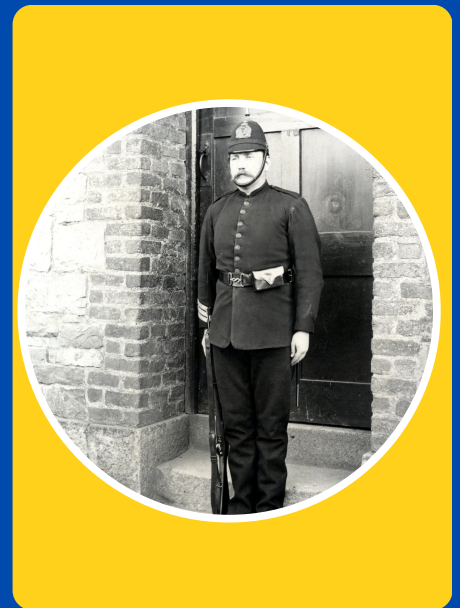


6th Class

Primary Schools Competition

As we come to the latter stage of the period known as the decade of commemorations, Monaghan County Council through the Office of the Cathaoirleach of Monaghan County Council and the it's Library and Museum services invites you to:

Write a Story or Poem about what you think life would have been like for you living through the War of Independence in Co. Monaghan 1919 - 1921.



Winning Entries 2023

A Dark Evening In Clones

By Donnabhan Keogh

I awaken every night in a cold sweat. I can no longer sleep with the guilt. Gunshots are still ringing in my ears. I can still smell the smoke from the train engine. The sulphur on the cold winter breeze still fills my nostrils. The hot iron of the Tommy gun still burns my hands. Nothing can change what happened that February evening in 1922.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement had just been signed and there was tension in the County Monaghan air. I decided to stay with the IRA, now the 'Irregulars'. While my older brother, who was always close to Michael Collins, joined the new "Free State" army. See my brother, Shane, was my hero growing up. He was always the strongest and the bravest. He joined the Flying Column in 1920 and joined up with Michael Collins in Dublin the following year. He was a real warrior and fought in many battles. See when he spoke, we listened. Anyway, after the 'Treaty', he said that Michael Collins had a plan. He would get the North back. The Treaty divided Ireland and Britain held on to six of our counties, not far away from here. Collins promised to re-unite the country and that he would be part of a secret mission to the northern statelet, but that he could not tell me anything more.

My commandant, Matt ('Mattie') Fitzpatrick, had also been a great hero of mine along with my brother. Their 'Great Escape' from the Brits was the stuff of legend. I was too young to join the IRA with my brother and Mattie in 1920 but I helped out where I could, running messages, dead drops, smuggling handguns in my school bag. That sort of thing, but sure don't tell anyone, would ya?

Then on my 16th birthday, at the end of October 1921, Mattie gave me my own gun and a Sam Browne belt. It was the proudest day of my life. I was following in my brother's footsteps. I was going to free Ireland..."Stick 'em up, Brits!"

Fast forward to 11th February 1922. We had just received a shipment of arms, the best of guns, courtesy of IRA Commander Liam Lynch. I was lucky enough to get my hands on one of them 'Tommy' guns, a powerful rapid fire machine gun. Earlier that day, a messenger had delivered a coded message to Mattie. He read it and smiled. He told me to round up five or six other irregulars and follow him to Clones Train Station. We brought our guns just in case. We always did!

We arrived at the station at 4:30pm. There was a steam train waiting at the platform. I remember the smell of burning coal and the noise of porters shouting and unloading boxes from the cargo carriages. Mattie spoke with the train driver and we were ordered to load a pallet of Liam Lynch's heavy boxes in to one of the cargo carriages whilst the train was being delayed. But there was something not right. There were a group of B-Specials in one carriage and they were watching us. I did not like the look of this. Why were British security forces south of the border after the Treaty?

When we had finished loading the boxes, we retrieved our weapons and Commandant Mattie walked calmly over to the carriage with the B-Specials. Then he surprised us all as he stuck his head in the window of the carriage and began to talk with the police inside. But why would he take such a risk? I gripped my Tommy gun tightly. My comrades did the same.

BANG!!! Suddenly a loud shot rang out!

Matt Fitzpatrick fell to the ground between the carriages...DEAD!

I can't tell you the anger that fell upon us. We pulled out our guns and opened fire. The B-Specials returned fire. I tore up the carriage with my machine gun. Windows shattered. Glass flew.

Women screamed. Men dived for cover. One by one the men on the train fell, some screamed in pain. One tried to make a run for it but I gunned him down. Smoke and terror filled the air. Then, just as suddenly, there was silence. There was smoke everywhere.

"Come out with your hands up!" I called. Two men came out slowly.

"What have you done?", said one.

"You idiots!", screamed the other, "We're Irish! We're on your side!".

"Shut him up!", I ordered.

I walked slowly over to the carriage, gun in hand.

"WE didn't shoot your commandant, it was the English man!", I heard one call out behind me, "You have to believe us!".

I stepped inside to see broken glass and seats torn up by gunfire. Men lay strewn across floor with their weapons still in hand. I couldn't help but notice some familiar faces among the dead.

I turned over one of the bodies. His cold dead sunken eyes stared back at me. The horror!

"No!", I told myself, "It can't be!", but it was. Nothing could, or can ever change the fact, that my own brother, disguised in enemy uniform, lay dead by my hand, in that train carriage in Clones that evening in 1922.

THE END

The War of Independence

By Cian Lynch 6th Class.

It was a Monday morning and the dawn had just drawn. I got up out of bed and went to my window, it was a nice foggy morning, but it was foggier than usual. In the corner of my eye, I saw two soldiers walking along the road talking to each other. I put on my old, ragged duffle coat and hurried downstairs to go explore. As I was walking down my lane the two soldiers spotted me and stared. As I got down to them "what are you two doing here" I said but then they just replied with "put your hands on your head and get down on the ground". "No way!" I said, "its soaking wet and I'll get soaked". "Just do it!" one of the soldiers said in a rough voice. "No way!" I shouted back.

Then they grabbed me and tackled me to the ground. "I'm twelve, you scum!" I said. "I do not care" the soldier replied. I remembered that I had a key in my pocket from the old cattle shed because I was feeding the cattle yesterday, so I reached for the key and then poked him in the knee cap, and I sprinted away.

"Get back here you little....." but as he said that I couldn't hear him anymore, I had run so fast I was already at Duffy's mill. While running that road there was more soldiers on the road so I jumped into a ditch beside the mill. I waited for a few minutes until two soldiers spotted me in the ditch, they walked over to me." Get away from me!" I shouted and I pointed my key at them like a knife but they just said, "don't worry wee man, we are the IRA". "What's that?" I asked. "That's the Irish Republican Army" one of them replied. "We saw what you done to them black and tans soldiers and that was gutsy of you" he said."

"Would you be interested in doing a job for us?" "Yes, I would" I replied, "but what is the job?" I asked. "Before I tell you the job, what is your name?" one of them asked. "My name is Cian" I replied. "Good man, Cian" one of the soldiers said." What is your name?" I asked the soldiers. "My name is Eoin O'Neil, I am head of the battalion and the other man's name is Dan Hogan from Tipperary", Eoin O'Neil said.

"Are you related to Michael Hogan the footballer?" I asked. "Yes, I am!" Dan Hogan replied. "I am his brother" he said. "Class!" I replied. "Right so, your job is to go to the train station and tell a man named Matt Fitzpatrick to get all the soldiers hidden at the Clones train station at three o'clock because the R.I.C. are coming on the train into Clones and we are going to ambush them." "Ok!" I replied. "But wee man be safe and go through the fields", Eoin O'Neill said. "Right then, good luck" I said as I ran away.

I got to my first field, hopped the fence, and ran through that field and then had to cross a ditch to the other field. As I got close to the station two-gun shots were fired. I ran as fast as my legs could carry me. I finally got to the train station and saw a man standing with a revolver. I ran over to him, "is your name Matt Fitzpatrick?" I asked. "I am he", he replied. "I have a message for you", I said. "Eoin O'Neill told me to tell you to round up the soldiers here because we are going to ambush the R.I.C. because they're coming on the train into Clones". "Ok thank you wee man" he replied.



I ran off back through the fields and over the ditch and back to the church beside my house. My mam and dad were standing outside shouting my name. I ran back up the lane and went over to them." Where were you?" they both said, "we were worried that you had got lost". "No, I was doing a job for the I.R.A" "but you didn't ask for our permission?" my mam said. "Ach it doesn't matter," my dad replied. "Right then", my mam mumbled "ok, but be careful next time and tell us before you go do something," they both said.

"Ok, I'm away to play football with Ryan and the boys". "Ok" my dad replied. "Good luck!" I shouted running off.

I ran down the road with my brother Ryan and we saw the lads down at the field. Ryan kicked the ball over to them and we ran into the field. "Well lads!" I said. "Well boys" they replied. We picked teams and played football for hours until we had to go for dinner. As we ran up the road I pushed my brother into a ditch and jumped in after him, "don't say a word" I whispered to him.

A battalion of soldiers walked past us as we hid down in the branches in the ditch. As we were about to get out two shots were fired so the battalion of soldiers fired back. We didn't know which battalion was the I.R.A. but I heard a soldier in a black and tanned uniform speak in a British accent. Then the shooting got more intense. We exited the ditch into the field and ran over to the I.R.A. soldiers, only to see that Eoin O'Neill wounded on the ground. "Shoot them black and tans Cian!" he said. I was frozen, so I picked up the gun and shot. It hit one of the black and tans and he fell to the ground and my brother grabbed the gun and shot and another black and tan soldier fell to the ground and then the rest of the black and tans ran off.

"Wow! wee men you're good at that" the soldiers said. "Thanks" we replied but we need a medic for Eoin. "Yes, get one right away!" Dan Hogan said. The medic came right away and ran over to Eoin. After a wee while he was put on the stretcher and was being brought back to the hedge hospital. It was for army men that were wounded. "Thanks men" the soldiers said to us. "We could really do with messengers on our team like you" they said. "Would you be interested? "Yeh but we have to ask our parents first!". "That's not a bother" they said.

We ran up the lane to our house and went in the door. "Mam, dad" we said. "Yes?" they replied. "We just got offered a job as messengers for the I.R.A." we said." So can we do it?" "No way!! "They both replied. "But why?" we said sadly. "Please?" "No and that's final, it's too dangerous" they replied. "Ok then" we replied.

We went back outside to go feed the cattle. We opened the shed door and there was two R.I.C. soldiers sitting in the corner asleep, their guns were lying on the floor. We picked them up and pointed the guns at them. "Get out now! get off our property" I shouted. They woke up with fright.

At that Eoin O'Neill and Dan Hogan appeared in the door way. "Leave this to us boys!" they said. "Remove their uniforms and tie them up" ordered Eoin O'Neill. "I think we have found our way to sneak into the infirmary and rescue Matt".

History Of Our Beloved Country

Blood was what many parties didn't desire,
Especially when the GPO was on fire.

The IRB were armed and were sly,
But many Irish citizens were screaming why??

De Valera sent Collins for justice,
A lot has happened since the times of Augustus.

The Proclamation Signatories were read out by Pearse,
We thought we would beat the British by acting all fierce.

A lot of those bodies has now rot,
But the same distinctive memory of Collins being shot.

From Dr Douglas Hyde to Michael D Higgins now,
When you look back at Irish History now all you can say is
WOW!!!!!!

Pauric Mc Dwyer
6th Class
SN Iorball Sionnaigh
Scotstown
Co. Monaghan

