

FROM A
whisper
TO A
ROAR

MONAGHAN
Músaem Chontae Mhuineachain
COUNTY
MUSEUM



EXHIBITION 2016

EXPLORING THE UNTOLD STORY OF MONAGHAN 1916




'Birth of the Irish Republic'
by Walter Paget in 1916.
The original painting now hangs
in the GPO, Dublin.

Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland



1916 A LOCAL STORY

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O'Neill Street, Carrickmacross.

1854



HORSE FAIR, BALLYBAY.

ON THE EVE OF REBELLION

"More people had left Monaghan between 1851 and 1901 than lived there in 1901."



Monaghan, 'the county of the little hills', lies at the centre of Ireland's drumlin belt. In 1911, less than 15 per cent of the county's population was urbanised and thus the vast majority of the population depended on agriculture for a living. The land was very mixed in quality, the best of it in the southern barony of Farney and the worst along the north-west boundary. Throughout the nineteenth century landownership was the preserve of a privileged minority. In 1870 there were just over 40 landlords in Monaghan who between them owned approximately 85 per cent of the county's total acreage of roughly 312,000 acres. The remainder was owned by absentees including the marquis of Bath who owned in excess of 22,000 acres in Farney in the south of the county.

Then came the revolutionary change in landownership, the path of which was determined by such factors as increased landlord indebtedness, the global economic decline from the late 1870s, which in Ireland led to the establishment of the Land League, and then government intervention in the form of land acts from 1870 to 1909. By 1912, 80 per cent of all holdings in Monaghan were owned by farmer proprietors. However, this did not lead to the disappearance of the old landlord class. Families such as the Leslies at Glaslough, the Dartreys in Rockcorry, the Rossmores around Monaghan town, the Maddens at Hilton Park in Clones and the Lucas Scudamores at Castleshane continued to reside in their impressive demesnes.

Almost without exception the landlord class belonged to the Church of Ireland. According to the 1911 census, Protestants comprised 25 per cent of the county's total population broken down into the various denominations as follows: 8,725 Protestant Episcopalians (12.2 per cent); 8,512 Presbyterians (11.9 per cent) and 860 others (1.2 per cent). Protestants were predominantly located in the northern half of the county where their social and economic dominance had carried through from the plantations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was reflected in the fact that the largest farms in the county tended to be owned by Protestants, while the commercial heartland of the towns – especially Monaghan, Clones and Ballybay - had a disproportionate number of Protestant businesses.

At the bottom end of the rural social scale there was a very heavy concentration of small farms owned by both Catholics and Presbyterians. Around 60 per cent of all farms had a rateable valuation of less than £15 and almost 50 per cent were in the 5-15 acre bracket. The transfer of proprietorship did little to improve the economic position of these small farmers and the landless labourers; as long as farms were so small labour outside the family was impossible to provide and poverty was always going to be a challenge to overcome. Another indication of widespread poverty was the fact that Monaghan had a long tradition of emigration stretching back to the Great Famine; as Fearghal McGarry contends: *'More people had left Monaghan between 1851 and 1901 than lived there in 1901.'*

There were other associated social problems: for example, in 1916, the Monaghan branch of the Irish National Teachers Organisation estimated there were 9,000 children of school-going age being denied a primary education.

However, poverty did not consume the lives of the people. In 1916, the judges of the Co. Monaghan Farm Prizes Scheme were impressed with how well Monaghan people kept their homesteads, describing the cottages and outoffices as *'generally clean and orderly'*, whitewashed with lime, properly ventilated and in the main, thatched. Gardens were well cultivated and well stocked; fowl were of good quality and the system of cropping and cultivation was of a *'high order'*.

There was also a vibrant social life. Much of it centred on events such as dances, fetes, concerts, and bazaars organised by a plethora of political organisations at local level including the United Irish League (which in 1916 was the largest organisation with 31 branches and 5,043 members), the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Orange Order, the Irish National Foresters and so on. The Gaelic Athletic Association was flourishing under the stewardship of Owen O'Duffy. In 1916, Monaghan wore white and blue for the first time and that year they went on to win the Ulster Championship only to be defeated by Wexford in the All-Ireland semi-final played in Carrickmacross. Cricket, tennis and hunting were all popular pastimes amongst the county's social elite. New golf clubs had quite recently been established in Carrickmacross and Clones, the latter by Michael E Knight, Grand Master of the Monaghan Orange Order, who was adamant that politics

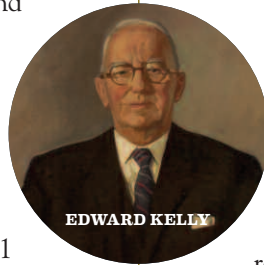
should never be discussed there. Further south, a relatively new craze had caught on and the Dundalk Democrat reported that *'the taste for pictures'* meant that the Farney Cinema Company was *'drawing big houses'*. Over the previous quarter of a century, there had also been a revolution in politics. Government legislation including the Secret Ballot Act of 1872, the Franchise and Redistribution Acts of the mid 1880s and especially the Government of Ireland Act of 1898 changed the political landscape, transferring power at both national and local levels from Protestant landlords and their representatives to Catholic middle class Nationalists, predominantly farmers, professionals and shopkeepers. Three men in particular dominated

local Nationalist politics: **Thomas Toal (1862-1946)**, chairman of the county council, a strong farmer, shopkeeper, publican and merchant from Smithboro in the north of the county, who became chairman of Monaghan county council in 1900 (a position he would retain until his retirement from public life in 1942); **Edward Kelly (1883-1972)**, county councillor, chairman of Carrickmacross poor law guardians and member of Carrickmacross rural district council, a farmer, shopkeeper and publican from Killanny in the south; and **Bernard O'Rourke (1876-1956)**, county councillor, chairman of Carrickmacross rural district council and member of Carrickmacross board of poor law guardians, large farmer, mill owner and entrepreneur from Inniskeen.

While Protestants may have held a strong grip on Monaghan's commercial and to a lesser extent agricultural life, they felt strongly discriminated against in terms of public appointments.



THOMAS TOAL



EDWARD KELLY



BERNARD O'ROURKE [1]

[1] IMAGE OF BERNARD O'ROURKE COURTESY OF TERRANCE O'ROURKE

In 1911, **John Madden of Hilton Park in Clones, Monaghan** argued:

We who live here know how the Local Government Act has been used to keep us out of every office of profit in our county.... Whenever a place is going to which a salary is attached then I say the principle acted upon is that no Unionist need apply.

The records verify his claim. The following year, when the third Home Rule crisis came to a head, 5,000 Monaghan Protestant males signed the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant (and thousands more women the female version) to defend Ulster against Home Rule and by 1913 the Ulster Volunteer Force had almost 1,800 members. After the Larne gun running episode of 1914, Monaghan had one the best armed per capita and most efficiently organised UVF structures in the province.

The Nationalist response was to establish its own volunteer organisation which numbered around 5,000 at its height in the late summer of 1914. The likes of Thomas Toal saw the Irish National Volunteers as a counter foil to the UVF but he was also adamant that his support was conditional on the Volunteers' loyalty to John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party.

The growth of two paramilitary organisations in the summer of 1914 polarised communities along politico-religious lines and gave rise to sectarian tensions in a county with a long history of the same. The outbreak of war on 4 August 1914 eliminated any threat of a civil war. The British government passed the Home Rule Act but suspended its implementation until the end of the war. The vast majority of Nationalists in Monaghan were not unduly despondent; Redmond, they felt, had delivered on his promise and Home Rule would be theirs to celebrate in a short time.

In September, a very small number of Volunteers split away from the movement in response to Redmond's pro-

recruitment speeches at Woodenbridge in Wicklow and the House of Commons. In Monaghan this rump probably numbered no more than 100. Amongst them was Fr Lorcan O Ciarain, parish priest of Rockcorry, one of the most radical Catholic clergymen in the country. In September 1914, he denounced Redmond's support for the British war effort:

If there was anyone foolish enough to enlist he hoped he would be sent to the front as soon as possible and that Ireland would not be at any loss; that the only loss Ireland would sustain would be the loss of the bones to make bone manure, and that France or Belgium, wherever the bones lay, would be so much the richer and that if they were not shot he hoped they would return in such a physically unfit condition that they would not be able to marry which would be a blessing as they would not be able to continue their species.

The Irish Volunteers pursued a more radical and separatist-minded agenda under Eoin MacNeill. Thomas McGahon, the editor of the Redmondite Dundalk Democrat, widely circulated in south Monaghan, saw them as nothing more than

A LITTLE KNOT OF DISCONTENTED, SOUR, SOREHEADED CRANKS, CRITICS AND MISCHIEF MAKERS, INCAPABLE OF ANYTHING BUT MAKING AN UNPLEASANT NOISE.'

Similarly, McGahon and others dismissed Sinn Fein which at the time was nothing more than a political sapling; McGahon taunted Sinn Féiners as

a movement directed against parliamentary action and whose chief work has been constant criticism and misrepresentation of Mr Redmond and his party and the provision of excellent material for Unionist speeches'.

PATRICK PEARSE IN CARRICKMACROSS 1915

...few indeed knew who this man Pearse was or what he stood for



The funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa on 1st August 1915 has often been taken as the start point of the events leading to the 1916 Rising. The graveside eulogy was delivered by a young Dublin school master, Patrick Pearse. His well publicised oration appealed to separatist ideology:

They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but, the fools, the fools, the fools! — They have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

Just over three months later, on 15 November 1915, Pearse was invited to Carrickmacross to address a Manchester Martyrs Commemorative. It was the first time such an event had been held in Monaghan for many years, a symptom perhaps of the Edwardian political and social climates. Back in the 1890s Douglas Hyde had called for the de-anglicisation of the Irish nation *'to show the folly of neglecting what is Irish, and hastening to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English.'*



[2]

In 1966, the authors of *Cuimhneachain Mhuineachain* looked back to the pre-1916 era and heavily criticised Redmond and his followers:

On close examination, the Home Rule Bill of 1912 was a pitiful concession to the aspirations of a nation, a sad ending to the dreams of Parnell and no answer at all to the ambitions of the Fenians. Yet it was accepted by the vast majority of the people as a great victory. Their leaders deemed it a major achievement. Like the people whom they led, these men scarcely realised how near to extinction Irish nationalism really was.

The crucial statement of fact in the above passage was that *'the vast majority of the people'* had accepted the passing of Home Rule in 1914 *'as a great victory.'* However, in a very changed climate in 1966 it was necessary to denigrate the work and achievement of

John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party in order to represent the Rising as the beginning of the successful move toward independence.

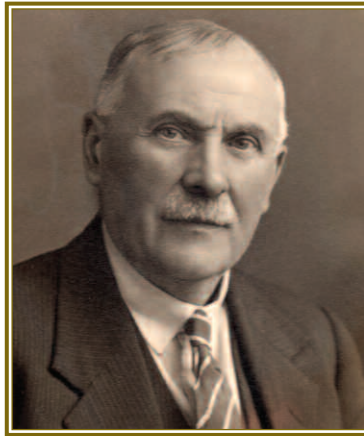
Since the previous May, Pearse had been a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood's military council who formed to plan for rebellion. When he addressed the *'densely packed'* hall in Carrickmacross, he spoke of his belief in a blood sacrifice over constitutional means:

O'Connell had stated that freedom was not worth shedding one drop of blood. The freedom of Belgium and Serbia had been worth millions of drops of blood. If anything was worth shedding blood for it was freedom (applause). If it was a good thing for Belgians and Serbians to die for their countries' freedom, then it must be a good thing for Irishmen to die for Ireland.

Fr Bernard 'Salamanca Barney' Maguire of Inniskeen, an avowed separatist who had already come to the police's attentions as a result of his 'anti-English and anti-recruiting addresses', proposed a vote of thanks:

He had never before listened to a speech from which he derived so much inspiration. It was refreshing and inspiring in these times to listen to the true gospel of Irish nationality. They should all resolve to follow the advice and counsel of Mr Pearse.

After Pearse's visit to Carrickmacross, Sinn Fein began to get a grip in Farny. Until the outbreak of the war Bernard O'Rourke had been a devoted Redmondite. In 1909-10, at various local government meetings, he was responsible for resolutions declaring 'unbounded confidence in the IPP'. In the late summer of 1914, he had rejoiced at the passing of the third Home Rule Bill. But events of the following eighteen months radically altered his political outlook. In particular, and shortly after Pearse's visit to Carrickmacross, three young men - Eugene Donnelly, James Ross and John Quinn - were arrested, tried and convicted for their involvement in an anti-recruitment demonstration. Their release in February 1916 occasioned a massive demonstration in Carrickmacross addressed by The O'Rahilly.



[3]

The county inspector concluded: 'This demonstration will no doubt strengthen the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin Party in and near Carrickmacross as it was meant to do.' Fr Maguire was on the reception platform (along with at least two other parish priests and four curates) and he introduced the three young men to the large crowd present as 'these martyrs for a principle':

He [Maguire] wished to associate himself intimately with the proceedings of the evening... A day would come when those who were now opposed to them would be glad to creep into the movement by the back stairs... As a man and a priest he was proud of the movement [Sinn Féin] and he hoped as he strove to guide the people right in religious matters, he would do so in matters political.

It is true that there would be those who would in time creep up the back stairs but not in the immediate future. The Catholic Hall may have been 'densely packed' for Pearse's visit but not everybody there had the conviction to follow his separatist ideology. There was only one other Sinn Fein club established in the county before Easter, in Rockcorry

under Fr O Ciarain. Francis Tummon later recalled in his witness statement that he had gone to Mass on the Sunday after the rebellion where the parish priest announced that Pearse had unconditionally surrendered in Dublin and recalled:

While I've no doubt the majority of the congregation on that Sunday morning were aware a rebellion against British rule had been in progress during the previous week, few indeed knew who this man Pearse was or what he stood for.

[3] IMAGE OF BERNARD O'ROURKE COURTESY OF TERRANCE O'ROURKE

PLANNING FOR REBELLION

"The Dublin Insurrection of 1916 came and went without a ripple in our household or in the district for that matter"



Meanwhile, the IRB continued to secretly plan for insurrection. They kept Eoin MacNeill in the dark for as long as possible, not revealing their plans until Good Friday 1916 and while MacNeill initially gave his support he rescinded this when he heard that the ship carrying German arms into Ireland had been scuttled off the coast of Kerry. On Easter Sunday, he issued a command through the national newspapers for all Volunteers to stand down from manoeuvres.

The IRB military council went ahead and on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, Pearse read **'The Proclamation of the Irish Republic'** to a gathering of bewildered people outside the General Post Office in Dublin.

IT PROMISED:

...religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

The Proclamation had been signed by seven men who had constituted themselves as the provisional government of the Irish republic, including James Connolly, sworn onto the IRB Military Council the previous January. Connolly's parents had emigrated from Monaghan to Edinburgh where Connolly was born in 1868.

Around 1,600 poorly armed Volunteers occupied strategic buildings in the centre of Dublin. Within a week, the rebellion had been crushed, large parts of the city had been destroyed, and over 450 people (mainly civilians) had been killed.

On Good Friday, only a very small band of Irish Volunteers from south Monaghan, probably no more than twelve in number, had congregated in the Foresters' Hall, Carrickmacross. Confusion reigned as original orders were countermanded. The men went home. Thus around south Monaghan, as *Peter Kavanagh*, the poet's brother, put it:

**THE DUBLIN INSURRECTION OF 1916
CAME AND WENT WITHOUT A RIPPLE
IN OUR HOUSEHOLD OR IN THE
DISTRICT, FOR THAT MATTER.'**

There is no evidence of Volunteers having gathered with intent anywhere else in County Monaghan. James Sullivan of Latton, for example, recalled that there was no attempt made by the Latton Volunteers to mobilise in 1916: *'We were not asked to mobilise and we didn't know that a Rising was to take place. We heard after Easter Sunday that Volunteers had mobilised at Rockcorry under arms but that nothing further took place. There was [sic] no arrests made following 1916 in our area.'* John McGahey of the Rockcorry Company claimed they continued to drill up to Easter Week but *'got no information that an impending resort to an armed rising was contemplated.'*

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC.
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN : In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

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

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages 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 cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,

SEAN Mac DIARMADA. THOMAS MacDONAGH,

P. H. PEARSE. EAMONN CEANNT,

JAMES CONNOLLY. JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

MONAGHAN'S PARTICIPANTS TO THE DUBLIN RISING

"More than once I saw the man I aimed at fall"



There were, however, a number of Monaghan people who were active in Dublin or simply got caught up in the events as eyewitnesses. For example, Charles Laverty, a prominent Castleblayney solicitor, his wife and four children were all confined to the Gresham Hotel during the rebellion. They had arrived on Easter Saturday for a weekend sojourn. On Easter Monday, they headed to the Museum in Kildare Street; Laverty told a reporter from the *Dundalk Democrat* that the *'city had the usual Easter Bank Holiday appearance and ... gave no clue to the terrible events that were to begin that day.'* When they were leaving the Museum they saw a young boy who had been shot in the leg and then rushed to hospital by the police. Rumours began to circulate that rebels had taken Stephen's Green and the GPO. The Lavertys decided to evacuate from the city but when on the train for Dundalk at Amiens Street station an excited official told all the passengers they had to get off. Laverty managed to get his family back to the Gresham Hotel.

On Tuesday the streets were filled with looters *'carrying away all sorts of expensive goods'*; Laurence's toy shop was looted and set on fire. Laverty saw *'barefooted youths carrying toy tricycles and rocking horses.'* On Wednesday, Laverty's young son saw three men killed at the corner of the hotel.

'ABSOLUTELY HEEDLESS OF THE DANGER, PERHAPS GLAD OF THE CHANCE THAT THE REBELLION HAD SENT HIS WAY.'

But it was on Thursday, during a lull in the fighting, that he witnessed something he claimed would stay with him for the rest of his life. Peeping out the window, Laverty saw a barelegged, bare-footed boy of six or seven years of age, joyfully kicking a new football around Nelson's Pillar. Those at the window shivered with fear for the unfortunate child; but he played on: *'absolutely heedless of the danger, perhaps glad of the chance that the Rebellion had sent his way.'*

By Friday, food was running short, there was no bread or milk, and guests dined on a diet of ham and potatoes. The atmosphere was dark and stuffy, all doors and windows were bolted, and the guests began to suffer from colds. The only amusement was provided by members of the D'Oyly Carte Company, a professional light opera company, who occasionally burst into song and kept the guests happy. On Saturday, the entire city centre seemed to be *'red with a lurid flame from the blazing buildings.'* The guests watched as a column of men dressed in Volunteer uniforms made their way from the direction of Nelson's Pillar to the Rotunda; Pearse had surrendered.

Sorcha MacMahon, born near Lough Egish in 1890 and educated in the St Louis Convent in Monaghan Town was working in Dublin when the rebellion broke out. She was secretary of the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan and a good friend of Kathleen Clarke, wife of Thomas, the senior signatory of the Proclamation. On Easter Monday, Sorcha carried mobilisation orders

throughout Dublin and for the rest of the week she was constantly in and out of the GPO carrying dispatches, as well as fresh clothes to the men. After the Rising, she set up the Irish Volunteers Dependants' Fund along with *Aine Ceannt* and *Kathleen Clarke*.

Annie Higgins was born in Dublin but was working as a music teacher in Carrickmacross in 1916. She was a member of the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan. She was in Dublin during the Easter holidays and spent Tuesday and Wednesday cooking for the Volunteers in the Hibernian Bank outpost opposite the GPO. She was sent with despatches to Monaghan but was arrested en route. She spent time in Armagh, Richmond, Kilmainham and Mountjoy gaols along with other women including *Constance Markievicz*, *Helena Molony*, *Countess Plunkett*, and *Kathleen Lynn*. She was released on 4 June 1916.

Margaret Skinnider was born in Coatbridge, North Lanarkshire. Her mother was Scottish and her father was originally from Monaghan. She strongly regarded herself as an Irish nationalist. She trained as a school teacher and worked in Glasgow until 1916 where she had joined Cumann na mBan. She was also an active suffragette and a member of the Women's Social and Political Union. In 1916, she resigned her teaching position and made a number of trips to Dublin in preparation for the Rising. On one boat trip over, she carried detonators for bombs hidden in her hat and under her coat. In Dublin, she joined the Irish Citizen Army and at the beginning of the Rising she served as a despatch rider for Michael Mallin's outpost on

St. Stephen's Green. Then she took up position as a sniper on the roof of the College of Surgeons. She would later write:

'It was dark there, full of smoke and the din of firing, but it was good to be in action. I could look across the tops of the trees and see the British soldiers on the roof of the Shelbourne. I could also hear their shot hailing against the roof and wall of our fortress. for in truth this building was just that. More than once I saw the man I aimed at fall.'

Skinnider was one of the very few women actively involved in military operations during the Rising.

On Wednesday 26th April, in the course of action along Harcourt Street, she was shot three times. She was brought to St Vincent's Hospital where she was arrested and brought to the Bridewell Police Station. A surgeon from St Vincent's intervened and said she was unfit for imprisonment.

After several weeks in hospital she was released and managed to make her way back to Scotland. In December 1916, she went to America where she collected funds for the republican movement.

Skinnider returned to Ireland in 1917 to take up a position as a teacher in North Dublin. She became active in the War of Independence and during the Civil War she became Paymaster General of the Provisional Irish Republican Army. During both conflicts she spent time in prison. After independence, she returned to her teaching career in Dublin and retired in 1961. She died ten years later and is buried in the Republican plot in Glasnevin Cemetery.



SORCHA MACMAHON

[4]



MARGARET SKINNIDER

[4] IMAGE OF SORCHA MACMAHON COURTESY OF THE MACMAHON FAMILY

POST-REBELLION REACTION IN COUNTY MONAGHAN

'Highest condemnation of the action precipitated by a number of hot-headed revolutionaries and socialists'



In the Wednesday after Easter, news of the shelling of Liberty Hall and the arrival of 10,000 troops was met with 'cheer after cheer' in Monaghan town. On Sunday Dean O'Connor told his parishioners in Carrickmacross: *'I have good news for you today. The Sinn Féin rebellion has been crushed and its leaders will be executed'*. Over the next two weeks, the seven signatories of the Proclamation and eight others were tried by courts martial and then executed by firing squad. A sixteenth man, Roger Casement, was later tried in London and hanged in Pentonville prison in August.

Thomas McGahon, the aforementioned editor of the Dundalk Democrat, articulated the outrage of middle class Nationalist Ireland in the headline, *'An act of madness'*. He argued so much had changed since the last quarter of the nineteenth century as *'concession after concession'* in terms of social and political reform had been wrung from the British government, culminating in the passing of the Home Rule Bill, that a rebellion could not be justified. His report also suggested the middle class fear of socialism and that an uprising leading to revolution would have serious consequence for the men of property who monopolised the politics and socio-economic life of rural Ireland. The Dublin mob's widespread looting, he argued, where *'every slum and court and tenement seemed to vomit forth the lawless element in the population on*

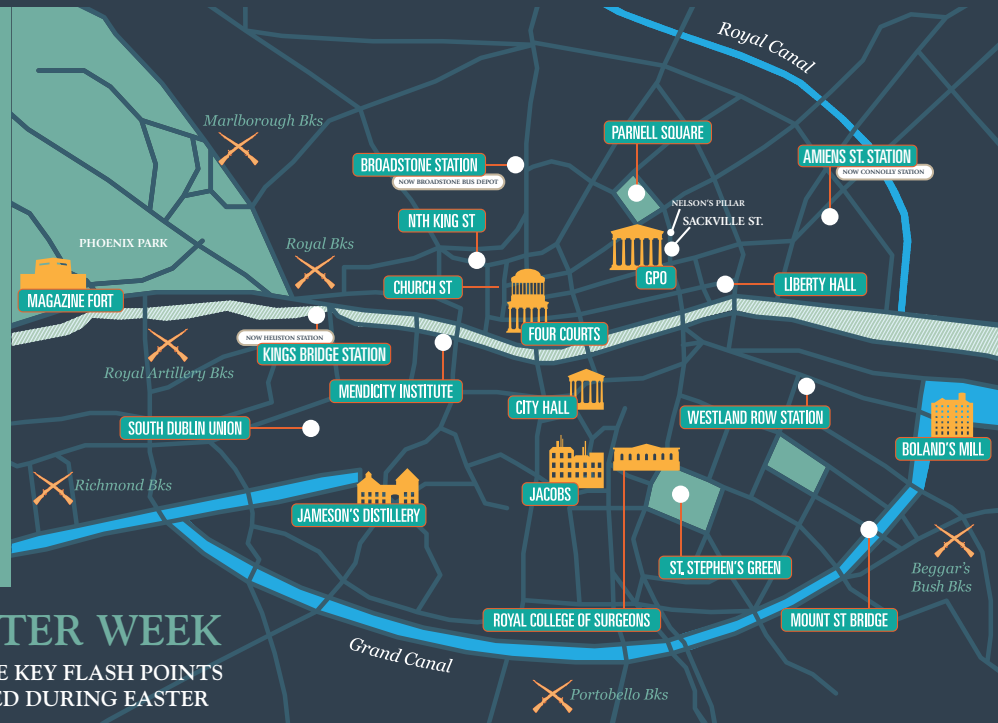
a wild career of loot and pillage, could not be allowed to engulf the rest of Ireland.'

McGahon's tirade appealed to the majority of those who sat on the local government bodies in Monaghan. Local political dignitaries such as Thomas Toal and Edward Kelly had passed through one bloodless revolution of the Land War era and had greatly benefited from the same; they were not now prepared to sacrifice all of these gains *'on the altar of Ireland.'* Thus, all the local government bodies disassociated themselves from the rebellion. The resolution of the county council *'greatly deplored ... the recent regrettable occurrences in Dublin which resulted in the loss of the lives of many of His Majesty's soldiers and civilians'*. The Carrickmacross Board of Guardians recorded their *'highest condemnation of the action precipitated by a number of hot-headed revolutionaries and socialists'* and called for the execution of the leaders. Edward Kelly had no sympathy for the leaders:

He was very glad that the prominent Sinn Féiners of Carrickmacross were so weak-spirited that they saved themselves on this occasion.... Everyone should approve of the action of the authorities in shooting the rebel leaders – because that is what they are only a handful of revolutionists. I say it knowing that the press is here and that it will be published – they were nothing but the cowards who

FROM A
WHISPER TO
A ROAR

THE 1916 RISING WAS LARGELY CONFINED TO DUBLIN CITY. THE REBELS TOOK OVER THE GENERAL POST OFFICE ON WHAT WAS THEN SACKVILLE STREET (NOW O'CONNELL STREET) AND USED IT AS THEIR HEADQUARTERS. THEY ALSO ESTABLISHED OUTPOSTS IN SOME OF THE MAJOR BUILDINGS OF THE CITY INCLUDING THE FOUR COURTS, JACOB'S BISCUIT FACTORY, BOLAND'S MILL, THE SOUTH DUBLIN UNION HOSPITAL AND ST STEPHEN'S GREEN. WITHIN A WEEK, THE REBELS WERE FORCED TO GIVE UP THE GPO BECAUSE OF THE FIRE THAT HAD RESULTED FROM SHELLING. THEY TOOK UP A NEW POSITION IN 16 MOORE STREET. IT WAS FROM HERE ON 29 APRIL THAT PATRICK PEARSE ISSUED AN ORDER FOR ALL COMPANIES TO SURRENDER TO PREVENT THE FURTHER LOSS OF LIFE.



DUBLIN, EASTER WEEK

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE KEY FLASH POINTS AND BUILDINGS OCCUPIED DURING EASTER WEEK 1916.

flinched conscription when their tried and true leader John Redmond – declared that Ireland would be a strong arm to assist England in this war (hear, hear). We are all ashamed of them.

Kelly had no fear of his outburst being published in the newspapers; there was no need to be fearful, he spoke on behalf of the majority for the majority.

Local Protestant response from church leaders, politicians, and local community leaders was, as to be expected, equally vehement in its denunciation. The Unionist Northern Standard told its readers of the rebels coming from their 'lair's', armed with 'deadly

weapons'. The rebels were said to have commandeered mail trucks which they then filled with 'carcasses of beef and mutton, chickens, sausages, hams, bread with butter and other edibles', reportedly paid for in £5 and £10 pound notes stolen from the post office. There was continuous emphasis of the immoral turpitude of the insurgents. The Dublin mob – 'always in evidence on occasions of this nature' – became 'riotously drunk' while 'elderly women [were] rolling along the streets, their skirts held up to carry the load of looted goods.' The report was intended to cause shock and abhorrence, to emphasise to Unionists what they could expect in a Home Rule Ireland.

MONAGHAN AND THE SOMME, JULY–NOVEMBER 1916

'Sought out and personally offered his services to his Lordship and his country'



In the summer of 1916 the Protestant families (in common with many Catholics) were more concerned about the fate of their sons at the Front. As the weeks passed the Northern Standard was more inclined to celebrate and grieve in equal measure the July offensive and 'the glorious achievement of the Ulster Division' at the Somme.

The Battle of the Somme was one of the largest battles of the Great War. Fought between 1 July and 1 November, it would cost over 1.5 million Allied lives. On the very first day, 57,500 British soldiers were killed, including almost 5,000 men from the 36th (Ulster) Division.

A perusal through the pages of the newspaper for the last six months of 1916 clearly illustrates the devastating impact that the 'Great Push' of 1 July had on so many families in Monaghan. The editorial of 1 August, after news of dozens of Monaghan dead and scores of wounded and missing, proudly proclaimed: *'the glorious deeds of heroism of the Ulster Division in the great advance ... had filled with pride the people of the whole province.'* Headlines told of an offensive three times the magnitude of the Battle of Loos, of 500 shell bursts a minute, but most particularly of the dead. One report told how *'Newbliss had indeed paid a heavy toll in the recent great "Push".'* At least three men from the small village had been killed, one had died of wounds and three more were wounded or missing in action.

Private Joseph Burke was killed, his brother, John, was badly injured in a gas attack and in a tragic irony their father, John, a former rate collector, died the same day at home in Newbliss. His neighbour, William Clarke, received news of the death of his son; another son in the army had been injured in the 1916 rebellion. From the same village, Private James Dunn, the eldest son of William Dunn, serving in the Bedfordshire Regiment was also killed. He had served his apprenticeship as a gardener on the Dartrey demesne in Rockcorry before moving to work for Earl Brownlow at Berkhamstead. While there, Earl Kitchener paid a visit and on hearing this, Dunn *'sought out and personally offered his services to his Lordship and his country.'*

The waiting and uncertainty for families must have been extremely stressful, so much so that M.E. Knight, Grand Master of the Orange Lodge, wrote to the editor of the Standard on 20 July to caution against rumours: *'Considerable anxiety and doubt prevails among the relatives and friends of many of our gallant soldiers of the Ulster division from this county engaged in the recent fighting, no reliable news as to many of them has been received.'*

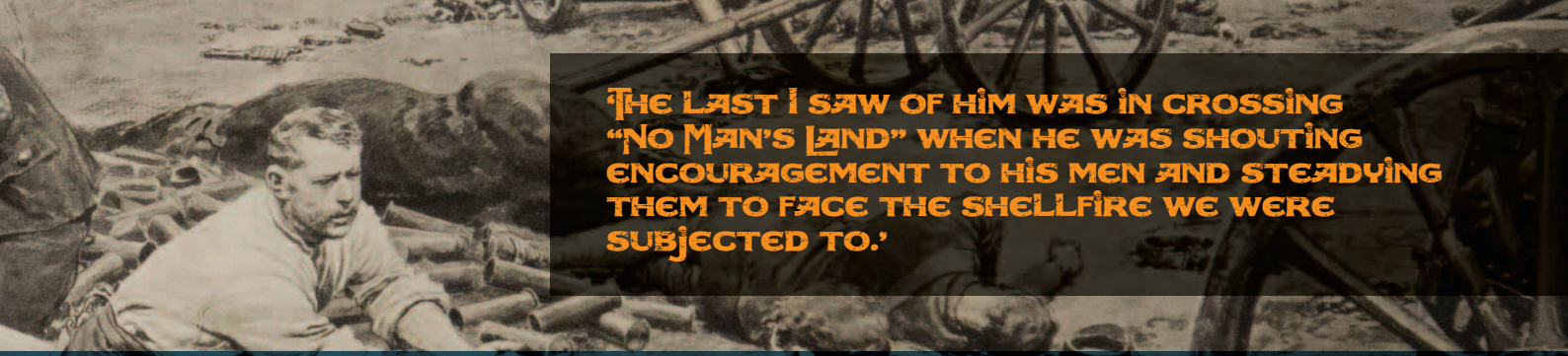
Shortly afterwards the Rev W.M. Wilson of the Methodist Manse in Monaghan town received news that his son had been killed. A comrade wrote to the minister: *'The last I saw of him was in crossing "No Man's Land" when he was shouting encouragement to his men and steadying them to face the shell-fire we were subjected to.'*

Two sons of Henry Davis, Clonkirk in Clones were reported killed. Lance Corporal Mark Wallace of Killygoan was killed shortly after crossing the parapet. He was twenty-six. His brother, Jack, had survived Gallipoli and was then serving in India. Private James Wilson of Corbrack House in Ballybay was killed and his brother, John, was reported missing.

Private Thomas Jackson of Tanderageebrack was killed in the first advance and his brother, Noble, wounded. Private James Kennedy's family received news from Lieutenant T.F. Given:

In total, almost 540 Monaghan men were killed in the war, about half and half Protestant and Catholic.

One story encapsulates the complexities of the time. In November 1916, news reached Monaghan that Private Thomas Hughes of Corravoo, Castleblayney, of the 6th Connaught Rangers, had been awarded the Victoria Cross. On 3 September 1916 Hughes had been wounded at Guillemont in France as part of the Somme offensive. Despite his injuries he single-handedly captured an enemy machine gun position, killing two gunners and capturing three or four prisoners.



**‘THE LAST I SAW OF HIM WAS IN CROSSING
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ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS MEN AND STEADYING
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SUBJECTED TO.’**

‘He was found by a search party belonging to another regiment, badly wounded, and was brought into the trenches, but, I am sorry to say, died soon afterwards. His body was buried ... in a cemetery just behind the line which we had been holding for some time previous to the 1st July.’

These are just a few examples of casualties from the Somme alone. In total around 2,500 Monaghan men served in the Great War. There were notable contributions from some families: Seven Roberts brothers from Killybreen in Errigal Truagh all joined the British army at different stages; seven sons of Sir Thomas Crawford of Newbliss served, and three of these were decorated for gallantry; four Steenson brothers from Glaslough volunteered and two were killed.

The Nationalist-dominated Castleblayney Board of Guardians agreed to present him with an address of welcome, one member proclaiming:

‘Go Monaghan should not alone feel proud of him – Ireland should be delighted with the record of this young hero.’

However, the Ireland which Private Hughes returned to was very different to the one he had left. By the end of 1918, the political landscape had changed radically as a result of events after the Easter Rising of 1916. In the 1940s, he died an impoverished bachelor, his heroics consigned to the scrap heap of memory.

THE RISE OF SINN FEIN

"...persuading themselves and others that they were out and our republicans and rebels"



It has been well documented by historians how in a remarkably short period of time Irish politics were transformed and condemnatory attitudes towards the rebels gave way to sympathy. The scale and method of the executions (drawn out over a number of weeks) and the government's attempts to suppress revolutionary nationalism through the mass arrest of suspects under the Defence of the Realm Act had a reactionary impact. In the final issue of the Dundalk Democrat in 1916, McGahon was forced to admit: *'It has been said and very truly that while the Sinn Féin rebellion aroused no sympathetic feeling in the masses of the people, the methods of its suppression did.'* In his June report the county inspector of the police noted that

Sympathy with the rebels has been strikingly shown by the readiness with which Nationalists are subscribing to collections in aid of the families of those who were imprisoned or shot for taking a leading part in the rebellion.

In 1966, the authors of *Cuimhneachain Mhuineachain* claimed: 'It was the execution of these same leaders that led many nationalists to admire the rebels and their gallant gesture. As death followed death a wave of anti-British feeling swept the country. When the first few were shot people pitied them as being unfortunate. By the time the last bullets were fired they had begun to worship them as heroes' and that when James Connolly was *'propped up on a chair and shot'*, there were *'few in Ireland [who] could sympathise with this extreme policy of extermination'*.

The aforementioned Tom Carragher recalled:

AFTER THE RISING THERE WAS AN AWFUL SILENCE, THEN A MURMUR WHICH GREW AND GREW INTO AN AWFUL ROAR AND BY 1918 THE PROFILE OF PATRICK PEARSE WAS HUNG ON EVERY KITCHEN WALL.'

The most prominent individual arrested after the Rising was Bernard O'Rourke; the events in Carrickmacross had brought him to the police's attention. O'Rourke's imprisonment, as evidenced in his letters to his wife, indicate the influence the experience had on his political transformation. In one, he wrote:

I never came across a jollier or finer set of chaps anywhere, but it would be impossible to be there and not to share their intrepid spirit – I might also say recklessness... These men were...looking to the future with absolute fearlessness.

Political intervention from the highest level, including British Prime Minister H.H. Asquith, ensured that O'Rourke was released without charge and he left Richmond in the first flush of detainees. He returned a local hero to blazing bonfires *'from hill to hill all over Farney.'* He began to work on behalf of Sinn Fein and would, in time, become the most successful Dáil loan organiser in Ulster.

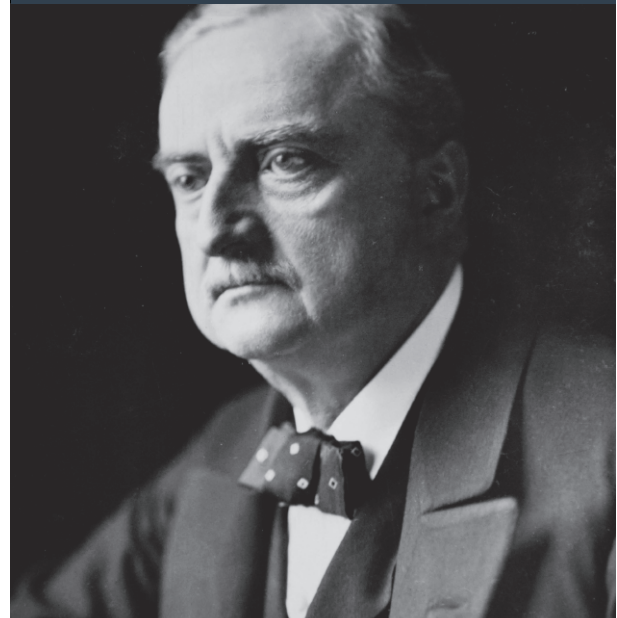
In other respects, the Irish Party was simply the architect of its own downfall. It did not do enough to combat the growth in popularity for Sinn Féin. John Redmond, for example, did not make a public speech until October, and regardless of his reasons for failing to do so, it was perceived by many of his supporters as poor judgement. In mid-October 1916, the editor of the Democrat could only conclude: *‘Mr Redmond has been too long silent, while his and Ireland’s enemies day after day poured poison into the people’s ears’*. Similarly, in April 1917, Thomas Toal, although still reluctant to express open support for Sinn Féin, stated that *‘they must have a go ahead constitutional movement ... Mr Redmond has been too weak.’* In the months which followed, Sinn Féin’s active anti-conscription campaign and the failure of the 1917 Convention to solve the Irish question, further paved the way for the emergence of Sinn Féin to prominence. In June 1917, part of a United Irish League resolution summed up the transformation in Monaghan:

A little over a year ago we were all constitutional Nationalists aiming at securing Home Rule.... Then came the bombshell of the rebellion and hardly had the noise of the explosion ceased than a number of the same people who for years had joined in the cry for Home Rule were persuading themselves and others that they were out and out republicans and rebels.

By December 1917, there were 35 Sinn Féin clubs in County Monaghan with an estimated membership of 1,800. The tide had turned against constitutional politics and Ireland was heading towards an armed struggle for independence. In the 1918 General election, two Sinn Feiners were returned for Monaghan and in the 1920 elections Sinn Féin took control of local government. By then a War of Independence was under way that would impact upon Monaghan much more than the Easter Rising.



ARTHUR GRIFFITH, Founder of Sinn Féin [5]



JOHN REDMOND, Leader of the Irish Political Party

[5] IMAGE OF ARTHUR GRIFFITH COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE EASTER RISING

"They had died for Irish freedom and their deaths had not been in vain"



y the time of its golden jubilee in 1966, the Easter Rising had assumed iconic status in Irish Nationalist history and had become the site of memory for those who wanted to celebrate the physical overthrow of the British administration in Ireland. The Irish government decreed that the fiftieth anniversary was to be celebrated with a great deal of pomp and ceremony. Monaghan was one of the twelve provincial centres chosen by the government to host official commemorative events because of its connection to James Connolly.

Because so little had happened in Monaghan during Easter Week 1916, the commemoration of the Rising was presented as part of the longer independence struggle which ended in 1921. The Golden Anniversary showed that commemoration and remembrance do not always sit comfortably side by side. Commemoration is selective: to remember some event or some body is to forget something or somebody else and this is often deliberate as much as accidental.

Thus, the 1966 commemorations in Monaghan showed little consideration for those whom the nature of the celebrations might offend, most especially the large Protestant population of the county – reduced, it should be noted, by more than half since 1916, not least of all because of the fallout from the 1919 to 1923 period. Mary Daly has pointed to the fact that the Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian communities in

Monaghan had issued a joint statement in which they hoped ‘that such celebrations as are contemplated will enhance the dignity and the image of our country in the eyes of the world’ and she concluded that

‘The government’s efforts to encourage the Protestant churches and the Jewish community to participate in the commemoration, and their apparent willingness to be involved, reflected the more open and pluralist attitudes found during the 1960s.’

However, it is very difficult to find any evidence of Protestant participation in the events of 1966 other perhaps that the loaning of Orange sashes to the students of St Louis Convent in Monaghan for the pageant there. There was no mention of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant or the Ulster Volunteer Force. In fact, the events in Monaghan clearly demonstrated the futility of the government’s ambition *‘to create a coherent narrative of Irish history and society.’* By 1966, and despite the fact that they lived in the Republic, the attitudes of many Monaghan Protestants were still conditioned by wider Ulster Unionist attitudes where the Stormont government in Northern Ireland was opposed to the jubilee celebrations.

‘EVERYONE SHOULD APPROVE OF THE ACTION OF THE AUTHORITIES IN SHOOTING THE REBEL LEADERS, BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF REVOLUTIONISTS.’

And while the most ambitious commemorative project undertaken in the county was the creation of an oral archive through interviews with veterans of the 1916 to 1921 period, it seems no one thought it might be a good idea to record the Protestant version of events. Perhaps there would not have been too many willing participants.

Nor was there much sensitivity shown towards the descendants of those families whose ancestors had been executed by the IRA as spies or informers during the War of Independence. Thus, in the village of Rockcorry there was a parade to the grave of Volunteer Peter Reilly who had been killed in the general raid for arms in 1920 but there was no mention of the Protestant Flemings, father and son, who were killed in March 1921 in retaliation for their defence of their home during the same general raid.

But most particularly, it was difficult for Protestant and, indeed, Catholic families who had been affected to publicly commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in July 1966. Fifty years of collective nationalist amnesia had denied the thousands of young Monaghan Catholic and Protestant men their rightful place in the county's history.

The same amnesia had allowed for the emergence of an alternative history of 1916 in Monaghan and the creation of a mythology that had little basis in historical fact. In the town of Carrickmacross, bedecked in tricolour bunting, Fr Donovan *'exhorted the people to carry on the good work started by the men of 1916.'* Patrick McNally, a member of Monaghan County Council, said that *'the sacrifice made by the men of 1916 was a blood sacrifice so that all Irishmen could be free. They had died for Irish freedom and their deaths had not been in vain.'* Nobody mentioned Dean O'Connor's joyful announcement in Carrickmacross fifty years before that the leaders of the Rising were to

be executed or the cheers his announcement had elicited from the crowds.

The only significant politician of the 1916 era to live to see the 1966 golden jubilee was Edward Kelly of Essexford. It has been noted already that in the direct aftermath of the Rising he had said, in his capacity as chairman of Carrickmacross Poor Law Guardians, that *'Everyone should approve of the action of the authorities in shooting the rebel leaders – because that is what they are only a handful of revolutionists.'*

A few weeks later he proclaimed that *'So far as his support of the Irish Party was concerned he would continue on until he went down with that ship (hear, hear), and when it was raked up out of the bottom of the sea, he would be found on deck.'* It was a rousing piece of political rhetoric but, like many others, he soon realised the futility of loyalty to the Home Rule cause if he was to survive the seismic political shift that took place after Easter Week.

Kelly recognised that old Redmondites like himself had to change and he certainly had few scruples when it came to party loyalty. He acquired the nickname *'the twister'* when over time he swung from the Irish Parliamentary Party to Sinn Féin to Fianna Fáil and eventually to Fine Gael. He was the consummate politician who used the nickname at local elections to his advantage when he went as far as to have a poster designed of himself, with his coat turned inside out, and he twisting the starting handle of a tractor with the slogan: *'Vote for Eddie, the twister'*. For seventeen years, he was chairman of Monaghan County Council and in 1954 achieved his most desired political ambition when he was elected Fianna Fáil TD for Monaghan.

He lost his seat in 1957 and when he did not get the Fianna Fáil nomination in the next election in 1961, he went to the Fine Gael convention in Ballybay where he was nominated as the running mate of the party leader, James Dillon. He narrowly failed to get elected but he later told Ted Nealon: *'It would have been interesting to have sat on both sides of the House. I think the people of Monaghan liked my brand of consistency.'*

Nealon reminisced that Kelly *'remains for me a man unmatched in any of the County Halls'*.

In 1966, when he was interviewed by the authors of *Cuimhneachan Mhuineachain*, Kelly found it necessary to completely fabricate his experiences in Easter Week. According to his witness statement, he and three friends who had been at Fairyhouse races on Easter Monday made their way into Dublin afterwards for a meal in Wynn's Hotel. They found themselves at the visitors' gate of Nelson Pillar. Kelly claimed:

'Wait a minute, boys,' I said *'surely if there's going to be trouble, we should be in after all we pose as great Irishmen down in County Monaghan. You are great Sinn Féiners. I am a great Hibernian. If we are sincere in what we say, the acid test [is] being applied now. It is up to us to do our little bit to drive home the blow. I, for one, am game to do that, if any one of you come with me into the Post Office.'*

It is not known when Kelly first made up this story or began to use it. What is more certain is that his political career could have ended abruptly after the 1916 Rising had he not chosen to change his politics. The great social revolution that he and others of his generation feared in 1916 never materialised. His socio-economic status was never threatened and so he was free to follow his political ambitions. His statement may have been fabricated but it is good that it has survived. As well as serving to illustrate that men like Kelly believed that a

major part of their legacy depended upon the role they created for themselves in the Rising, it is also a clear warning to historians about the veracity of the much hyped witness statements.



A COLLECTION OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL PRINTED PUBLICATIONS FROM 1966 IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 1916 RISING

FROM A WHISPER TO A ROAR

IT IS ONLY FAIR THAT THE 1916 RISING AND THE IDEOLOGICAL ASPIRATIONS OF ITS LEADERS, AS ESPOUSED IN THE PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE, NEEDS TO BE APPRAISED IN A BALANCED AND SCHOLARLY FASHION WITH DUE RECOGNITION OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN WHICH THEY WERE FORMULATED. THE ASPIRATIONS OF ITS LEADERS AND THOSE WHO FOUGHT MUST BE VIEWED AND INTERPRETED IN ITS MUCH WIDER GLOBAL CONTEXT. THE CENTENARY COMMEMORATIONS OF 2016, TAKING PLACE IN A MUCH CHANGED POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE TO 1966, ALLOWS FOR A MORE

NUANCED AND HISTORICALLY ACCURATE EXAMINATION AND, IN PARTICULAR, AN OPPORTUNITY TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO WERE FORGOTTEN FOR DECADES AFTER INDEPENDENCE, EXPELLED FROM THE NATIONAL HERITAGE NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE BORDER. IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT THIS BOOKLET AND ACCOMPANYING EXHIBITION, UNDERPINNED BY A WEALTH OF AVAILABLE PRIMARY SOURCES, MOST PARTICULARLY THOSE ON DEPOSIT IN MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM, GOES SOME WAY TOWARDS THIS.



PROFESSOR TERENCE DOOLEY

Professor Terence Dooley lectures in the History Department at Maynooth University where he is also Director of the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates. He has published a number of best-selling books including *'The decline of the Big House in Ireland'*, *'The murders at Wildgoose Lodge'* and most recently *'The decline and fall of the dukes of Leinster: love, war, debt and madness 1872-1948'*. He has also written extensively on Monaghan life and politics during the revolutionary period. He is a native of Killanny, Co. Monaghan.

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And to remember the late Pdraig Clerkin who first alerted me to it.]
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FROM A WHISPER TO A ROAR – EXPLORING THE UNTOLD STORY OF MONAGHAN 1916

Monaghan 1916, when the whisper of an Irish Republic exploded into a roar following the bombshell of the Rebellion. A never before told story about the lives of Monaghan people caught up in the Rising as well as the Monaghan people who fought in the British Army during the Battle of Somme. This ground breaking exhibition looks at life in the county during this turbulent time and how these violent and chaotic events affected everyone in Monaghan and changed their lives forever. Monaghan County Museum has been working for over a year with renowned historian and Monaghan man, Professor Terence Dooley of NUI Maynooth to research and develop this gripping story of passion, sacrifice and patriotism.

The region of Ireland that would eventually become known as County Monaghan has been defined by life on the frontier since the Bronze Age and the construction of the Black Pig's Dyke, an ancient barrier separating Ulster from the rest of the country. The Home Rule Bill that was passed in 1914 but postponed until the end of the war proposed a separate state in the North of Ireland and Monaghan was once again about to experience life on the border. This possible future aroused great fury in a county that was at the epicentre of the political divide in Ireland.



MONAGHAN
Músaem Chontae Mhuineachain
**COUNTY
MUSEUM**

In this exhibition we investigate how the people of Monaghan who were from both Nationalist and Unionist backgrounds dealt with the initial shock of the 1916 Rising and we see how the tremors of the rebellion eventually started shaking the county to the core, forever changing the future of Monaghan and the country.

For many in Monaghan though, both Nationalist and Unionist, the summer of 1916 brought their focus to the battle fields of France. Thousands of men from Monaghan signed up and went to fight in the British Army during World War I. Many of them formed part of the 36th (Ulster) Division who went over the top on the first day of the Somme offensive on July 1st and never came back. For the men who were lucky enough to survive, the Monaghan they came home to was a very different place.

The exhibition will run from March 10th until the end of 2016 and will be supported with a vast array of workshops, talks, tours and events throughout the year.

*For full details on Monaghan County Museum's full programme of events visit:
www.monaghan.ie/museum*

Like us on Facebook, call us on (047)82928 or visit us at 1-2 Hill Street Monaghan Town.



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MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE MHUINEACHAIN

ON VIEW FROM 10TH MARCH UNTIL DECEMBER 2016

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PROF. TERRANCE DOOLEY OF NUI MAYNOOTH