.<sup>71</sup> In mid January 1916 Monteith wrote in his diary that he was not fit for the job of leading the men. Some three months after taking up his post, on 1 March 1916 Robert Monteith was summoned to the German General Staff in Berlin and was told of the planned Easter Rising and the German arms that were to be sent by sea to Ireland. Monteith then informed Casement of the limited German assistance for the Rising.<sup>72</sup> The Germans wanted to send Casement and his entire Brigade to Ireland with the weapons, so ridding themselves of both Casement and his men. There was a few weeks of bad tempered negotiations between Casement and the German General Staff, as Casement thought the proposed Rising in Ireland was futile and did not wish to send the men. Casement was convinced that the Rising could not work without a large number of German troops, and the best he had been able to obtain was one boatload of arms. Ultimately, the brigade was not sent and the Germans agreed to provide a submarine to take Casement, Monteith and Daniel Bailey (a sergeant in the Irish Brigade) to Ireland and they departed on board U-19 on 15 April. Six days earlier, the *Aud*, carrying 20,000 rifles had departed for the Kerry coast. Before leaving Germany for Ireland Casement had written the following letter to be read to the men of the Irish Brigade:

*Berlin. 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1916.*

*Comrades of the Irish Brigade, we are going to-night on a very perilous journey and have been forced to leave you without a word of farewell or further explanation. It was not possible to tell you or to explain a few days ago or even now fully why we did not bring you. One reason, perhaps the chief one, why you are not accompanying us to-day is to keep you out of the very grave danger we have to face. We are sure that all of you would have faced these dangers, too, seeing that it is in the cause of Ireland's Independence we go, but we decided it was*

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<sup>71</sup> Kee, *The Green Flag*, 546.

<sup>72</sup> Monteith, *Casements Last Adventure*, Revised Edition, 105.

*unfair to you to appeal to your courage in a manner where all the elements of danger are very apparent and those of hope entirely wanting. You must, therefore, forgive us for going in silence from you and leaving you to the continued inactivities that have already been so harmful to you and contrary to your hopes when you volunteered for service of Irish Freedom. Should we live, you will know and understand all. If we do not return or you hear no more of us, you will know we have gone to do our part in our country's cause according to what we deemed right....when the war is over your many friends at home in Ireland and in U.S.A. will certainly have you in their care and affection; meanwhile you may have many hard and unhappy days to face, many trials and temptations too, and perhaps harsh things to endure. Bear all with brave stout Irish hearts, remembering that in what you did, you sought to save your country, and that no Irishman could give to that cause more than you gave. You gave yourselves. Having given yourselves so freely, keep yourselves bravely. Be obedient, disciplined, and patient, and rest assured that whatever happens to us who are going from you to-day, you will find many friends in the world and your names will be honoured in Irish [hi]story.*

*Roger Casement, Chief*

*Robert Monteith, Captain*<sup>73</sup>

The day after Casement wrote this letter, on 12 April 1916, Robert Monteith wrote a letter to his wife Mollie in New York, from the German naval base of Wilhelmshaven, stating:

This is to let you know that I am leaving at once. I know well what may be facing us - a long and dangerous journey, S.R.C. and I know of the problem, but I [am] of good heart [and] will

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<sup>73</sup> Michael J. Kehoe, BMH WS 741.

succeed. I will contact you through the office of J.D.N.Y. Keep your silence about everything.<sup>74</sup>

The tone of the letter suggests that Mollie was aware of the nature of his mission. The S.R.C. in the letter refers to Sir Roger Casement; while J.D.N.Y. refers to John Devoy New York. On Good Friday, 21 April, nine days after writing this letter, Monteith, along with Casement and Bailey (using the alias Beverly) reached Tralee Bay just after midnight. When they reached the rendezvous point there was no sign of the *Aud* as it had weighed anchor some miles away and was out of sight of the submarine<sup>75</sup>. (The *Aud* was soon captured at sea by the British Navy but was scuttled by her German crew while being escorted into Cork harbour.) The expected reception party of local Kerry Volunteers had failed to materialize as they were not expecting either vessel to appear until Sunday 23 April. About 2 a.m., the three Irishmen climbed into a small boat to make the trip to the shore but their boat capsized before they reached Banna Strand, near Tralee. Robert Monteith helped an exhausted Roger Casement to safety on shore. Monteith was later to comment, 'Had I known the end of the chapter I would surely have let him sleep into eternity in the foaming water of Banna Strand'.<sup>76</sup> Leaving the sickly Casement at the ruins of McKenna's Fort, Monteith and Bailey made for Tralee. Casement (who intended to warn Eoin MacNeill of insufficient German support for an insurrection) was discovered by two local RIC police officers at about 1:30 that afternoon. Daniel Bailey was arrested later but Robert Monteith managed to avoid capture. The *London Times* carried the following article in June 1916:

Scotland Yard has issued a description of Robert Monteith who is 'wanted' for being concerned with Sir Roger Casement and Daniel Bailey, now in custody, on a charge of high treason.

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<sup>74</sup> On 19 April 2011 this letter along with a first edition copy of *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, by Robert Monteith's daughter Florence Monteith Lynch, was sold by Adams Auctioneers (Lot 472) for a sum of €2100. Information from [adams.ie](http://adams.ie), accessed 10 October 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Foy and Brian Barton. *The Easter Rising*, (Stroud, 2004), 65.

<sup>76</sup> Monteith, *Casement's Last Adventure*, Revised Edition, 154.

Monteith is the man whose name has been frequently mentioned in connection with the Sinn Féin rising (sic) in Ireland. He is described as-36 to 40 years of age; regular nose; small black moustache; square shoulders; military gait. The notice also mentioned that Monteith was formerly a sergeant (sic) in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and was employed in the ordnance depot in Dublin at the outbreak of the war; that he was removed from the prohibited area by order of the competent military authority on November 13, 1914, and went to America and then to Germany.<sup>77</sup>

After landing, Monteith made his way to Tralee,<sup>78</sup> where he made contact with Austin Stack, before spending some months in hiding at Batt Laffan's farm at Killonan, five miles outside of Limerick City. He was hiding there while waiting to make his way to Liverpool where Peter Murphy of Scotland Road was arranging his passage on to America. Whilst in hiding at Laffan's farmhouse he had a narrow escape from capture on one occasion being saved by the quick thinking of Laffan and one of his farm staff.<sup>79</sup> At the time a wanted notice was published in *Hue and Cry*, offering a reward of £1000 for Monteith, dead or alive. The end of the notice stated 'preferably dead, as Casement's trial had cost the British government too much money.'<sup>80</sup> In December 1916 Monteith finally made his escape from Ireland to Liverpool, and from there on to New York. He made the journey across the Atlantic using the false papers of a stoker, a role for which he was not physically capable. Later he was put on lighter work, and managed to get ashore in New York undetected. During the next 30 years he held many posts mostly in the automobile industry in Michigan. In 1932 Monteith wrote *Casement's Last Adventure* an account of the Irish Brigade, of which a limited edition was published privately in Chicago. In 1943, after retiring as a foreman from the Ford Motor Company at Dearborn, he farmed for a time in Michigan. In 1947, aged 68, he returned to live in his native

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<sup>77</sup> *The Times*, 16 June 1916.

<sup>78</sup> Monteith, *Casement's Last Adventure*, Revised Edition, 160.

<sup>79</sup> John J. Quilty, BMH WS 516.

<sup>80</sup> Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, 124.

Wicklow, purchasing a house near where he was born, at Sea Road in Kilcoole.<sup>81</sup> Due to its condition and location this proved unsuitable for the aging couple and, through a fund set up to pay a 'national tribute' to him, a house was purchased for Monteith and his wife at Kilbarrack in Dublin.<sup>82</sup> The keys were handed over to him at the Fr. Matthew Hall on St. Patrick's Day 1949. Among those who contributed to this fund were Margaret Pearse (sister of Patrick Pearse), Mrs. Tom Clarke and Maude Gonne McBride. In April 1950 he re-visited Banna Strand where he had landed with Roger Casement in 1916. About this time he suffered a serious illness and underwent an operation in Dublin. In April 1951 the ailing Monteiths again moved house, this time to Donnycarney. After spending six years in Ireland, in December of 1953 Robert Monteith returned to America. Earlier that year *Casement's Last Adventure* was published again, this time with additions made by Monteith while living in Dublin. It received little publicity and did not sell well in Ireland. He died in Detroit, Michigan on 18 February 1956 aged 77.<sup>83</sup> If Robert Monteith had not managed to evade arrest for high treason in 1916 he would most likely, as an ex-member of the British Army, have suffered the same fate as his comrade Sir Roger Casement, who was convicted of high treason and hanged in Pentonville Prison in London on 3 August 1916.<sup>84</sup>

### JOHN GREER OF BRAY

Apart from Robert Monteith, one other member of Casement's Irish Brigade was from County Wicklow. He was John Greer, a son of Moses and Catherine Greer. John Greer was born in Bray on 25 July in 1883 and in 1901 the family was living at Waterloo Terrace in Bray.<sup>85</sup> Greer's address was given in 1911 as 4 Dock Terrace in Bray. He was a railway porter before he joined the Royal Irish Rifles

<sup>81</sup> Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, 122.

<sup>82</sup> Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand*, 129-130.

<sup>83</sup> *The Irish Press*, 21 February, 1956.

<sup>84</sup> Bailey was put on trial in London for treason but turned King's evidence and was set free.

<sup>85</sup> John Greer's brother Edward (aged 22) was killed in action at the Somme on 29 September 1916.

(No.7708) in 1905. In 1911 he was serving in the British Army in Burma and arrived in France in August 1914 to take part in the First World War. He was soon captured and became a prisoner of war in Germany where he spent time in Limburg, Zossen and Danzig. He was recruited by Casement and was part of A Company Machine-Gun Corps and was referred to as the brigade musician.<sup>86</sup> He returned to Bray via Holland in 1919 and served in the IRA during the War of Independence. In his later years he took to busking around Bray wearing a rose in his lapel and playing a melodeon. He was the oldest surviving member of Casement's Brigade and died in a Dublin hospital aged 75, on 11 December 1957. He was buried in Little Bray Cemetery on 13 December where a rifle salute was fired over his grave. At the time of his death his address was 6 Seapoint Terrace, Bray and he was survived by a brother and sisters.<sup>87</sup>



John Greer, third from left with surviving members of Casement's Brigade, J. Kavanagh, T. Wilson and M. Keogh. Pictured at Dublin Castle, May 1957.

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<sup>86</sup>He was noted as a champion melodeon player and also played the harmonica.

<sup>87</sup>*The Irish Press*, 12 December 1957. *The Irish Press*, 17 December 1957, *Irish Independent*, 12 December 1957. [www.irishbrigade.eu](http://www.irishbrigade.eu), accessed 14 October 2014.

## THE SHILLELAGH AND GLENEALY RIFLES

In a report for the German military in 1915 Joseph Plunkett wrote, 'Volunteers are very few in Wicklow and not well organised or armed. They could however undertake to destroy the railway.'<sup>88</sup> In May of the same year an RIC report stated that the county was peaceable with no person receiving police protection. There was only one Sinn Féin branch with 9 members and although recruitment meetings for the British army were well attended few joined the army. The National Volunteers were also in decline and while possessing 378 rifles they had no ammunition. The revived Irish Volunteers in Bray had only 14 members while a second group of Irish Volunteers were formed in Baltinglass in November 1915.<sup>89</sup> By the autumn of 1915 with volunteering almost extinct in Wicklow, Tom Fleming suggested to C.M. Byrne that it was best to form an organisation outside of the volunteers. As a result the Wicklow Rifle League was founded. Fleming and Byrne were mutual friends as they were both involved in administering the GAA in Wicklow. Although it was short lived the Rifle League enabled a few men to gain experience at shooting. Tom Fleming had joined the IRB in Dublin in 1903. In 1913 he returned to Shillelagh and organised the Irish Volunteers in West Wicklow and after the split he was active in Redmond's National Volunteers. In 1940 he gave the following account of an intriguing subterfuge that he was centrally involved in:

It was known to the I.[rish]. Volunteers executive that Redmond had placed a substantial order with the Westly Richards<sup>90</sup> rifle makers in England for .303 Martini Henry rifles. The I.[rish] volunteers exe. sent my brother Michael to me asking that I should remain attached to Redmond volunteers and maintain my work with a view to securing as much of these Westly Richards rifles as possible. That the I.[rish]. Vol. exe. would furnish me with cash to purchase those

<sup>88</sup> Eva O'Cathaoir, 'Revolutionary Undercurrents in Wicklow and South Dublin 1867-1916', in *Bray Historical Record* No.5, (1992), 34.

<sup>89</sup> O'Cathaoir, 'Revolutionary Undercurrents', 33.

<sup>90</sup> A Birmingham based Arms Company.

rifles and that I could make arrangements to have them handed over to the Dublin Brigade.<sup>91</sup>

Tom Fleming had previously made a submission to the Military Service Pensions Board in the 1930's in which he stated:

I organised a number of men in Wicklow and secured their co-operation in a plan that they would allow me to use their names as charge of companies of [National] volunteers and purchase rifles for arming of same. I saw Mr Donovan and suggested to him as he was Sec. of Nat. Volunteers and M.P. for Wicklow also as Mr. Redmond had such associations with Co. Wicklow it would be advisable to have as many companies as possible armed with modern rifles. Donovan agrees and the Nat. Vol. executive gave him permission to sell as many of the rifles and ammunition as he considered advisable.<sup>92</sup>

Tom Fleming had arranged with a trusted man in each area to nominally accept delivery of two cases with 12 rifles in each. The last lot arrived by train at Shillelagh on Good Friday of 1916. Fleming claimed to have secured 350 rifles in total which he transferred to the Dublin Brigade via Eamon Price, Joseph Lawless and his brother Michael.<sup>93</sup> In late January 1916 Michael Fleming contacted C.M. Byrne concerning the rifles. Byrne received some of the National Volunteer rifles and stated that: 'These rifles never left my home and I had them in readiness for the emergency I knew was coming though I knew not when or what.' On Good Friday 1916 Michael Fleming arrived in Glenealy to tell Byrne that the rifles were to be taken from him on Easter Saturday night. He did not however tell Byrne that a Rising was planned to take place on Easter Sunday as he was sworn to secrecy. On Easter Saturday morning C.M. Byrne, travelled to attend the annual GAA congress in Dublin.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Fleming, MSPC 34/41534.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Fleming, MSPC 34/41534. Thomas was a brother of Michael Fleming.

<sup>93</sup> In 1918 for failing to account for the National Volunteer rifles Thomas Fleming was sentenced to hard labour and spent from December 1918 until January 1920 in Mountjoy prison.

Before leaving he instructed one of his employees to give the rifles to whoever called that night. In the event no one called to collect the rifles.

In Dublin Byrne was informed by Michael Fleming that Eoin MacNeill wanted to see him and he travelled by taxi, with a few others, to MacNeill's house at Rathfarnham. It was in the course of discussions there that Byrne first learnt of plans to hold a Rising on Easter Sunday. MacNeill was initially in favour of the uprising, which he had only heard of on the previous Thursday, but on learning of the capture of Casement and the loss of the *Aud* and its cargo of guns, he changed his mind. MacNeill stated that a number of prominent volunteers opposed his view. He asked Byrne and the others to use their influence to stop the Rising. Byrne stated that he had little influence with the people concerned. He then returned to the GAA congress before travelling back to Glenealy on Sunday unsure of whether the Rising would take place or not. Late on Easter Monday he heard rumours that Dublin 'was out'. He thought that this might be the Irish Citizen Army rather than the Irish Volunteers. On Tuesday he received confirmation that Dublin had risen. Byrne claimed that by then it was too late for him to do anything as the RIC had arrived at his home while he was absent and taken the rifles away.

In June 1916 shortly after the Rising, District Inspector O'Hara of Wicklow RIC called C.M. Byrne in and subjected him to heavy questions about the rifles which the RIC had seized earlier. Byrne informed the inspector that he had no authority to take the rifles as they were the property of the National Volunteers. Byrne then contacted J. T. Donovan MP for West Wicklow and pressurised him to use his influence with his parliamentary colleagues to get the rifles returned or risk losing support in Wicklow. About four weeks later the rifles were returned to Byrne.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> C.M. Byrne, BMH WS 1014.

## PART THREE-THE RISING

### BRAY AND THE RISING

At noon on Easter Monday 24 April 1916 the GPO and other buildings in Dublin were seized by the Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers led by James Connolly and Padraig Pearse, signalling the beginning of the Easter Rising. Pearse read the proclamation outside the GPO and the Irish Republic was declared. About 700 rebels took part in the initial stage but these were joined by others during the week making the total number of volunteers involved about 1700. The rising was originally intended to take place on Easter Sunday but Eoin MacNeill on hearing of the plans, to which he was not privy, decided to issue a countermanding order in his role as head of the Volunteers. Despite MacNeill's objections the IRB group, in association with James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army went ahead with the plans the following day, Easter Monday.

On Easter Sunday the Bray Company of the Irish Volunteers reported for parade at the People's Park off Dargle Road under their O/C Captain Tarrant. The Bray Volunteers consisted of two sections, Shankill and Bray/Enniskerry. The Shankill section leader was P.J. Farrell who was also the local IRB centre. There were about 35 volunteers on parade in Bray that day with the majority being from Shankill. Among those present from Bray were Joe Kenny, Bill Forde, Jack Fox, Peter (Lukie) Legget, Nickey Mulvey, Stephen Mulvey, Stanley McConrey, Corkey McNamara and Paddy Martin. Charlie Brien of Roundwood who was working in Shankill at the time was also present. All the Volunteers had been requested to bring two days ration along with their equipment. As it was the first time such an order had been given this added to the men's anticipation.<sup>95</sup>

It appears that the volunteers assembled in the People's Park on Easter Sunday had intended to attack Bray Barracks. Instead, on receiving MacNeill's cancellation order P. J. Farrell was instructed to take the Shankill group out of the park but to keep away from the

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<sup>95</sup> Christy Brien, 'Easter Sunday 1916', in *Bray Historical Record*, No 2, 1986, 16.

main road. He took the men via Old Connaught to Carrickgollogan Mountain where they spent the night. The Shankill volunteers were all arrested the following day when news of the rising broke but they were released later that night.<sup>96</sup> The Bray section had dispersed on receiving the countermanding order and soon afterwards Joe Kenny, Corkey McNamara and Bill Forde were arrested.<sup>97</sup>

Arthur Griffith delivered the cancellation order to Bray and Joe Kenny in his witness statement gave the following account:

On Easter Sunday 1916, at approximately 10.30 or 11a.m. Arthur Griffith called at my house...I was at Mass and the maid told Mr. Griffith where he might find me. At noon I was reading the 'Sunday Independent' at Wilde's newsagents...I was especially interested in the order of cancellation by Mr. Eoin MacNeill...I was tapped on the shoulder and turned to see the Chief (I always called him the Chief) standing beside me...I asked him what had happened, but he said the news was bad, that he had a message for me and that he had to return to town as soon as possible...The Chief gave me the letter. It was written and signed personally by Eoin MacNeill from Woodtown House, Rathfarnham...After reading the message, Mr. Griffith directed me to take it to the Secretary of the local Volunteer Coy. And that it was also to be noted by a Mr. P.J. Farrell. I found Farrell, who, like myself, was a member of the GAA., in a 'wash out' in Bray river... I then took the message to the local Volunteer Secretary, Mr. James McCarthy, a railway official. After questioning me about it, he destroyed it before I could stop him. A second message was delivered to me after dinner by Mr. Sean Byrne, an old friend of mine, who was an inspector of telephones. A third message was sent by Mr. Diarmaid Lynch- a simple visiting card of his with the word 'Cancel' on the back.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Brien, 'Easter Sunday 1916', 16.

<sup>97</sup> O'Cathaoir, 'Revolutionary Undercurrents', 13.

<sup>98</sup> Joe Kenny, BMH WS 332.

As a result of the countermanding order Joe Kenny took no part in the Rising. Following his arrest, on 8 May 1916, Joe Kenny was detained for two or three days. He was then ordered to report daily to Bray RIC station, which he had to do for four months.<sup>99</sup>

### **CUTTING COMMUNICATIONS**

In his witness statement Joe Kenny said that one local volunteer named Twamley, decided to disobey the countermanding order and go to Dublin on Easter Sunday. John Twamley was a native of Dublin and in 1916 was a linesman in the Engineering Department of the Post Office and was stationed in Bray, where he also had lodgings. In early April, Diarmaid Lynch appointed him to a special communications squad and he was given the task of cutting communication in the Bray area if and when the Rising took place. Mick Higgins the local IRB Centre was to aid him in this task. They succeeded in getting access to a map of communications in the Bray area from the Rathdown Rural District Council offices at Loughlinstown.<sup>100</sup>

John Twamley was called to Liberty Hall on Good Friday or Easter Saturday and told by Lynch that the Rising was timed for Easter Sunday and told to start cutting communications. He went back to Bray to make preparations. At about twenty minutes to twelve on Easter Sunday he received a despatch from James Connolly via Sean Byrne that the Rising was off, which he did not believe. He then travelled to Liberty Hall to seek confirmation and was told to remain in Dublin. On Easter Monday morning he was informed that the Rising was going ahead and told to return to Bray. He went there and made contact with Mick Higgins about midday and told him the Rising was starting immediately. As there was no time to organise any activity in Bray he was to try and get his men to the GPO. John Twamley went on to state:

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<sup>99</sup> Joe Kenny, BMH WS 332.

<sup>100</sup> John Twamley, BMH WS 629.

I then set out across the fields to the Railway, climbed the poles and cut the telegraph and telephone wires and all the railway signal wires. Having completed the job here I went on to the road and cut the telephone wires and junctions between Shankill and Bray.<sup>101</sup>

Stephen Mulvey was also involved in the wire cutting around Bray, and owing to the confusion caused by MacNeill's countermanding order, this was the only activity of the Bray Volunteers on the outbreak of the Rising. However, some of the Bray men were involved on their own accord in activities in Dublin. Stephen Mulvey walked from Bray to Dublin on Tuesday and took part in the fighting at Westmoreland Street, O'Connell Street, the GPO and Princes Street. He was wounded in the left leg during the fighting and was hospitalised but returned to his post. He escaped capture on the surrender and spent three weeks convalescing while hiding in Mrs. Flanagan's house in Wilford Place. On returning to Bray he was arrested for three days and then released due to lack of evidence. Another Bray man, Tom Sutton was employed on the Dublin/Wexford train line in 1916. He claimed that he carried a miniature rifle on the train and that on Tuesday 25 April he fired on a party of British soldiers, including Capt. J.C. Bowen-Colthurst, who were holding three handcuffed prisoners. Sutton stated that he fired from a position at the railway bridge at Adelaide Road/Harcourt Street. He also claimed to have carried a dispatch to the Enniscorthy rebels on the train.

### **JAMES DOYLE AT CLANWILLAM HOUSE**

On Wednesday 26 April, Wicklow man James Doyle was involved in the 'Battle of Mount Street Bridge', when a small number of Volunteers held up two British battalions advancing on Dublin and inflicted severe losses. *The Irish Times* in May 1916 gave the British casualties as 28 Sherwood Foresters killed and more than 200 wounded.<sup>102</sup> James Doyle was born at Coolroe, Tinahely in 1898 and

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<sup>101</sup> John Twamley, BMH WS 629. Twamley afterwards made his way to the GPO, was captured and spent time in Stafford Jail.

<sup>102</sup> *The Irish Times*, 11 May 1916.

moved to Dublin in 1914 where he was a shop assistant at M.A. Lennon's of Richmond Hill. In October 1914 he joined the Volunteers as a member of 'C' Company 3rd Battalion where he was attached to the cyclist section. In March 1916 he was sworn-in to the IRB. He was mobilised at Earlsfort Terrace on Easter Monday and posted to Clanwilliam House. On Wednesday 26 April a fierce fire fight took place as newly arrived reinforcements of Sherwood Foresters attempted to enter the city from Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire). Clanwilliam House was the last outpost resisting against far superior forces. Repeated attempts were made on the house by the British soldiers from about 2pm until late evening when a grenade finally set the house on fire. At one point James Doyle's rifle exploded in his face and he was injured but resumed his post. He also received bullet wounds to an arm and a leg. Three of his house comrades were killed during the battle but Doyle, although badly injured, and three others managed to get away.<sup>103</sup> As the house was engulfed in flames they escaped through a small window. Doyle collapsed shortly afterward near Gratton Street. He was carried by James Fields and others into a house in Grant's Row where he was given first aid and stripped of his uniform. Shortly afterwards he was taken to York Street and then admitted to Mercers Hospital for a short time. He next made his way to a cousin's house on James's Street. He then fled home to Coolroe, Tinahely where he lay low with cousins until later in the year when he returned to Dublin.<sup>104</sup>

#### **OTHER WICKLOW MEN INVOLVED**

In the days immediately before the rising Michael Fleming was involved in distributing arms stored at his home in Shillelagh, at his brothers business in Drumcondra and other locations. On Easter Monday, Fleming was involved in the fighting at St. Stephens Green. On Tuesday along with other members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Dublin he joined up with the Fingal Brigade. They cut communications and carried out a series of raids on North Dublin RIC barracks. On Friday an attack was launched on the RIC at Ashbourne. The 'Battle of Ashbourne' lasted four hours and was the most significant event of

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<sup>103</sup> James Doyle BMH WS 127.

<sup>104</sup> James Doyle, MSPC 34/ 20659.

the Rising outside Dublin with 8 RIC killed along with 2 Volunteers and 3 civilians. When RIC reinforcements arrived Michael Fleming was involved in a crucial action as described by Paddy Doyle:

The section that stopped the police from coming through played a decisive part in the battle. They were section leader, Charlie Weston, Michael and John McAllister, Benny McAllister, Richard Aungier and Mick [Michael] Fleming.<sup>105</sup>

After the surrender Fleming was interned and released in December 1916. Tom Cullen was born in Blessington and worked as a grocer in Dublin. He was in the South Dublin Union and after the surrender he spent time in Wakefield Prison and Frongoch and was released on 23 December. Pat McCrea of Carnew was residing in Clontarf and attached to B Company 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. On Easter Sunday he was mobilized for Fr. Matthew Park but was informed that the action was off. On Monday, he went 'out the country that morning to my own home'<sup>106</sup> before returning by train that evening. On learning that the Rising was in progress he reported to the GPO. On Wednesday he was injured in the fighting and taken to the Mater Hospital where he remained until the surrender. He was taken out through the hospital mortuary before being placed in a car and driven to Carnew. Because his wife was under harassment by police in Dublin, he decided to let himself be seen and was arrested by the local RIC in Carnew. He was taken to Richmond Barracks, tried by a military court and sent to Wakefield Prison where he was detained for about two months before being released.<sup>107</sup> Tom Kehoe, (Keogh), of Knockananna, and Mick McDonnell, served at Jacobs Factory as members of 'E' Company 2<sup>nd</sup> Dublin Brigade and Richard Whelan, who was born in Avoca, served in the South Dublin Union.

### THE FITZGERALDS IN BRAY AND THE GPO

Desmond FitzGerald was banished by the authorities from Kerry in 1915 because of his republican activities there and this resulted in

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<sup>105</sup> Sean O'Luain, *I Die in a Good Cause*, (Tralee, 1970), 84.

<sup>106</sup> Presumably this means he went to Carnew.

<sup>107</sup> Pat McCrea, BMH WS 413.

him and his wife Mabel settling in Bray.<sup>108</sup> On discovering that Bray which was close to Dublin was not among the areas from which he was barred he decided to settle there. He soon began organising the Irish Volunteers in Wicklow.<sup>109</sup> He distributed the Irish Volunteers manifesto in Bray and found revolutionary agitation in County Wicklow an uphill struggle. He was ignored by the young men of Enniskerry and the small Bray Company failed to grow. In late 1915 he was arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment for a seditious speech discouraging recruitment to the British army.<sup>110</sup> Although said to have had some misgivings about the Rising he and Mabel made their way from Bray and joined the insurgents in the GPO. He stated: 'as we approached the Post office we saw the flag being hoisted over the roof, and Mr. Pearse standing on the street outside... I said to my wife, this is worth being wiped out for.'<sup>111</sup> This statement leaves no doubt as to his support for the Rising. Desmond was appointed as adjutant to Michael 'The' Cahilly with responsibility for food rationing. Mabel left the GPO on Thursday on instruction from Patrick Pearse and after the surrender Desmond made his way back to Bray but was afterwards arrested, court-martialed and given a 10 year sentence. After serving time in a number of British prisons he was released in mid 1917.<sup>112</sup>

## WICKLOW FATALITIES

Total fatalities due to the Rising amounted to 485 people some of whom had Wicklow connections. Andrew James Byrne, a native of County Wicklow and a member of the Irish Volunteers, died from wounds received in action on 27 April 1916 in the Boland's Mill area. He left a wife and a two year old son and is buried in a mass grave in Deansgrange cemetery Dublin.<sup>113</sup> The *Irish Times Rebellion Handbook* (1917) incorrectly named him as Joseph Byrne a native of Wicklow aged 32. According to this source he left a wife and two

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<sup>108</sup> The FitzGeralds were parents of former Irish Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald.

<sup>109</sup> Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, (Dublin, 1991), 6.

<sup>110</sup> FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, 6.

<sup>111</sup> O'Cathaoir, 'Revolutionary Undercurrents', 32-33.

<sup>112</sup> FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, 7.

<sup>113</sup> <http://irishmedals.org>, accessed on 10 October, 2014.

children.<sup>114</sup> Some of the British soldiers killed in the Easter Rising were Irish born and these included Francis William White Knox (no. 27861), a Private of the 12th Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He was born in Delgany, County Wicklow, enlisted in Bray and lived in Greystones. He was aged 37 and died in Dublin during the hostilities when a shell he was preparing to fire exploded.<sup>115</sup> Among the civilian casualties<sup>116</sup> was John Murphy aged 60, of Killincarrig, Delgany County Wicklow. He had remained in 42 Henry Street on the corner with Moore Street, during the fighting to guard his licensed premises. Murphy was a Rathdown Poor Law Guardian and Justice of the Peace and served on Rathdown No. 2 District Council. He was also a member of the Greystones Carnegie Library Committee. At a meeting of that committee in May 1916 a motion of sympathy was passed on the death of John Murphy:

...who met his death under very sad circumstances during the disturbances of Easter Week. Mr. Murphy was a kind and courteous friend of the Carnegie Library, Greystones and to his exertions were due the inception and the establishment of the library in Greystones. That we, the members of the Library Committee desire to put on record, our deep regret and sympathy with the widow and relatives of the deceased.<sup>117</sup>

The Irish Times Handbook states that John Murphy was killed on Saturday 29 April as he was on his way to visit his sister in another part of the city.<sup>118</sup> Some accounts state that Murphy was joined by a teacher from Clash [Ballinaclesh] named Byrne and that they were ordered to leave the vicinity of the GPO as the British began their bombardment but decided to return to Murphy's licensed premises to collect money and both were killed.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *Weekly Irish Times*, Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook 1916, (1917 Issue), 260.

<sup>115</sup> <http://irishmedals.org>, accessed on 10 October, 2014.

<sup>116</sup> The first civilian casualty was Nurse Margaret Keogh of Leighlinbridge in Carlow who was killed at South Dublin Union on Easter Monday.

<sup>117</sup> Greystones Carnegie Library Committee Minutes Book 1912-1939.

<sup>118</sup> *Weekly Irish Times*, Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook 1916, (1917 Issue), 263.

<sup>119</sup> O'Cathaoir, 'Revolutionary Undercurrents', 34-35.

## PART FOUR-WICKLOW EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

### 'DA' BARTON'S ACCOUNT

There are two illuminating eye-witness accounts of the 1916 Rising by women with Wicklow connections, one from a republican perspective and one from a unionist viewpoint. Women took an active part during the revolutionary period in Ireland, none more so than Dulcibella 'Da' Barton of Glendalough House, Annamoe, whose role is often overlooked. Dulcibella was a sister of Bob Barton, a first cousin of Erskine Childers and a close friend of Countess Markievicz. The Barton family were traditionally Conservative, with their English mother an avid reader of the *London Times*. However, Dulcibella claimed that she and her brother Bob became interested in Irish politics as a result of reading the *Sinn Féin* newspaper. Dulcibella Barton arrived by train in Dublin from Belfast on Easter Monday 1916 the day the Rising started and she remained in Dublin for that traumatic week. She gave the following account of events in Dublin following the outbreak of the rebellion:

*I happened to arrive in Dublin the day the Rising started I had been to the North and came in on the last train from the North. Every platform in Amiens Street was filled with military. I was going to stay with my friend, Mary Boland, at Earlsfort Terrace. She was a sister of John Boland M.P. I asked a policeman at the bottom of the stairs to get a cab for me. He said they were all off the streets, so I got a little boy to carry my luggage. He was half dead when we reached Earlsfort Terrace.*

*I was interested in the fact that there was a rebellion in progress. I spent about a week in the city. I think it must have been at the end of the week that I met Father Sherwin of University Church and he asked me where I was going. I said I was going into town to buy an Irish Times. He asked me to get one for him. When I got to the Times office there was a great crowd and as I hate standing in a queue I got a little boy to get the paper for me. He did and I gave him something for himself. The paper was a single sheet and I brought one back to Father*

*Sherwin. Before I went home to Glendalough House I went to some office-I think it was the Sinn Féin office- to hand in some money as a contribution towards the fighting. I also called to the Alexandra Club which was a women's club near the College of Surgeons, and of which I was a member, to see if there were any letters for me. It had been occupied by the Volunteers during the Rising and I thought I would search the place to see whether there was anything left there by them that would incriminate anybody. There were a lot of overcoats there and I searched the pockets but they were all empty. Upstairs, on a table, however, I found a piece of paper- a sort of mobilisation order signed 'James Connolly'. I took it and put it in my pocket. Sometime later I sent it by post to Nora Connolly thinking she might be glad to have it.*

*I wondered how I would get home. I knew that the Spring Show was coming on and that we had some stock to show there. The animals were in Harcourt Street Station waiting to be taken to the Show. I managed to find the Steward and I told him I would go home with him in the car the following day. He said I couldn't as the roads had cordons everywhere. I asked him how he got in. He said he had got a pass in Roundwood Barracks from the RIC. I went to the Castle (Dublin) and asked for a pass to go home. Having got it from some British officer I told him I wanted a pass to come in and out of Dublin whenever I wanted. He said he could not give it to me, that the only one who could give that was Major Edgeworth-Johnson. He was in another room and I went there. He absolutely refused to give it. I said 'All right, I'll stay here till I get it'. I remained sitting in the straight-back chair until he finally got worn down and handed out the pass to me. The pass is now in the National Library, I think, in a book of newspaper cuttings that I gave to it. I left for home the next day. A policeman held me up at Roundwood and asked me what was the news. I told*

him he could get in and out of Dublin as well as I could and that I had no news. I at last got home.<sup>120</sup>

### **MOLLIE BLACK'S ACCOUNT**

In the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the 1916 rebellion in Dublin, martial law was introduced and consequently there was little information forthcoming on the evolving situation. This lack of information led to all sorts of rumours being circulated about the gravity of the situation. Many people outside Dublin were concerned for loved ones and relatives residing in the city. One such person was Mollie Black of Avondale, Rathdrum whose husband was serving in the British Army and who had elderly relatives living at Donnybrook in Dublin. On 30 April 1916, she went to Barry's Railway Hotel in Rathdrum from where she acquired the following pass from the local RIC sergeant:

*Rathdrum RIC*

*30/4/16*

*The bearer Mrs Black Avondale Rathdrum leaves here this evening by rail in order to see three old ladies named Buckley 4 Morehampton Terrace Donnybrook who are friends of Mrs Black. Mrs Black is a thorough loyal subject and her husband is a Captain in the Army.*

*Thomas Roberts Sgt*

*To all concerned*

On receiving her pass Mrs. Black determined to make her way to Dublin to assist her relatives. The following is a letter she subsequently wrote to her husband who was serving in the British Army, in which she gives a graphic eyewitness account of the situation in Dublin in the aftermath of the 1916 rebellion. (I was unable to decipher a number of the words in the handwritten text,

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<sup>120</sup> Dulcibella Barton, BMH WS 936.

which I have left blank and I have purposely retained the original text and grammar. Kingstown is now Dun Laoghaire)

*Avondale House  
Rathdrum  
May 3rd '16*

*My dearest Jim,*

*I haven't had a word of news from you for more than 10 days. Except what I heard indirectly from Mr. Clarke. We have had the most alarming stories going about. Friday's news was dismal but on Saturday night an engine came down the line bearing a message that the rebels in Dublin had surrendered. Saule motored out to Forbes to tell him, and Mr. Forbes came over at about 12 p.m. to tell me. We had been talking of going up to Dublin at the first opportunity, as I was very anxious about the old aunts at Donnybrook. I heard of people being shot on Morehampton Rd., and that Dublin was starving. We had only rumour to go on, as we saw no paper, or received no letters from Easter Monday. I walked in everyday to see the one train come in after Wednesday it only went as far as Arklow, as the Rebels had Enniscorthy.<sup>121</sup>*

*On Sunday I got ready for church but went to the train first. Gill was on it he had sent a message to the Comerfords to meet him about sending flour to Dublin I presume he was going on to Fogarty on the same errand to Aughrim.<sup>122</sup> Some man had got out of Dublin from Ringsend and told ghastly tales of starvation, fires, devastation, etc. etc. Bell, the King's brother in law was on the train, and the news he added decided me to start at once with money and provisions to rescue the three old aunts. The train was to return from Arklow in a couple of hours*

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<sup>121</sup> During Easter Week Comdt. Paul Galligan was sent from Dublin to Enniscorthy to organise disruption of the Dublin/Wexford rail line in order to hinder expected British reinforcements travelling via Rosslare. Volunteers under Galligan held the town from Thursday to Sunday.

<sup>122</sup> Comerfords of Rathdrum and Fogartys of Aughrim were flour millers.

for Kingstown so I darted home, met Mr. Forbes, and told him there was an up train (He was dressed to cycle to Bray to get news) and he ordered a car and I gathered up bread, milk, sugar eggs etc. all I could carry, also all the £. S.D.[ Pounds, shillings and pence] I could get. (I had got money from the bank on Thursday in preparation for the expedition) I travelled with Forbes in the carriage next Gill in hopes of getting a lift at Kingstown!! Mr. Gill was staying in Kingstown I think or had no one to meet him. Anyway he looked rather sick, and although he lives in Fitzwilliam St., he knew absolutely nothing about the offices in Merrion St.

Kingstown was glorious with soldiers- I did love it- the first thing on arrival I was told to go and get a pass at the Town Hall a fairly long queue were waiting and all the men about were either in Kaki, or the green of the Veteran Corp with G.R. on their arms (The Wrecks? as they are called!) or somebodies with a red armband with M. P. on it (what for I don't know) Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts all looking as if they were running the empire. I waited ages outside and then another age inside before I got to the Pass Giver - a duck of a little English Officer. I produced a letter from the Sergeant here and talked to him nicely, and he said he would give me a pass. But, he would advise me not to go unless it was absolutely necessary, 'very unhealthy district' etc. etc. I said I would wait until morning, and he made out the pass for Monkstown then ( I had arranged to stop with Mrs Bell if I could'nt get into Dublin.) and for Ballsbridge next day. (I ----- said I would go that way, as I expected to walk and only knew the main road) He said I would have to get another pass there, and to get one to bring me out again as well!

In the meantime Mr Forbes who had ----- left me at the first to go and order a car, was chased back after a few yards and had to take his place miles behind me in the queue. So I said farewell to him and wished him luck. (He thought it would be healthier in England and crossed to London that night) I then proceeded to find the Bell's place at Salthill, as you are painfully aware I do not possess the ---- of locality. I took the

sea road, which was paved with Tommies all English regiments and no one could direct me. At last a nice officer came to the rescue and hailed a coastguard and I got my bearings alright. My passport was getting dilapidated by this time as it was looked at every 50 yds. I was lulled to sleep (as I thought) by the music of the guns (but in the morning found it was only the rocks at the Kish Lighthouse) and a nice sound? of motors and horses and a clanking of arms etc.- (We had a picket at the gate so felt extra safe) In the morning I decided the situation must be really desperate in Dublin, and I determined to have a motor and rescue the aunts. I set out for Cooks garage Kingstown and was truly glad I had my pass, as now the queue from the Town Hall reached half way up to Georges St., that before 8.30. am. Cooke made a fearful fuss about the car, I had to pay 30/s down and engage only to keep her standing half an hour. The man said we would be all day if we tried to go through Ballsbridge, and that he would take me the back way, so we got off the main road and didn't dare call at Monkstown for the provisions (I decided it didn't matter as I was going to take them out of the place) and nipped round all kind of backways and hoped Sinn Féiners wouldn't commandeer the car and got into Donnybrook (no stopping to look at passes there at all.)

I found the old ladies, all well, most cheerful, with an extremely large joint of meat in the house and plenty of everything except bread. They had been out every day, shopping, and to church, but had not been in the city. To my enquiries if they would like to come away, they only replied, how is the darling baby, and s--- etc. etc. so I said goodbye I'll go back to Rathdrum. I had no pass back, so the chauffeur said to say nothing and he would show his. So I sat in front beside him and tried to look innocent. He flew for it, but I just missed the 10 (and only) train (for the day) at Kingstown by three minutes. I then returned to Mrs. Bell divided the eatables with her, and started with the other portion for Donnybrook again, on foot. I heard there was fighting of some kind about Merrion and Ballsbridge, so I went up Merrion Avenue way. I got a short lift

*to Donnybrook in an old trap, had lunch with the aunts, and set out to look up Mrs. Kings sister at South Circular Rd if possible. I walked by Marlborough Rd through Ranelagh and Rathmines. The population of these districts were all out searching for provisions. Everyone had a parcel, or loaves of bread without any paper at all. One youth rode a bicycle, and had a frilled pillowcase with loaves in it over his shoulder. Portobello Bridge was guarded with soldiers and there were a few stray soldiers about Rathmines. I displayed my pass and told them as it was disturbed at Ballsbridge I had to come in by Donnybrook. The sentry said I would have to have a pass out, but if I was only half-an-hour he would still be on duty and would let me out without one.*

*I simply flew along, but found the house where Miss King lived was miles away Dolphin's Barn end, and a passer by told me she had been all through Sackville St. and it was quiet, so I decided to risk the 'pass out' and see the sights. Miss King was all right I felt sure as everything was quiet and no sign of damage. I then began slumming, and made for the Adelaide to see Theresa. I simply fell into Jacobs Factory before I knew, it is there still, but all the glass is powder in the street, and sandbags in the windows. There was some scare on at the Adelaide, about turning some stray rebels out of a house close by, and the Matron was in the "jump". This performance has gone on all the time Theresa says. They have been kept jumping the patients from the top storey down to the basement, and then up again when there was a lull. She says they have had a truly awful time there. I didn't wait to hear more, lest I should get barricaded in, and see no more, and then went through Bishop St., Georges St., Parliament St., Dame St., Westmoreland St., Sackville St., Earl St and up to Dr Woods Gardiner St. Only in the Sackville St. Abbey St., Eden Quay, Earl St., Henry St., and Liberty Hall is there real devastation. We climbed over bricks there and Lawrence's ruins were still smoldering. The right hand side of Sackville St. from O'Connell Bridge to Lawrences is non ext.*

*The Post Office is gutted, only the walls standing. Crowds were out sightseeing. The Woods had a stirring time, but had no leisure for fearfulness, as they entertained 25 or 30 officers and soldiers, and Addie went out in the thick of the fighting with a soldier to forage for provisions. They fired from their roof, and of course they saw the fall of Liberty Hall from shell fire from the gunboat. I had tea there, and heard lots of news and came back by Eden Quay, Grafton St. the Green and intended to try my luck at Leeson St. Bridge, but we (the other was a youth who told me lots of news: he saw some of the fighting) were "shoved" out of Leeson St. as there was some sniping or something going on on top. The youth told me the Officers handled the men very badly at first, without seeking cover, they were picked off in dozens at one spot, Earlsbrook House I think. Of course you have heard the Trinity Boys held the college and the Bank of Ireland, they are all right except for a few broken windows. Grafton St. Stephens Green, Shelbourne Hotel the same, only broken glass, no great destruction at all.*

*I parted from the youth at Leeson St. and made for Richmond Bridge into Ranelagh all along by Earlsfort Terrace, Harcourt St. etc. (that's all right too, just a little glass broken). At Richmond Bridge there were a good many people at each side and a rough barricade was thrown up behind to stop cars getting out. I showed my pass in and the serjeants letter to a private. He said he didn't think that would do, but to ask the serjeant. While I was speaking to him the other sentry (there were only 3) shot at a man a couple of times. (They were fairly jumpy, as a sentry was shot in Kingstown by an old woman) The serjeant let me pass and I heard several more shots fired just after that. I had seen the sentry chase an oldish man back as I came up to the bridge.*

*Of course they were banging away out Ballsbridge way all the time, and there were enough Red Cross people motoring, cycling and walking to look after a whole division. I only stayed a few minutes with the aunts and told them the news of how quiet Dublin was, and then continued my journey back to*

Kingstown for the night. I tried to hire a car in Donnybrook, but a man with a pass wanted 15/- so I walked on, and, about halfway there, a cab overtook me and I got a lift back. They had a barricade of sandbags at Blackrock. I saw guns being galloped out, for where I don't know, and they were digging trenches somewhere too. In the morning ten armoured motor cars with guns mounted in them left Kingstown and a lot of cavalry. A lot more soldiers came in on Monday.

I felt quite sorry to leave all the soldiers and excitement behind at Kingstown on Tuesday, - every empty house at Kingstown was full of soldiers, also the Marine Hotel, Royal Mail Hotel, Pavilion Gardens, etc. we had to sign our name on our passes also. My first pass did duty all through for me, but when we got to Dalkey, they searched the train, and there was great excitement. I was told I should have got a pass to go back to Rathdrum, and a man was very nearly kept back, but he provided a sheaf of letters and an income tax receipt and railway pass.

I was glad to see by to-days Daily Mail (there are no Irish papers now) that all is quiet in Cork. I had heard of a lady being shot there and the horrid way the Sinn Féiners picked off the officers coming from the races on Easter Monday disgusted me, and made me feel very anxious. I expect by this the Ballsbridge district is cleared, and all the rest of Dublin is quiet. And one would think from the action here and at Kingstown that things were frightful but really, except the Sackville St. area I saw nothing appalling. The military regulations are very strict, but when three soldiers alone, can guard a bridge, there are not many lively Sinn Féiners left.

Well much love, I am sending the ---, in the hope that it may reach you, as I understand- no Irish letters are being delivered. Certainly I have had none, except one from Florence for 10 days. Do try and send me some communications soon.

Your loving wife  
Mollie Black.

## BOB BARTON'S ACCOUNT

Bob Barton of Annamoe County Wicklow, was a brother of Dulcibella (Da) Barton and cousin of Erskine Childers. Although he was Oxford educated and a large ascendancy landholder he developed nationalist leanings. He joined the Volunteers and for a time was secretary to Col. Moore. He joined the British Army in 1915 and was in England when the 1916 Rising broke out. He was sent to Dublin after the outbreak and in his witness statement he gave the following account of events:

*I had been a Private in the Inns of Court Officers Training Corps in Berkhamstead<sup>123</sup> since October, 1915, and on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916, I was gazetted to the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Dublin Fusiliers. I reached Ireland on the Wednesday following Easter Sunday, 1916, under orders to report to my Commanding Officer, Colonel Lawrence Esmonde of the 10<sup>th</sup> Dublins in the Royal Barracks....I arrived in Kingstown [Dun Laoghaire]. Dublin was more or less under siege and part of it in flames. Being unable to get in to the city, I reported to the Provost-Marshal at Kingstown. He told me that, as I had no uniform, I had better go home-my officer's uniform was in Phillips's shop, the tailors in Dame Street. I went to my home in Annamoe, Co. Wicklow, and, as I received no further order, I stayed there as long as I thought proper.*

*After about a week, I reported to Colonel Esmonde in the Royal Barracks and, as he knew where my sympathies lay, my duties were confined to the Barracks. Some days later, he received an instruction....to send two officers to Richmond Barracks.... for duty in connection with the prisoners in Richmond Barracks. I reported to Colonel Frazer....Frazer instructed me to take over the duties of officer in charge of prisoners effects. He made some statement to the effect that the War Office was greatly concerned because the troops in Dublin had been looting, an*

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<sup>123</sup> In Hertfordshire, 42 kilometres northwest of London.

*offence for which they would be shot if they were in France, and that the War Office wanted this situation cleared up. There was a great many charges of looting against the British troops, and the War Office had instructed the authorities in Dublin to stop the looting and to collect what had been looted and return it.*

*I was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant when I took up my duty as officer in charge of prisoners' effects, and my authority as a junior officer was very limited.... I found things in a chaotic state. Prisoners' effects were in buckets and bags littered around the office, and I first tried to put them in order and to find out to whom they belonged. The bundles had been systematically pillaged....I instituted an inquiry and went around to all the prisoners to ascertain what each had lost. I was unable to return a quantity of property because I could not find claimants among the prisoners in the barracks. From information thus obtained I tried to identify the officers, N.C.O's and privates who had arrested or searched the prisoners in the various places to which they had been taken, and to recover missing property. I compiled a long list of lost property and had much difficulty in collecting it and in getting co-operation from senior officers.*

*There were people arrested, like Claud Chevasse, who had nothing to do with the Rising. If they were wearing anything unusual, like kilts, they would be arrested. An unfortunate woman was arrested in the vicinity of Boland's Mills because she was dressed in green. All her property was taken when she was searched, and she came to me to recover it.*

*As to whether Connolly was heavily drugged-Heathcote told me he was probably drugged and was almost dead. He was not able to sit upright in the chair on which he was placed and, when they shot him, the whole back of the chair was blown out. I could not say if there was a priest with Connolly.<sup>124</sup>*

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<sup>124</sup> Robert Barton, BMH WS 979.

## AFTERMATH

The 1916 rebels unconditionally surrendered on 29 April by which time there were some 3,000 casualties, including 485 fatalities. The *Wicklow Newsletter* first referred to the rising as 'the riots in Dublin' it also stated that 'the greatest possible excitement existed in Bray...the Sinn Féin rising (sic) was discussed in every conceivable way.'<sup>125</sup> The other local paper, the *Wicklow People*, went further, it denounced the 1916 Rising and supported the execution of its leaders as, 'It was guided by feather heads and dreamers, hence only mischief and worse than mischief could attend it.'<sup>126</sup> During the First World War County Wicklow provided a large number of recruits to the British Army. These came not only from the Unionist influenced areas of Bray, Enniskerry, Delgany and Greystones, but notably from the working class villages of Newtownmountkennedy and Rathnew which had a tradition of British army service.<sup>127</sup> As a result of this involvement many families in Wicklow were dependent on British Army payments and there was a large amount of support for the British war effort in the county.<sup>128</sup> In Arklow thousands of workers were employed at Kynoch's which had munitions contracts with the British War Office while Bray also had industry connected to the war effort.

Another reason why there was a lack of sympathy for the insurgents was the hardships endured by the general public during Easter Week and in the immediate aftermath of the Rising. Among the privations endured by the people of Dublin during the disturbances was a shortage of bread and other essentials items. This forced some people to travel as far as Kingstown and Bray in an attempt to acquire foodstuffs. (In Mollie Black's letter she recounts meeting a man trying to obtain flour supplies for Dublin from Rathdrum and Aughrim.) When stocks ran out in Bray local traders went to the

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<sup>125</sup> O'Cathaoir, 'Revolutionary Undercurrents', 34.

<sup>126</sup> *Wicklow People*, 6 May 1916.

<sup>127</sup> O'Cathaoir, 'Revolutionary Undercurrents', 31.

<sup>128</sup> C. M. Byrne, BMH WS 1014.

trouble of sending a ship to Liverpool for supplies.<sup>129</sup> Despite the initial general hostility to the rebels there was a change in public attitude following the imposition of Martial Law under Sir John Maxwell, the execution of the leaders and the whole scale arrest and internment of suspects, many of whom were totally innocent. Katherine Tynan later recounted the following telling comment on the detrimental effect of these draconian measures:

Someone was reported to have said to Sir John Maxwell that, during the week of the Rebellion, Ireland and England had never been so near together, the Rebellion was unpopular, but that, after three weeks of his regime, the countries were never so fatally set apart.<sup>130</sup>

Because of the severity of the military measures taken there was a consequent increase of public support for the Sinn Féin Party and recruitment for the British Army diminished greatly. C. M. Byrne made the following observation on the aftermath of the Rising:

The publication of the surrender was in the Post Offices on Saturday night. The executions followed quickly. I could do nothing but lie low and gladly watch the rising temper of the country at the executions, deportations, etc., which incensed people who were opposed to the Rising.<sup>131</sup>

On 3 February 1917 Count Plunkett, father of executed 1916 leader Joseph Plunkett, was triumphant in the North Roscommon by-election. Although he stood as an Independent candidate he was strongly supported by Sinn Féin. Later that year Sinn Féin candidates were successful in elections in South Longford (Joseph McGuinness) Kilkenny (William Cosgrave) and East Clare (Eamon De Valera). In October 1917 a National Convention of Sinn Féin was held with Eamon de Valera being elected as president, replacing Arthur

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<sup>129</sup> Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, 302-303.

<sup>130</sup> Katherine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow*, 203.

<sup>131</sup> C.M. Byrne, BMH WS 1014.

Griffith. He pledged Sinn Féin to achieving a republic and promised that a referendum to decide on the precise form of government would be held once a republic was achieved. De Valera was also elected president of the Irish Volunteers shortly afterwards. After the election of Count Plunkett in February, C. M. Byrne in Glenealy realised that conditions for the separatists were improving and he thought it was time to do something with the rifles he held in case the RIC would seize them again. With the aid of the local Glenealy volunteers in the spring of 1917 the rifles were buried at an old farmhouse located on Byrne's land. The stash consisted of 24 Martini-Henry rifles and 'one large German rifle which held nine rounds of ammunition'. Byrne now used another ruse by contacting the RIC and stating that he had sent the rifles back to the National Volunteers headquarters in Dublin. At the time the National Volunteers were in rapid decline with George Redmond the sole official working in the office and Byrne informed him of the ruse. When Inspector Lowe of the RIC arrived at the office to enquire if a man named Byrne from Wicklow had returned rifles he was informed by Redmond that he had. This satisfied the RIC Inspector and the subterfuge was successful. The Glenealy rifles were dug up in the autumn of 1917 and Byrne ensured that they went over to the Irish Volunteers through Michael Collins and Michael Staines, who was a brother-in-law of Byrne. The rapidly changing political landscape would soon find a new outlet for the rifles and Wicklow would have more involvement in the looming War of Independence and the resultant Civil War than it had in the 1916 Rising.

### The Author

Martin Timmons has been a member of Roundwood & District Historical and Folklore Society since its inception. He was the founding editor of the Roundwood Historical & Folklore Journal. He is a history graduate of UCD where his unpublished MA dissertation was entitled *Wicklow and the Civil War 1922-1923*.

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locally or overseas and those who used to live in Wicklow.

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**THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT**  
**OF THE**  
**IRISH REPUBLIC**  
**TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.**

THINKER AND  
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We declare that  
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The Irish Republic is entitled to and hereby claims the restoration of every  
 freedom and franchise. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal  
 rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its purpose to pursue  
 the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all  
 the rights of the nation equally, and cherishing the differences of the various religious  
 communities of the Republic, which have derived a security from the majority in the past.

That our arms have brought the country to a point for the establishment of a  
 permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and  
 elected by their suffrage of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby  
 constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for  
 the people.

We place the arms of the Irish Republic under the protection of the people of  
 Ireland, and we declare that we shall not let our arms and the people of the Republic  
 be used for any other purpose than the establishment of a permanent National  
 Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by their  
 suffrage of all her men and women, and by the confidence of the people of  
 Ireland, and we shall not let our arms and the people of the Republic be used  
 for any other purpose.



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