

THE IRISH TIMES



Stories

from the revolution

1912-1923

IRISH TIMES BOOKS

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Introduction:

Beyond heroes and villains

‘Stories’ is about the richness and complexity of history’s weave, and the part our relatives all played in it, for good or ill.

Patrick Smyth

‘*Stories from the Revolution*’ is another of *The Irish Times* “Century” eBooks produced to mark/commemorate/celebrate – whatever you’re having yourself – the decade of centenaries of the period 1912-23 which forged the shape of modern Ireland.

A “revolution”? Not just the Rising itself, but the decade, a period when the engine of history accelerated, of mass mobilisations and social and political transformation – from agitation over Home Rule and the Ulster Covenant, through the Lockout of 1913, the women’s movement, the first World War, the Rising, the War of Independence, to the foundation of the new State, to Civil War . . .

Unlike the supplements on Home Rule and the Ulster resistance (April 25th, 2012) and the struggle for women’s suffrage (October 17th, 2012), “*Stories*” is a miscellany of mostly unrelated individual tales of how the courses of ordinary people’s lives were transformed by extraordinary times. It takes as its starting point the personal; these are the trees rather than the wood, history at the micro level.

The supplement is an attempt to convey the variety and complexity of the experiences of those days through a form of “citizen history”, mostly family stories, others drawn from archives like the extraordinary digitised, easily searchable witness accounts of the Bureau of Military History. It’s not comprehensive, or scientifically representative, and not objective – largely personal accounts, full, no doubt, of self-justification. These are not, for the most part, the great figures that history remembers.

These will also not necessarily be the stories of the “good guys” of our history. My own grandfather’s recently uncovered history as a commander of the Ulster Volunteers sits uneasily with his grandson’s socialist leaning. I’d prefer to be able to boast, like, it appears, most of the population, that he’d been with the rebels in the GPO instead of fighting in France. But I can’t help being somewhat proud of his engagement. Rediscovering our family’s place in our history is not to define ourselves definitively but to better understand who we are.

The purpose of the current commemoration exercise is not merely, like the 1966 Rising commemoration was, a legitimisation of the present by reviving heroes and crafting national narratives, airbrushing the uncomfortable out of our history. It is supposedly about understanding better our different traditions so that they can be reconciled and, yes, argued about. Reconciliation between communities, nationalist and unionist, between political traditions, republican and Free Stater, constitutionalist and revolutionary, and even perhaps within families still divided by history.

Historian Roy Foster has rightly wondered nervously “whether reconciliation is the historian’s business”. There are too many uncomfortable truths that can get in the way of a

political peacemaking project, and historians should not be in the business of massaging facts, of propaganda, to suit our current objectives.

The alternative to commemoration, he suggests whimsically, is total abstinence. “Should we go so far as to follow the suggestion that the next commemoration might take the form of raising a monument to Amnesia, and forgetting where we put it? Not entirely: as a historian, I have to be shocked by the idea. But as an Irishman I am rather attracted to it.”

Fellow historian Ann Dolan writes about the conflicting aspirations between those for whom history is a moral tale to justify the present and historians digging up uncomfortable truths: “The division is perhaps between those who want to arbitrate between right and wrong and those who want to find instead a multiplicity of motivations and interpretations, who see beyond heroes and villains, and look instead to people just doing what they did, as they saw it to get by.”

Michael McDowell’s story of his grandfather Eoin McNeill’s loss of his own son Brian in the Civil War, and Tim Kennedy’s nod to the execution of his cousin, RIC man Anthony Foley, vividly testify to the depth of divisions of the time even within families. Others write about untimely deaths, some poignant and courageous, others brutal, pointless, often of those only tangentially involved in conflict or drawn in against their will. Or how an alternative course, involvement in the First World War, shaped their lives.

And there are the forgotten stories of extraordinary women determined to make their mark, but all too easily written out of history.

“*Stories*” is not about heroes and villains, celebrating derring-do or passing judgment. It’s just about the richness and complexity of history’s weave, and the part our relatives all played in it, for good or ill.

Contributors to Stories from the Revolution

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‘Should the worst befall me . . .’

Philip Walshe was shot dead in the Easter Rising, unaware that a ceasefire had been called.

Fiona Gartland

As a teenager in the 1980s, I knew my great-uncle Philip Walshe had been killed in the 1916 Rising. A book mentioning his name had its place on the shelf in our front room, and my father, his nephew and namesake, kept a yellowed 1966 newspaper that listed him among the Easter dead.

But I think at the time there was a fear that romanticising his sacrifice might inspire his grandnieces and -nephews to identify with the then very active IRA. As a result, while there was quiet pride, there were few stories about him.

I have set out here to tell his story.

Philip was born in 1888 in Bishop Street, Dublin. His father Patrick – quiet, with an impressive moustache – was a delivery man for Boland’s bakery. His mother, Elizabeth McEvoy, a bright and lively woman, liked to talk politics at home. And while Patrick espoused Daniel O’Connell’s philosophy of non-violent resistance, Elizabeth spoke of the Fenian struggle; it was natural to her as a Laois-born daughter of an ageing Fenian, Patrick McEvoy.

Philip mopped up the debates and spent summers with his maternal grandfather listening to stories of Ireland’s struggle and British tyranny.

In 1902, when Philip was 14 the family moved to Manor Place in Stoneybatter and he left school to become an apprentice bookbinder. His indenture, still in family possession, shows him earning 10 shillings a week in his seventh and last year of training.

He worked for Cahill’s Printers and became involved in the local Gaelic Athletic Club, Archbishop Crokes. He also joined the Gaelic League, which met in Columcille Hall in Blackhall Street not far from his home. He threw himself into activities there and became a fluent Irish speaker. His younger sisters joined him, winning medals for Irish dancing and supporting him when he joined the Irish Volunteers in November 1913.

In the run-up to the Rising, according to research carried out by a cousin, Catherine Murphy, he held meetings of local volunteers in the parlour of Manor Place and as the day drew closer, hid guns beneath the floorboards there.

It is easy to imagine the scene on Easter Monday, April 24th, when the call came and 27-year-old Philip, a company sergeant, readied to depart. His older brother Patrick was working in Scotland at the time and so his sisters would have looked on as he prepared his rifle while his mother made sandwiches and his father, whom he called “the boss”, tried to find the words to dissuade him from action. But he wasn’t to be dissuaded.

He turned out in Columcille Hall with 68 other members of G Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade. It’s unlikely he had a uniform; according to a witness statement held at the

Bureau of Military History from Nicholas Laffan, the company captain, only 15 volunteers were in uniform.

They marched to the North King Street/Church Street area. Captain Laffan said they were “to occupy Broadstone Railway Station” but “had not sufficient men”. Instead they took up positions in the area, erecting barricades on the streets, taking over homes and businesses, and making ready to fight the soldiers that would come from the railway station.

A comrade, Patrick J Kelly, recorded how he was with Philip at the corner of Church Street and North Brunswick Street on that first day when a British lancer on horseback and a riderless horse came toward them. Philip opened fire and Commandant Ned Daly, the head of the battalion, rested a 45 revolver on Kelly’s shoulder, took aim and killed the lancer.

“Phil and I caught the horses. We turned them round and sent them galloping back ... to throw any others who might be behind into confusion.”

Kelly also recounted how on April 26th he and Philip climbed over a roof and down a ladder into the grounds of a convent in North Brunswick Street where a Capuchin friar, Fr Albert heard their confessions. He wrote that the friar blessed him and told him to die for Ireland if necessary “as Christ died for mankind”.

“I felt exalted and could have faced the entire British army single-handed,” Kelly said.

During the week, Philip’s sisters brought food to him and his comrades, skirting down the back lanes, dodging British army patrols. They told him they could hear the fighting from Manor Place and he called them “brave little girls”.

As the days passed, the British army closed in on G Company. By April 29th only a small group remained in the area, trapped in and around Clarke’s dairy on North King Street.

And while Pdraig Pearse surrendered to Gen William Lowe on that Saturday afternoon, Capt Laffan, as yet oblivious to the ceasefire, sent Philip and three others through the back yards of the street to find out if there were any volunteers left at Reilly’s Fort, a nearby pub.

It was on this mission that Philip was shot dead. Witness statements vary, but it appears he may have lain where he fell until late that night when news of the ceasefire finally filtered through and volunteer Sean O’Duffy helped carry his body to the nearby Richmond Hospital.

In his pocket they found a simple letter:

“Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know you are ever in my thoughts and should the worst befall me I am happy to have lent a hand in the fight and I know you will be proud of my involvement. Remember me to Lillie, Eileen, Kathleen and also the Boss and Paddy.

Yours, Phil.”

Family lore has it that his father could find no one willing to bury Philip and he had to borrow a horse and cart from Guinness's to transport his body to Glasnevin cemetery. His mother blamed herself for politicising her son and died a few years later.

There are memorials to Philip; descendants named after him, a headstone in Glasnevin cemetery marking his sacrifice; and in his father's own hand, written in the family bible "Philip Walshe Died for Ireland".

'A tigress in kitten's fur'

Helen Molony was held as 'an extremist of some importance', a badge of honour for the Abbey actress turned trade union leader.

Nell Regan

As the curtain came down for the interval and the audience were filing into the Abbey Theatre foyer, Helena Molony was already out of her costume, out the stage door and headed for Beresford Place to address an open-air anti-recruitment meeting.

It was 1915 and she spoke of the "perfidy of the British", reminding her audience that "England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity". Stepping off the platform she ran back to the Abbey, just as she had done every night that week, to appear as Mrs Mulroy in the last act of *The Mineral Workers* by George Boyle.

But this time, waiting at the stage door, was manager St John Irvine, who "flew into a violent rage" and ordered an understudy to get ready to replace her. "I said 'What about it? I am here half an hour before the time'. He said: 'You have no right to address a meeting. This is not a tea party, or a Sunday School party.' I said 'I have no experience of Sunday schools. I have experience of the stage'."

Molony performed that night and the incident was characteristic of her life over the decade 1912 to 1922 as she combined a busy acting career with work as militant separatist and emerging labour leader.

She later wrote "I was in the No. II (Abbey) company ... but more interested in Liberty Hall and what it stood for, Inghinidhe na hEireann where I was fostered, and in the Citizens Army and the Volunteers – all of whose aspirations were simmering up to the boilover so to speak".

The "boilover" came on Easter Monday, 1916. Molony had not just been speaking about rebellion; she had been at the centre of actual preparations for it since taking over the remnants of the Irish Women's Workers Union and Co-Op at James Connolly's request in 1915.

It was the start of a long trade union career but also a period of active military engagement. "If the simile 'a wolf in sheep's clothing' be used, the Workers Co-Op might be described as a 'tigress in kitten's fur' being carried on as it apparently was by a group of working women for whom I acted as secretary..."

"All the women of the co-op were members of the Citizen Army and bore arms and went into action with the Citizen Army on Easter Monday 1916...They were an integral part of the army and not in any sense a 'ladies auxiliary' but shared in the duties and responsibilities of their brothers in arms."

These were extraordinary times, her apprenticeship as a trade unionist dovetailed with her work as a separatist and feminist and it is unlikely that she would have been a military combatant in any other situation. In fact her work throughout the War of Independence and Civil War never again involved active military service,

Imprisoned in England after the Rising, and classified as ‘an extremist of some importance’, Molony wrote letters home saying that she was thinking about writing a play, “a temptation I have long resisted, in public anyway”. Released at Christmas, she had received so many insults about stabbing the British in the back, she “came home determined to do it all again”.

She moved into a flat on Leeson Street and immediately renewed activity on all fronts; appearing in the first Irish production of Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya*, resuming leadership of the Irish Women Workers Union, and remobilising public opinion.

Independence seemed farther away than ever as “we were defeated; nobody thought we would rise up again.” Defying not only the British authorities but trade union leaders and the commands of the IRB, she and “the extremist group in Liberty Hall, who were indeed the women” marked the first anniversary of the Rising. They “beflagged” the positions taken, pasted copies of the proclamation around the city and hung a banner on the roof of Liberty Hall inscribed “James Connolly Murdered 12 May”.

Barricading themselves in behind several tons of coal, it took a contingent of 200 police and army hours to shovel their way through to find “four girls inside Liberty Hall... sat like perfect ladies waiting for them...That celebration in 1917 established the 1916 Commemoration.”

Over the following turbulent years, Molony continued to work in the Abbey, with the Irish Women Workers Union (though no longer general secretary), as adviser to the Provisional Government, and was also in great demand “because I happened to have the misfortune to be able to speak. On any pretence,” she continued “we would hold a meeting – probably because it was forbidden”.

Moving from room to rented room and sometimes staying with friends, she was constantly raided. In fact “It would be easier to record the times I was not raided”.

Toward the end of this decade, 1912- 22, Molony had to think about one of the biggest professional decisions of her life – whether to remain a full-time actress or a trade union official. It was apt that her theatrical and political lives again tipped off each other so closely.

In February 1922, she appeared as Mrs Drennan in the first Abbey production of *The Round Table* by Lennox Robinson, (played by Sara Allgood later that year). Less than two weeks later she was back in the theatre but this time as executive member of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress for a special congress. Molony, vehemently anti Treaty, tabled an unsuccessful motion calling for Labour to stand aside so the upcoming election could be fought on pro-and anti- Treaty grounds.

In the event she chose to stay a trade unionist and left the stage.

Summing up those years she wrote “Military and social problems overshadowed artistic and cultural values”. That was certainly the case for Helena Molony; secretary of Inghinidhe na hEireann, Irish Citizen Army member and veteran of the 1916 Rising, 2nd general secretary of the Irish Women Workers Union, founding member of Saor Eire, leading member of the Dublin Trades Council and president of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions ... and Abbey actor.

Nell Regan is a freelance writer, poet and educator . Her biography of Helena Molony is published in Female Activists: Irish Women and Change 1900-1960 - Eds Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy, Woodfield Press, 2001.

Family of divided loyalties that was reunited in grief

All my sons' great-grandparents were dramatically affected by the 'decade of centenaries' but Brian Mac Neill particularly epitomises civil war's tragedy.

Michael McDowell

In the decade 2012 to 2022, frequently referred to nowadays in Ireland as "a decade of centenaries", I have been asked in a number of different ways to reflect on some of those events from the perspective of a descendant of one of the leading figures in Ireland's national struggle for independence. I do not claim any special authority for family members of historical figures; it is, however, almost inevitable that family connections colour one's views of historical events.

Examining my own present family, I find that the events of the "decade of centenaries" have left indelible marks. Put it this way - my sons' eight great-grandparents' lives were each dramatically affected by those events.

On my side of my family, Eoin Mac Neill, my maternal grandfather, played a well-known central role in the tumultuous events in the 10 years leading up to the foundation of the independent Irish state.

But my paternal grandfather, John M McDowell, was in his own way closely involved as well. He was a prominent member of John Redmond's United Irish League, closely associated with Nationalist MPs John Redmond, John Dillon, John Nugent and Joseph Devlin, as their legal adviser in their struggle for Home Rule.

In the immediate aftermath of 1916, he saw the way the wind was blowing, and, as a constitutional nationalist, urged his party to pursue Dominion Home Rule to ward off the Sinn Féin threat. He died suddenly in 1925 in London on a social trip in the company of his wife, John Nugent and Joseph Devlin.

My wife's grandparents' lives were equally affected by those events. Joseph Brennan, then a leading Sinn Féin member in Cahirciveen, had his home blown up as an official reprisal by British forces under martial law, and came to Dublin to pursue a career that would eventually see him elected to the Senate.

Patrick McCarvill, her maternal grandfather, as a young doctor was heavily involved in the IRA in Monaghan, was elected as a Republican TD, imprisoned by the British and Free State governments, and went on hunger strike. His fiancée and future wife, Eileen McGrane, was Michael Collins's secretary when he was on the run, was captured and imprisoned by the British and later by the Free State government, joining McCarvill on hunger strike.

So, from the constitutional, nationalist Redmondite lawyer to the anti-Treaty Republican hunger strikers, my sons' eight great-grandparents span a broad spectrum of nationalist and separatist activity in those years. Three of them became parliamentarians; three served multiple prison terms. They each endured a great deal of personal tragedy and sacrifice.

John M McDowell and his wife Maud lost their 19-year-old favourite orphan nephew, William, who had been reared in their home, in the slaughter of the Somme on September 9th, 1916 in the battle of Ginchy. His warm letters to them from the trenches make sad reading. Cut to pieces by machine-gun fire in the advance of the 7th Leinster Battalion at Guillemont, his body was never found. Such was the price of his family's loyalty to the constitutional politics of John Redmond.

Perhaps a better-known, and most obviously poignant, piece of my family's history concerns the shooting, in the course of the Civil War, of Brian Mac Neill, the 22-year-old second eldest son of Eoin Mac Neill, on the slopes of Ben Bulbin, in September 1922, by soldiers of the Free State Army serving his father's government.

Brian, like his two brothers, Niall and Turlough, had enlisted in the South Dublin IRA's 6th Battalion. and were members of an active service unit that played a leading role in the War of Independence from 1919 to 1921. Their father's home was the battalion's hidden weapons dump, never discovered in the course of multiple British searches.

All three boys were on the run and imprisoned during that period. During the Truce, Brian was sent by IRA HQ to help reorganise the IRA in Sligo, north Roscommon and east Mayo. He was appointed divisional adjutant. When the IRA split over the Treaty, Brian's division went anti-Treaty. With a heavy heart, his loyalty to his division outweighed his loyalty to his father and to his brothers, both of whom became commissioned officers in the National Army.

Prior to the commencement of Civil War hostilities, Brian was a frequent visitor to the family home in Blackrock, sometimes giving his minister father, Eoin, a lift from there to Government Buildings in a commandeered Dodge motor car. Brian, a first-class honours second-year medical student, who had taken a year out to fulfil his IRA duties, was by all accounts his mother's favourite. Cheery and outgoing, he was also a very popular figure in the anti-Treaty movement in Sligo.

After the attack on the Four Courts, and the commencement of open Civil War, Brian could no longer travel home but kept in regular touch with his parents and brothers in a warm and loving correspondence via safe houses in Sligo.

After the death of Michael Collins, Gen Richard Mulcahy put strong pressure on Gen Sean Mac Eoin, his Western commander, to bring a quick and decisive end to the Civil War in Sligo and the west.

By this time, Brian had informed the Republican leadership that the IRA in Sligo was going to adopt guerrilla tactics. From their stronghold at Rahelly near Sligo, they engaged in a hit and run campaign against the Free State forces, inflicting heavy casualties and losses in terms of men killed and materiel captured.

Many brave Free State soldiers, including close comrades in the War of Independence of Sean Mac Eoin, died at their hands in roadside ambushes and full-scale incursions on towns held by the Free State. Free State intelligence officers were to be "shot on sight". Brig Gen Joe Ring and Paddy Callaghan (a previous member of Mac Eoin's Longford Flying Column) were killed in ambushes in Mayo and Sligo.

Dáil Eireann had passed a resolution giving the National Army powers to conduct field courts-martial and to execute “Irregulars” found under arms. Mac Eoin was in no humour to show mercy to those who had shot his comrades.

In the end, Free State forces cornered the leadership of the Republican forces between Rahelly and Ben Bulbin.

The day after the decisive battle in which the Republicans were surrounded and routed, a number of them sought to escape the ring of steel surrounding them by crossing Ben Bulbin in the hope of regrouping at a hidden cave above Glencar Lake.

Brian MacNeill and three others, Seamus Devins TD and Volunteers Carroll and Banks, were surprised and surrounded in a mountain gully by a party of Free Staters commanded by two officers, McGoohan and Sexton.

What happened next is not certain but it appears most probable that they surrendered, were disarmed and shot by their captors. Apparently, Brian MacNeill, realising what was about to happen, attempted to run and was shot a short distance from where the other three were gunned down.

Certainly, the same party of Free State troops two hours later captured two more “Irregulars”, Volunteers Patrick Langan and Joseph Benson, and executed them, mangling their bodies with machine-gun fire after they were put standing in a deep bog hole on the top of the mountain. All the bodies were left where they lay.

The Free State forces published untrue and highly misleading accounts of the killings and privately gave the MacNeill family a further untrue but consoling version of the shootings. “Sligo’s Noble Six”, as the victims became known, became symbols of Civil War cruelty. They remain embedded in the political and historical fabric of Co Sligo to this day.

For Eoin Mac Neill, his wife Taddie, and their children, this was a cause of unimaginable grief and misgivings, which they dealt with entirely privately, and an horrendous outcome to their participation in the struggle for Irish freedom. A letter written by Eoin Mac Neill at the height of the Civil War gives some insight into his grief, his pride in, and his love for his lost son.

In the end, Brian’s coffin was borne by his brothers and by fellow IRA comrades now wearing Free State uniforms, to his family grave at Kilbarrack in Dublin. Such was, and is, the reality of civil war.

All of this is part of my sons’ family legacy.

Michael McDowell is a Senior Counsel and former Tánaiste and leader of the Progressive Democrats.

Excluded by history

James Goulden, son of an RIC sergeant, devoted his life to challenging how the force was portrayed.

Eve Morrison

The son of an RIC sergeant stationed in Co Mayo during the War of Independence, James Richard Weekes Goulden was intensely interested in the War of Independence, but he was not a republican.

He dedicated himself for the rest of his life to challenging what he felt were misrepresentations of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the writing of history that excluded them.

Goulden was a Trinity College graduate, gaeilgeoir and Irish master at the prestigious High School in Dublin, Church of Ireland, rugby player, history enthusiast and amateur archaeologist. He was born in Tourmakeady RIC barracks in 1907.

The Bureau of Military History (BMH) investigator who dealt with Goulden remarked that he seemed “actuated solely by his historical interests and, possibly, to some extent by filial respect for his father”.

Goulden collected material about the RIC for most of his life, for a history he never finished. An avid reader of IRA “fighting stories”, Goulden sent the accounts to former members of the RIC who had been involved in the incidents.

Some responded with great bitterness: “I have nearly forgotten the whole affair or at least I try to forget it,” wrote one man, “and how these so called patriots try to keep up their campaign of lies.”

Goulden successfully negotiated two communities, two histories, two worlds. In 1956 he co-produced at his school an Irish language play written by Sinéad de Valera. Her husband Éamon de Valera had called on the Dáil to sanction a police boycott in April 1919, denouncing the RIC as “spies in our midst”.

The BMH did not approach Goulden for a statement. He offered two he had written or procured himself. Over half of his own statement concerns the Tourmakeady ambush, on May 3rd, 1921, when a South Mayo Brigade flying column commanded by Tom Maguire killed four RIC men. Two IRA men also lost their lives in the aftermath.

The second statement was from Geoffrey Ibberson. Goulden had located him via the British War Office. As a young lieutenant in the Border Regiment, Ibberson had pursued Maguire’s column into the Partry Mountains after the ambush. He shot dead Michael O’Brien, South Mayo Brigade’s adjutant, and was himself severely wounded. Patrick Feeney was killed later in Ballinrobe by other Border Regiment soldiers, most likely in retaliation for the deaths of the police.

Both statements differed markedly from Maguire’s version of events as reproduced in newspaper articles by Ernie O’Malley, and in Dorothy Macardle’s *The Irish Republic*.

Ibberson also challenged Maguire publicly in 1955. An acrimonious exchange between them followed in the Sunday Press.

Goulden's statement also describes his family's gradual isolation from the local community from 1916 to 1921. According to him, before the Easter Rising relations were friendly and his father knew them all by their first names. Peace was disturbed only by Irish language students arriving in the summer, who "hated the RIC and all that they stood for".

It was in the aftermath of the Great War rather than the Easter Rising that local feeling changed. The "younger men were not really hostile but were to some extent openly defiant ... For the most part, they expressed themselves in more or less friendly discussions with my father about the day which was coming when he and his like would have to leave."

Then, on November 11th 1919, the local RIC station was closed. "It is difficult to know who was the more surprised – the local people or my father and his men."

Sgt Goulden was reassigned to a neighbouring station, while his wife and children remained living in the barracks: "My father visited us every day through the winter of 1919-20. Sometimes he carried a revolver, but very often he did not bother because of the weight. He was completely confident that no local would interfere with him. Often they met him on the road and they used to remark: 'Are you not afraid we would shoot you some night going home?' He always turned it aside as a joke."

At Easter 1920, police barracks across the country were burnt down by the IRA. In Tourmakeady, Goulden and his family were not evicted, but by then the local community no longer supplied them with fresh milk unless one of the children was ill. They were frequently asked when they were leaving which, in May 1920, they did. Three weeks later the barracks was burnt to the ground.

The Goulden family relocated to Ballinrobe where his father was stationed in the now heavily fortified station. Windows were fitted with steel shutters. Net-wire frames kept out grenades.

"I used to bring meals to my father when he was busy," he remembered. "I often got a trip out on a lorry and learned the use of firearms."

Goulden got to know many of the police and Black and Tans stationed there, as well as soldiers from the Border Regiment.

Goulden's account of Tourmakeady was compiled from what his father had told him, interviews with survivors and witnesses and newspaper reports. Only 14 at the time, what Goulden himself remembered was seeing the RIC men's coffins in the barracks. Sgt Goulden resigned from the force a short time later, after refusing to carry out a reprisal against Michael O'Brien's mother.

Ibberson eventually married the daughter of a local land agent in Mayo. The family left the area shortly after he paid her a visit in March 1922.

"I think I was recognised by two men on the road just west of Cross," he told Goulden. The visit had repercussions for his future father-in-law. "He was attacked and badly knocked

about at a later date on his way between his office and Lisloughry. Soon after he resigned the agency and retired.”

In 1960, Goulden and Ibberson seem to have met face to face in London. “My hair,” wrote Ibberson, “what there remains of it – is red (and white!) and I shall be in a Rover saloon car.”

Goulden died in 1976. His wife donated his voluminous collection of original documents, correspondence and notes for his unfinished history to Trinity College, Dublin. Ibberson died the following year.

Dr Eve Morrison is currently writing a book about the Bureau of Military History for Liverpool University Press.

One bloody day in the War of Independence

The violent, unheroic deaths of five young men in three incidents on one day in 1920 say much about the nature of the country's 'war'.

Conor Mulvagh

On the morning of April 14th, 1920, acting Sgt Patrick Lavin, a Royal Irish Constabulary drill instructor, died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in his office at the police depot in the Phoenix Park.

Lavin's death, and that of four others in two separate incidents on that same day, put in a broader perspective the untold story of firearm deaths during the War of Independence – the flying column and the ambush were by no means the only ways that people met untimely ends.

It was a bloody conflict not defined by set-pieces like the assassinations and reprisals on Bloody Sunday or the Kilmichael ambush, despite the disproportionate space they occupy in the memory of the conflict. Most of the dying and killing was ad hoc, swift and occasionally indiscriminate. In the transition from one regime to another, anarchy bridged the gap between British and Irish rule in many parts of the country. And, in truth, the ubiquity of firearms and persons trained in their use was a key factor in changing the nature of death and dying in Ireland after the first World War.

Lavin, a native of Co Roscommon, had been a member of the Irish Guards and, on demobilisation, had joined the RIC, becoming a drill instructor at the depot.

While it is impossible to know the reasons for his suicide, the papers of the day reported that, shortly before his death, Lavin had been informed that he was to be transferred out of the depot to a posting in the countryside at a time when violence against the police was occurring with heightened frequency.

If this was the motivation behind his death, then surely Lavin can be counted among the victims of the War of Independence.

The second event occurred at about 9.30pm that same Wednesday, April 14th. At Miltown Malbay, Co Clare, a crowd gathered to celebrate the release of hunger-striking prisoners from Mountjoy gaol that day.

Congregating around a lit tar barrel, the assembly sang songs, including the *Soldier's Song*. Soon, a detachment of police and infantry advanced from the local barracks. Stopping 200 yards short of the gathering, Crown forces fired on the crowd leaving three unarmed local men – Patrick Hennessy, Thomas O'Leary and John O'Loughlin – dead at the scene.

At least 12 others were injured. Such indiscriminate firing had a deeply negative effect on public perceptions of the Crown forces in Ireland. In a highly politicised coroner's inquest, the jury returned a verdict of murder and warrants were issued for the arrest of the soldiers and police involved.

If Lavin's death highlights the psychological strains under which the police were operating by the spring of 1920, then Miltown Malbay underlined how fragile and hostile relations between civilians and Crown forces had become.

At some point on the night of April 14th/15th, Constable Patrick Foley, then on leave in his native Annascaul, was abducted along with a companion with whom he had been drinking in a local hotel.

Foley was allegedly engaged in collecting the names of local republicans while on leave in Kerry and, following an IRA court martial, was executed as a spy. His body was not found until 7am on April 16th in the yard of a creamery in Deelis, near Camp, 10 miles from his abduction.

At the time the authorities were confused by the fact that Foley had been taken so far from Annascaul. But Tadhg Kennedy, intelligence officer of Kerry No 1 Brigade [see also page 12], later revealed that "[Foley's] sentence could not be carried out in the Dingle Battalion as almost all the officers were relatives of his." Contemporary press reported that Foley was "riddled with bullets".

Historian Sinead Joy has noted that the brutality of Foley's murder was intentional, designed to send out a warning to other would-be informants.

While all of the above cases relate in one way or another to the independence struggle, shortly before these five men lost their lives, on March 23rd, 1920, an argument between relatives in Ballyharigan, Drum, Co Derry, ended in tragedy when 23-year-old Hugh Hutton called to the home of Mary Hutton, a shoemaker's wife and nine years Hugh's senior.

Hugh's younger brother had allegedly hit two of Mary's children and an argument ensued. As tensions flared, Mary Hutton took down a shotgun which was kept on a rafter and, as she threatened Hugh, the weapon discharged into his abdomen, mortally wounding him.

Mary Hutton would be sentenced to eight days' imprisonment on a capital charge. Although Hugh Hutton died, like Foley, after being shot, it should not be taken that the prevalence of firearms in Ireland in this period was solely responsible for the increase in death. Indeed, on May 25th, 1920, two men, Coleman Keane and Martin Ridge, got in an argument and the latter was struck with a hammer and mortally wounded.

However, just as the first World War had democratised the experience of death across Europe, in Ireland, the War of Independence brought violence to the doors of civilians across Ireland in a manner and on a scale that simply had not occurred for at least a century.

In a European context, the human cost of the Irish revolution, at roughly 2,000 dead, was comparatively low, perhaps remarkably so. The Polish-Soviet war, which lasted from February 1919 to March 1921, witnessed over 100,000 deaths. In Finland, a more appropriate comparison in population terms, 25,000 people died during the civil war of 1918.

However, the impact of Ireland's revolution cannot be measured in purely statistical terms. The deepest impact was psychological and the killing of civilians and police was one of the central differentiations between regular and irregular warfare.

As we look towards commemorating these events in the years ahead there should be no airbrushing of the often inglorious and always painful events that inhabit Ireland's revolutionary decade.

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Millionaire helped finance War of Independence

James O'Mara played a vital role in Ireland's fight for independence by organising a bond drive in the United States that raised \$5.1m for the first Dáil.

Joe Humphreys

James O'Mara did not fit the standard profile of republican activist. He was a successful businessman and millionaire whose summer holiday home was Cashel House in Connemara, now a hotel of the same name.

Yet O'Mara, my great-grandfather, played an important role in helping the fledgling State on to its feet by organising the government's first bond-certificate drive in the United States from 1919 to 1921. Over \$5.1 million (at least \$68 million in today's money) was raised in the campaign, and while political fundraising might have a grubby reputation these days it was essential then to keep a financially vulnerable administration together.

As historian Francis Carroll put it: "This was the money that financed the War [of Independence], indeed, made the war possible. Not only did these funds support the army, but just as important, they enabled the Dáil government to operate the offices of a working government."

As an episode in the State's founding history, however, it also has its murky side. Power struggles intruded on the high ideals behind the plan – O'Mara resigned his post over concerns about Eamon de Valera's financial management -- and today questions are still being asked as to whether all the money went where it should have gone.

James O'Mara was born in 1873 in Limerick where his grandfather had set up a bacon company. He succeeded his Parnellite father as MP for Kilkenny South, and helped put a Bill through the House of Commons in 1903 that made St Patrick's Day an official bank holiday in Ireland.

As progress on Home Rule stalled, however, O'Mara resigned his Westminster seat and in 1907 joined Arthur Griffith's newly formed Sinn Féin. He became the party's financial director and an election organiser and was himself returned in the 1918 elections to take a seat in the first Dáil.

Funding was one of the priorities of the revolutionary parliament, which first met in the Mansion House on the very day the War of Independence began. As Carroll wrote in his history of the loan drive, *Money for Ireland*, "no money, no government functions; no government functions, no credibility; no credibility and the whole struggle to obtain independence was in danger of collapse."

Sinn Féin looked for help to America, and the many Irish nationalists living there. O'Mara was named as one of three trustees of the new Dáil, and charged – along with de Valera – with setting up the bond certificate drive. They agreed that each subscriber would receive a certificate of indebtedness of the Irish Republic, which was non-interest bearing. The bonds would be sold on the back of de Valera's tour of America.

There followed a gruelling coast to coast tour, for which O'Mara and de Valera had to dodge British intelligence and sidestep US law. De Valera used his diplomatic skills to circumvent the fact that the Irish government was not officially recognised by the US congress, while O'Mara came up with elaborate schemes to launder the money.

An early dispatch of \$200,000 was sent through three different bank accounts, to remove all trace of its origins, and eventually drawn down by a New York priest who gave it to the Bishop of Killaloe, Michael Fogarty, then also a Dáil trustee.

Some 303,578 people bought certificates, the largest proportion buying amounts of \$25 or less. In New York alone, about 100,000 people purchased about \$1 million worth.

Back home it was hailed as a stunning success but there were tensions behind the scenes. O'Mara, who paid his own personal expenses in America, shelling out £10,000 in all, was critical of the running costs incurred by others. He also clashed with de Valera on policy. Disagreements over the establishing of a new Irish-American political lobby and the manner in which to run a planned second bond drive eventually led to O'Mara's resignation.

It was a bitter divorce – it would be nearly 20 years before they'd speak to one another again – and the reasons behind it are still contentious. Some commentators believe de Valera wanted rid of O'Mara so he'd have full control over the finances in America. But, as Stephen Kelly points out in *The Sinn Fein Millionaire: James O'Mara and the First American Bond-Certificate Drive*, there were personality issues too.

“He was nine years older than de Valera and as a successful businessman, used to making his own decisions, O'Mara had come to view his younger colleague with more than a hint of disdain.”

O'Mara became further disillusioned with politics when the Civil War broke out. He acted as the State's first ambassador to the US in 1922 and two years later won a Dáil seat as a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate. But in 1927 he left politics for good.

The story of the bonds didn't end there, however. About \$2.5 million of the deposits were sent to the Irish government in 1922 but de Valera held on to the remainder in the US, along with \$600,000 which had been raised in the second bond drive without O'Mara.

The Free State government took legal action, and in 1927 a New York court ruled that the bondholders should be repaid, at a rate of 58c for each \$1.

What happened next was probably one of the greatest strokes in Irish politics. De Valera contacted the bondholders directly asking them to sign over the bonds to him so he could set up the *Irish Press*. Many did, or had forms signed on their behalf by next of kin. When de Valera came to power in 1932 he pushed legislation through the Dáil saying bondholders would receive, not just the 58c, but an additional 67c from the Exchequer making it \$1.25 in all.

De Valera used the cash windfall to buy shares, along with his son Vivion, in the *Irish Press*. “While the exact number of bonds converted has never been made public, the money de Valera received from the transfer was crucial as start-up capital,” notes Mark O'Brien in his history of that newspaper, *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the Irish Press* .

Adding intrigue to the affair was the fact de Valera kept his huge family shareholding in the *Press* secret until Noel Browne exposed it in the Dáil in the late 1950s.

In somewhat Machiavellian fashion, de Valera had appointed O'Mara's younger brother Stephen as a trustee of the US bond monies immediately after O'Mara's resignation, and the same sibling was later made a director of the *Press*. Perhaps to avoid family disharmony, James O'Mara kept his counsel in later years about de Valera's use – some would say misuse – of the loan funds.

O'Mara died in 1948, and his funeral drew little public attention. As his daughter Patricia Lavelle recalled in her biography of the Sinn Féiner: “There was no tricolour over his coffin, no bugles sounded over his grave. No guns were fired in salute but we paid silent tribute to him for all he had done and suffered that Ireland might be free.”

Pivotal role in Kerry 'Troubles'

Tadhg Kennedy played key part in tumultuous years in the Kingdom.

Richard Mcelligott

On November 7th, 1915, Wexford defeated Kerry in the All-Ireland final. The previous evening Tim "Tadhg" Kennedy, a lieutenant in the Tralee corps of the Irish Volunteers, boarded the Dublin train having been put in charge of a group of fellow Volunteers ostensibly travelling as supporters to the match. The game provided them with perfect cover.

By now, plans were being formed to use the Irish Volunteers to launch an insurrection against British rule. In October, Patrick Pearse visited Tralee and informed Austin Stack, commander of the Kerry Volunteers, of the plans for revolt and shortly afterwards Stack arranged for the purchase of a large consignment of weapons from Dublin.

The morning after the final, Kennedy and his men drove to the home of Kerry native Michael O'Rahilly where the weapons would be handed over. They were loaded and driven to Kingsbridge station and smuggled aboard the returning supporters' train to Tralee that evening.

Tim Kennedy's experience of the Irish revolutionary period was certainly one of the most eventful. Born in Annascaul, west Kerry, in 1885, he moved to Tralee to work for Kerry County Council. He quickly became friends with Austin Stack who swore him into the local IRB.

He joined the Gaelic League, becoming secretary of its Tralee branch. His other love was Gaelic football and he became a county board representative and a noted referee.

When the Irish Volunteers were formed, local Gaelic League branches frequently acted as their nucleus. Kennedy was contacted by the Volunteers in Dublin and asked to form a corps in Tralee in late 1913. From then on he became actively involved in the politics of the era.

In 1916 Stack instructed him to lead the Dingle Volunteers during the planned rebellion on Easter Sunday. Kennedy and his men arrived in Tralee, only to discover that the national uprising had been called off.

After the failure of the Rising in Dublin, Kennedy helped reorganise the local Volunteers. Once they adopted their new name, the Irish Republican Army, and began reorganising for war in 1919, he served as the main intelligence officer for the Kerry IRA. His work in the county council had made him an obvious choice.

He had been a friend of Michael Collins since they met on holidays in 1913. Under Kennedy's leadership, an intelligence network was constructed by the Kerry IRA which aped Collins's own in Dublin, relying heavily on information supplied by sympathetic or disillusioned civil servants and RIC officers.

He used Tom Dillon, chief clerk in the Tralee General Post Office, to procure copies of the letters and telegrams being sent to local British forces. And Margaret Pandy, who was in

charge of the Tralee telephone exchange, listened in on police and military calls and reported back to him.

Yet not everyone sympathised with the IRA's cause. Violence directed against those believed to be spies or informers grew in intensity as the war dragged on and Kennedy was directly involved in this brutal campaign against perceived enemies.

Often this ruthless intelligence war exposed political fault lines within families and Kennedy was forced to consent to the killing of his first cousin, Constable Patrick Foley of the RIC, in April 1920 (see Conor Mulvagh's article, page 9).

Foley had been stationed in Galway, but mysteriously returned to Tralee. Kennedy quickly became suspicious when he began asking questions about known IRA men and was frequently seen entering local RIC barracks. Shortly afterwards, Kennedy got an urgent message from RIC District Inspector, Bernard O'Connor, who was supplying him with information.

O'Connor handed him notebooks which Foley had delivered into the RIC station in Dingle. They contained the names of every IRA officer in the district. After Kennedy's own name, Foley had drawn a large question mark, still unsure if his relation was connected with the republicans.

Reluctantly, Kennedy was eventually forced to acknowledge that Foley represented too grave a threat to the local IRA. His bullet-ridden corpse was found by the RIC several days later.

In August 1920, Tim's brother Patrick was shot dead by two Black and Tans in Annascaul. Kennedy had by then transferred to Dublin to work directly under Collins.

One evening, as both returned to their lodgings, the house was surrounded by British troops. Collins led Kennedy down a corridor towards a bookcase and touched a spring which opened the bookcase to reveal a darkened room. Safely inside, moments later they heard the footsteps of soldiers entering and searching the house. They then waited in the cell-like room until both men judged the danger had passed.

From Collins, Kennedy learned the importance of deceiving the enemy by completely integrating himself with them. On his return to Kerry, he became especially friendly with Col Berkley, the head of the British military in Tralee.

When the truce came Kennedy was appointed local liaison officer for the IRA, charged with ensuring the stable handover from the local British garrison. When he was shown into the room of the barracks commander in Tralee the colonel exclaimed "Good Christ!" as he leapt up in shock, "I hand it to you people, you're the last man in the world I'd suspect."

Though Kennedy personally supported the Treaty, his loyalty to Austin Stack ensured he sided with the anti-Treaty side and during the Civil War he was captured by Free State forces on August 3rd, 1922. Later he served as a Sinn Féin director of elections. He was campaign manager for Stack's final election bid in 1927, two years before his death, and worked with Kerry County Council until his retirement.

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An enthusiastic volunteer when the Rising came

Trade unionist Thomas Leahy came home from England to work on the Dublin docks in 1914.

Padraig Yeates

When the first World War broke out Thomas Leahy was working as a riveter in Vickers' navy yard at Barrow-on-Furness because employment was "very bad" in Dublin for the engineering trades.

He had joined the local Irish club and was disappointed to find it had "a very mixed crowd". It was "more of a social club instead of national minded". There was nothing to match political life in the Irish capital, where he said he had "attended all meetings, lectures and talks by James Connolly, Jim Larkin, PT Daly and other labour leaders, and [by] well-known leaders in the Republican movement".

Despite its apolitical nature the Barrow-in-Furness club organised collections, dances and concerts for workers locked out in Dublin and, at the end of 1913, a company of Irish Volunteers was formed. The debates on the Home Rule Bill were "closely followed" and, when the Volunteers split, the majority of local members decided "to have no further dealings with the [Irish] Party".

Anxious to return home, Leahy found a job as a boiler-maker in the Dublin Dockyard Company by November 1914. The firm thrived on naval and munitions contracts. Skilled workers in the yard shared a strange medley of political allegiances ranging from the Orange Order to the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Leahy joined "E" Company of the Irish Volunteers 2nd Battalion, based in the north inner city.

On Easter Monday 1916 he took part in the attack on the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park. His main qualification appeared to be possession of a bicycle, given the distance to be covered from Liberty Hall in time to reinforce the men already there. He later served in Fairview, Ballybough and the O'Connell Street area.

He was interned in Frongoch, where he shared a hut with Richard Mulcahy and Abbey actor Arthur Shields. Released at Christmas 1916 Leahy was re-employed by the Dublin Dockyard Company, as were several other rebels.

Among them was Frank Robbins, a sergeant in the Irish Citizen Army, and he may have recruited Leahy and other employees. It was unusual but not unknown for activists in Dublin to switch between the two organisations. It did not prevent Leahy co-operating with volunteers in using the yard's facilities and their own skills to make "train wrecking tools . . . and everything that would be useful when required".

Arms and ammunition were regularly stolen from naval vessels in for repair, but Leahy presumably bought war bonds like every other employee, which gave them all a vested interest in an allied military victory. Like many other veterans of 1916, especially married men, he does not appear to have been very active militarily in the War of Independence.

Leahy was “active in the Labour movement from 1912 and learned, through it, the way the workers of Ireland were being treated. With wages and working conditions and long hours of employment forced on them by the employers, somewhere and somehow, if these were not changed or improved, revolt against some employers must come.”

At the same time it was in Sinn Féin rather than Labour that he chose to become politically active. This was possibly because many craft workers saw Labour as the party of general labourers and the working poor. In the 1918 election he campaigned for the Sinn Féin candidate in the north docks area, Phil Shanahan. “While canvassing in the slums it was awful to behold where human beings had to sleep, eat and drink. No wonder the working classes were always ripe for revolt.”

Alfie Byrne was the sitting MP and fought hard to keep the seat, in the literal sense, with the use of Irish Party “bludgeon men”, but times had changed and his strong-arm supporters were quickly routed by the volunteers and ICA men.

Leahy’s most important activity came in 1920 when he became a trustee of the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Workers’ Trade Union. The idea of an Irish union for craft workers was first proposed by Countess Markievicz at the 1917 Sinn Féin ardfheis. It was intended to emulate the ITGWU, which Jim Larkin had established as a breakaway from the National Union of Dock Labourers.

There was a lot of resentment among Irish members of British unions who had to apply to head offices in Britain whenever they needed unemployment benefit or strike pay. Frequently there was little sympathy for Irish strikes, which were often seen as “political” rather than trade disputes. Finally, “there was a very large amount of money leaving country”, Leahy said. “At least half of it, or some amount, should have been invested in Ireland for their Irish members.”

When Markievicz became minister for labour in the Dáil Éireann government Leahy was among the group of men, mostly IRB members, who entered discussions with the Countess and subsequently Michael Collins, as Minister for Finance, on establishing the new union.

The first meeting was held in the Abbey Theatre on June 20th, 1920. How the union was financed has never been adequately explained and the secret probably died with Collins at Béal na mBláth. Its new premises at Gardiner Row had the active service unit of the Dublin Brigade as a tenant and Collins’s Squad operated out of the offices of the Stationery Engine Drivers.

In the Civil War Leahy took the anti-treaty side and was arrested.

Despite his heavy involvement in the Troubles his job as a highly-skilled shipyard worker in the first World War and post-war boom enabled him to acquire a house for his family. By the end of the Civil War the boom had ended and, on his release from Mountjoy, Leahy found his job gone and other employments temporary.

He had to emigrate once more to Britain. He moved his family to Glasgow where he resumed his career as a riveter in the shipyards. “My family had opportunities they would never have got at home . . . and now they are married and have no regrets for coming here,” he would later recall.

Interviewed by the Bureau of Military History in 1952 he had not lost hope “that God in his mercy and own time will spare all those who fought the good fight for the Republic to meet again . . . with all our people, north, south, east and west under the flag of a United and Gaelic Free Ireland.”

Final act, curtain . . .

A founder actress of the Abbey Theatre, Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh recorded the surrender of Jacob's garrison.

Dave Kenny

Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh (Mary Walker), was a founder actress of the Abbey Theatre, and its first leading lady when it opened in December 1904. Her wan, ethereal beauty captivated audiences and critics in Ireland, London and the US. Portrait artists queued up to paint her. Revolutionaries and poets wrote plays for her. The Pearse brothers, AE, Countess Markievicz, Synge, WB Yeats (albeit grudgingly) all admired her. Dublin loved her.

In 1916, Máire, my grandaunt, put her acting career on the line when she took part in the Rising. While her father, brother and brother-in-law published the *Irish War News* for Pearse, and her sister carried dispatches for Cathal Brugha, Máire led the Cumann na mBan 'girls' in Jacob's biscuit factory.

Once the State had gained its measure of independence, she quietly faded out of public view. Only her portraits in the Abbey and the National Gallery remain as testament to her extraordinary beauty.

In the mid-1950s my father, Ted, persuaded Máire to allow him to write up her memoirs. *The Splendid Years* was well-received but Ted was unhappy with the final edit and took it out of print in 1958. I have his revisions in a folder beside my desk and, some day, will get around to making them. What follows are abridged extracts, notably from her account of the surrender at Jacob's garrison.

Máire spent the day before the Rising with Éamonn Ceannt and his family. Forty years on, as the embers grew dull in her hearth, she could still recall the rustling of papers and the hushed voices in the next room. Ceannt was struggling to countermand Eoin MacNeill's cancellation of the general mobilisation order. He looked tired and strained as he walked her to the front door that evening. "Goodbye, Máire," he said. She never saw him again.

She was at Mass in Glasthule the following morning when her father slipped into the church with a telegram. She was ordered to join Ceannt's battalion as the "manoeuvres" were now going ahead.

On her way into town, a British military vehicle collided with her bike and badly gashed her knee. The "boy" soldier driving it was deeply upset at having injured such an important-looking woman. A bizarre battle of wills ensued as he tried, in vain, to put Máire and her bike into his car to take her to a doctor. She later recalled the bewildered Tommy scratching his head as she pedalled away to join the Volunteers who, by then, would have shot him on sight.

She arrived safely in town but failed to locate Ceannt, so she made her way to Thomas McDonagh's garrison at Jacob's just as the barricades were going up . . .

Extract from *The Splendid Years*:

“The days passed quickly,” she would later write. “How can I describe how I felt this week? All the time I was divided between the excitement of being in Jacob’s, and worries for those whom I had left at home. I had no means of knowing what was happening in Glasthule. But mostly I was conscious of a great excitement. I am sure everyone in the building felt the same. I seldom felt tired, I never felt the need of much sleep for the four days.

“The great spirit of this whole period was all around us in Jacob’s, the enthusiasm, the wonderful feeling that underlaid every worthwhile activity in Dublin in those years. No one had any regrets – why should they have had? Until the surrender there was not a word of complaint from anyone I met. You never thought much about what the result of it all would be. You never assumed that victory was certain, but neither did you think of defeat. What might happen if we lost meant nothing: life or death, freedom or imprisonment, these things did not enter into it at all.

“The great thing was that what you had always hoped for had happened at last. An insurrection had taken place, and you were actually participating in it. The pity was that it ended so soon. The news of the surrender, when it came, was heartbreaking.

“Tom McDonagh was an excellent leader and had hid his responsibilities and his worries behind his good humour throughout the week, never allowing anyone to think other than that the fighting was going well. It was only when he sent for me at the end that his humour faltered slightly. Then he bore himself with dignity.

“He was standing behind his desk, beside Major MacBride. ‘We are going to surrender,’ he said, very simply. He seemed the same business-like person we had always known, until he spoke; his voice was quiet, and he seemed very disillusioned. He said, ‘I want you to thank all the girls for what they have done. Tell them I am issuing an order that they are to go home. I’ll see that you are all safely conducted out of the building.’

“I started to protest, but he turned away. One could never imagine him looking so sad.

“I went downstairs and into the bakeroom. I will never forget that scene. Almost everyone in the building had assembled on the ground floor. The announcement of surrender had just been made. It had not been taken well. There were shouts of ‘Don’t give in . . . we can’t give in now.’ Everyone was talking at once. The noise was deafening.

“I saw a man throw down his rifle and put his hands over his face. Another was smashing the butt of a gun against a wall. Some of the men seemed confused, as though they could not believe it. The officers were calling for order and trying to explain why surrender was necessary.

“Tom MacDonagh came in. He climbed on to a table and held up his hand. The noise died away at once. He said, very sadly: ‘We have to give in. Those of you who are in civilian clothes, go home. Those in uniform stay on. You cannot leave if you are in uniform.’ He stepped down.

“A Volunteer officer, Thomas Hunter, pushed his way through the crowd and climbed on to a bench. He held up his arms and shouted, ‘All I say is, any of you who go home now ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Stand your ground like men!’ There was a murmur of approval. No one moved.

“I gave the girls MacDonagh’s order. They did not want to leave. I could understand their feelings. They were my own; I did not want to go, myself. I told them what MacDonagh had said. He was anxious to have all girls out of the building before he surrendered. He feared that we would be arrested. If this had been the only consideration, I would have ignored his plea, and stayed; but he thought that the sight of the girls being arrested might upset the men. He wanted everything to go as quietly as possible.

“On the other hand, Sara Kealy said that it might be useful for a few girls to stay behind. They could write letters for the men and take messages to relatives. She announced her decision to remain. I did not press the matter.

“In the midst of much confusion, some Cumann-na-mBan women came in. They were on their way home and asked me to go with them. MacDonagh came through the crowd and asked, ‘Will you go now, please?’ ‘I don’t know, Tom. All the girls insist on staying’.

“MacBride was standing just inside one of the exits. ‘It would be better for you to go,’ he said. As we shook hands, he asked that a message be taken to some friends at Glasthule. ‘Tell them, too, that we had a good week of it,’ he added simply. Outside, a British officer was standing near one of the gateways. He said, ‘I’ll see you over the roadway, ladies.’

“We walked down the roadway and turned the corner into Camden Street. It was a route I had taken many times through the years. I cannot remember what we talked about – if we talked at all, for there did not seem very much to say. I felt confused and disappointed. All at once, I had begun to feel very tired.

“Along Camden Street the shop windows were shuttered and dark. We passed few people on the footpath. Everything looked strange, even the street was different. It was as though I had never seen it before. Despite what was going on inside, Jacob’s looked very dark, very empty. Dublin seemed unnaturally still.”

Back in the factory, a young Volunteer captain named Eamonn Price had been instructed to marshall the garrison for the surrender. He would later become director of organisation of the IRA and fight alongside Michael Collins.

He had spotted Máire joining the men on Easter Monday and had fallen hopelessly in love. Nine years later, surrounded by the ghosts of dead comrades, they were married in the city they had helped to liberate.

From *The Splendid Years* Nic Shiubhlaigh/Kenny. Copyright: David Kenny

Top scholar devoted his life to British army

Conor and Willie O'Brien answered John Redmond's call as much for adventure as out of national feeling.

Mary-Jane O'Brien

In the summer of 1912, 17-year-old Conor O'Brien must have been delighted with himself. School days were over, and the long holidays stretched out like the road before him as he travelled from Blackrock College to his family home on Inishmore on the Aran Islands.

As Conor and his classmate Liam O'Flaherty, both scholarship boys, headed home, Conor had no idea yet that he had won overall first place in all Ireland in Senior Grade Exams and was to become Blackrock College Student of the Year 1912, or that his friend would become a famous novelist.

Conor's parents moved to Inishmore from Miltown Malbay in 1905 when he was just 10. His father Michael, a veteran of the 1867 Fenian rising, had in 1882-83 served six months in Limerick jail for supporting Parnell. His politics clashed with the Catholic hierarchy and he lost his post of 20 years as medical officer in charge of Ennistymon Workhouse and had been supported for the post of island doctor by Liam's father Mick O'Flaherty, an outspoken but influential critic of the church. Conor and Liam met both Pearse and Casement in the O'Flaherty and O'Brien homes in Kilronan.

After a wet August, Conor returned to Dublin to take up another scholarship, to read Greek and Latin at University College Dublin. Liam returned too, but to enter the priesthood.

Conor did well in his first year and secured a scholarship for his second year. In late 1913, there was intense excitement among the students, many of them, Conor's friends included, enrolled in the Irish Volunteers. Conor and his sister Susie, now also at UCD, went to the public meeting on November 25th, 1913, at which the movement was launched and recruits enrolled. She felt he might have enrolled too had the crowds not blocked him from getting into the meeting.

In his third year, Conor visited his brother William and sister Mary in Aughrim, Co Wicklow, where Willie was dispensary doctor. He took Conor out on his rounds in his new car, a De Dion Bouton tourer, and they had a chance meeting with MP Willie Redmond whose similar car had broken down on the way to John Redmond's house at Aughavanagh.

On 20th September, 1914, John Redmond, at Woodenbridge near Aughrim, called on Irish men to join another volunteer force – this time to fight with Britain “in defence of small nations”. Dr William O'Brien joined the Royal Army Medical Corp (RAMC) and was to spend much of the first War on a hospital ship treating casualties from the Dardenelles.

Despite his promise to his parents not to sign up, Conor left UCD without his degree, and on April 15th, 1915, “enlisted at Kilworth Camp into the Leinster Regiment Regular Army for the duration of war”. He was to see action in France, Macedonia, Egypt and Palestine; all the time keeping a secret diary of his war in his Sunday missal.

If he were asked he might have said he had joined up to fight for Ireland and to help Catholic Belgium in her struggle against the Germans. But while he did respect the nationalist views and the hopes he had often heard his father express for Ireland's future, Conor had little interest in nationalism. He wanted to be part of the great adventure, a lust for adventure shared by his friend Liam who also signed up.

At training camp in Fermoy, for the 7th Leinsters in the 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War, Conor was given the job of Lewis gunner. His company was transferred to Blackdown Camp at Aldershot in Surrey and then on December 17th, 1915, Conor crossed the channel and was transported by red double decker buses to "the front".

He was in the trenches at Loos and Hullach during Easter 1916. News of the Rising filtered through and later news of the courts martial and executions. Conor was saddened that men like Willie Pearse and Thomas McDonagh had gone before the firing squad. He had listened to McDonagh lecturing on the English poets. Nor did Willie Pearse, the young man he had seen, only two years ago, walking with his brother Patrick under the beech trees at St Enda's, seem like a dangerous insurgent.

His missal was to follow his wartime life: injured by a shell near Loos, he was evacuated to hospital in England on the eve of the battle of the Somme; his welcome home on recuperation leave in full British army uniform in Kilronan in July 1916; his Kilronan Christmas 1916, when he made a special note, in a mixture of French and Irish, in his diary: "Conhubhair Ua Bríain, Creg Móir. Cill Ronáin, Oileán Arainn, Co na Gaillime. Nodlag 1916. Pour huit jour – bontime."

The missal notes: "Feb 3 1917. Left 4th Leinsters at Limerick for 6th at Struma, Macedonia. Within days of the Allies arriving in Struma, 7,000 came down with malaria and there were many deaths." Conor too got malaria and recorded: "Weather very hot. Mosquitoes terrible."

Then, undated, the opening lines, in Greek, of Homer's *Odyssey*: "Tell me, Muse, of the man of many twists and turns, who wandered far and wide after he had sacked Troy's sacred city, and saw the towns of many men and knew their minds."

Conor was to go on to fight in Egypt and Palestine before being demobbed on February 12th, 1919. His prayer book diary ends at the end of April 1918 recording the departure of the 5th Connaught Rangers from Palestine. Some entries give more information than others but all reveal a young man trying to capture a world where nothing would ever seem as certain again as it did on that summer day in 1912.

On November 15th Conor arrived at the Connaught Barracks in Dover. There, as his service records tells us, he "re-enlisted into the Connaught Rangers Regular Army" and "was posted to the 2nd Battalion".

He was now nearly 25 years of age. He was once again a private soldier but now with three campaign medals, as well as an honorary BA in Classics. He was to remain in the army for the next 26 years, serving in many different fields and adding more medals on his tunic.

Never, in all that time, nor in his years of retirement, when once more he returned to the army as a Chelsea Pensioner, was he to give any sign that he regretted the decision he had made in 1919 to spend his life as a British soldier.

Cornelius Francis O'Brien – born January 23rd, 1895; died December 31st, 1964.

Adapted by Mary-Jane O'Brien from the book, *My Uncle Frank*, by Conor Reilly.

‘When Ulster’s position was challenged ...’

William Smyth worked to defend the union from the threat of Home Rule – a fact not lost on his adversaries.

Patrick Smyth

‘This is to warn you that you have been tried and found guilty of high treason to the Republic and sentenced to death. . . – By order, Provincial Centre, IRB’– Strabane, Co Tyrone, February, 1923.

The note, neatly written in what might be a schoolteacher’s hand, actually quite polite and formal, almost apologetic, was part of a bundle of letters and papers at the back of a drawer. It had lain there, unopened, probably for 80 years, forgotten family history, until the recent occasion of a funeral and its tidying-up aftermath.

And it was certainly news to my father that his own father, William, had received it. He was aware of William Smyth’s involvement in unionist politics but my subsequent researches would prove as much of a surprise to him as to me, although family lore still vaguely recalls a story about gunrunning (a simple teapot, now on my shelf, is said to have been part of a consignment of goods used to conceal a smuggled batch of rifles).

A prominent young Presbyterian miller, businessman and accomplished amateur sportsman, “in the days when Ulster’s position as part of the Empire was challenged by the Home Rule campaign,” a local paper wrote in its obituary of William’s role in 1912, “he directed all his influence to opposing the measure and such was his gift of leadership that he was appointed Commander of the Strabane UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force] Club.”

Papers lodged by his widow in the Northern Ireland Public Records Office record the drilling camps he took part in organising in the great local estate of the Duke of Abercorn, and list the volunteers and their addresses, and the owners of such strategically prized possessions as bicycles.

His father, Robert, who would die in December that year, was also heavily involved. The *Derry Standard* recorded that: “His last public appearance was on the platform of the great Presbyterian Convention against Home Rule held in Belfast early in the present year . He took the chair at the May Street Church meeting on that occasion and, although looking far from well delivered a speech of power and earnestness.” In September, he and the rest of the family would lead the local signing of the Ulster Covenant.

William went off to war with the North Irish Horse to return in 1919 and resume his political activities. He would become a councillor, was for up to 20 years chairman of the Strabane Unionist Association, and a member of the Ulster Unionist Council, the governing body of Unionism.

He appears to have had a lucky escape in early 1922 when the newly formed Ulster council of the IRA, with the support of Michael Collins, responded to a vigorous campaign of arrests by the Special Constabulary in the North and death sentences against three Derry republicans, by deciding to kidnap some 50 prominent unionists and police officers. On February 8th they successfully captured some 42 of their targets although testimony in the archives of the

Bureau of Military History records that they failed to pick up a “William Smyth” who had not been located on the day.

The kidnappings provoked significant sectarian tensions and unionist leader James Craig wanted the British government to send large contingents of Specials in “hot pursuit” south to recover the hostages. Winston Churchill advised against, and Collins succeeded in getting reprieves for the condemned men. The hostages would be freed in return for the releases by Craig of several other IRA men.

In a personal note dated June 2nd, 1922, William describes sending a telegram to the Provisional Government in Dublin on behalf of “all denominations Strabane” asking for assistance in preventing injury to the civil population resulting from “indiscriminate shooting from Free State territory” by republicans.

He describes two apparently unsuccessful meetings with a republican representative, “Commandant O’Donnell” (presumably Peadar, the local IRA commander, trade union organiser and later writer), who promised that republicans will not strike unless sniped at, that they “did not shoot at the train on Friday”, and that they will not recognise any boundary and will shoot at Crown forces as “long as Specials turn back people at the Railway Crossing”.

Eight months later, as the Civil War raged in the South, William received the letter from the Irish Republican Brotherhood:

“Take notice that by your action in signing the declaration of allegiance to the Belfast Government, as a member of Strabane UDC, you have subverted the interests of the Republic to the Government of the usurper established by an act, and maintained by the armed forces of a foreign power. This is to warn you that you have been tried and found guilty of high treason to the Republic and sentenced to death, sentence being deferred in order to give you an opportunity to sever your connection with the UDC as you do not voice the opinions of the people you claim to represent, if failing to comply with this notice, sentence will be carried out.” By order, Provincial Centre, IRB.”

As it happened, my grandfather did not resign, and was never executed, but lived on for 23 years to die in his bed in 1946. He continued his active involvement in unionist politics and in public affairs, notably the Strabane District Hospital and the canal company, both of which he chaired.

And his papers record his impassioned testimony on behalf of his community to the Boundary Commission. Among other arguments, he reports to the commission that he has consulted traders – despite being adversely affected by the border they would prefer to remain in the North as income tax is lower and there is “stable government”. Farmers in the Free State, he said, have problems borrowing in the North, and the exclusion of Strabane would make this worse.

On his death, in a lengthy tribute to him in the Strabane Presbyterian Church, the Rev EE McLelland is reported to have eulogised, no doubt somewhat over-enthusiastically and colourfully, that “he was not as other men; he was not of the common run of mankind. In the compound of his being there was some choicer, finer dust than was found in most men and they could only explain it as a gift from God. He was a simple man; simple not because of an

empty innocence but because he was close to the foundation qualities of life, the things that really mattered. He was straight. His word was his bond.”

What can I say?

One woman's Civil War in Ireland

Kathy Barry refused to play a subsidiary role as the war got under way with battles in the streets of Dublin.

Eve Morrison

'Your attitude with regard to the Hammam is based really on a wrong impression,' Kathy Barry wrote to her disapproving future husband. "First of all, the men didn't allow us to stay, we just stayed."

There was no way, as the Civil War got under way in battles at the Four Courts and then the Hammam Hotel, Kathy and her "sisters" were going to allow Cathal Brugha dictate a subsidiary role for them. They were determined to play their full part, a man's part.

Kathleen Barry Moloney was born in Dublin on October 19th, 1896. She came from a prosperous farming and dairy family based in Carlow and Dublin. The Barrys were staunch republicans.

During the War of Independence, her brothers were in the IRA and she and her sisters in Cumann na mBan. She joined the UCD branch captained by Eileen McGrane, while continuing to help her mother raise six younger siblings and run the family business. As the war intensified over 1919-1920, Kathy Barry's time was increasingly taken up with the independence struggle. "My life," she told the Bureau of Military History, "like that of every other republican, centred round the activities of the IRA."

An anti-treatyite, during the Civil War she ran communications between anti-treaty commander Liam Lynch in Cork and the Dublin IRA.

Todd Andrews remembered her as a daring and charismatic figure whose fashionable clothes and lipstick made her stand out like an "apparition" in the wilds of west Cork.

She also acted as general secretary of the Irish Republican Prisoner's Dependents' Fund until 1924, making trips to the US and Australia to raise funds.

In the 1930s, with her husband out of work and with children to feed she secured a publicity job with the ESB. A committed trade union activist and republican radical, she supported Clann na Poblachta and campaigned against the execution of republican prisoners between 1939 and 1944.

Very little of Kathy Barry's remarkable life is recounted in her witness statement to the bureau. It is devoted mostly to her brother Kevin Barry, executed in Mountjoy Prison on November 1st, 1920.

She never gave the statement about herself they requested. A decision she came to regret: "I did Kevin's story for them, but I could not face any more," she wrote to Oscar Traynor sometime after suffering a stroke in 1958.

“I have an urge to put on paper for my grandchildren the beginning to the end of the Civil War. . . Unfortunately I only write with great strain which is bad for me and the B of MH is closed.”

Indicative of what might have been was a remarkably vivid letter she wrote in January 1923 to her future husband Jim Moloney. He was then director of communications under Liam Lynch.

“My dear,” it begins, “I’ll take your ring anytime you want me to and I’ll wear it if you want me to and I’ll do anything you want me to.”

As the letter continues, it is clear there had been a row: “All the horrid things you said that night,” she wrote, “you told me I wasn’t a woman at all so I decided if I ever got a chance when the war was over I’d vamp you and so you see whether I was or not.” Yet this was no ordinary lover’s tiff. The Civil War began on June 28th, 1922 with the National Army’s shelling of the Four Courts, then headquarters of republican forces.

The overwhelmingly anti-treatyite Dublin Brigade under Oscar Traynor took over various buildings in the city, including several hotels on O’Connell Street. Forced to evacuate within days, the last contingent was with Cathal Brugha in the Hammam Hotel.

With them were five members of Cumann na mBan including Kathy Barry, Linda Kearns and Muriel McSwiney.

The occupation and subsequent retreat from the hotel took up several pages in Kathy Barry’s letter*. “Your attitude with regard to the Hammam is based really on a wrong impression. First of all, the men didn’t allow us to stay, we just stayed.” Moloney was furious at her wilfulness.

The women had refused to leave. “Dev kind of carried me across the room and then he put me down & turned round to see if there were any more neurotic girls.”

Kathy Barry crawled behind a door and hid in a “beastly dirty place”. Other women stood outside the hotel all night, rushing the backdoor in the morning.

Brugha eventually relented: “On Tuesday night he said he should never have been able to keep it up so long if he hadn’t had Muriel and me stay and I said it wasn’t fair to drive us to mutiny in order to be let stay and he said ‘It wasn’t. If I had to do it all again I’d let you stay without the mutiny’.”

Nonetheless, Brugha kept a close eye on the women, ensuring that no breach of propriety took place. “I had to dodge Cathal all the time. He approved of me making tea and Bovril, but not of me filling sandbags in my leisure moments.”

Not all the men were so conflicted by the women’s presence. “You may disapprove of me all you like for refusing to go when I was told but you mustn’t disapprove of the men. And you can ask Jack O’Meara or Ned Reilly or Dan Keeffe if we hindered the fight or kept them from holding out as long as they would otherwise have done. They were great – they were sports and let me do heaps of things.”

By July 5th, the Hammam was on fire and all were forced to leave. Brugha chose to die rather than surrender: “He rushed out and turned up the lane with his revolver. The Staters couldn’t be blamed for shooting him because he wanted to be shot. He wasn’t trying to get away. He was trying to give his life and he succeeded.”

For Kathy Barry, the events were a heady, frustrating experience: “I love those three days at the end because I felt I was nearly as useful as a man and you don’t know how helpless a feeling it is to be a woman when you feel you ought to be a man.”

Her letter stands as a passionate defence of the lengths to which Cumann na mBan women often went in wresting a place for themselves in the fight for a republic. One they fully expected would grant them equality.

Dr Eve Morrison is currently writing a book about the Bureau of Military History for Liverpool University Press. Letter is from the Kathy Barry Moloney Papers (UCD Archives)

First victim of the Rising

The first man to die in the Easter rebellion was an unarmed RIC Limerickman – James O’Brien.

Colm Keena

The first person killed in the 1916 Rising was an unarmed policeman on duty at the Cork Hill entrance to the upper yard of Dublin Castle.

Constable James O’Brien, born in Kilfergus, Co Limerick, in 1868, had 21 years’ service at the time.

He was killed by a public servant, Abbey actor and member of the Irish Citizen Army, Seán Connolly, who was himself shot about an hour later by a British army sniper. Connolly is believed to be the first of the rebels to have died.

According to police records cited by Jim Herlihy in his 2001 book, *The Dublin Metropolitan Police, A Short History*, O’Brien was shot between 11am and midday on Easter Monday, April 24th, by a volunteer who rode up to the castle gate on a bicycle.

Connolly was heading a group of Irish Citizen Army men and women who had come from Liberty Hall to seize Dublin Castle. It seems that when O’Brien tried to prevent them getting into the castle, Connolly shot him in the head.

Helena Molony, a republican, feminist and labour activist, was among the rebels who went out to seize the castle. She later recalled that O’Brien seemed to believe the rebels were part of a parade and they would be going up Ship Street. “When Connolly went to get past him, the Sergeant (sic) put out his arm and Connolly shot him dead.” Connolly “was excited because he had shot the policeman dead” and started to shout at his detachment to go into the castle. But they hesitated and the gates were closed against them.

Another member of the contingent was a medical doctor, Kathleen Lynn. She said that when she got to City Hall at about midday, it was occupied by Connolly and his colleagues. “As I arrived I saw the dead body of a big policeman lying on the ground – it seemed to be in front of the castle gate. Just then [prominent Home Ruler] Sir Thomas Myles came up, evidently going into the castle, and I still remember the look of horror on his face when he saw the body. I don’t think he noticed me.” Lynn said the rebels were advised by Connolly to go up on the roof in case of attack. “It was a beautiful day, the sun was hot and we were not long there when we noticed Seán Connolly coming towards us, walking upright, although we had been advised to crouch and take cover as much as possible. We suddenly saw him fall mortally wounded by a sniper’s bullet from the castle. First aid was useless. He died almost immediately.”

The archives of *The Irish Times* show that O’Brien and Molony’s paths had crossed just five years earlier, when the policeman gave evidence to a court hearing held on the day after disturbances near the Mansion House in Dublin linked to the then impending visit of the British king and queen. The Tuesday, July 4th, 1911, disturbances led to a James Pike, of 45 Connaught Street, Phibsborough, being brought before the court for acting in a disorderly manner. O’Brien told the court that he saw a large crowd outside the Mansion House and that

Pike was cheering and hooting and calling upon the people. At St Stephen's Green, he said, Pike headed a few ugly rushes at the police, and was shouting at the top of his voice and using profane language when he was arrested.

He said "Helen Moloney" and Countess Markievicz were with Pike at the time. They both gave evidence to the court that they were with Pike and had not seen any of the behaviour described by O'Brien. However, the judge, a Mr Drury, said he had no doubt that O'Brien's evidence was correct. This did not mean the "ladies" were not telling the truth to the court, he added, before fining Pike 40 shillings. At the same hearing Moloney was told she would have to pay a fine or go to jail for her part in throwing a stone during the disturbances. "You'll get no money from me," she told the court, to much cheering. She was then led away.

O'Brien was temporarily buried along with 13 others in the castle gardens. On Friday, April 28th, 1916, his body was exhumed and removed to Mount Argus Church. The next day, after Requiem Mass, his remains were removed by train to Foynes, Co Limerick, and transferred from there by hearse with a large contingent of DMP men for burial in Kilfergus. His gravestone refers to his "sorrowing brothers and sisters". There is no mention of family. Connolly, who was 32 when he died, left behind a wife and three young children. A native of Straffan, Co Kildare, he was living on Philipsburgh Avenue, Marino, in 1916. He was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery.

From spy to governor of Mountjoy

Sean Kavanagh went from espionage for Michael Collins to running Mountjoy.

Eoin McVey

It was the possession of three letters in January 1921 that got Sean Kavanagh arrested by the Auxiliaries in Dublin's Royal Exchange Hotel on Parliament Street.

Two years earlier, Sean, my grandfather, had moved from Waterford to Naas, Co Kildare, to teach Irish to adults for the Gaelic League. Before that he had been active in the league, Sinn Féin and the Volunteers so naturally he made early contact with some like-minded locals in Naas. He found out from them that a local RIC sergeant was sympathetic to the cause.

On a visit to Dublin he passed this on to his friend Michael Staines (later to be first Commissioner of the Garda Síochána). A week later Staines said that Michael Collins wanted to see him. Sean told Collins that the sergeant, Jerry Maher, was confidential clerk to the Inspector for Kildare and Carlow. This was of huge significance to Collins because he was anxious to get hold of the new code being used by the RIC for important telegrams. The county inspector, Kerry Supple, would have the code.

Collins instructed Sean to make contact with Maher and, typically, ordered him to say nothing of it to the local Sinn Féiners and Volunteers. Sean met Maher at least twice weekly from then on and the fruits of that (including the code) and contacts with other sources were reported back directly to Collins in Vaughan's Hotel every Saturday night.

Collins communicated with Sean by letter, passed on by friendly Great Southern Railways staff in Kingsbridge and Sallins stations. But despite his efforts by January 1921 Sean was under suspicion by the RIC and had to go into hiding, mostly in a friend's house in Ballymore Eustace from where he continued his intelligence work and his weekly trips to Vaughan's.

On January 8th, Collins, for the first time, failed to keep his appointment. Sean decided to travel to Vaughan's the following Saturday nevertheless and at Sallins station was given three letters.

Two of the letters, which as a lone operator he shouldn't have been given, were from the adjutant general to local Kildare batalions. The third, addressed to "SK, Naas" was from Collins:

"Dear Sean,

*I'm sorry I couldn't turn up last Saturday night. Will you meet me on next Saturday at 8?—
M"*

Sean didn't read the letters on the train as it was too crowded. He waited until that afternoon when he was having lunch in a quiet dining room of the Royal Exchange Hotel. Unfortunately, he had been spotted in Kingsbridge by a Black and Tan and followed. Two Auxiliaries arrested him.

He was brought to Dublin Castle where he was interrogated only about the “M” letter because they were convinced it was from Collins. Questioning, body-blows and hair-pulling continued for two hours but he held out.

Fortunately his interrogators, Major King, OC of F Company Auxiliaries, and the notorious Capt Hardy, decided that the meeting at eight described in the letter would be in the Royal Exchange. They brought Sean back and made him stand alone at the hotel entrance with Auxiliaries in mufti in the hotel and on both sides of the street. But Collins, who was waiting in Vaughan’s, never showed up.

Sean was hauled off to Kilmainham and from there to Mountjoy, hand-cuffed to Rory O’Connor. The charge sheet accused Sean of “having in his possession . . . a seditious document namely a report headed Óglaigh na hÉireann containing statements relating to road cutting” and another “relating to the affairs of the Irish Volunteers, an unlawful association”.

Two days earlier, Ernie O’Malley and two others had escaped from Kilmainham so the ground floor of Mountjoy’s Block C was turned into a fortress with Auxiliaries running it, not the usual prison warders.

Within a month, six of Sean’s fellow prisoners were executed for their alleged involvement in the Bloody Sunday killings. Sean received a 12-month sentence. Collins smuggled in a letter congratulating him on his “very light sentence”. In fact, he did just nine months, being released in December on the signing of the Treaty. On leaving, he told some (mostly hostile) warders that if the truce didn’t hold, he “would be back”.

Early in 1922 he joined the Free State Army. In August, with the rank of commandant, he was appointed governor of the Hare Park camp on the Curragh. Two years later, he left the army for the post of deputy governor of Mountjoy. He was “back”.

He served in other prisons but spent 28 years as governor of Mountjoy, detaining many former comrades (with some difficulty), supervising executions (with great difficulty) and teaching Irish to an enthusiastic Brendan Behan. Still the teacher.

Fighting for the Crown

Michael O'Driscoll was among the many thousands of young men who chose to serve in the British army and fight in the first World War.

Elaine Edwards

When Michael O'Driscoll joined the British army at the age of 20 in 1912, nearly two years before the outbreak of the first World War, there was a serious confrontation between him and his future brothers-in-law, and he was thrown into the Liffey.

It was in their eyes an inappropriate choice of career for a young man from a Catholic, Dublin family.

Michael – my great-grandfather – enlisted as Private 8771 with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on October 26th of that year and would later fight alongside fellow Irishmen and British soldiers against Germany in the first World War.

As it happened that assault by Mary O'Brien's brothers cemented the young couple's intention to pursue their relationship.

His son Daniel (Dan), now 82, recalls in an account of his father's life written for his family that "joining the army was seen by some as a last resort for young unemployed men, and the O'Brien family were not pleased with Mary keeping company with a soldier".

But Michael proved to be a "fine, upstanding proper gentleman" and the families were reconciled.

His choice to join the British army was prompted by a sense of adventure, as much, perhaps, as a desire to escape the more mundane job he had been in since he left school at Strand Street – at Smith's umbrella shop on Essex Quay.

Of about 200,000 Irishmen who served in the first World War, some 30,000 died. Many more, including Michael, were to suffer the lifelong effects of the mustard gas that wracked their lungs.

"At the time of the Easter Rising in Dublin, the 16th Irish Division, including the Dublin men, suffered appallingly from a German poison gas attack in the Hulluch sector, near Loos in France. I believe that was where my dad was first exposed to the poison gas – the effects of which he suffered for the rest of his life," Dan remembers.

While Dan does not recall his mother speaking of the turbulent days of the Rising, it must surely have been a fearful time. She was a young woman with a "good, secure job" in Jacob's biscuit factory – occupied by Thomas MacDonagh and his men that Easter Monday – and the young man she loved was fighting alongside British soldiers hundreds of miles away.

After service in France, during which he was hospitalised suffering exposure after fighting in the trenches of the Somme in the winter of 1916-17, Michael was promoted to sergeant on January 2nd, 1917, and returned to Dublin for a brief rest period.

That month he married Mary in the parish church of St Michael and St John in the old heart of the city, a stone's throw from where they were born and reared on Wood Quay and Fishamble Street.

In August 1917, Michael was involved in the British offensive at the Battle of Passchendaele where two Irish divisions suffered heavy casualties. His 108th Brigade with the 36th Division was involved in further battles from the early part of 1918 and the men were finally withdrawn in October. According to army records, Michael suffered exposure, scabies, dysentery and the lingering effects of the gas.

“On one of the very rare occasions when my dad spoke about the war, he told my brother and I that many of the troops had no gas masks. They would keep a bucket of urine close at hand and if there was a sudden gas attack, the urine would help to save their lives,” says Dan.

Michael's war came to an end 10 days before the armistice on November 11th, 1918, when he left Calais on a hospital ship. He spent 45 days in hospital in London before he was fit to return to Ireland.

The country wasn't so welcoming to returning Irishmen who had fought for the crown and some were intimidated and killed as informers during the War of Independence.

“Mary and Michael and their first child May were living on Wood Quay and their house was raided by the Black and Tans. Michael was not there at the time and lucky that his three guns were in Dublin Castle. Nothing incriminating was found, but the Tans were intimidating and did a lot of damage in the house,” says Dan. Michael, by then a first lieutenant, relinquished his commission on June 17th, 1920.

Dan recalls a gun mounted on the wall in the family home but it was years before he learnt the story behind it.

At his mother's funeral in 1948, a man who had served alongside his father told how Michael had gathered volunteers for reconnaissance missions past the front lines.

“One particular night, my father heard a German voice from behind cry out ‘halt, halt!’ As my father dropped his weapon, a shot was heard and the young German dropped to the ground. One of my father's comrades was near by and had shot the German. The rifle belonged to that unfortunate German soldier.”

When the second World War broke out in 1939, Michael took the train to Belfast to enlist, telling his family that for a man of his experience to do nothing against Hitler would be “a betrayal”. He failed the medical and was offered a desk job, which he declined. He had held jobs with Todd Burns department store and later at the Provincial Bank on Grafton Street, although he was in constant poor health.

Dan remembers Michael and Mary as “busy, inventive and industrious parents”. His mother sewed; his father made a dining table and stools, a hallstand and a “tall, delicate flower pot stand which stood proudly in our front window”.

Michael founded a branch of the Catholic Boy Scouts and a house where he often trained them still stands on West Essex Street.

After his death in January 1941, he was buried as he had wished: in a British military cemetery in a plain grave with no flowers.

Not quite the GPO, but a militant telegraph boy

An Arthur Griffith speech politicised Thomas Courtney, who intercepted enemy intelligence as a telegraph boy before joining a flying column.

Kevin Courtney

Thomas Courtney had an interesting job during the War of Independence. He worked in an obscure branch of the post office known as “the steaming and opening department”. This wasn’t an officially recognised position, mind. He was actually a telegraph boy in the post office, but this made him perfectly placed to intercept military correspondence and pass on valuable intelligence to his companions in the IRA.

My grandad was intelligence officer in the Mid-Galway No 1 Brigade of the IRA, Castlegar Company. His code-name was Captain Puzzle.

He was born in Newcastle in Galway in 1890, and was a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and captain of the Temperance Boat Club.

He was a champion rower, winning the Senior Sculls Championship of Ireland in 1920, 1921 and 1923.

He had become politicised as a teenager after stopping to listen to a speech by Arthur Griffith in Eyre Square. Galway was, in his opinion, “the most shoneen town in Ireland”, and he determined to join the armed resistance and battle British influence.

He delivered secret letters between various IRA commanders while on his postal rounds and smuggled messages in to prisoners in Galway jail. On one of his rounds, he was stopped and searched by the Black and Tans in Castlegar, who found republican documents in his post bag. They dragged him off to the notorious Earl’s Island barracks, where he was tortured and threatened with death.

On his release from Earl’s Island, he went on the run – or, as his mother put it, “on your keeping” – and joined the growing numbers of rebels conducting a clandestine war against the British army, the RIC and the Black and Tans.

During 1920, he took part in raids on mail cars, ambushes on RIC vehicles, sniping on Renmore Barracks, and a shootout at Galway Railway Station in which a volunteer, Seán Mulvey, and a Black and Tan named Krumm were killed.

Courtney was even immortalised in song – Verse 5 of *The Second Western Division* goes something like this:

“Note a man of iron rule

In Brigadier Mick Newell

From ‘16 down he made

A wise provision

With Tom Ruane and Brian Molloy

Tom Courtney was his guide

In the second western division.”

OK, it's not exactly *The Soldier's Song*, but who's to say it wasn't the Gangnam Style of its day?

Fast-forward more than 40 years to 1963, and local Galway author Walter Macken was beginning work on his new novel, *The Scorching Wind*, the final part of a trilogy that began with *Seek the Fair Land* and continued with *The Silent People*.

As part of his research, Macken interviewed Courtney, among others, about his exploits in the Mid-Galway IRA. One of my grandfather's stories had just the nail-biting tension Macken needed for his fictional tale.

Granddad was smuggling a wooden suitcase filled with small arms and incendiary devices on the train from Dublin to Galway when two armed Tans came into his carriage and took their seats.

Trying to act naturally, Courtney chatted nonchalantly with the soldiers, praying that they wouldn't ask to examine his suitcase. But then, as the train journey got underway, one of the Tans suggested playing a game of cards to while away the time, and grabbed the suitcase to use as a table, commenting on its unusually heavy weight.

Granddad told them the case was filled with snooker balls for the Temperance Boat Club. The trio played cards all the way to Galway, the soldiers never guessing that the case of snooker balls was actually packed with guns and explosives. One of the soldiers even helpfully hoisted the suitcase off the train, much to the astonishment of Granddad's fellow insurgents waiting to meet him.

A copy of *The Scorching Wind* was always prominently displayed on our dining-room bookshelf in Glenageary. Inside, a typewritten sheet of paper, faded and dog-eared, detailing the page and paragraph numbers of the passages based on my grandfather's IRA stories.

I still remember that sheet of paper, and I still remember Pop Courtney, behatted, thin as a rake, with his small, round John Lennon glasses, his grandchildren gathered around him to listen to his stories of rebellion and derring-do. He died in 1967 aged 77, but some of his stories are preserved on reel-to-reel tapes made by my dad in the 1960s.

My cousin, Thomas Courtney, has pages of testimony my granddad gave to the Bureau of Military History 1913-1921, which was set up by the minister of defence in 1947 to collate material, recollections and eyewitness accounts from the Rising and the War of Independence.

In his account, Granddad recalls the hopeless wait for the arrival of a German submarine which was to bring arms to help the Galway volunteers play their part in the Rising, and the tense weeks following the Rising, when he skulked around Galway and its outlying villages trying to avoid arrest.

He still managed to inflict some damage on the British regime, though, organising a dance to raise money for his imprisoned comrades which the local priest, Fr McHugh, tried to ban, and playing a prank on the local RIC by submitting false army recruitment forms filled in with the names of constables and their friends, resulting in a number of them being called up for duty.

My cousin also has a letter from the taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, dated December 10th, 1939, thanking Granddad and his colleagues in the Mid-Galway No 1 Brigade Old IRA for their offer of national service at the start of the Emergency.

Fast-forward to 2012, and the publication last November of *Blood for Blood the Black and Tan War in Galway* (Mercier Press, €14.99) by Galway author William Henry. It's a detailed account of the Black and Tans in Galway between 1920 and 1922, and the rebels who stood up to these "thugs in uniform", and with a full account, card game included, of my grandfather's role.

My two grandfathers, the Civil War split and a union

The one thing they had in common is that they both joined the IRA – and they met only once, after the war.

Edel Morgan

One day, some years ago, while holed up in *The Irish Times* library, trawling through acres of microfilm for the *Irish Times Book of the Century*, I felt a sudden pang of regret: “If only I’d listened.”

Why didn’t I pay attention when Granda Drew told us how he “stood guard for Sean Moylan before the Civil War – or how, after the war, “Dev’s men” fired several shots into his family home in Boherbue, Co Cork?

I thought of him tucked into his comfortable brown armchair, his eyes shining and his Cork accent almost indecipherable at the deliciously dangerous memory of it all.

And if only I’d probed into the family legends of Granda Morgan’s life on the run with the IRA during the Civil War, or the time when he was arrested in Ardee, Co Louth by one of the O’Higgins brothers (history doesn’t relate which one). Why didn’t I even ask about his time in Mountjoy in 1922 at the same time Erskine Childers was executed?

Now all I’m left with is a patchwork of half-remembered stories.

Not that my grandfather’s stories are unique; many men of their generation would have had similar stories to tell (though few have been recorded for posterity). But between them, Granda Drew and Granda Morgan encapsulated the ordinary man’s experience of the Civil War – the experience of those who helped to make the news but who never featured on the news pages themselves.

Their backgrounds could hardly have been more different.

My maternal grandfather, Edward Drew, was from a family of 13 children whose family businesses – the forge and the undertakers – had suffered due to a scarcity of wood after the first World War. The other, Sean Morgan, was born in Gosport in the south of England but brought up in Co Down, the only child of a well-to-do merchant navy captain.

The one thing they had in common was that, like many young men of their generation, they both joined the IRA. Drew and several of his brothers would chop down trees to waylay British soldiers in Boherbue, and two of his brothers spent time in Buttevant jail.

But Drew and Morgan took opposing sides during the Civil War. The former was staunchly pro-Treaty. The story goes that after the Civil War his arthritic grandmother, who lived with the family, told him and his brothers that they couldn’t “live like that with no proper jobs”. They had to start somewhere so why not help to set up the new State and join the Civic Guard? Five of them took her advice and some time later a volley of shots was fired into the house by “Dev’s men”, leaving the walls pockmarked with bullet-holes.

Drew used to say that Sean Moylan, although a staunch nationalist, understood that the Drews wanted to make a life for themselves. He was grateful to them for all the hours they had spent guarding his house in the old days and told the perpetrators that if they ever attacked the Drew house again, they'd have him to answer to.

My granny, Jane Drew, liked Eamon de Valera and the story goes that when she and my granda were courting, they were out for a walk in the Phoenix Park one day when they saw Dev approaching (probably in a car). She remarked to my granda: "Isn't he a lovely simple man?"

"A simpleton more like," he replied, before adding: "I don't know why you like him anyway. Sure didn't he destroy the pig industry?" My granny's family had been wealthy pig traders.

Had he been alive to see it, he would have loved Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* – I sometimes suspect that he was some kind of posthumous script adviser. He would call de Valera "an oul' turncoat", believing that Dev stayed in Ireland while Collins and the other Treaty delegates went to London to meet the British prime minister, because he reckoned they had little choice but to accept what was on offer.

"Don't forget what really happened when Collins was killed," he would say, discounting any notion that Collins was accidentally caught in crossfire at Béal na Bláth in August 1922.

Morgan, a much quieter man, rarely spoke about the Civil War, but we do know he believed that Collins "sold out" with the Treaty. While on the run during the Civil War he was arrested by one of the O'Higginses at Ardee after the fellow on sentry duty fell asleep while he and others were sleeping in a barn.

After the Civil War, Drew spent the rest of his working life in the Garda Síochána. A tall, imposing Cork man, he used to say that he wasn't paid for quite a while after joining the Free State's new police force in 1922. He would also recall how de Valera would refuse to salute the first gardai on duty at government buildings.

Morgan became a teacher of English and geography in Dundalk CBS. He refused the IRA military pension when he retired because he said he didn't do it for the money.

Thankfully, despite their great differences, they managed to eke out enough common ground to avoid the thorny subject of politics for one whole day when they met for the first and only time at my parents' wedding in June 1967.

Guarding family treasure from the Black and Tans

A culinary act of defiance.

Joyce Hickey

Auntie Moll's pastry was unsurpassed. More a biscuit base than a pastry case, it was usually topped with stewed apple and was reserved for special Sundays.

She got the recipe from a chef at the Royal Hibernian Hotel, on Dawson Street in Dublin, where she worked for some years as a receptionist.

Some time about 1920, Moll moved back to the family farm at Montdaniel, near Fermoy in north Cork, and worked as a secretary to the colonel at the local army barracks.

During the height of Black and Tan activity in the area, two of her brothers went on the run, and the countryside was combed.

And so, one day, while she cooked a fruit cake over the fire, two Tans clattered into the kitchen, guns almost blazing, looking for the men. The smell stopped them in their tracks.

The captain was distracted: "Your cake or your life," was the gist of his demand.

"You're not having it," said Moll. "You'll have to shoot me first."

He didn't shoot her. And she didn't surrender the cake. But she entrusted the pastry recipe to my mother.

The golden locket, the hidden grave and the forgotten soldier

History refuses to be done with the fate of Guy Pinfield, an English officer killed in Dublin Castle on the first day of the Easter Rising.

Paul O'Brien

On Easter Monday, April 24th, 1916, as the independent Irish Republic was being declared from the steps of the GPO in Sackville Street, a young British army officer was preparing to go on duty.

Lieut Guy Vickery Pinfield was 21 years old, a rugby-playing former student of Cambridge University. He had received his commission as a second lieutenant into the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars at the outbreak of war in 1914. A year later he was posted to the 10th Reserve Cavalry Regiment at the Curragh Camp in Co Kildare.

Born in Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire in 1895, Pinfield came from a successful and prosperous family that had made their money through tea plantations in the Indian province of Assam. Like many other young men of the regiment, he was waiting for his orders to move to the front. The conflict had been raging for two years and he was concerned that the war would be over before he got a chance to join in.

On April 24th, 1916, news reached the Curragh that a rebellion had erupted in Dublin city and reinforcements were needed urgently. Pinfield was posted to the city by train and was sent to Dublin Castle.

Shortly before midday, a section from the Irish Citizen Army commanded by Abbey actor, Séan Connolly, occupied City Hall and other strategic positions in the area. An unarmed RIC man, James O'Brien was shot dead as he attempted to close the gates of Dublin Castle. The guardroom of the complex was rushed by a number of armed Volunteers.

From these posts, Connolly's men kept up a relentless fire against British forces in the Castle. Pinfield was ordered to lead an attack with the objective of securing the main gate of the Castle and the guardhouse. Under heavy fire, the platoon moved towards the gate but Pinfield was shot and fell to the ground mortally wounded.

A section of his unit moved forward and laid down strong covering fire while another group of them managed to pull their dying officer into cover. Francis Sheehy Skeffington, the well-known pacifist, braved the hail of gunfire to bring aid to the stricken officer, but it was too late. The platoon fell back having suffered one officer killed, another officer wounded and roughly 30 ordinary ranks wounded.

As the rebellion raged throughout Easter Week, those that had fallen were hastily buried in the grounds of the complex. Pinfield's body was wrapped in a winding sheet and interred in a temporary grave in the Castle gardens like many other British soldiers.

After the Rising, the families of the dead came to the Castle to reclaim the bodies and at the end of the month, those unclaimed were reinterred at the British military cemetery at Blackhorse Avenue, Grangegorman. However, the bodies of Pinfield and another four officers, Godfrey Hunter (26), Algernon Lucas (37), Philip Addison (20) and Basil Worsley-

Worswick (35), remained in Dublin Castle, unclaimed. Granite slabs recorded the names, regiments and dates of death of the five officers.

There they remained, as the formal garden slowly succumbed to the elements, over decades of neglect. Their temporary graves were rediscovered by chance in 1962 on what was by that time deemed waste ground. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission made arrangements for them to be exhumed and reburied within Grangegorman cemetery. On May 17th, 1963, the five men were buried with the distinctive Commonwealth War Grave headstones marking their final resting place.

Pinfield was not forgotten. Soon after his death in 1916 the *Illustrated London News* published his photo on their Roll of Honour. His obituary in *The Times* announced the much loved only son of Mrs P Russell had been killed in action in Ireland. At Marlborough College his name appears with 742 others who lost their lives during the Great War. Fellow officers erected a plaque to his memory within St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, the only plaque in the cathedral connected to the Easter Rising.

In his home town of Bishops Stortford, his name appears in the local church and town war memorial. His old rugby club at Rosslyn Park also have his name on their memorial. But for the wider world he would have remained another unknown statistic of the Irish Easter Rising if it were not for the 2011 auction in Essex of a locket which prompted a number of researchers to investigate his story.

The 15-carat gold memorial locket sold for £850 (€1,008) and carries his image. It is engraved with the words of the Hussars' motto "*Pristinae Virtutis memores*" (the memory of former valour). His initials "GVP" and his place and date of death, Dublin April 24th, 1916, are also to be found on the locket which his mother wore throughout her life.

A letter to her from a brother officer may disclose one of the reasons why his body was not removed from the castle and repatriated to England. The officer states that Pinfield's remains were to be buried within the Castle environs in consecrated ground, a fitting resting place as it was just a few feet from where he fell. It is possible that Pinfield's mother took solace in this and left the remains of her son where she believed they would be tended by the military.

To most of the world the 1916 Easter Rising was overshadowed by events on the Western Front later that year. The Battle of the Somme followed that summer and the 116 British soldiers killed during the insurrection in Dublin city were listed as "killed at home". The British military and government were reluctant to remember soldiers killed in Dublin during the rebellion, as the event had caused some embarrassment.

The locket sold to an unknown Irish bidder.

Paul O'Brien is author of *Shootout, The Battle for St Stephen's Green, 1916*, the penultimate title in his series of six detailed histories on the key engagements of Easter 1916.