Martin Connolly of Kilgevrin

Volunteer in the Ranks

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For my brother Niall,
'Who kept the flag flying high.
May the cause be ne'er forgotten.'

Contents

Cover photo: Family gathering at Harolds Cross, Dublin, 1961
(names listed on acknowledgements page 224)

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"We learn history not in order to know how to behave or how to succeed, but to know who we are"

Preface

When my mother Madeleine died, in November 2016, I committed to completing a book on the history of her maternal family, the Bradys of Killeshandra. While I knew both of my mother's parents, and was particularly close to my grandfather, Dan Healy, I had little knowledge of my grandmother's family background, nor had I met any of her siblings. When I finally published the Brady family history, in 2019, I realised that I had even less knowledge of the family background of my father's father, Martin Connolly of Kilgevrin in north Galway. My grandmother, Bea Connolly (nee O'Connor) lived to the age of 101 and as a result I was very knowledgeable about her family, had met four of her brothers, but not her only sister and, since my early twenties, had visited her hometown of Ballycastle, county Mayo, regularly. I also knew that after they married, my grandparents settled in Tullow, County Carlow, where my father and his three siblings were born. However, while I met my grandfather, Martin Connolly, when I was very young, and after he retired, other than a vague notion of his involvement in the struggle for Independence and that, when he was unemployed, he had emigrated to work in England at some stage, I knew little else about his life.

Bea Connolly told me that she had first met Martin in Knockloughrim, in South Derry, when she was bringing IRA dispatches from her brother Willy O'Connor. While she also told me that he had been active in the IRA in Derry and with the Flying Column in Galway and Mayo, for some reason she consistently maintained that he had refused to apply for an IRA pension and, as a result, they were deprived of much needed income later in life. Given how little real detail Bea was prepared to impart on Martin's activi-

ties, over the years I became increasingly skeptical, when I could not authenticate any of the information. Luckily, when I discovered that the Irish Military Archive had two files in relation to Martin Connolly's pension application, this provided a very different story on his role in the struggle for Irish Independence. The Military Archive also made available pension files on Bea's three brothers, who were also IRA activists, involved in the Revolutionary period.

This family history is focused, primarily, on my grandfather Martin, my grandmother Kate (Bea) Connor and three of her brothers, Paddy, Michael and Willy. The work is undertaken primarily in the context of the current Decade of Centenaries, commemorating the Revolutionary period 1913-1923, by examining their involvement in the struggle for Irish Independence. While this narrative is referred to as a family history, more accurately it should be described as a history of my two paternal grandparents and their immediate connections. As a result of the detailed information provided, further research on relevant sources and interviews with my father's cousins, I have been able to produce this history of my father's family, extending to his direct ancestors, his parents and his three siblings.

The title 'Volunteer in the Ranks' is literally the description Martin Connolly provided in his IRA Pension application, but in many respects, it also reflects his life experience. As an ordinary member in the IRA, he is not visible in the historical record of the various key events that he participated in, nor is his story one of glory and reward, because much of his military experience was traumatic and tragic, with severe personal consequences. Subsequently, like many of his comrades he was denied recognition and reward for his efforts by the new State. In fact, in later life he joined the ranks of the unemployed and the emigrant. But hopefully, his commitment, indomitable spirit and resilience, and that of his extended family and contemporaries, shines through this dedicated narrative of a life well spent.

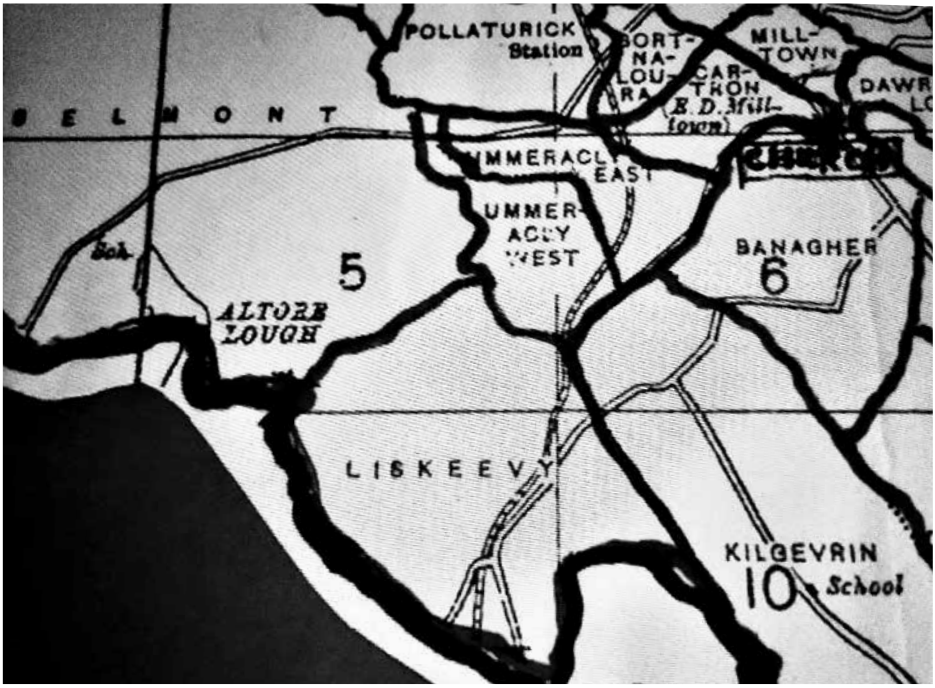
While the information accessed in the files can provide a general description and timeline for the revolutionary engagement of Martin Connolly, it cannot capture the complex tapestry of his lived experience, the range and variety of the activities that he was involved in, the challenges that he had to confront, the positive contribution that he made to his family and his country

and the inter-connections and intricacies of the community from which he emerged.

Martin Connolly grew up in Kilgevrin, in a small rural area surrounded by family relations and long-established neighbours, but where physical hardship was often experienced and where the potential for eviction and starvation was always present. The most striking characteristic of this part of North Galway, in the first two decades of his life, was the perpetual and intense conflict with the local landlords, in relation to land ownership and farming sustainability. This was particularly acute in Kilgevrin, and the surrounding townlands. As a result, Martin's father and older brothers were active in what was termed the 'Land War' in north Galway and were members, alongside most of their neighbours, of the Land League and the United Irish League. This radical experience, growing up in Kilgevrin, undoubtedly, contributed to Martin and many of his contemporaries becoming active in the Irish Republican Army during the War of Independence and the subsequent Civil War. This early traumatic engagement shaped and determined his life, but his up-bringing and the cultural influences and values, passed down and inculcated over generations, were more likely the determining factors that made him the person he was to become. Martin Connolly grew up in a community of tenant farmers, among an extensive family network. To fully appreciate the contribution made by this previous generation to the fight for Irish independence it is necessary to explore the early history and experience of the Connolly family, particularly in the context of the prolonged conflict over land ownership and occupation in Galway and Mayo. In fact, examining the struggle for land is also the key to understanding the long road to the Irish Republic.

PART ONE:

CONFLICT IN NORTH GALWAY



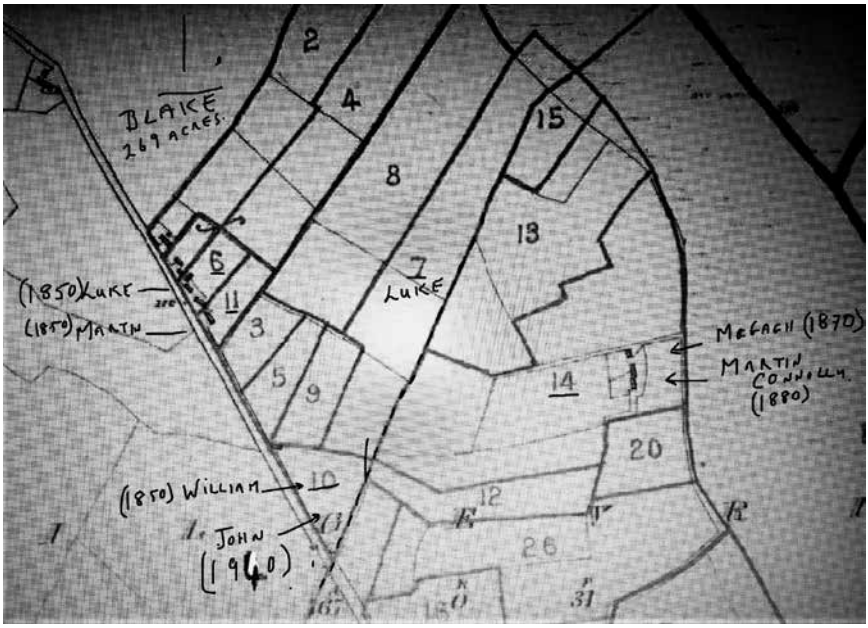
North Galway Townlands including Kilgevrin, Liskeevy and Belmont with Milltown village

Chapter One:

The Land Struggle: Kilgevrin Tenants V Landlords

While much of Ireland had been subject to a series of English plantations from the 1500s onwards, the Gaelic (Rundale) system of land ownership and distribution, an Irish indigenous practice of fairly distributing land occupation among related extended families, survived in Connacht until the Cromwellian invasion and subsequent land confiscation during the 1650s. However, Cromwell's land settlement policy resulted in the confiscation of large estates, to provide grants of Irish land to 12,000 veterans of Cromwell's New Model Army and the displacement of the Catholic landowners to poor land west of the Shannon, referred to as 'To Hell or to Connacht'. Before the Cromwellian invasion, Catholics had owned 60 per cent of the land in Ireland, however, during the Commonwealth period, when Oliver Cromwell was in power, Catholic landownership fell to 8 to 9 per cent and they were replaced by Protestant settlers.

In Kilgevrin, the main landlord Lynch, and their sub-landlord Blake, were originally Anglo-Norman and long established and prominent Catholic landlords, in Mayo and Galway. The Lynches were one of the so-called Galway tribes, until they were forced to leave Galway for Mayo because of the Cromwellian invasion and land confiscation. They secured land in Mayo where the Blakes were already established as substantial landlords. The Blakes were also descended from a very prominent Catholic landlord family, with some distinguished connections. Blake's ancestor married the daughter of Manus O'Donnell, a major landlord in north Mayo and descendant of the O'Donnell chieftains of Donegal, and their son, George Blake, was the leader of the Irish forces at the battle of Ballinamuck in 1798, for which he was executed by the English. They were also related to the Lynch family, from which they leased the Kilgevrin land. Mark Blake of Cong in Mayo had married Julianne Lynch. The Connolly connection with the Blakes as the landlords went back to at least the late 1700s and a Catholic Landlord,



Connolly holdings, Kilgevrin. Griffith Valuation 1850. Connolly tenancy sublet from Landlord Charles Blake. Holdings 6 and 7, Luke (7 acres); 10. William (1.5 acres); 11. Martin (0.5 acres). 1870s 14. McGaghs, from 1880s, Martin Connolly and 1940s, John Connolly on holding 10.

Francis Blake, is listed in the area in the Down Survey in 1670, so it may go back as far as the Cromwellian invasion.

By the 1830s, the Connolly landlord was Charles Blake of Brooklawn, who owned 600 acres and was leasing over 900 acres in the Milltown area, including 200 in Kilgevrin, from his relation Catherine Lynch, who owned over 1000 acres. As a result of this enforced land transfer over two centuries, the native families, including the Connolly's, lost their ownership of land and were forced to concentrate their homes and small holdings on the worst quality, peripheral areas. After the landlords had removed them from the larger more productive farmland, originally used for tillage, over time they converted most acreage to grazing as it became more profitable. In Kilgevrin, this high-quality grazing land was also made available for leasing by a series of 'eviction clearances' of the local tenants over time. The Blake family was particularly resented lo-

cally because they had carried out one of the largest mass evictions, at the time of the Famine in 1847, when, in one day, thirty-three local families were forced from their homes. As a result, most of the remaining tenants were on holdings, which were considered uneconomic. The Kilgevrin tenants rented from one absentee landlord, who owned 767 acres. The relationship was highly fraught, but this tension and conflict was increased by the presence of the Blake family, who treated the Connolly's very badly as tenants, eventually evicting them from long-held tillage land, resulting in a bitterness that persisted for over two decades.

Kilgevrin townland

Most of the Kilgevrin tenants, on sixty-five holdings in the area, had Catherine Lynch as their main landlord, but, for the Connolly's, from the 1700s, their direct landlord was Charles Blake and, from 1878, his son John D Blake, who controlled their land holding, as Lynch's sub-landlord. My great great grandfather, Luke Connolly, married Bridget Courtney in 1841 and they had five children, including Martin John in 1850. Luke inherited the main Connolly holding from his father Michael, who was listed in 1825 as a tenant of Charles Blake with a rented holding of six acres. Luke had two brothers, William and Martin who also shared the tenancy. The extract, from the Griffiths map of 1850, illustrates the Connolly tenancies at the time, and their subsequent locations in Kilgevrin. The three brothers, Luke, William, and Martin occupied three small holdings, rented from landlord Blake, each with a house and some land, totaling nine acres on which the three families were totally dependent for survival.

When my great grandfather, called Martin John, was born in June 1850, in Kilgevrin townland there were forty-one cottages, with a total population of 249 people, of which 119 were males and 130 females. Each of the houses were two roomed thatched cottages, with an average of six people per house. However, the 1850 Griffiths Valuation, which identifies tenants and landlords, only lists twenty-nine local families, occupying seventy-eight separate small holdings. The additional twelve houses in the townland, listed in the 1851 census, most likely refers to extended family members, or other landless cottiers, who were sharing the small holding, resulting in severe congestion with more than one family dependent

on each holding for survival and always subject to the Landlords permission.

Aside from the substantial holdings for Blake, with over 300 acres, the other Lynch tenants have varying size holdings with, in many cases the extended family members sharing the holding. The largest holding, with 33 acres, was Patrick Brennan. The other family names, who were still in Kilgevrin when my grandfather, Martin Connolly junior, was born in 1897, include, Ferrick (10 acres); Mannion (23 acres); Lavelle (24 acres); Ruane (18 acres); Cunningham (16 acres); Turner (30 acres); McGrath (10 acres) and Ryan (10 acres). Only four holdings are listed as landless tenants, described as 'Cottiers', with a subsistence holding, comprising a house and garden of 30 perches. These were provided by the sub-tenant and were made available on an annual basis, in return for farm labour. Given their very small holding, the three Connolly brothers, with only nine acres between them, would also be considered as cottiers, solely dependent on Landlord Blake. The cottage where Luke was living, was on less than a quarter acre (Plot 6) but he was also a tenant on seven- and three-quarter acres (plot 7) and this land would have been jointly farmed by the three brothers, solely to feed their families. His brother Martin, lived on three quarters of an acre (Plot 11), on land provided by Luke and William lived on one and a half acres (plot 10).

Their landlord Charles Blake, held a total of over 300 acres, valued at £200, on a perpetual lease, from his relative, the landlord Catherine Lynch. Blake sublet 35 acres to five Tenants, including the three Connolly brothers, and retained the balance. Charles Blake was the foremost industrialist in Tuam. Blakes brewery and associated milling and malting establishments were the main industries, in early 19th century Tuam. When he died in February 1878, aged sixty-eight, Blake also possessed properties in the town of Galway, at Killeen Castle with 125 acres; 274 acres at Cong in Mayo and 164 acres in Tipperary, in total valued at almost £500, a substantial asset at that time. He lived in Tuam, where he was a leading member of the Catholic Gentry, as a Justice of the Peace and Vice-Chairman of the Poor Law Guardians, and a prominent member of the Catholic Church. On his death, the Blake estate was equally divided between his three sons, with John D. Blake inheriting the original family home at Brooklawn House, with the large

land holding in the surrounding area and the perpetual lease in Kilgevrin, three miles away.

The Land League campaign

When John Blake became a prominent landlord in north Galway, the challenge to the landlord class in Ireland was beginning to organize and he had to contend with the emergence of the Land League the following year, in October 1879. The first Land League meeting held in Milltown in July 1880 was the largest held nationally, with over 35,000 people attending. Martin Connolly became a direct tenant of Alicia Lynch, after he married Mary McGagh in 1884, and moved into the two-room thatched cottage beside his brother-in-law, Tom McGagh, (Plot 14), where the two families equally shared thirteen acres, as joint tenants of the landlord Alicia Lynch. Martin's father, Luke, originally had the tenancy for the adjacent field of seven acres from Blake and this would have formed part of the holding he succeeded to. Thomas McGagh and Winifred (Una) Hannon married in 1873, so it is likely that they moved in at that stage. Martin and Tom, and most of their neighbours in Kilgevrin and the surrounding area, were active locally in the Land League. Like many tenant farmers across Ireland, they believed that a militant campaign was necessary to challenge the landlords, to ease the poverty and hardship that their families had to endure. The success of the agitation by the Land League placed severe pressure on the landlords and John D. Blake was involved in forming an association of the north Galway landlords, in Tuam in 1887.

Despite the efforts of Blake and his fellow landlords the Land League campaign, led by Michael Davitt, was successful, across Ireland. They had pursued three key demands, called 'The 3Fs', Fair Rent, annual payments, that poor tenants could reasonably afford; Fixity of Tenure, definite periods of land lease to be set to prevent evictions and Free Sale, of the right of occupancy of the leased holding. These demands became essential, because of the small tenant farmers previous experience, particularly in the decades after the famine, when rents were hiked up without notice, widespread evictions were carried out for land clearances for grazing and the landlords controlled the sale of land holdings. The League campaign forced the Government to introduce a range of Land Acts in Westminster in the 1880s. These Acts provided substantial funds, for the

new Congested Districts Board for the west of Ireland, to enable the purchase of land from landlords, to tackle extreme hardship and to reduce uneconomic holdings, with unsustainable numbers of family occupants. However, the changes primarily benefitted the larger tenant farmers, most of whom were in Leinster and Munster. The tenant farmers in the west of Ireland, especially those concentrated in designated Congested districts, such as north Galway, did not secure the changes necessary to survive on small holdings. These problems of poverty and forced emigration were further exacerbated by the increasing tendency of the landlords in Galway and Mayo to remove good tillage land from their long-established tenants and to lease the grassland to large graziers instead. This was organised on eleven-month leases, which were not subject to the regulations to control land allocation, introduced by the Land Acts, enacted in response to the effective Land League campaign.

However, arising from the success of the Land League campaign, the new Land Acts of the 1880s were used to encourage Landlords to transfer their large holdings to the new Congested Districts Boards, established in 1891. In north Galway, following extensive negotiations between the Board and the Lynch family, they agreed to sell the land to their tenants, on a twenty-three-year purchase, which would enable the Estates Commissioners to transfer the land to the ownership of the tenants by the early 1900s. At that time, the Lynch estate extended to over 1,000 acres of bog, farm, and tillage land, with 400 acres of the best quality grassland in the hands of graziers or middlemen, of which 200 acres were on 11-month leases and 200 acres were held by John D. Blake of Brooklawn. Blake became a substantial grazier, by switching the use of the Kilgevrin land from tillage to grassland for cattle, which he then leased out to a sub-tenant. For example, in December 1893 he advertised 80 acres to let in Kilgevrin for grazing purposes. While Alicia Lynch was, by this time, the main landlord for Martin Connolly's family, whose house and small holding were rented from this landlord, the wider family still depended on Blake for their original holdings. Despite the agreement with the Lynches, Blake refused to transfer the land that he held in Kilgevrin, which was on a perpetual lease and excluded from the terms of the Land Act.

Securing ownership of this large acreage was vital to the tenant farmers, on the smallest holdings in Kilgevrin, particularly the Con-

Martin Connolly, was born in June 1850. Martin married Mary McGagh in 1884 and shared a thirteen-acre holding with his brother-in-law. They were both active in the Land League in the 1880s and subsequently with the United Irish League. Martin died on the 3 May, 1922. (for family connections see Appendix One)

nolly's, as it was the only means for them to expand to a more viable farm. In addition, it would appear from the records that John Blake, evicted the Connolly's, and his other tenants, from their original holdings in 1900 and converted them for grazing. This action generated deep resentment among the tenants at Kilgevrin, who would have rented the land for tillage purposes, prior to the famine. The removal of access and use of this land from the local tenants, who were already living on uneconomic holdings in an area described as a Congested District, was a source of continuous and mounting conflict, particularly between the Connolly's and Blake. This landlord and tenant relationship could provide some indication as to why

the future conflict, first organized by the Land League campaign and then the United Irish League, was so bitter and so prolonged, because without an economic land holding the Connolly's and the other small tenant farmers in Kilgevrin, depended solely on the transfer of land under the Land Acts, which their landlord frustrated for two decades.

The Ranch War in North Galway

When my grandfather Martin was born in 1897, of the thirty-three households in Kilgevrin, at least four were related directly to his family, including seven cousins living beside him. There were also family relations nearby, in the townlands of Belmont and Liskeevy. The 1901 census records a total population in the three adjacent townlands of Kilgevrin, Belmont and Liskeevy, as 692 inhabitants in 123 households, headed almost exclusively by small farmers, with only two teachers for the local primary schools, a wool-weaver, two tailors, a shoemaker, and a musician, listed as heads of households. When Martin was three years old, the population of Kilgevrin was 183 inhabitants in 33 households. Milltown village, in Banagher townland, is only two miles from Kilgevrin and, in 1901, contained 11 households and 73 inhabitants, including four public houses, two large shops, an RIC barracks, with six policemen, and a Catholic Church.

When my grandfather Martin was born, in November 1897, his three brothers were, Luke age eight; William age six; John aged four and a sister Mary, aged two years, two other sisters were born subsequently, Delia, born in 1910, who died young and Freddie, born in 1915. His father Martin, was forty-seven and his mother Mary (McGagh), was twenty-eight. Martin's grandmother was Mary Hannon, from Belmont, and his grandfather was William McGagh, from Liskeevy, who had been previously married to a Bridget Connolly and had a son Thomas. The family home, a two-room thatched cottage, was located at the edge of a small holding, next to the bog, The total holding of just over 13 acres, with two thatched cottages beside each other, was shared equally with Mary's stepbrother, Thomas McGagh, who had eleven children with Una Hannon. A total of nineteen family members had to survive on this joint holding.

From the year that he was born in 1897, and for the first two decades of his life, my grandfather, lived through a continuous and

increasingly militant conflict with the local landlords, that involved his father and elder brothers and most of his neighbors and extended family. This intensive struggle sought to obtain ownership of the small, rented holdings which the Connolly's had occupied over many centuries and to secure additional land for expansion to provide a viable farm size, capable of feeding and maintaining the family and earning a sustainable livelihood. In many respects this was a life and death struggle because the experience of the recent famine had shown that most tenants were living on uneconomic holdings, dependent on the potato crop for survival and, as the landlords converted their farmland to grazing, this increased the incidence of extreme poverty and hardship. In Kilgevrin, the Blake acreage included the former Connolly holding. The campaign against Blake, maintained over two decades, involved direct negotiation, protest, boycott, intimidation, cattle driving, land occupation, imprisonment of tenants and culminated in an attempted assassination of Blake, which had serious consequences for the Connolly family.

Formation of United Irish League

This intensified local agitation, commenced with the establishment of the United Irish League (UIL) in 1898, which was founded by William O'Brien, the former nationalist MP, who lived in Mayo. It was in the context of the increase in graziers and the growing demand from small tenants for compulsory land purchase, in areas such as Kilgevrin, that the UIL was setup at a meeting in Westport on 23 January 1898, attended by 4,000 people. The foundation of the League, with the motto "The Land for the People", promised, as the first objective, to tackle the grazing issue and force landlords to sell the untenanted land to the local small farmers in Congested Districts. The most important resolution adopted at the first meeting stated:

> That the most effective means of preventing the frequent cries of distress and famine in this so-called congested district would be the breaking up of the large grazing ranches with which the district is cursed, and the partition of them amongst the small land-holders, who were driven into the bogs and mountains to make room for the sheep

Tenant protest against local landlords. The poster reads "Praise the Lord for here the tyrants arm was paralysed"

and bullocks of English and Scotch adventurers and Irish grabbers.'

This new agrarian campaign provided an effective focus for the small tenant farmers around Milltown in north Galway, to cooperate through local branches, with other local interests, and these became the principle means to organise and expand rapidly. By 1900, in Galway, there were 74 UIL branches and 10,711 members. The subsequent merger of the UIL with the reformed Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) in 1900 also provided an effective national political dimension to the local agitation.

Milltown UIL

The UIL branch in Milltown was established early in the campaign.

Local small farmers joined the organisation and elected an Executive Committee, which also included local shopkeepers and clergy. Most of the farmers in Kilgevrin, led by Tom McGagh, became very prominent in the UIL, and in the activities organised by the Branch. Martin Connolly senior and his two sons John and William were also active members. The UIL Branches intended to complement the work of the Congested Districts Boards locally, in facilitating land distribution and breaking up the large grazing farms, by introducing an element of compulsion and intimidation into the Boards negotiations with landlords and graziers. The Milltown UIL Branch achieved this by organising deputations to meet with the local landlords and graziers; boycotting auctions of eleven-month leases; putting pressure on labourers working for graziers; preventing graziers from saving crops over the summer months and boycotting shopkeepers who refused to support the UIL local campaign.

In the Milltown area, a primary target for the UIL Branch was the local landlord, John D. Blake, who had refused to transfer his grasslands to the local tenants, particularly the Connolly's. In a subsequent court case, Blake admitted that he had evicted the Connolly's, and his other tenants, from their original holdings by 1900. At that time, Martin Connolly was also a tenant on a small holding from landlord Alicia Lynch, but he would have relied on the Blake land, which his father had occupied, for additional tillage and this was converted for grazing by Blake. Despite the UIL campaign, Blake placed an advertisement in the Tuam Herald in April 1901, promoting the letting for grazing at Kilgevrin of about 100 acres of prime land in suitable divisions. He rented out the land to one substantial tenant for grazing purposes and this became the centre of a sustained, and sometimes violent, confrontation between Blake and the residents of the townland of Kilgevrin. In 1903, the Tuam Board of Guardians was provided with a full listing of grazing farms in the north Galway division, including the Milltown area, extracted from the Rate Book. This showed a total farmland used for grazing as 76,435 acres valued at £29,686. This agricultural land, which was owned by 146 landlords with an additional 187 graziers, had a total of 3,680 smaller tenants, with a valuation below £9, which was a size of holding generally considered uneconomic. The largest Landlord in the division was Robert Blake, a Catholic, who held 4,965 acres and had 309 tenants with an average value of £4 per

annum, which was the lowest value for rental purposes, indicating barely subsistence holdings.

The UIL national campaign eventually resulted in the Land (Purchase) Act (1903), which allowed for purchase from landowners on generous terms and the establishment of a Land Commission and Congested Districts Board to oversee the transfer and redistribution of large estates to smaller units. In the period 1903 to 1909 over 200,000 peasants became owners of their holdings under the Act, across Ireland. The approval of the Land Act in 1903 provided the basis for the negotiations with landlords to secure the purchase and transfer of their estates and this became the primary focus of the local UIL in Galway. However, despite the new legislation, the impact on north Galway and Connacht was minimal and this resulted in substantially increased agitation, which is referred to as the 'Ranch War'. This 'War' comprised two interlinked agitations, both of which originated in the spring of 1904 and ended in the winter of 1908. In the first instance the Ranch War was an agitation against landlords, often in the form of rent strikes, to force them to sell their estates, at prices determined by the tenants. Second, the Ranch War involved an agitation against the grazing system aimed at reducing the Landlords profits from untenanted land, by intimidating grazing tenants into giving up their grazing leases, so that landlords might be induced to sell their grazing land to the Estates Commissioners. In effect, the UIL Branches were exerting an illegal pressure on the operation of the land market, so that the Estates Commissioners could acquire untenanted land at a more reasonable price. The 'war' commenced in East Galway in October 1903. It was led by the local UIL and supported by John Roche MP, who was a leader of the previous Land League campaign and had been jailed several times and subsequently elected for the Irish Parliamentary Party. He told the tenants of the Dunsandle Estate, of over 37,000 acres, 'Should your landlord refuse to sell to you on reasonable terms, do everything in your power to cut down the rent of that landlord.' As a result, 300 tenants withheld their rent from their landlord, William Daly, to force him to transfer his estate to them. By spring 1904 he agreed to sell his estate, including 2,500 untenanted acres, to the tenants. This successful local action became the model for the rest of Galway.

Blake refusal

When, under intense local pressure, the Lynch Estate, a major landowner in North Galway with a holding of over 1,000 acres, including 400 acres of grazing land, eventually agreed to sell their land to the Congested Districts Board, John D Blake, who held a perpetual lease on 200 of these acres, refused to transfer his holding. He had sublet this land for grazing purposes to a rancher and was not concerned about the impact on the surrounding tenants. It was this holding that became the source of continuous and bitter conflict with the other local tenants, primarily the Connolly's, because he also controlled their future farm viability. The Kilgevrin tenants believed that this land should be bought and divided to increase their individual small holdings. In February 1905 a deputation from the tenants, accompanied by the regional chairperson of the UIL, met with Blake to progress their claim. Tom McGagh, Mary Connolly's stepbrother and neighbour, led the delegations and reported back to the Committee that the offer to negotiate the sale of the lease was not accepted.

Following this meeting the Milltown UIL Branch decided to call on the local graziers, on the Lynch estate, to surrender their holdings. Suggestions were also put forward by members for more radical means to put pressure on the graziers, including formation of mobile picketing groups, like the Trade Unions in England at the time. The May meeting, of the Milltown UIL branch, chaired by Edward Connolly from Kilgevrin, again focussed on the issues related to the tenants on the Alicia Lynch estate in the area, which also affected the Kilgevrin members. Connolly informed the meeting that fifty legal summonses, were processed without warning by the RIC, for non-payment of rent by tenants in Kilkeerin, (near Milltown) who were also in negotiation with the Alicia Lynch estate for the purchase of their landholdings, over the previous year. However, luckily none of the named tenants were home when the RIC arrived, so they were unable to legally serve them, but a large police force was in the area trying to impose the summonses.

Militant Kilgevrin land campaign

By 1911 Martin Connolly was sixty-two years old, his wife Mary was forty-three and they had been married for twenty-seven years with six children. Their eldest son Luke had left Ireland, and their

sons William (22) and John (19) worked on the farm and were active in the UIL campaign, two of their other children, Mary and Martin, were still at school and the youngest Delia was one year old, but died a few years later. Sadly, the Connolly's eldest son, Luke, emigrated from Ireland in 1905, at the age of sixteen. He remained working in England until he emigrated to America from Liverpool on 28 September 1915. Ten days later he arrived at Ellis Island, New York on the S.S. Cameronia, where he described himself to immigration as a labourer, age 24 years, who could speak Irish. His description was noted as tall, medium build, with blue eyes and brown hair. He settled in the Bronx where he was employed in various labouring trades until he was drafted to the US army in May 1917. My grandfather, Martin junior, completed school in June of 1911 and took up an apprenticeship as a shop worker in Noone's, a hardware store in Milltown. In 1911, in the adjacent cottage, only five of the McGagh's remained at home. Tom McGagh was fifty-eight years old; his wife Una was seventy and they had been married for thirty-eight years. Only three of their eleven children lived with them, two as farm workers and one at school. William and John McGagh also joined their father in the UIL campaign and became increasingly militant in their demand for land.

Over the following decade, the Milltown UIL committee changed their tactics, with the focus initially on developing their campaign by securing political support at a national level, primarily from the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and eventually, becoming more militant, taking direct action against Blake by forcibly occupying his grazing land in 1917, resulting in the imprisonment of William Connolly, John McGagh and many of their neighbours, and ultimately by an assassination attempt in 1920, which tragically had serious consequences for the Connolly family. The Milltown UIL Branch Committee secured national political support through their MP, Richard Hazelton, who was a prominent member of John Redmond's IPP and in return most of the Kilgevrin tenants were listed publicly as contributing to the Home Rule Fund. At a Party meeting, held in Tuam in September 1912, a delegation attended from the Milltown UIL Branch. Hazelton and William O'Brien, founder of the UIL, were in attendance. While the principal purpose of the meetings was to promote the Home Rule Bill, the Milltown delegation obtained commitments from Hazelton. Their main objective

was to pressure the Congested Districts Board (CDB) to purchase the Lynch Estate and, specifically, to secure ownership of the lands held by Blake, even though he was resisting any attempt to purchase the legal rights to this land. By mid-1913, Hazelton was in communication with the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell, who in August confirmed that the Congested Districts Board had issued an order for the purchase of the estate, but this had not been accepted. The November meeting of the Milltown UIL Branch was informed, by Edward Connolly of Kilgevrin, that the CDB had made a further offer for the Kilgevrin land, but this was again refused. The Branch chairman proposed that compulsion should be used under the new Land Bill and suggested that the reason for the delay in the process was due to 'favouritism among local officials to Mr Blake'.

Rent strike

In January 1914 the Congested Districts Board confirmed to Hazleton that, while the Lynch estate had been fully purchased, Blake was still refusing to sell the land in Kilgevrin. The February meeting of the Milltown UIL Branch considered the reply from the CDB and, in response, a protest statement signed by the Kilgevrin tenants was forwarded to the CDB, viz.,

> Lynche Estate. To the Congested Districts Board for Ireland.
>
> We, the undersigned tenants of the Kilgevrin portion of the above estate hereby declare that we will not pay any further rent until the grass land of Kilgevrin is divided amongst us. Three years ago, your Board purchased Mr Lynches interest in the whole estate and settled the Liskeevey tenants on grass lands of that portion of the property, yet nothing has been done for us. It is strange that you allow Mr Blake to retain possession of the Kilgevrin grass lands whilst the tenants there are in absolute need of economic holdings. It is a question that should be solved publicly, without fear or favour on either side-
>
> (signed). John Brennan, Andrew Ryan, John Feerick, James Lavelle, John McGrath, Michael Lavelle, John Hughes, Mich Ruane, Dan McCormack, Thos. Ryan, Pat

> Cosgrave, Michael Kirrane, Catherine Ryan, Patk. Turner, Thomas Casserly, Michl. Keane, Mary Devany, Thos. Murray, Patk Mannion, Thos Burke, Patk. Haire, Martin Connolly, Thomas McGagh.

In April, frustrated at the lack of action by the CD Board, the same Kilgevrin tenants sent a second letter to Hazelton requesting that he raise the matter in the House of Commons, stating,

> On the Kilgevrin portion there is a large grass farm which is urgently required for the relief of congestion amongst the tenants, who have been paying interest for some years in lieu of rent and see no prospect of a final settlement. So serious is the hardship entailed on the tenants through their uneconomic holdings that we have determined to pay no rent until something is done to relieve the present conditions of things.

However, the outbreak of the First World War, in August 1914, effectively stopped any further progress in resolving the Kilgevrin land issue. The suspension of land division by the CDB during the War also inflamed dissent, as did the widespread practice of renting land to graziers on the eleven-month system, while division was pending by the Board, which caused great resentment. The Great War period brought a substantial economic benefit to the graziers with the agricultural boom. By 1915, Galway had 72,801 acres on eleven-month system, just behind the highest county Meath. The Kilgevrin land issue continued to fester during 1915 and 1916, although the impact of the World War and the Easter Rising meant that other major issues became more dominant nationally. Resulting from the slow progress, the Kilgevrin land dispute was escalated by the exasperated tenants into a major confrontation over the next few years.

Kilgevrin land occupation

On 22 January 1917 a crowd of fifty Kilgevrin tenants marched to Brooklawn to confront the Landlord Blake. They demanded that he hand over the arable land in Kilgevrin, which Blake leased from the Lynch Estate and which had been recently purchased by the

Congested Districts Board. The group told him that if he did not give it, the Food Controller would take it and give it to them. This was a reference to the new Compulsory Tillage Order which obliged landowners with over ten acres to convert ten percent of their arable land to tillage, ' . . . the purpose of which was to provide food to the Empire during the Great War . . . ' Blake refused to comply. On Monday morning 5 March 1917 about thirty men and several women, including the Connolly's and McGagh's, entered the Blake grazing land in Kilgevrin with seven teams of horses and commenced ploughing and tillage operations on a field of twenty-two acres, which had been sub-let to a Mrs Norah Cunningham. Blake arrived at his land at one o'clock and complained about the action. Shortly afterwards a large force of police arrived but did not interfere, other than taking the names of the most prominent tenants. Each day during the week the Kilgevrin UIL members occupied and ploughed further fields, knocking fences and drove Cunningham's cattle and sheep off the land. The following week the event was reported in the national newspapers and the *Western People* led with a dramatic headline:

> **The extension of tillage campaign-Kilgevrin Farm-Sensational arrests at Milltown-Extraordinary action of the crown-charge of unlawful assembly-sixteen men go to jail-demonstration of public sympathy. (From our Reporter)**
> On Monday morning considerable sensation was caused throughout the Milltown district by the arrest of twenty-five men of the farming class at Kilgevrin on the charge of unlawful assembly in connection with tillage operations on the Kilgevrin farm. A farcical feature of the proceedings was the drafting into the little village of an overwhelming police force. A sergeant and two men would readily have affected the arrests for the parties charged, if called upon, would have accompanied them without demur to the barrack, but the crown laid its plans with 'deep strategy' and carried them into dramatic effect. In the early hours of the morning at 3am "tanks" filled with armed police swooped down on the village from all directions, and the arrests were promptly effected. The prisoners were marched to

the Milltown police barracks, where between thirty and forty police had assembled. At 12 o'clock a special court was held at the courthouse before Mr H A Hingston RM . . . Though the arrests had been carried out so suddenly that the people of the parish were for the most part unaware of the occurrence, there was a goodly attendance of sympathisers with the accused at the special court . . . The following was the charge against the defendants "That they (defendants) did on the 5th March 1917 at Kilgevrin unlawfully enter upon the lands of one John D. Blake, of Brooklawn, without his authority and consent and ploughed such lands."

The Trial

The twenty-four defendants, all of whom resided in Kilgevrin, were drawn up in the courthouse in double file and answered to their names as follows-Andrew Ryan, John McGagh, John Hughes, Thomas Devaney, Patrick Murray, Michael Turner, Pat McGrath, Peter McCormack, Michael Ryan, William Connolly, Martin Devaney, Patrick Haire, Thomas Brennan, Thomas Ryan (junr), John Connolly, Michael Kirrane, Michael Keane, Patrick McCormack, Patrick Burke Michael Casserly, James Lavelle, P Cosgrove, A Ryan (junr), P Ryan and William Steede. Landlord Blake was called as a witness. He claimed that he and his family had been abused by the tenants when they protested at his house in January and that he had offered them nineteen acres for tillage, which they had rejected as inferior land. The landlord was then asked if the field he had offered to them was ever tilled by the prisoners before. He replied . . . ' No. but their fathers did, about 18 years ago. These are all young wastrels'. The defence lawyer argued that Blake had not complied with the Compulsory Tillage Order. The Chairman of the Special Court replied that there were extenuating circumstances and he had some sympathy with the farmers but there was no justification for taking the law into their own hands. The Defendants were ordered to keep the peace, with a potential fine of £30, a substantial sum, if they failed to do so.

By agreement between the prisoners, due to age or family dependency, eight of the men signed for bail, including John Connolly; one was discharged due to his youth, and the others, who refused, in-

cluding William Connolly and John McGagh, were removed to Galway Gaol. At 3.30pm the men lined up at the barracks and marched with a heavy escort of armed police to the railway station for the Galway train. Outside the barracks a large crowd had assembled and as the prisoners emerged gave hearty cheers and prolonged groaning for Blake. Along the way the prisoners were received with the greatest enthusiasm and as the train steamed out cheers were again raised. The newspaper report concluded, 'Volunteers from all over the parish have offered support for the farm work of the men who have gone to jail, and the district is seething with excitement.'

Celebrations on release

The men were released after a month in Galway Jail. They were met at Tuam railway station by over 250 people, who marched with them two-deep to the Town Hall where, amid much enthusiasm a meeting was held. A large contingent attended from Milltown and amongst those present were the Officers of the North Galway UIL and several elected representatives. The UIL Chairman welcomed the prisoners back and stated that:

> . . . the example they had shown was a lead for the country. It was a test case. They had gone to jail not for a crime but for the assertion of their rights. They were not law breakers in the sense of the word but law makers. He hoped some arrangement would be come to between the CD Board and the Department of Agriculture, so that the people who ploughed the land will be enabled to seed it. The matter, he understood, was being taken up by the CD Board and the sooner it was dealt with the better.

Thomas Sloyan, Irish Parliamentary Party member and Secretary of the Galway UIL Executive, also spoke to the assembled crowd, stating:

> The land in question had been in possession of the prisoner's fathers, who had been evicted from it in the old penal days. The middleman, Mr Blake, had no right to stand in the way of an Act of Parliament passed by the British Government in times of stress and need when the prices

> of provisions had gone up in some cases over two hundred per cent, and when the food was necessary to supply the troops of the Empire fighting for small nationalities . . . It was a great wonder the Kilgevrin people held their patience so long and did not demand as a right-not as a compliment-the lands hitherto held by their forefathers

Following the speeches, the prisoners and their friends were hospitably entertained to lunch by a Committee of the Kilgevrin and Milltown people. On their return home bonfires were lighted all over the country. The Kilgevrin occupation received national coverage in the newspapers and was generally viewed as a significant protest in the continuing land war, providing an example for other tenant farmers in the UIL.

Chapter Two:

The War of Independence, North Galway

It was only after the Irish Volunteers were formed in 1913 and the Rising occurred in Easter 1916 that many younger men in rural areas became involved in what was to become a national struggle for independence. Many of the local leaders and activists of the north Galway UIL subsequently joined Sinn Féin and the IRA. There was a significant amount of political activity in the Milltown area during the World War period, specifically through the UIL and especially in Kilgevrin, with the continuing bitter tenants dispute with the landlords Lynch and Blake. In addition, the prolonged agrarian campaign in north Galway, where the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), who organised the Easter Rising, had been secretly active and radicalised many young men with the result that membership of Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers became an option for further militant involvement, mainly by the sons of small tenant farmers and landless labourers.

The direct struggle against the local landlord Blake, and the land occupation and arrest and imprisonment of family members, must also have had an influence on the many local young men and women in Kilgevrin, and the surrounding townlands, who joined the Republican movement. However, in the context of the longer-term impact on the Connolly family, a more significant outcome from the arrest of his brothers, and three months after the release of his brother William from Galway Jail, in July 1917, Martin Connolly joined the local Milltown Company of the Irish Volunteers. His future IRA compatriots, who joined the adjacent Belmont Company, included Patrick Walsh, Dan and John McCormack, Patrick and Peter Brennan and Thomas Bannon, who was related to the Connolly family, each of whose families had also been centrally involved in the land dispute in Kilgevrin and the adjacent townlands of Liskeevy and Belmont. It is an interesting coincidence also that Martin's eldest brother, Luke, was drafted into the US army two months earlier, in May 1917. A note on his draft file states that he

was employed in a construction company on 4th Avenue in New York and that he partly financed his father and mother. He was initially based in Camp Hancock in Georgia, where in July 1918, supported by his officers, he petitioned successfully for US citizenship. Subsequently he served in Europe, during the First World War. He was transferred as part of the 51st Infantry Battalion, to Europe in September 1918, two months prior to the ceasefire and he remained in Europe until his formal discharge, in June 1919, when his Battalion was transported by the Navy from Brest in France to Hoboken in New Jersey and he was married five months later.

The Milltown Irish Volunteers

Martin Connolly's initial involvement in the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin in Milltown was also in the context that very many local young men became involved in the Republican movement in support of the 1916 rising, when South Galway had the largest mobilisation of Volunteers, outside Dublin. Over 200 men mobilised under Liam Mellows, with the intention of securing west of the Shannon. They were expecting a landing of an arms shipment, but these were captured in Kerry and the men were sent home after two days of military manoeuvres. The largest number of Volunteers interned in Frongoch after the Rising, outside of Dublin, was in Galway, where 322 men were imprisoned. In early 1917 the Irish Volunteer organ-

Wedding portrait, Luke Connolly and Katherin Finnegan, New York December 1919

isation was re-established in north Galway, initially in Dunmore near Milltown, by three released Easter Rising prisoners- Tom Kilgarrif, Willie McGill, and Michael Ronayne. By mid-1917 all of Galway was in one Volunteer Brigade area, under Commandant Seamus Murphy, from Dublin.

After he left school in 1911, Martin Connolly was initially employed as an apprentice in a hardware shop, Noone's in Milltown, and subsequently worked in a shop, Fahey's of Tuam, which was connected to one his mother's relations, the Hannon's. Martin joined the Milltown Irish volunteers while he was employed in the village. However, the two local IRA Companies, Milltown, and Belmont, were closely linked. In 1917 the Belmont IRA Company was led by Michael McHugh. He was subsequently replaced by Patrick Brennan, from Liskeevy, the brother of Peter Brennan, who provided a written reference for Martin Connolly, as one of his IRA officers. They were cousins of John Brennan from Kilgevrin, who was involved in the UIL and was elected as a Sinn Féin councillor in 1920. The Belmont unit was eventually led by Thomas Hannon, a direct relation of the Connolly's, and the Milltown Company was led by Thomas Ferrick. As a member of the Milltown Volunteer Company, Martin would have been under the ultimate control of the Tuam Battalion, where he named his senior officers as Peter Burke of Kilconly and Tim Dunleavy. Dunleavy's brother, Patrick, had been interned in Frongoch prison camp in Wales, after the 1916 rising. He had joined the IRB circle in Tuam in 1912 and the Volunteers in 1914, under Liam Mellows. The IRB in Tuam was part of the Galway mobilisation for the Easter rising, but Dunleavy was captured by the local RIC.

Martin joins the Irish Republican Brotherhood

On his release from internment, Patrick Dunleavy became the main organiser for the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the Tuam district and it is most likely that Martin Connolly joined the secret, oath bound, organisation, when he was working in the town. Patrick Dunleavy was appointed secretary for the IRB in Connaught in 1919. The growth of Sinn Féin clubs in North Galway was spearheaded by Dr Bryan Cusack and George Nichols of Galway, who toured the different towns during August 1917, and organised mainly by the IRB. Sinn Féin Clubs were established in Belmont

Irish Volunteers North Galway circa 1918 (with wooden guns!)

and Milltown in the second half of 1917, where Martin would have been an active member. By the end of 1917, the Belmont company had thirty-five Volunteers and Martin's Company in Milltown numbered about thirty men. Parades were held in each area once a week after working hours, where foot drill was taught and practised, but no arms drill. Drilling was done openly at first, usually after Sunday mass, where the Belmont and Milltown Companies often came together, with the Battalion officers present. Cumann na mBan, which was formed in 1914 and integrated with the IRA in 1916, was also active in north Galway with several members around Milltown. After the Rising they were mainly involved in fund-raising for the families of Republican internees.

The new Land War and the Conscription Crisis

There was a resurgence of agrarianism, with the boycott of the RIC in 1918 occurring earlier in Galway than elsewhere, and the collapse of the RIC authority in rural areas provided opportunities for the anti-grazier movement in a "New Land War". As this new Land War developed from January until May 1918, Sinn Féin, and the Irish Volunteers, particularly around Milltown, became actively involved in supporting this local land agitation. Many tenants, as had happened in Kilgevrin in 1917, became involved in cattle drives,

forcible ploughing of land, public meetings and deputations aimed at forcing landowners to surrender their holdings to the CDB for division. Sinn Féin Cumainn sprang up around local agitations and former UIL members were often prominent in land seizures and cattle drives. Sinn Féin and the local Volunteer Companies acted as stewards and organised deputations to landowners, who experienced great fear and insecurity, against which the RIC were powerless.

In the Spring of 1918, the British government announced plans to extend military conscription to Ireland. The Irish MPs at Westminster opposed the decision, and a widely based coalition of interests was formed in Ireland to organise a campaign to defeat the move, including the two main political parties, IPP and Sinn Féin, the Trade Unions, the Catholic church, and numerous cultural associations. In north Galway, the Tuam Town Commissioners, unanimously passed a resolution stating, 'We deny the right of the British Parliament to enforce such service and hold that the Irish people will be justified in resisting it by all means in their power'. Cumann na mBan organised a meeting for the women of Tuam on the same night, with a full attendance. After the meeting all joined in processional order and marched through the street of the town, headed by a banner bearing the words 'We will not allow the Saxon to conscript our men'. The same night over 500 men marched in the procession through the town behind a banner stating WE WILL HAVE NO CONSCRIPTION. The following Sunday, 14 April 1918, saw one of the largest protests held in the town, with many thousands attending, including Martin Connolly's Volunteer Company. During the British army conscription crisis in Ireland, from April 1918, the membership of the Belmont company increased to over one hundred and thirty men but fell after conscription was prevented.

1918 Election and outbreak of War of Independence

At the end of the World war, in November 1918, the British Government called an election. In this general election, Martin Connolly as a member of the north Galway Volunteers and the IRB under Patrick Dunleavy, together with the local Sinn Féin members canvassed and organised transport to ensure that, a prisoner, Dr Brian Cusack the Sinn Féin candidate, was elected with a good majority.

The Volunteers were also on duty at each polling station and escorted the ballot boxes to Tuam courthouse, where they remained on duty with the RIC all night, to ensure nothing happened the boxes until the count next day. With this General Election in December 1918 the political landscape was completely altered, Sinn Féin swept to power, the IPP and the UIL were eclipsed, both nationally, where Sinn Féin won 73 seats; Unionists 26 seats and IPP only 6 seats, and locally, where all four Galway seats were taken by Sinn Féin TDs. In north Galway, Dr Bryan Cusack defeated Thomas Sloyan, IPP, and Liam Mellows, who was also in prison, was elected unopposed in East Galway, to the seat previously held by John Roche MP.

The first meeting of Dail Eireann was convened on 21 January 1919 and, on the same day the IRA Tipperary Brigade attacked an RIC convoy, shooting dead two constables and marking the commencement of the War of Independence. In north Galway the local Volunteers were the driving force behind the collection for the new Dail Eireann Loan, which involved significant numbers of people subscribing £5 and, with the commencement of the War of Independence, most local Volunteer activity was directed to securing arms. Many of the men in the Belmont and Milltown Companies, who were farmers sons, had shotguns of their own, however, local gun owners were approached and, usually, willingly handed over their guns. By the end of 1919, the Belmont Company had about thirty shotguns for the 35 men in the unit and the Milltown Company had collected an additional twenty shotguns, but still had no rifles of any kind. In July 1919 Martin Connolly, as a member of the IRB, was transferred by the IRA command to south Derry, where he was provided with employment and joined the Gulladuff IRA company, in Bellaghy Brigade, while most of his comrades in the Belmont and Milltown Companies, remained with the local IRA and were active in the area until the Truce in July 1921.

War of Independence, north Galway, January 1920-July 1921

The War of Independence in north Galway effectively began on 5 January 1920, with an attack by fifty local IRA members on the Castlehackett RIC barracks, near Tuam. There were eight RIC members based in the barracks and, in an attack that lasted three

hours, the IRA used gelignite and hand grenades to damage the barracks and an RIC Sergeant was wounded. In the following months, attacks were made on RIC barracks in Castlegrove near Milltown and Lough George near Claregalway. The Castlegrove attack, in April 1920, lasted for two hours and involved the use of explosives, which seriously damaged the end wall of the barracks. However, the RIC force of eleven men refused to surrender and the IRA had to retreat due to shortage of ammunition and the arrival of reinforcements. The IRA unit included Volunteers from Belmont and Milltown Companies, including Martin's comrades led by Captain Patrick Brennan, Peter Brennan, John P McCormack, Patrick Walsh, Thomas Hannon, and John P Ruane. There were also Volunteers from Barnaderg and Tuam.

Resulting from the activities of a local informer, in June 1920, some of the most active Volunteers of the Belmont IRA Company were forced to go on the run. The McCormack and Walsh homes in Liskeevy were raided, several times, by the RIC seeking arms. A local resident was identified as the suspected informer and arrested by the IRA. However, the prisoner escaped and joined the RIC in Tuam. Michael McHugh's house in Belmont was burned by the security forces and the Captain of the Belmont IRA Company, Patrick Brennan, who took over from Michael McHugh, was severely beaten up by the Black and Tans, near Kilgevrin, and his mother was terrified in a house raid. After further threats to his life, he had to emigrate to Belgium, where he remained until after the Civil War. He was replaced by Thomas Hannon, a relation of Martin Connolly.

Kilgevrin land dispute 1920

While a first wave of agrarian violence, called the 'new Ranch War', had occurred from January until May 1918, when the Irish Volunteers benefitted from the militancy of the rural tenants and which helped Sinn Féin in the subsequent election, the sheer scale of the second wave of agitation from January until May 1920 forced Sinn Féin to create a local mechanism for resolving land disputes, with the establishment of the Sinn Féin Courts, which proved effective in many cases, until forced underground in Winter 1920. However, Sinn Féin, and the IRA, were less involved in the second wave because the leadership officially opposed it and Sinn Féin's need for respectability in elections eventually worked against them, in

terms of small farmer and tenant support. Despite this, the Galway local council elections in June 1920 resulted in a major victory for Sinn Féin, who ran almost unopposed, and completely replaced the former representation. In the Tuam electoral area of North Galway, only one ward held a poll, as in every other electoral ward, Sinn Féin was unopposed. Sinn Féin won almost all seats across the constituency, with a few exceptions. John Brennan of Kilgevrin was newly elected for Sinn Féin for the Belclare area and, Martin Connolly's relation, Michael Hannon for Belmont.

The Connacht Tribune described the heightened agrarian agitation as "sweeping through the west like a prairie fire". In March 1920, Frank Shawe-Taylor, a substantial landowner, and grazier in Athenry, was shot by the IRA following his refusal to give up his grazing land. Arising from this second 'Ranch War', by mid-1920, the dispute with landlord Blake entered a new phase. The week after the election, the *Western People*, of 12 June 1920, contained a dramatic report, under the heading-

> **SHOT ON HIS WAY TO MASS**
> Mr John D Blake, Brooklawn House Tuam, when walking to mass about 11 o'clock on Sunday morning was fired at and seriously wounded. Mr Blake was walking alone and when about a mile from home three shots were fired through the hedge, taking effect on his neck and back. He fell but was able to crawl a few yards to the stile, where he was found by some men also going to mass who immediately went to his aid. When asked what was wrong, the injured man replied- "I didn't expect this. It was not a neighbour did it." His life is in extreme danger as his back was riddled with shot and there is a deep wound in his neck. Mr Blake owns about 400 acres, of which 35 had recently been given to his tenants for grazing, but he had a dispute with some tenants on a farm some miles from Brooklawn. Rev. John O'Dea, PP Kilconly, preaching at the mass to which Mr Blake was going, strongly condemned the crime, and said the relations between Mr Blake and his tenants in that parish were friendly.

The local newspaper also reported that the Archbishop of Tuam

'denounced the dastardly outrage and referred to it as sacrilege' and that some months previously Blake was attacked by a party of men, and had been under police protection, which suggests an increased threat locally. The local members of the IRA, in Kilgevrin and Liskeevy, were suspected of involvement in the attack on Blake and this had serious consequences for the Connolly family five months later, however Martin Connolly was no longer based in the area in June 1920, so it is unlikely that he participated in the shooting, but the newspaper reference to a dispute with 'tenants on a farm some miles from Brooklawn', may have implicated the Connolly's.

Tuam IRA attack and RIC reprisals

The most lethal ambush carried out by the north Galway IRA was on 19 July 1920 when four RIC men, who were travelling from attending the Law Courts in Galway to Dunmore, were ambushed at Gallagh, about three miles from Tuam. The short attack lasted about thirty minutes and resulted in the killing of two of the RIC men and the capture of the other two, along with their motor van, which was burned. The IRA unit was led by Con Fogarty and Michael Moran and involved over twenty Volunteers, ten with Lee Enfield rifles and ten with shotguns, from Tuam and Barnaderg, including, Martin Connolly's comrades, Tim Dunleavy, and Peter Burke of Barnaderg and Tim's brother Thomas, who was a Battalion officer. This attack resulted in the occupation of the town of Tuam by the Crown Forces, the following morning, where, at 5am the members of the RIC went on a rampage shooting indiscriminately at houses, terrorising the local population, and burning many homes and businesses owned by identified Republicans and nationalists, including Fahey's, where Martin Connolly had worked. The Town Hall, location of a Republican Court the previous week, was specifically targeted, with paraffin oil and petrol thrown on the woodwork and windows, before being set alight and completely gutted.

The RIC indiscriminate firing lasted for about two hours, however luckily no one was killed or injured. The Freeman's Journal reported on the sacking of the town under the headline: POLICE PARTY RUNS AMOK AND TERRORISES TUAM. The following week compensation claims were submitted on behalf of fifty different premises and the damages caused to the town was estimated at

£100,000. The Archbishop of Tuam, Dr Thomas Gilmartin, wrote to General Nevil Macready, Commander in Chief of British Forces in Ireland, demanding a sworn inquiry. However, Macready dismissed this and claimed that the Gallagh ambush could not have occurred without the 'tacit consent and connivance of a large section of the population'. Subsequent evidence established that it was not a case of the police losing control, but rather an action that was deliberately and systematically planned, with targets specifically chosen who were well known Republicans. British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, later stated:

> The police naturally feel that the time has come to defend themselves and that is what is called reprisals in Ireland. Sinn Féin could not have it both ways.

Terror in Galway, The Auxiliaries and Black and Tans

The official reprisal policy, which commenced in Tuam, marked the start of a violent militant phase in north Galway. As a result of the escalation of the war across Ireland and especially in the most active areas, in August 1920, the British Government introduced *The Restoration of Order in Ireland Act*, which provided the powers of internment and execution. In addition, despite reservations among some of the British Cabinet, the Government also deployed large numbers of paramilitary troops to augment the RIC. The American Peace Commission estimated that, resulting from this decision, there were over 48,000 raids by the Crown forces in 1920 alone. The deployment of additional Crown forces resulted in the arrival in Galway, in the summer of 1920, of the Auxiliary Division of the RIC, comprised of former British army officers, called 'Auxiliaries', and ex-British soldiers who became temporary RIC constables, called the 'Black and Tans'. During the months of October and November, the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans went on a rampage throughout Galway, which was deliberately aimed at terrorising the population, carrying out reprisals and attempting to isolate the IRA members. The Auxiliaries sent to north Galway were based at Annagh House, in Ballyglunin, six miles south of Tuam. In response to this escalation, by the Autumn of 1920, the IRA was also reorganised into a North Galway Brigade consisting of two Battalions in Tuam and Glenamaddy, each with ten companies. Michael Moran was com-

mandant of the Tuam Battalion and Seamus Maloney commandant of Glenamaddy, with Con Fogarty appointed commandant of the whole Brigade.

Terror incident, Kilgevrin, November 1920

The minute of Tuam District Council meeting of September 1920 refers to a claim by JD Blake, for £500, for being maimed in June of that year. However, the attempted assassination of landlord Blake had direct and terrifying consequences for the Connolly family in Kilgevrin. The *Connaught Tribune* of 13 November reported on a serious incident in Kilgevrin, under the headline.

> **D.C. flogged, stripped naked and beaten with a cane. Amazing allegations. Demand that he should tell who shot Mr Blake.**
> Some men in the village of Kilgevrin, Milltown, were put through the ordeal of flogging on Friday morning, 5th last. The sleeping villagers were disturbed by the purr of the engines of a heavy motor lorry that arrived about 3.30am. Such an unexpected visit created alarm and fear . . . Mr John Brennan D.C. (District Councillor) told the "Tribune" representative that about 3.30am a knock came to his door, and he got up to open it. A man with a revolver entered and asked Mr Brennan his name. He told him and the man gave him a few punches in the face and told him to go with them they wanted him. A number of other men were outside the door. Mr Brennan was brought across the bog to Connolly's house. On the way the party kept questioning him regarding who shot Mr John Blake at Brooklawn. They asked Mr Brennan if he had a gun. He said he had given the only gun he had to the RIC last January and held a receipt for it. Mr Brennan was punched in the face several times and his right eye was blackened and swollen. He was brought as far as Connolly's house where the party entered and treated the Connolly boys in a similar manner while Mr Brennan was kept outside.
>
> The two Connolly men, William and John, were asked if they were 'Sinn Féiners', and also if they knew anything about the recent shooting of the landlord, John Blake of

Brooklawn. They replied that they did not, and that William had been working in England since February and was only a few weeks home. A dead pig was hanging behind the back door, and one of the armed men said to John Connolly that he would be like that pig in ten minutes. They then proceeded to beat the men with their fists and a cane, each being attacked by two of the armed men. William Connolly was beaten badly around the head, which was swollen and cut. Their father Martin Connolly, aged 79 years, witnessed the attack and his wife Mary, who was 64, collapsed in her room as one of the armed intruders kept two little children quiet in another room, and pacified until the trouble was over. When the party came out in the street (Brennan) was given further punches in the head and asked, "Do you know who shot Mr Blake?" Mr Brennan told them he had nothing to do with it and knew nothing about it: that he never shot a man in his life and never would do anything of the kind. He was then stripped naked and flogged with a cane. After further assaulting and beating councillor John Brennan and discharging a number of shots at him as he ran, the armed group then proceeded to the village of Fartamore, Brooklawn, where a further five houses were entered and the men seriously assaulted for agitating against John Blake.

Martin Connolly suspected

The details of the incident were provided to the reporter by interview with the father of the two men, Martin Connolly. From the newspaper descriptions it appears that the men involved were British Auxiliaries, based in Annagh House in Ballyglunin near Tuam, and accompanied by local RIC men, who would have known that Martin Connolly, junior, was in the IRA. The report of the attack and the fact that their neighbour, recently elected Sinn Féin District Councillor John Brennan, was accosted by the soldiers before they proceeded to the Connolly house, would confirm that Martin was a suspect in the shooting of the landlord. Fortunately, he was in Derry on the night of the attack because it is likely that he would have been shot dead by these members of the security forces, as had happened with a series of similar incidents which occurred in north

Galway at this time, where several IRA and Sinn Féin suspects were murdered in cold blood. The Kilgevrin attack, of 5 November, carried out by the Auxiliaries, on the two Connolly brothers and John Brennan, resulted in questions in the House of Commons the following week to Sir Hamar Greenwood, Chief Secretary of Ireland, who was closely identified with the aggressive use of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries at this time, but he dismissed the matter.

Just over two weeks later the Black and Tans attacked the house of Michael Hannon in Belmont, who had been elected as a Sinn Féin councillor in June, along with John Brennan. At midnight, his wife and six young children were forced to leave their home and seek shelter with the neighbours. The 'Tans burned the house and everything in it as well as the stocks of corn and hay and the turf sheds. Seven or eight armed men dragged Michael and his brother, who had spent three years in the British army and was wounded in the war, out of the house and they were forced to run across the fields, when they were shot at. The *Fermanagh Herald* reported that Hannon was asked if he was a Catholic and if he had ever threatened to shoot a policeman. When he denied this, he was told 'this is what ye get for yer Sinn Féin'. At the public enquiry, the following January, evidence was given that the armed group arrived in two lorries and a motor car, stopped at a local pub, wore trench coats, and spoke with British accents. The Hannon's were awarded compensation of £2950, which was a substantial sum at that time. Timothy Giblin, also of Belmont, whose furniture and corn were burned on the same night, was awarded £700.

Bloody Sunday reaction

Nationally, the intensity of the violence escalated dramatically on Sunday 21 November 1920 when Michael Collins, 'IRA Squad', killed twelve suspected British intelligence agents, and two policemen, in their homes in Dublin and the Crown Forces retaliated by shooting dead fourteen civilians and injuring sixty-four others at a football match in Croke Park, an incident that became known as 'Bloody Sunday'. The following day, the IRA Tuam Commandant, 27-year-old Michael Moran, who had been arrested in October and released after six weeks in custody for the Gallagh ambush, was rearrested by Auxiliaries and brought to Eglington Street barracks

in Galway city. He was interrogated and tortured for two days and shot dead while being transferred to prison. The RIC claimed that he was shot 'trying to escape'. His funeral in Tuam, was one of the largest ever held in the town, with Archbishop Gilmartin presiding. Following the mass, the coffin draped with the Republican flag and escorted by a large contingent of Volunteers in uniform and a huge crowd, was confronted by British soldiers with fixed bayonets. However, the Archbishop intervened and prevented armed conflict. Thomas Hannon, a land agent in Clonbern, North Galway, was subsequently executed by the IRA for informing on Michael Moran.

As a result of the murder of Michael Moran, the arrest of Con Fogarty and other IRA members and the severe reprisals and atrocities on the civilian population by the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans, there was a much-reduced level of IRA attacks in north Galway between November 1920 and early 1921. However, the IRA Brigade in north Galway was reorganised in January 1921 and resumed guerrilla activity. Martin Connolly's former officer and IRB comrade, Patrick Dunleavy, was appointed Brigade commandant. His brother, Thomas Dunleavy, was appointed Commandant of the Tuam Battalion. In addition, the formation of a Flying Column was approved, comprised of twenty Volunteers, officers and men who were on the run and were staying in hiding in different places throughout Tuam and Glenamaddy Battalions. The Column included some of Martin Connolly's former comrades from Milltown, Thomas Ferrick, Patrick Walsh, Peter Brennan and Dan and John McCormack and officers whom he referred to in his Pension application, Tim Dunleavy, Thomas Ryan, and Peter Burke. This Column, a full-time Active Service Unit (ASU), constantly on the move, was provided with safe houses by local IRA Companies when in their areas, such as Brennan's and Hannon's in Belmont. The ASU depended on the goodwill of local people for food and shelter and to act as scouts. Despatch riders from Cumann na mBan and local IRA Companies, often travelling by bicycle, brought messages to IRA officers in other areas and joint ambushes and actions were planned and carried out over the next six months.

Escalation of armed conflict and reprisals

Violent reprisals by the Crown Forces took two forms: the burning of villages when an IRA attack took place and secondly, more low-

key but extremely effective, attacks on the homes of the families of Volunteers who were believed to be active. The series of murders of IRA leaders in custody and the widespread indiscriminate killing of civilians, also had a negative impact on morale. A total of twenty-five people were shot by the Crown forces in county Galway, between October 1920 and May 1921, eleven of whom were republicans. Nine were killed randomly by rampaging troops; nine were killed by small undercover units of five soldiers targeting individuals, raiding their homes, and taken out and shot in cold blood; seven IRA members were killed while in custody and described as being 'shot while trying to escape'. The burning of homes, destruction of property and public whipping or beating of men, as had happened the Connolly brothers and their neighbour John Brennan, were part of the wider official terror campaign, carried out by the Crown forces as reprisals.

The area around Milltown was particularly targeted by the Crown Forces, during this period, who terrorised the local population while searching for the IRA. On 26 February 1921, the town of Dunmore, about ten miles from Milltown was occupied by a large force of Black and Tans and Auxiliaries who were seeking the North Galway Flying Column, which was then based at Williamstown, twenty-five miles from Milltown. Houses were searched and fired at indiscriminately forcing residents to flee to the countryside, the home of two County Councillors were bombed. The following week over 100 lorries with British military arrived in the town for a large round-up of men and boys for interrogation. However, no Volunteers were caught, but on the afternoon of 2 March, a Black and Tan unit, seeking an IRA member in Dunmore, captured his brother Thomas Mullen, who was home from England. He was brutally beaten before being shot dead and left with a broken leg and about seven bullet wounds in his body.

IRA restructured

In March 1921, the IRA nationally was restructured by GHQ into Divisions. Reflecting the weaknesses in Galway, the south of the county was subsumed by the Clare Division, under Michael Brennan, and north Galway was incorporated in the 2nd Western Division, dominated by south Mayo, and led by Tom Maguire. The most prominent members from the Belmont IRA company, transferred to

the Milltown Company, which increased their membership to forty strong, under Captain Thomas Ferrick. Both Companies, as part of the Tuam Battalion, became very militant and were involved in significant activity, including two fatal attacks on the Milltown RIC barracks. In April, the Milltown IRA Company was involved in an ambush locally, which was set up to attack an RIC patrol, returning to the Barracks. The fire fight, which lasted fifteen minutes, resulted in the two RIC men being severely wounded, however the IRA were poorly armed, with eight shotguns and one revolver, so they had to retreat when machine-gun fire was directed at them from the Barracks. Despite this attack the RIC continued to patrol through the village, so a further ambush was planned for Sunday 26 June 1921, which involved the Flying Column, under Tom Dunleavy. An RIC patrol of six men was ambushed, just before midnight, 150 yards from the Barracks. The fight, which lasted for thirty minutes, resulted in two RIC killed, two seriously wounded and two who escaped back to the Barracks, under cover of fire from a machine gun post on the roof.

About fifteen IRA Volunteers, armed mainly with two rifles, several shotguns, and some revolvers, were involved, consisting of seven members of the Flying Column and eight from the Milltown Company. Those listed as taking part were mainly from Milltown but also Belmont, Dunmore, Corofin, Tuam and Barnaderg. The Milltown men included Captain Thomas Ferrick, Patrick Walsh, John P McCormack, Daniel McCormack, Peter Brennan, Peter Burke, Captain Tim Dunleavy of Barnaderg, Captain Thomas Mannion of Dunmore and from the Tuam Battalion; Thomas Ryan, QM, Thomas Nohilly, Adjutant and Thomas Dunleavy, O/C. The two policemen who were killed were Sergeant James Murren from Sligo, a 47-year-old, due to retire a week before his death, but for the fact that his pension papers had not arrived, and Ernest Day, a 23-year-old from Nottingham who had joined the RIC, as a 'Black and Tan', the previous January. Resulting from the attack a curfew was imposed on Milltown, as it had been on Dunmore previously, which forced local people to stay indoors from 8pm and banned all fairs and markets within six miles of the village. This was the final fatal attack by the IRA in Galway, prior to the ceasefire and Truce in July 1921.

General Tom Maguire O.C. 2nd Western Division IRA

Scale of war casualties, Galway

During the eighteen months of conflict, from January 1920 to June 1921, in county Galway, sixty people were killed, including sixteen civilians, twenty-one Sinn Féin and IRA members, twenty-one Crown Forces and two others linked to the land struggle. Of the Crown forces only five soldiers were shot, three accidentally; three informers and the rest were RIC members. The two others shot, in February and March 1920, were linked to the Land War; the Herdsman on the Blake estate in Menlo, who continued to work for the landlord and Frank Shawe-Taylor, the main landlord in Athenry, who had refused to transfer land to his tenants. The people of north Galway were made aware of the Truce when the national newspapers arrived in Tuam, on Saturday 9 July 1921, and the *Irish Independent* carried the headline 'HOSTILITIES TO CEASE ON

MONDAY – MR DE VALERA TO MEET MR LLOYD GEORGE'. The military curfews were lifted on Milltown and the other three towns in north Galway and the local fairs and markets were held again. By July 1921 there were almost 700 men in the Tuam Battalion area, in various local IRA companies, when the ceasefire was called. The local IRA men, who were on the run, including those in the Flying Column were safe to come into the open and were treated as popular heroes. Even the Crown Forces felt safe to mix locally, with about one hundred British soldiers attending the Tuam races unarmed, on Tuesday 12 July 1921, the day after the Truce came into effect. Some of the senior IRA figures locally were questioning their capacity to continue and Patrick Dunleavy, North Galway Brigade O/C, subsequently confirmed that they had practically no ammunition left when the Truce was called.

Final legal action against landlord Blake

The bitter dispute between the Kilgevrin tenants and their landlord, John D Blake, continued to fester during the subsequent year. The Tenants maintained pressure on the Congested Districts Board, despite the refusal of Blake to engage. Finally, in March 1922, a case was lodged in the High Court of Justice of Southern Ireland by the CDB against the owners of the estate. The case submitted provided details of the lease arrangement. This referred to a perpetual yearly rent of £205, by grant in perpetuity on 7 July 1875, between Alicia Lynch and Charles Blake, for part of the lands at Kilgevrin containing 307 acres, situated in the Barony of Dunmore. The case lodged provided notice of one month for proceedings to commence to take full possession. The direct action by the tenants against Blake also continued. In May 1922, Blake submitted a compensation claim to Tuam District Council for £2000 for damage to farm equipment, roller and harrows, and the knocking down of a 5-foot stone wall of 850 yards at his estate at Brooklawn. Tragically Martin Connolly, senior, did not live to see the resolution of the dispute with his landlord and the subsequent transfer of land to his family, for which he had long fought. He passed away, at home, on the 3 May 1922. He died at the age of seventy-two, in the presence of his wife Mary, of tuberculosis from which he had suffered for several years. This is particularly sad because it is unlikely that his son Martin had been able to visit his father, since he left in 1919, due to the distance from

south Derry, the fact that he was on continuous Active Service with the IRA in the six counties and that he was wanted by the local RIC in Galway. Martin's brother, John, succeeded to the farm, which by that stage comprised of a total of nineteen acres.

PART TWO:

THE WAR IN ULSTER

Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) stations Derry 1921

Chapter Three:

On Active Service: South Derry IRA

Martin Connolly had been transferred by the IRA to south Derry during June 1919, where he was provided with employment in McGlade's Hardware store in Knockloughrim, a village which was adjacent to the Belfast to Derry main road. The village, located in the townland of Cabragh, had twenty-eight houses, a mixture of slate and thatch, with 140 residents. The residents comprised a wide range of religious denominations including, Roman Catholics, numbering fifty, Baptist, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Irish Church, and Church of England. In terms of occupations, there were several farmers, farm labourers and skilled trades such as linen weavers, millers, carpenters, seamstress, milliner, dressmaker, blacksmith with a creamery manager and a teacher. The village had two churches, Methodist, and Church of Ireland, but no Catholic church, an Orange Hall and a Corn and Flax Mills. There was also a Railway station. The closest town was Magherafelt, and other significant towns nearby included Maghera, Bellaghy, Castledawson, Desertmartin and Swatragh.

The McGlade shop and public house was a long-established, substantial, and profitable business, providing employment in the village for many staff. For example, the 1901 census records eighteen people living in the house with nine family and nine staff, all of whom were Roman Catholic, including two Drapers assistants, two Grocers assistants, a yardman, a domestic servant, a nurse and two young women, described as Governess, one of whom was from France. This would indicate the McGlade's were a prosperous middle-class family in a large dwelling house and business premises, with 19 rooms and 12 front windows. By 1911, when the McGlade's were 21 years married, all their eight children had left home and there were three shop assistants and a servant living in their house. The McGlade family were prominent Nationalists, active in the Catholic Church. Patrick McGlade was aged 58 years and his

Gulladuff village, Derry circa 1900

wife Kate was 46 years old in 1919. Given his status, it is likely that Patrick was also a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and a supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party, who were prominent in Derry.

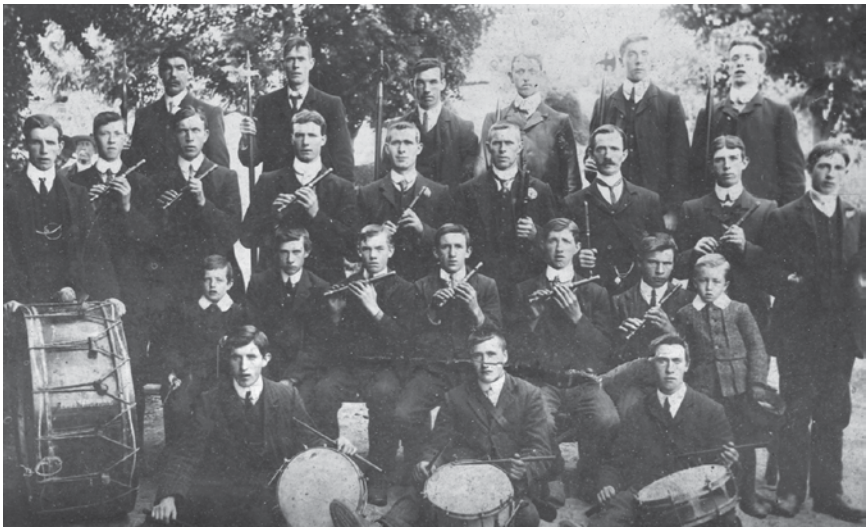
Gulladuff IRA Company

The fact that Martin Connolly was employed by McGlade's and lived in their house, would suggest that his employer was also a supporter of Sinn Féin by that stage, because it would not be possible to remain on Active Service which included meetings, training, mobilisations, and covert night-time activities, without being noticed. When Martin arrived, he joined 'E' Company, in Gulladuff, based in a village just two miles from Knockloughrim. This IRA Company was part of the 3rd Battalion (Bellaghty), 3rd Brigade, 2nd Northern Division. While Martin was a member, the Company involved at least twenty-six Volunteers and was one of seven IRA Companies comprising the 3rd Battalion (Bellaghy), which had a total of 137 Volunteers. His two main officers were Captain Dan Mulholland, Bellaghy, and Lieutenant John J McErlaine, from

the Knockloughrim area. The other three battalions were in Cookstown, Gortin and Maghera. These four Battalions covered all of county Derry, outside the city, part of county Tyrone and a small portion of county Antrim above Lough Neagh, along the river Bann, which was included in Martin Connolly's Battalion area. One of his main officers, was Anthony McGurk, who was forty-six years old in 1919 and a native of Gulladuff. He was a prominent member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and had been instrumental in developing the Republican movement in the area since 1913. The Gulladuff Volunteers, led by McGurk, mobilised for the Easter Rising in 1916. However, they returned home after the cancellation order from Eoin McNeill and Anthony McGurk was subsequently imprisoned in Frongoch internment camp in Wales.

Development of South Derry Republican movement

The McGurk's were a large local family involved in farming. Anthony McGurk's father, Hugh, married Leticia McGee in 1868. He was long recognised as a leading Fenian in south Derry. The 1911 census return, records Letitia as a widow aged 62 years, who had nine children, her eldest, James, was a School Attendance Officer, aged 41 years, her second son, Anthony was a farmer. In Martin Connolly's Pension application, three of the McGurk brothers were referred to as in the IRA, Francis, Anthony, and James. Francis McGurk was on the South Derry Sinn Féin Executive in 1919, alongside Louis Smith of Magherafelt. The Republican movement in south Derry emerged from the political clubs formed to celebrate the centenary of the 1798 rebellion. When Sinn Féin was established as a political party in 1906, three prominent northern members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Bulmer Hobson, Denis McCullough, and Sean McDermott travelled through county Derry seeking to establish Sinn Féin clubs and Gaelic League Branches, although the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the United Irish League were still strongly supported in Derry, and openly promoted by the Catholic Church. One prominent IRB organiser in the county was Louis Smith, a publican, in Magherafelt, who had been involved with the Land League and Parnell. When Ernest Blythe, a protestant and senior member of the IRB was reorganising the Volunteers in Ulster in 1913, he visited Gulladuff at McGurk's request where he recruited a large group of men in a remote area.



T. F. Meagher pipe band Ballymacpeake South Derry, including Gulladuff Irish Volunteers, Anthony and Frank McGurk.

Two of Martin's senior Brigade officers, Patrick Diamond, and Daniel McKenna from Maghera, were also recruited to the IRB in 1913, by Hugh Cribben and Anthony McGurk, respectively. Patrick Joseph Diamond, from Castledawson county Derry, joined his local Newbridge Company of the Irish Volunteers and was mobilised for the 1916 Rising at Coalisland Co Tyrone, as Captain with twelve men of the Company. He was one of the first IRA officers in county Derry, and generally recognised as leader of the south Derry IRA. Hugh Cribben and Louis Smith were also interned in 1916. The Larkin family in Magherafelt were also politically active and the RIC believed that Tom Larkin, and his brother Sean, introduced Sinn Féin to the county in 1915. Sean Larkin was to become a prominent IRA leader in south Derry during the War of Independence.

During 1917 and 1918, under the cover of the newly formed dramatic, cultural, and Irish language societies, meetings were organised in local halls, often involving the IRB, to develop Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan. In the Gulladuff area, the T F Meagher Band, Ballymacpeake was comprised mainly of Irish Volunteers, some of whom could not play an instrument. The band included the local men who formed the Gulladuff IRA company, in-

cluding Anthony and Frank McGurk, the Birts, McErleans, Youngs and Mulhollands, who were Martin Connolly's officers and comrades in the Gulladuff IRA Company. During 1919, Mary Toner of Draperstown, was the senior officer and chief organiser of Cumann na mBan and was involved in establishing over ten branches in south Derry and east Tyrone, including in Gulladuff and Bellaghy. Over 100 Cumann members, including fourteen local women in the Lavey, Gulladuff Branch, were actively involved in supporting the south Derry IRA, during the period of conflict.

South Derry Loyalists

In 1911, the largest town in the area was Magherafelt, less than four miles from Knockloughrim and located exactly halfway between Derry and Belfast, with a population of over 1,300 residents, living in 267 houses, the majority of whom were Catholic. While there was some tradition of linen making, the town mainly provided retail services for the surrounding district, with twenty-three grocers, thirty-one publicans and fifteen drapers. There was also a weekly market and monthly fairs. There were five churches in the town, showing the diversity of faiths, including Church of Ireland, First and Second Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic. The Midland railway station served the Belfast to Derry line. The local RIC barracks had eleven police, with four officers and seven constables. Two local societies, the Masonic Lodge, and the Orange Order, met monthly.

After the Home Rule Bill was passed by the British Government in 1912, in response to demands from the Irish Parliamentary Party, local Unionists formed clubs in Magherafelt and the towns around, to organise opposition to the Bill. On Ulster Day, 28 September 1912, the Ulster Covenant, which pledged violent resistance, if necessary, was signed in the town. The following week the *Mid-Ulster Mail* newspaper carried a long article which reported that from 11.30 to 2pm Union Jacks were flying from each Protestant business and private house as well as the various Protestant churches in the town. All Loyalist business houses were closed. After a church service the local MP John Gordon, signed the Covenant first, in the Town Hall, followed by the clergy, then the local men. After this ceremony, the local Protestant women marched to the Union Road Lecture Hall, to sign separately.

For Martin Connolly, a Southern Catholic, South Derry was a particularly risky area to be based in 1919, as there was a significant presence of members of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), ever since it was first established in 1913 to oppose Home Rule. The formal structure in the area was the Second Battalion of the South Londonderry Regiment, UVF. The main leadership locally were members of the Unionist aristocracy. By December 1913, this regiment had almost 1,500 men in this part of Derry, including 275 men in the Maghera/ Knockloughrim area; 219 in Magherafelt and Castledawson and Moneymore, Ballyronan, and surrounding areas, had 313 UVF Volunteers. On 24 April 1914, a massive consignment of arms, including 25,000 rifles and up to 3 million rounds of ammunition, was landed illegally for the UVF at Larne, county Antrim and these were distributed across Ulster. On 9 May 1914, the *Mid-Ulster Mail* was able to report that 'the South Derry Regiment of U.V.F. is now a fully armed force'. Large numbers of local Protestants, who were members of the UVF, participated in the First World War. However, while the UVF was demobilised after the war, from 1919 onwards, small vigilante UVF groups reformed across Derry, including in Knockloughrim, in response to the IRA locally, and these became the nucleus of the Special Constabulary ('Specials') in 1920 and, ultimately, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in June 1922.

South Derry IRA activity 1919-1920

South Derry was a dangerous location to be active in the IRA. Given the long history of intercommunal strive, an underlying sectarian element was inevitable in any conflict. While the IRA did not set out with a sectarian agenda, their focus was on attacking the Crown Forces, and it mattered little whether those being attacked were Catholic or Protestant, for the Protestant community each attack on the Crown forces was on their own people. Consequently, many successful IRA actions resulted is direct and indiscriminate retaliation against the Catholic population, particularly by the newly formed 'B' Specials, an exclusively Protestant paramilitary group, which also carried out the murders of those suspected of being IRA members. Despite this, Martin Connolly's area of South Derry, was one of the most active Republican areas in Ulster, during the War of Independence. In terms of Martin Connolly's involvement on Active

**Anthony McGurk
I.O. 3rd Brigade
2nd Northern
Division IRA**

Service, in this part of South Derry, from July 1919 to December 1921, Anthony McGurk, Intelligence Officer of the 2nd Battalion submitted a reference to the Pension Board, which provides an overview:

> *Guladuff, Co Derry, 15.8.50*
> *This is to certify that Martin Connolly who was a shop assistant & was employed here during the years 19, 20 & 21 was a member of the IRA in E Coy. & took part in all the activities of the Coy. During that period viz. raiding for arms, blocking roads, blowing up bridges etc. etc. & I can certify that he was a very energetic and active member of this Coy. He left here on transfer to Castlewellan Co Down about the end of 21.*
> *Signed, Anthony McGurk, I.O., 2 Batt, 3rd Brig. 2 Ntn Div.*

Arming the local IRA

McGurk refers to the initial activity undertaken to secure arms for the IRA. Most of the guns imported by the UVF in 1914 remained

in the area after the end of the First World War and so, when the south Derry IRA decided to arm themselves, they began to raid the houses of the local UVF leadership, which resulted in growing tension at a community level. Martin's IRA Company was involved in these initial activities, which developed from arms raids in the second half of 1919 to full scale ambushes and attacks on the Crown Forces, including the British Army, Black and Tans, the "B" Specials, and the RIC during the War of Independence period to the Truce in July 1921. In addition, despite the Truce and unlike the IRA in the rest of Ireland, the two IRA Divisions, based in the six counties, remained militarily active in opposing partition and steadily intensified the conflict, until their ultimate defeat in May 1922. The south Derry IRA faced opposition from Unionists but also members of the militant Catholic Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), there were often fights between AOH and Sinn Féin supporters. When raiding for arms the IRA targeted both Unionist, mainly British officers, and AOH households.

The military actions undertaken in the 3rd Battalion area were usually organised jointly between the different local Companies, to provide the numbers necessary to mount an attack on the Crown Forces, while individual actions such as raiding for arms were usually a local initiative, involving several adjacent IRA Companies. It is worth noting that while the Crown Forces had access to motorised transport, the IRA depended on their own bicycles to travel to the scene of a planned attack and most of the members, such as Martin Connolly, were part time and in employment or farmers, with some officer's full time and on the run, so the Battalions had to plan activity around these constraints. When raiding close to their area they walked across the fields, usually late at night, but when further away they rode their bicycles to about a mile from the location of the target. While the local members of Cumann na mBan were not directly involved in armed conflict, they were responsible for collecting funds. carrying despatches, observing, and reporting on the movements of police and military, providing first aid and safe houses for IRA members on the run and transporting and hiding arms and explosives.

Escalating activity

It is likely that Martin Connolly and his comrades were involved in

'Death or Victory' supporting the prisoners on hunger strike 1920, includes Patrick Diamond.

most of the action close to their homes, and based on contemporary newspaper reports and subsequent Pension claims from senior Officers, including Patrick Diamond, Daniel McKenna, and Thomas Morris, who was O/C of the 3rd Northern Division, it is possible to identify a range of actions that occurred in the area over the period 1919 to December 1920, which would have involved Martin's, Gulladuff Company. According to Paddy Diamond, who was O/C of the Newbridge Company, three miles from Knockloughrim, between April 1919 to March 1920, they carried out over seventy raids for arms, targeted at Ulster Volunteers and Loyalists and the homes of numerous other ex-British officers. These would have been organised in conjunction with adjacent IRA Companies, particularly Gulladuff. Dan McKenna was O/C of the 2nd Battalion, from April 1918 to March 1920, when Joseph McKelvey of Belfast, was his Commanding Officer. McKenna's statement confirms that in 1919, Martin Connolly's Brigade was generally involved in arms raids; the cutting of communications links- destroying bridges, roads, and

railway lines, capturing mail for intelligence purposes and destroying telephone lines.

In response to the increased IRA activity, the RIC in south Derry, in February 1920, carried out raids on the homes of known Republican families and their supporters, many living around the Bellaghy area. In early March, Paddy Diamond was arrested on a charge of raiding for arms and being in possession of arms and lodged in Belfast Jail. Other local leaders, Sean Larkin, and Patrick Shiels, of Sinn Féin, were also arrested. Larkin received a two-year sentence and joined Shiels in Mountjoy, where they both went on hunger strike in April 1920. In Belfast jail the hunger strike was led by Eoin O'Duffy and involved Paddy Diamond and others. In May, the hunger strike was supported by a general strike organised by the Trade Unions, which resulted in the release of IRA prisoners. This success led to an upsurge in IRA action, particularly after the GHQ order to boycott the RIC. Police reinforcements were then introduced in the form of the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans. Paddy Diamond was released in May 1920 and was appointed O/C of Martin's Battalion. Diamond stated that,

> After my release I donated my attention towards perfecting the organisation and was immediately sought for again by enemy forces, took part in further raids for arms and mails & attacks on Loyalist premises. Destroyed the RIC barracks in Ballyronan Co Derry & a house in Toombebridge Co Antrim, which was about to be commandeered by the RIC as a barracks . . . Took part in the attacks on Cookstown Barracks co Tyrone early in 1920, had also got in touch with a Sergt Kelly, Constable Shortt, Const Harney & Const Brady RIC and succeeded in getting information, arms, and ammunition from them . . .

Derry city attack

During June 1920, there was a serious outbreak of intercommunal violence in Derry city, which resulted in the shooting dead of twenty people and with scores injured. There were serious allegations, at the time, that the British army had stood aside as the UVF loyalist paramilitaries attacked Catholic areas and that, only when the IRA got organised and armed, did the army introduce martial law and

take back control. The Derry IRA leader, Patrick Shields, provided an eye-witness account to IRA GHQ, on Saturday 18 June 1920, detailing the attacks.

> For several weeks previous to this date, groups of civilians, assisted by the military and police have been firing into Republican districts and houses, several people have been wounded, and it is dangerous for our people to be on the streets at night owing to these attacks. A climax was reached on this Saturday night when 5 or 6 Nationalist citizens were shot dead and many others wounded. These shootings took place near some of the principal street of the City. A party of volunteers was sent to Long Tower Street and Bridge Street where heavy firing was taking place. Orders were given to protect the lives and property of our people. This party remained on duty all during the night and engaged the attackers.

In Derry City, in September 1918 there had been only five RIC barracks with 101 men, following the armed conflict in June 1920, the military presence in Derry had increased to 1500, which curtailed the capacity of the IRA to operate. However, in south Derry and Tyrone, a significant effort was put into increasing the organisational presence of Sinn Féin and ensuring voter registration for the rural elections which were held in early June 1920. Martin's officer Anthony McGurk, for the Bellaghy area, and Louis Smith, for the Magherafelt area, stood for Sinn Féin and were both elected to the Magherafelt Rural Council, which comprised 11 Unionists and 14 Others, including the two Sinn Féin seats. Nationally, Sinn Féin took control of 338 of Ireland's 393 local government bodies, with the Labour Party in second place, often forming ad-hoc coalitions with Sinn Féin, to take control of Councils in many areas.

New IRA leadership

Following the election in June 1920, the IRA GHQ issued an order to Northern units to 'engage the maximum enemy Force and take the pressure off the South'. The south Derry IRA commenced the burning of vacated RIC barracks in June, a little later than their comrades in Derry city. RIC Barracks in Park, Feeny and

Ballyronan were burned down, and an attempt was made on Innishrush station, all in the operations area of Martin Connolly's Brigade. They were also involved in the enforcement of the Belfast Boycott, requiring the destruction of goods supplied by Protestant owned business in the city, mounted in response to the forced exclusion of 7,000 Catholic from the Belfast Shipyards, in July 1920. Charlie Daly, a young Kerry man, was appointed as organiser for south Derry and Tyrone after his predecessor, Tom Morris, was imprisoned for possession of firearms and ammunition, in September 1920. Daly arrived with GHQ orders to raid for arms, and he followed the more offensive tone of the times, by using the active Volunteers under his command to pursue a strategy that might stir quieter areas into action. In August 1920, the first general raid for arms was coordinated centrally when many locations were attacked at the same time. However, after Bloody Sunday in Dublin, on 21 November 1920, a general sweep was carried out across the six counties and many IRA members were arrested and interned, in the newly opened Ballykinlar internment camp in County Down, with at least six prominent leaders from county Derry, including Tom Larkin, from Magherafelt, and the newly elected SF councillor, Louis Smith.

Formation of Ulster Special Constabulary (USC)

In response to the upsurge in nationalist political success and increased IRA violence, the UVF, which still had thousands of rifles at its disposal, reformed on 25 June 1920 and by July was calling its former members back for duty. Unionists had been lobbying for an auxiliary police force to combat the IRA since April 1920 and the reorganisation of the UVF from the middle of the year fed directly into the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC) in October 1920. This placed the nascent Northern Ireland Government in a robust and favourable position, as control of a paramilitary police force could consolidate its power and give it the upper hand in the fight against the IRA. It also allowed the Government to enrol large numbers of unemployed Protestant, World War One, veterans. Unionists generally distrusted the RIC, due to the Catholic and Southern composition of its ranks.

The UVF was formally remobilised in Derry after the June fighting. Spenser Chichester, the County Lieutenant, a government of-

ficial, chaired recruiting meetings. By September, the Derry UVF was directly liaising with the British Army regularly. This informal relationship was such that the army began using the UVF for intelligence purposes in Derry and not the RIC. It was not long before the direct link between the UVF and proposed Ulster Special Constabulary (USC) was established, with the RIC District Inspector in Coleraine, openly appealing for recruits to the USC from the UVF. Ernest Clarke, the assistant under-secretary for Northern Ireland ordered for Derry County the recruitment of three different 'Classes' of Special Constabulary- 110 Class "A", who were full time paid paramilitary police; 2500 Class "B" reservists to be called on when necessary; and an unspecified number of Class "C" reservists to consist of all suitable persons. By the end of 1920, with Black and Tans and Ulster Special Constabulary, there were 5,000 crown forces stationed in Derry city, with a population of less than 50,000.

Government of Ireland Act

In December 1920, the *Government of Ireland Act* (GOI), was passed into law at Westminster, to commence in May 1921. This legislation had a significant impact on the struggle within the six counties. The Act was introduced by the British Government to ensure that the Unionists retained a power base within Ulster and was designed in such a way to create a sustainable sectarian majority. The Unionists were initially opposed to the idea of a local legislature but when they saw how the Nationalist power and influence was expanding throughout the island, especially with the Sinn Féin victories in the June council elections, they agreed to the approach, on condition that they determined the shape and extent of the proposed enclave. It was decided by the British that only six counties of Ulster would be included, because there were Catholic majorities in Cavan, Monaghan, and Donegal, so they were excluded. Derry city was included, although the city had a significant majority Nationalist and Catholic population. Territorial extensions into the other three excluded counties, where there were sizeable Protestant communities, were also identified for possible inclusion under the Northern Ireland jurisdiction.

In effect, the Unionists were given absolute power within the six counties which enabled them to establish their own police force, the Ulster Special Constabulary, drawn primarily from the sectar-

ian UVF and to dissolve Nationalist dominated local councils, who refused to recognise the new Stormont regime. The introduction of the Act provided the Northern IRA with a new enemy and a more specific target for their militant activities. In direct response to the GOI Act, from early 1921 to May 1922 the IRA fight was largely directed at the institutions of Northern Ireland, with a re-energised anti-partitionist focus, fighting to prevent the Border. The election victories early in the year meant little, as Derry city and county and Tyrone, despite their Nationalist majority, were now under the jurisdiction of the proposed, Northern Ireland Parliament. They could only promote non-recognition and rely on the southern IRA leadership for direction and military and political assistance, to prevent partition.

1921, IRA reorganisation and intensification of conflict

IRA activity in south Derry intensified during the first six months of 1921 and continued after the Truce in July of that year. In Martin Connolly's Brigade area, a series of raids for arms, took place in the Magherafelt district in February 1921 and two attempts were made to burn the vacated Swatragh RIC barracks in the same month. However, by March, Swatragh barracks and all but two others in the county were reoccupied. This resurgence in confidence by the police largely came about from reinforcements provided by the 'Specials' (USC), but the IRA in south Derry continued to keep the pressure on, by burning buildings identified as replacements for destroyed barracks that were beyond repair. In spring 1921, because of sustained pressure from the Gulladuff IRA company, the RIC abandoned the barracks in the town, and it was occupied by the IRA.

In March 1921, as part of a national reorganisation of the IRA structures, GHQ created five divisional areas in Ulster. This was also an attempt to coordinate activities in the six counties and to take the war to the North in a much more aggressive fashion. The 2nd Northern Division was formed, which included all of county Derry and Tyrone and the part of West Antrim, in Martin Connolly's Battalion area. Eoin O'Duffy, who had been O/C of the IRA Monaghan Brigade, was appointed as Divisional O/C and Martin's officer, Dan McKenna, was appointed as deputy O/C. Their drive

Patrick Diamond
O.C. South Derry
Battalion

and ability had a significant impact on the organisation and because of the restructuring, there was an increase in activity in County Derry and Tyrone. Reflecting on this intensified activity, Paddy Diamond in his Pension statement provides a brief insight to these important changes

> . . . I was O/C South Derry Battalion by April 1921 and had the organisation on a fairly good basis when Gen O'Duffy came to the area as O/C 2nd Northern Division. Organised & took part in further raids for arms and organisation of new (IRA) Companies and Outposts & the perfecting of units already organised. Organised and took part in raids on mail trains, at Creagh Co Derry & Staffordstown

co Antrim, also three attacks on "B" Special Constables at Anaghorish, Derryganie & Ballymaguigan, co-Derry, in which the enemy sustained casualties and in a reprisal activity at Doons Cookstown county Tyrone, organised attacks on enemy forces & positions throughout the greater portion of S. Derry W. Antrim & E. Tyrone.

In Castledawson, on 28 March, an ambush on a goods train was undertaken by a large group of IRA from Martin Connolly's Battalion, seeking Military intelligence reports, and enforcing the Belfast Boycott on Protestant owned businesses. There was also a notable rise in actions in this area, including kidnappings, cutting telegraph wires, trenching roads, and destroying bridges, over the next few months. Several small-scale ambushes on police patrols, including RIC and USC, were also carried out. In May, Eoin O'Duffy was transferred from the 2nd Northern Division to GHQ and was replaced as O/C by Charlie Daly, who maintained the aggressive approach up until the Truce in July 1921, although the effectiveness of the IRA was increasingly curtailed by the reprisals of the Specials on the local Catholic population. On 5 June an IRA ambush, under the command of John Haughey, was carried out at Swatragh RIC Barracks and resulted in the first death of an RIC man, Sergeant Michael Burke, and the wounding of two constables. On the evening of this ambush, a Sinn Féin member was shot dead by the police, while cycling through the town of Swatragh, and 200 houses were raided over the following days.

Gulladuff IRA actions and final attack before the Truce

Shortly after the Swatragh attack, the IRA Companies in Newbridge and Gulladuff carried out a major raid on the mail train at Toomebridge, aimed at capturing the monthly police reports sent to RIC HQ. The train driver was held up in the station and the raid involved members of Cumann na mBan in cars transporting the mail bags to boatmen on Lough Neagh, who brought them to a safe place. Some significant information was captured, including a description of Michael Collins, whom the RIC believed was in the North, and the names of spies and informers operating in Bellaghty. The following month, Paddy Diamond led a raid involving the same

two IRA Companies, on the ancestral home of prominent Unionist, Robert Chichester at Moyola Park, Castledawson, three miles from Knockloughrim. He was a prime target because Chichester, who was elected an MP in the by-election the following month, was a prominent Loyalist and IRA intelligence found out that large quantities of armaments, belonging to the UVF, were stored in his house. However, the main arms cache was not located and only three rifles and three revolvers were captured, together with over 11,000 rounds of ammunition. The RIC removed the hidden Loyalist arms the following day.

By mid-1921 the role of the "B" Specials in south Derry, was greatly expanded to combat the IRA by carrying out nightly patrols, trenching roads, raiding houses, and gathering intelligence. During June 1921, the Black and Tans and elements of the USC burned several cooperative creameries, owned by Nationalists and the Sinn Féin office in Dunamore was burned. Local "B" Specials also murdered the father of an IRA member, named McCracken at Dunamore. His father answered the door and when he said his son was not at home, he was shot dead. When Paddy Diamond was informed that the leader of the Specials, and the man who pointed out the McCracken home to the gang, was the Manager of the Doon Creamery it was decided that the creamery would be burned, and the manager shot as an official reprisal. Charlie Daly as Divisional O/C was in charge and IRA members from the First Brigade and Martin Connolly's Third Brigade were mobilized, under Paddy Diamond and his second-in-command Dan McKenna. They gathered at the McCracken's house on the Sunday evening. McKenna came in a motor car, and they also commandeered a lorry to transport the large number of Volunteers, who were necessary because Doons Creamery was in a strong Unionist area, near Cookstown. The following morning the Greencastle Post Office and surrounding premises were occupied, and the creamery was taken over, but the Manager was not there as he was in Cookstown at the bank. Two RIC members and the creamery staff were held as hostages as the whole complex was gutted by fire and the prisoners were released just before noon, on 11 July 1921, when the Truce came into effect.

The Truce – July to December 1921

Just over six weeks prior to the Truce, an election to the new North-

ern Ireland parliament was called for 24 May 1921. In the context of partition, this increased pressure on Sinn Féin to develop a coherent policy on the proposed Northern Ireland Government, with a split in the leadership between boycott, abstentionism or a federal solution. In the end, an election pact between Sinn Féin and the Irish Parliamentary Party, provided a joint anti-partitionist platform. The brother of Martin Connolly's employer, Reverend J. J McGlade, Parish Priest of Limavady, was a prominent leader in the anti-partition league and spoke alongside Kathleen Lynn, Helena Moloney and Sean T. O'Kelly, at major protests in Derry. In the election, Sinn Féin selected two prisoners, Eoin McNeill, and John Walsh, from Maghera, with McNeill winning a seat in Derry. Overall, the Unionists won forty of the fifty-two seats, with SF and IPP sharing the remaining twelve evenly.

King George V formally opened the new Parliament on the 22 June 1921. A crowd of over 20,000 loyalists welcomed the King as he travelled from Donegall Quay to City Hall, where the northern parliament was to sit. After lunch the King travelled to the Ulster Hall to deliver a second speech and then returned to his ship for departure. The visit lasted only four and a half hours. Given the increased intensity of the IRA campaign in the six counties, over the previous six months, there was serious concern about the King's safety. There were 11,000 troops and policemen on duty in Belfast for the visit, along with 300 Scotland Yard detectives in plain clothes. The following day, in a spectacular attack on the returning troops, the IRA Armagh Brigade, under Frank Aiken, derailed the troop train to Dublin and five soldiers and 50 cavalry horses were killed.

The British Government, under extreme pressure from the loyalists, was determined to enact the legislation speedily, to establish the new unionist dominated parliament, before negotiations for a ceasefire were commenced with the Republicans, even though, the British cabinet was aware of tentative contacts from Arthur Griffith on behalf of Sinn Sein, to enter preliminary peace talks. Having convened the parliament and established and armed the Ulster Special Constabulary, the British policy in the Treaty talks was that Ulster constituencies should be able to choose if they wanted to be ruled from Dublin and, if not, those opposed to southern control could remain under the Northern Ireland parliament, which

would be subordinate to a Dublin parliament.

Loyalist forces

When the Truce commenced at 12 noon on 11 July 1921, on the island of Ireland, there were 40,000 British soldiers, plus 7,000 Black and Tans and 6,000 auxiliaries in the RIC. Between 1920 and 1921, 525 members of the British forces had died with 1000 wounded. The Truce terms included, that British troops would be confined to barracks; no military or police reinforcements would be made and no interference with Irish civilians or IRA members. The IRA agreed to suspend attacks on Crown forces and civilians; to refrain from provocative displays of force; to cease interference with Government and private property, and "to prevent any action likely to cause disturbance of the peace which might necessitate military interference". The IRA was conferred with a certain legitimacy and the Ulster Special Constabulary was demobilised, which caused great concern among northern Unionists.

While the Treaty negotiations were underway in London the UVF 'loyalist defence forces' were reformed in the six counties and by November there was an estimated membership of 21,000 mobilised, among such groups, with plans to expand to 150,000. The Northern divisional Commissioner of the RIC, Colonel Wickham, proposed that new military units be formed from the UVF, but when this proved controversial, a new Special Constabulary (C1) was created with an initial cap of 6,000 men. When security powers were transferred by the British to the Northern Government, on 22 November 1921, the RIC in the six counties were placed under their control and the Ulster Special Constabulary, was re-mobilised and reinforced with additional powers. This proved decisive in the battle against the northern IRA over the next six months, as an armed militia was developed, culminating in the demobilisation of the RIC and the eventual establishment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), an almost exclusively Protestant armed force, in June 1922, which evolved directly from the Ulster Special Constabulary and the UVF.

Preparation for renewed conflict

The terms of the Truce were greatly tested in the 2nd Northern Division area, where there was a substantial increase in members. In

the 2nd Brigade (South Derry) area the membership doubled from 160 Volunteers in June 1921 to 320 in August 1921. This expansion was due to increased sectarian tensions, with the increasing control of the new Unionist government. There was also an assumption, among the northern IRA, that the Truce was temporary, and Charlie Daly believed the Truce would last only a few weeks. Unlike the rest of Ireland, in the six Ulster counties the Truce was only maintained for a short period. Local training camps were set up in the Sperrin mountains, twenty miles from Gulladuff, and in houses and farms near Maghera and Moneymore, to be ready for renewed hostilities. Groups of around 200 men were trained in the use of Thompson sub-machine guns and bomb throwing and new arms continued to be transported from Dublin and distributed to the 2nd and 3rd Northern Divisions, based within the six counties.

Sean Larkin replaced Paddy Diamond as O/C of the south Derry Brigade, from July 1921 to June 1922. During the initial Truce period, Diamond underwent a course of training in the GHQ camp at Glenasmole in Dublin. On his return he was involved in setting up training camps in Martin Connolly's, 3rd Brigade area, with workshops for manufacture of munitions, grenades, and repair of weapons. Republican Courts were also revived by Sinn Féin, in the county, with one in Maghera presided over by prominent Sinn Féin member, Louis Walsh. These were guarded and policed by the local IRA Brigades, ensuring that any sentences imposed were adhered to. Meanwhile the RIC, either confused by the Truce terms or to avoid trouble, retired to barracks.

Martin Connolly transferred to Down

When the Treaty was signed there were still 57,000 Crown Forces in Ireland and, on paper, the IRA had a national membership of 112,650 Volunteers. Soon after the signing of the Treaty, the 2nd Northern Division held an open-air meeting in the Sperrin mountains, where the Divisional Headquarters was located, and it was decided by a majority that they would support the treaty. Despite this decision the Ulster Special Constabulary and the British forces intensified their pressure on the IRA. Large scale raids were carried out on the training camps in the Sperrin mountains, and, despite the Truce, numbers of IRA members were arrested. By the end of December, Martin Connolly was transferred to East Down

by the IRA command. He subsequently stated that he was forced to leave his employment in Knockloughrim and was provided with a job in Castlewellan, county Down.

Given the increased local arrests, there would have been a concern for his continued safety, as the Specials were targeting Republicans for reprisal attacks and his presence in the McGlade shop, over two years on active service, in a majority loyalist area, was likely to have been noticed. As a shop worker it was easier for the IRA to arrange a transfer for Martin to another job, as most of the south Derry Battalion members were farmers sons. While Castlewellan in east Down is only seventy miles from Knockloughrim, the local Crown forces would not have information on active IRA members in Derry, so he would not be suspected. As an IRA Volunteer and IRB member he was entitled to return to Galway, if he wished, but he must have agreed to accept the transfer. By this stage most of his direct officers, on the Brigade staff, were on the run and were more difficult to capture. In fact, by this stage, his most senior officers Paddy Diamond and Tom Morris, were in safe houses in Donegal, and Diamond had to be smuggled into the six counties to visit his family on New Year's Eve.

Chapter Four:

The Northern Offensive: East Down IRA

The signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6 December 1921 was a major blow to the Republicans and Nationalists in the six counties. In effect this copper-fastened partition under the Government of Ireland Act (1920). However, many Nationalists believed that the new Boundary Commission, proposed in the Treaty, would decide on removing at least two of the counties from the regime, where there were substantial Catholic majorities and therefore it was not a viable entity. In January 1922, Martin Connolly was reassigned by the IRA, to the 3rd Northern Division in Castlewellan county Down. His transfer was related to the GHQ decision to strengthen the two Northern Divisions, based solely within the six counties, as they prepared for a new 'Northern Offensive' during 1922, aimed at the overthrow of the new Unionist Government in Northern Ireland. In this regard, his experience over the following six months was different from his activity in Derry, as the separate Brigades and Divisions began to cooperate and combine, in training, arms smuggling, intelligence gathering and operating. The majority of the Northern IRA were opposed to the Treaty and did not consider it as relevant to their campaign in the six counties, but they were prepared to cooperate with the pro-Treaty element, led by Michael Collins, on the basis that they were promised direct military assistance in continuing their armed resistance to the Northern regime. In moving to East Down, as part of this process, Martin was bringing considerable experience and expertise, in terms of military conflict and guerrilla warfare over three years, to an area that had not been highly active during the War of Independence period, mainly because it was predominantly Unionist.

The 3rd Northern Division covered all of county Antrim, including Belfast, and east Down. The Belfast Brigade had two Battalions - the 1st in West Belfast, with six Companies and the 2nd with units from more isolated nationalist areas. Antrim had four

Battalions, but none had more than 100 members. East Down had four Battalions, three around Strangford Lough and the fourth, further south, in Castlewellan, where Martin was transferred. Martin joined the 1st Battalion, "A" Company, Castlewellan, which had twenty-six members. His Commandant was John Hughes and Vice Commandant, Thomas King, who was named as a local reference in Martin's IRA Pension application. There were another five Companies in this Battalion area, with a total of 162 men. In January 1922, within the six counties among the four Divisions, there was a total of 3,357 IRA Volunteers. When Martin Connolly joined the 3rd Northern Division, there were 1,314 Volunteer members, of whom 318 were in the 3rd Brigade, East Down, where he was based. This overall number had more than doubled since the date of the Truce, in July 1921. A significant part of this increase was because, after the Truce, many local men joined the IRA to protect the Catholic areas from sectarian attack. In the North, recruitment to the IRA continued as the conflict escalated, because as Roger McCorley, Belfast Brigade O/C put it later, " . . . the Truce in Belfast lasted 6 hours, the pogrom lasted 2 years."

Preparing for conflict

During the early months of 1922, Martin Connolly and the Volunteers in Down were involved in attending training camps, set up on the 'Border', in preparation for the forthcoming offensive which was being planned. There was also a large training camp in Castlewellan. After the Treaty was ratified by the Dail, in January 1922, hostilities escalated across the Northern six counties. The sectarian aspect of the conflict was the dominating factor, and, unlike other parts of Ireland, the Crown Forces included the Special Constabulary, comprised solely of Protestants, which earned a reputation for indiscriminate and brutal atrocities, often carried out in response to IRA actions. These attacks were targeted mainly at the general Catholic population in specific parts of Belfast, where less than a quarter of the total population, of almost 400,000, were Catholic, but also in rural areas.

The total population of county Down was circa 200,000, of which only a third were Catholic. The area of East Down where Martin was assigned, which was enclosed by the towns of Banbridge, Ballynahinch and Newcastle, was an area with a small Catholic popu-

lation and especially prone to sectarian reprisals.

After the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed and ratified by the Dail, the cessation of violence was maintained in the twenty-six counties, as the Treaty was debated among the IRA Divisions. The terms of the Treaty included formal recognition for the Northern Ireland Government. Despite this recognition, during January, Michael Collins secretly set up a new Northern Command, or 'Ulster Council', which was to prepare for a Northern Offensive. The Council was headed by Michael Collins and its leadership acted under the auspices of the IRB, of which Collins was President and Eoin O'Duffy and General Richard Mulcahy were executive members. Locally the Ulster Council, based in Clones, County Monaghan, was under Frank Aiken, O/C of the 4th Northern Division, with Sean MacEoin, O/C of the Midland Division, as his second-in-command. It included all the commanders of the Northern Divisions and paid the salaries of all Northern IRA officers. Collins told the IRA 2nd Northern Division that,

> although the treaty might have (seemed) an outward expression of Partition, the Government had plans whereby they would make it impossible . . . Partition would never be recognized even though it might mean the smashing of the treaty.

Early action and reaction

The first combined action of the new IRA 'Ulster Council' occurred in late January, when IRA Officers, from the 5th Northern Division in Monaghan, were arrested by Ulster Special Constabulary, and imprisoned in Derry Jail. They were travelling to Derry with the intention of freeing jailed IRA members, who despite the Treaty, had been sentenced to execution by the Northern regime. In response senior army officer, Eoin O'Duffy, with Collins's approval, ordered the kidnapping of one hundred prominent Orangemen, in counties Fermanagh and Tyrone. The raids were planned by the Ulster Council for 7-8 February and forty Unionists were kidnapped and held in Clones Workhouse in Monaghan, demanding the release of the IRA men held in Derry jail. In an unfortunate coincidence with tragic consequences, three days later there was an armed incident at Clones railway station, when a force of nineteen

"A" Specials, travelling by train to Enniskillen, were confronted by a similar number of local IRA and in the resulting fracas the local IRA commander and four Specials were shot dead. On 21 February, the British released the IRA prisoners from Derry Jail and the Monaghan IRA allowed twenty-six of the captured loyalists to go free. However, these kidnappings, together with the killings of the Specials and their subsequent funerals increased community tensions, resulting in savage sectarian reprisals in Belfast, where between 6 and 25 February, 43 people were killed in the city (27 Catholics and 16 Protestants) and 95 were wounded (69 Catholics and 26 Protestants). Despite the attempts to reduce sectarian tensions, in early March 1922, the Northern Ireland Minister of Home Affairs, Dawson Bates, announced 'we are at war with the Irish Republican Army'.

On 18 March, a major raid was carried out by Crown Forces on the Belfast HQ of the 3rd Northern Division, which captured detailed IRA internal documentation, that the Unionist Government used to claim that the IRA was still active and mobilised in the North, despite the Treaty agreements. The capture of the information proved especially useful to the Unionist authorities, by revealing collusion between Southern IRA leaders in the recent attacks and the Northern command and was to have serious consequences for the membership three months later, when internment was introduced in the Six Counties. The day after the Belfast raid the south Derry IRA launched an initial offensive, when 200 Volunteers from Martin Connolly's former 3rd Battalion occupied Maghera barracks. The IRA locked up the RIC members and left in commandeered trucks, loaded with significant numbers of rifles, 2000 rounds of ammunition, bicycles, furniture, and bedding. On the same night, the 1st Battalion raided the RIC barracks in Pomeroy and during the month several arson attacks were carried out, including one of a flax-mill in Tobermore, owned by the local head constable of the B Specials. This intensification followed an order, in March, to all Brigade O/Cs in the 2nd Northern Division, directing that the property of 'prominent Orangemen' be destroyed and that reprisals be carried out six-fold upon the 'enemy' to prevent them continuing in the same vein. Threatening letters were sent to B Specials and properties belonging to USC members were burned.

IRA National Convention, March 1922

Three days after the Dail ratified the Treaty in January 1922 a national meeting was convened in Dublin, attended by a majority of IRA Divisional Officers and three GHQ members, which formulated their anti-treaty policy. A new IRA Army Council was established at the meeting, and they decided that an IRA Army Convention should be convened. The Convention met on 26 March and was attended by 233 delegates, the majority from the south and west of Ireland. Joe McKelvey represented the 3rd Northern Division as O/C, together with the three Brigade O/Cs, Roger McCorley, Belfast: Tom Fitzpatrick, Antrim and John Hughes, East Down, Martin Connolly's O/C. The Convention passed a resolution stating that the Army "shall be maintained as the Army of the Irish Republic under an executive appointed by the Convention".

An Anti-Treaty Executive was established to oversee the IRA, with McKelvey being elected, one of sixteen members of the Executive governing Army Council, under Liam Lynch. This Executive was set up in defiance of the Provisional Free State Government Army leadership, under Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy, the new Minister for Defence, who had succeeded the anti-treaty, Cathal Brugha. Desperate to win back the Northern units, at a meeting in Beggars Bush barracks immediately after the Convention, pro-treaty Chief of Staff, Eoin O'Duffy promised McCorley and Fitzpatrick that the Provisional Government would supply them with arms and ammunition, on an undertaking that they agreed to recommend that their Brigades remain under the command of the existing GHQ, rather than the new IRA Executive. Two weeks after the Convention, on 13 April 1922, IRA Volunteers from Dublin No 1 Brigade, on orders from the new Executive Army council, took over the Four Courts in Dublin. The following day Liam Mellows, as secretary of the Army Council, sent peace terms to the Secretary of the Dail, laying down the basis of their claims. These included the disbandment of the new Civic Guard; an undertaking from the Dail to meet all the Army's financial liabilities and an agreement that no elections would be held 'while the threat of war with England exists'. They stated that these terms represented 'probably the last hope' for the Dail to take this matter out of the hands of the Cabinet and 'of saving the country from Civil War, now threatened by those who have abandoned the Republic'. The new IRA Executive set up a

Republican HQ in the Four Courts, under Rory O'Connor, with Joe McKelvey also involved.

Preparing for the Northern Offensive

Despite the occupation of the Four Courts, arrangements to resupply the IRA Northern Divisions with arms were also underway in the South. Even though there was a growing antagonism between the pro and anti-treaty sections of the IRA Volunteers, in the south of Ireland, they all cooperated on this joint initiative. This was necessary because of the top-secret agreement reached between Michael Collins and Liam Lynch, leader of the anti-treaty IRA, to swop new armaments, supplied by the British Government to the Free State forces, with anti-treaty IRA units, who in turn agreed to send their guns to their comrades in the Northern Divisions. This elaborate deception was necessary to avoid the risk of the capture of British army guns in Northern Ireland, being used by the IRA. While the main objectives in undertaking the Northern Offensive was to overthrow the Unionist Government and to protect the beleaguered Catholic minority, which had seen increased sectarian attacks, murders, house burnings and evictions, with over 15,000 northern Catholics fleeing south, there was also a belief among senior officers, such as Collins and O'Duffy, that a joint-IRA initiative targeted at the North could help heal IRA divisions and avoid a Civil War in the south. For Collins, despite his involvement in approving the Treaty, overcoming partition was increasingly a personal crusade.

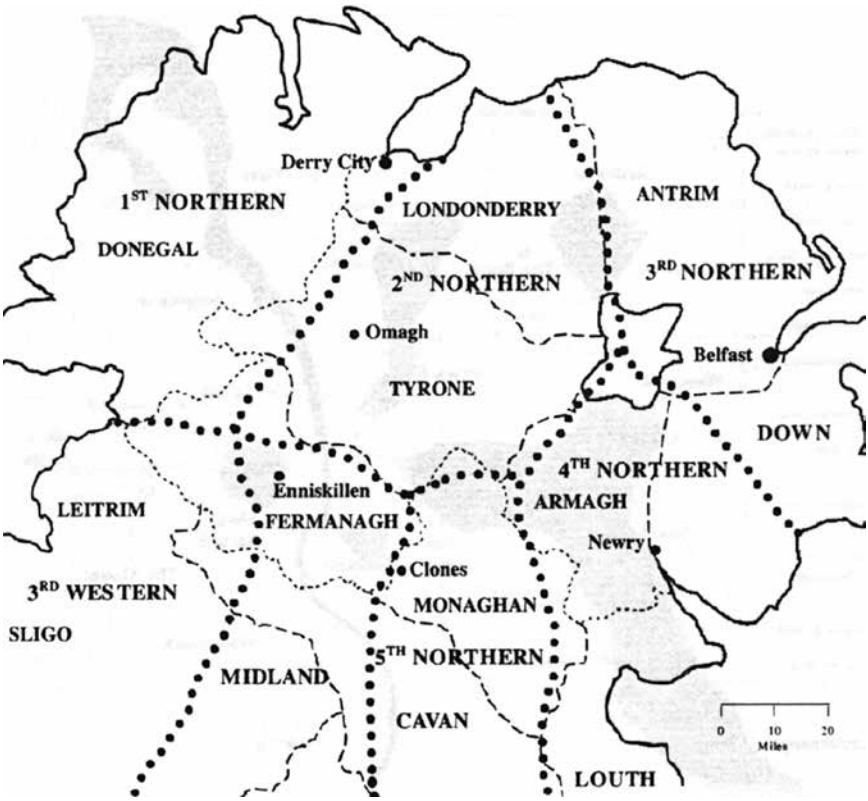
In response to the increased threat from the northern IRA, on 7 April 1922, the Unionist Government introduced the *Civil Authorities (Special Power) Act Northern Ireland*, which provided for internment, flogging of prisoners, area curfews, special courts, press censorship and execution for certain offences. The Act also banned the IRA, Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan and Fianna Eireann (the Republican youth wing). On 11 April 1922, a meeting in Dublin of the Northern Advisory Committee, presided over by Collins, was attended by Arthur Griffith and most of the senior Ministers of the Provisional Government, including, O'Higgins, Mulcahy, Cosgrave, McNeill, and Eoin O'Duffy, chief of Staff of the pro treaty IRA. The Northern committee included three bishops and several Sinn Féin priests, together with prominent Nationalists. There were also

leaders of the two Northern IRA Divisions, including Tom Morris and Seamus Woods.

During April, a new joint IRA Northern Offensive was planned, which would involve all five Divisions, undertaking coordinated action on each side of the border and a general offensive within Northern Ireland. The Northern Division commanders agreed that 2 and 3 May were the potential start dates for what was called, by the IRA members, 'The Rising' or 'May Offensive'. Roger McCorley subsequently explained 'The idea in our May 1922 attack was to smash the northern government completely. As far as we could help it we didn't attack the British' . . . in his view, the May uprising was aimed at nothing less than ' . . . (the) downfall of the six county government by military means'. Most of the IRA weapons, for swopping with the Free State army, came from the Cork IRA. through Liam Lynch, who was also based in the Four Courts. However due to mistrust many transfers did not take place and instead British supplied rifles were also sent north, with the serial numbers filed off.

Arming the Northern Divisions

To organise the arms shipments for the 2nd Northern Division, Paddy Diamond formally joined the National Army, in May 1922, and was engaged in convoying munitions from their Headquarters at Portabello Barracks, in Dublin to Drumboe Castle, Co Donegal. Diamond subsequently explained that Paddy Hurl, the Divisional Quarter Master, was given 200 rifles and ammunition in Beggars Bush barracks which were brought to the Four Courts and there exchanged for 200 rifles, that belonged to the anti-treaty southern IRA divisions. These rifles were then brought to Donegal and eventually to the six counties. Tom Morris and John Haughey were also directly involved in transporting these arms for the Division, when 300 Lee Enfield rifles were smuggled in an oil tanker from Donegal. The 3rd Northern Division received around 150 rifles for each of its Brigades, plus a similar number of revolvers for the IRA in Belfast. It was estimated in May 1922, by Tom McNally of Belfast, that 600 rifles and 5 Thompson sub machine guns had been smuggled into Belfast over previous months. There were also arms provided directly by the 4th Northern Division in Dundalk, smuggled in by oil tankers or by sea and landed on the East Down coast, where



IRA Northern Divisions 1922

Martin Connolly's, Castlewellan Company, was located. Patrick Casey, based in Dundalk, remembered the activity with 'Thousands of rifles, sub machine guns, grenades, boxes of ammunition and mines detonators etc. were passed over the border by various routes and dispersed through the six counties.'

In addition, to increase the numbers of experienced Volunteers, Sean Lehane, a prominent IRA leader from Cork, with over 100 men, was moved to the Border, in preparation for the offensive. It was intended that he would take over as O/C of the 1st Northern Division (mostly Donegal) and 2nd Northern (mostly Derry and Tyrone) with Charlie Daly as his second in command. Their purpose, Lehane recorded, was to assist Frank Aiken in his activities against

the Specials and Crown Forces. It appears that the recruits for the North came from the anti-treaty units, while the financial resources were provided by the pro-treaty GHQ, Sean MacEoin's, Midlands Division, was to cooperate in the attacks. However, this was resisted by the pro-treaty officers in Donegal. On 1 May, Joe Sweeney, and Tom Glennon (O/C and vice O/C of the pro-treaty 1st Northern Division) met with Sean Lehane and Charlie Daly in Drumboe Castle and insisted that Lehane and his men evacuate county Donegal, but they refused and confirmed that they would continue to launch attacks across the border on the Specials in counties Fermanagh, Tyrone, and Derry.

Northern Divisions, May 1922 'Uprising'

As planned, the 'Northern Offensive' commenced with attacks on 2 May by the 2nd Northern Division on barracks in Derry and Tyrone, resulting in six RIC and Specials being killed over two days. On the first night, large numbers of Volunteers, led by Paddy Diamond, attacked the RIC Barracks in Bellaghy. Diamond subsequently provided a graphic description of a violent encounter,

> . . . we got into the barrack yard . . . and then went through the back door of the barracks which was open. We entered the day room where we found eleven policemen one sergeant and ten men . . . We ordered them to put up their hands. There was an oil lamp on the mantlepiece and a policeman there extinguished it, leaving the whole place in darkness. Just as he went to extinguish the light we started to shoot. I noticed the sergeant reaching up to the shelf for a revolver and I fired at him hitting him twice in the region of the stomach. Johnny Martin one of our volunteers from the Creag . . . started firing at another policeman. By this time we were shooting indiscriminately in the general direction of where we imagined the police were, judging from what we had seen when the light went out. Both of us had two revolvers each and we emptied both revolvers at the policemen.

One of the IRA men, William John Hinphey, was shot and badly injured and an RIC Constable Harvey was also shot that night,

Maghera R.I.C. barracks 1922

but he was shot by his own men who suspected him of helping the IRA, which he did by opening the back door to enable access for the Unit. Three IRA Companies were involved including Gulladuff, led by Dan Mulholland. The same night, the RIC was ambushed at Moneymore with two constables shot, in another ambush, led by Dan McKenna and John Haughey, Draperstown barracks was attacked, but they failed to gain entrance and had to withdraw. The IRA units involved were supplied by Cumann na mBan members, who had smuggled detonators and a Thompson Gun from Dundalk three days before the attack and, on the day of the assault, distributed rifles by car to the Volunteers. The following night the Newbridge and Gulladuff IRA units ambushed the Inspector General of the RUC, Charles Wickham, who was in the area, but he was too well protected and escaped uninjured. On the same night three local Volunteers were attacked by a joint RIC/ USC patrol near Ballyronan, where three of the RIC were killed in the firefight and all three volunteers wounded. Although injured, the three IRA mem-

bers who carried out the attack escaped and crossed the border, however over the following week savage reprisals were carried out by the Special Constabulary on local Catholic civilians. On 10 May, Martin Connolly's former IRA company in Gulladuff, were involved in an exchange of fire with a 'B' Specials patrol when about forty Volunteers were attacked on their way to burn the Culnady Scutch Mill.

Sectarian Reprisals

Following the series of IRA attacks, during the early morning of 6 May 1922, six men with blackened faces arrived at the door of Hugh McGillen, near Dungiven, and arrested two men for questioning about arms, when they protested their innocence, they were riddled with bullets and the bodies dumped in a watery flax hole. At 2am, on 11 May, in Ballyronan a group of men wearing police caps, members of the "A" Specials, entered the house of the McKeown family and lined up the male members of the family in the kitchen. They then shot the three sons present, Frank, Thomas, and James, in front of their parents. The Specials were seeking their brother Henry, who was a prominent IRA member and had visited his parents the previous day. On 19 May, the large Starrett's mill in Desertmartin, which was five miles from Knockloughrim, was burned to the ground by the IRA. In a direct reprisal, two Specials started a fire in a large four storey mill in the village, which was destroyed. The Specials claimed that they had seen two men running away from the scene and this was enough excuse for Specials from the area, and from nearby Magherafelt, to loot and burn Catholic-owned homes and shops in Desertmartin. While this was going on, several Specials in uniform went to the homes of the Catholic McGeehan and Higgins families, where they took two sets of brothers out to a nearby lane, lined them up against a ditch and riddled them with bullets. The Sunday after this slaughter four hearses brought their remains to the church in Desertmartin, where they were interred in a single grave. At the inquest into their deaths the police admitted that they were respectable men who had never previously come to their notice. After these murders the local IRA considered reprisals but decided there might be a greater sectarian backlash in an area that was mainly loyalist. After this series of sectarian murders every IRA member in Derry, who had not already crossed

the border, went on the run to avoid the twin threats of arrest and the rampaging Specials. They slept out in bogs and on hillsides in fear of being found at home, until it became clear that the situation was too dangerous to remain in Northern Ireland.

East Down, Castlewellan attack

Two weeks after the south Derry attacks, the Belfast IRA launched a major assault on Musgrave Street Barracks, with the intention of seizing a large quantity of arms, armoured cars, and other weapons, which would be vital for wider military action, but they were forced to withdraw. After the failure of this action, it appears that attempts were made to call off the planned offensive, meant for two days later. However, countermanding orders, did not reach some areas. Some attacks on police barracks did take place in the 3rd Northern Division; there were also arson attacks on several stately homes and widespread burning of property in Belfast. The Antrim and East Down Battalions also carried out several military actions in their area, including the major attack on Castlewellan Barracks, where Martin Connolly participated, as outlined in his Pension statement. The Evening Herald of 20 May 1922 carried a brief account of the attack, under the headline,

> FIGHT IN CO. DOWN,
> The Press Association states that it is reported that an attack was made on the police barracks in Castlewellan, Co. Down, and after a three hour fight the raiders were beaten back. It is stated three of the attackers were killed, seven wounded, and ten taken prisoners. Old Court, the seat of the Baroness De Ros, at Strangford, Co Down, was destroyed by fire.

The Belfast Newsletter also reported,

> The attack at Castlewellan was particularly fierce. The "I.R.A." used bombs, machine guns and rifles and kept up their onslaught four hours, but beyond bespattering the building with bullet marks, and bomb splinters and breaking the windows, little damage was done. The houses of two men living near the barracks were destroyed by

> the "I.R.A." under the impression that both were inhabited by Protestants, but this was only the case in one instance. All the roads between Ballynahinch, Castlewellan, Downpatrick, Newcastle and Newry had been blocked and telegraph poles had been felled along the County Down railway tracks, over a wide area in South Down.

In addition to the major attacks in Belfast and at Castlewellan, several other actions occurred. Three castles were burned, Shanes Castle in Co. Antrim: Edencourt Castle on Carlingford Lough in Martin Connolly's area and Glenmona Castle. Police barracks, railway stations and over twenty large business premises in Belfast were also burned on the three days from 19 May. In reprisal the NI Government, through the security forces, unleased a terrible sectarian backlash against Belfast Catholics, with 12 Catholics being killed over two days, 20 and 21 May, during sectarian mob attacks in Catholic areas. Five IRA members in Antrim were killed on active service during May and June 1922, three of whom were executed by Specials after capture in Cushendall. An IRA memorandum to Mulcahy, from O/C, Seamus Woods, in June 1922, which specifically mentioned Martin Connolly's 3rd Brigade, reported: -

> After a period of five weeks the demoralisation has practically completed its work . . . The positions in No 2 and 3 Brigades of 3rd Northern Division today is that the Military Organisation is almost destroyed (and the enemy) believe that they have beaten the IRA completely in Antrim and Down . . . The people who supported us feel they have been abandoned by Dail Eireann, for our position today is more unbearable that it was in June 1921 . . . Today the people feel that all their suffering has been in vain and cannot see any hope for the future.

Northern Uprising failure

Despite the fact, that all five northern divisions had agreed a start date for the combined offensive in early May, in the event, only the 2nd Northern Division commenced operations on that date, in Derry and Tyrone, with the 3rd Northern Division two weeks later. The other three Northern Divisions failed to act, for various

reasons. Ineffective communications between the Divisions caused utter confusion concerning the widespread activities planned for 19 May. This left the 2nd and 3rd Northern Divisions isolated and allowed the Specials to concentrate on their areas. Roger McCorley, the Belfast IRA leader, was to complain that the 1st and 4th Northern Divisions failed to act. Tom McNally, also of the 3rd Northern Division, recorded; 'we had little association outside of ourselves, and we had no faith in other areas.' Seamus Woods, the O/C of the 3rd Northern, pointed out the futility of an aggressive IRA policy in Belfast when the minority population was highly vulnerable to reprisals. He stated that respect for the IRA in Belfast,

> . . . had been won not so much out of sympathy with our National aspirations . . . but more on account of the part the Army (IRA) had played in defending the minority against organised attacks by uniformed and non-uniformed Crown forces.

It had been planned that the 4th Northern Division, under Frank Aiken, would also carry out attacks in Armagh and South Down and, on 22 May, large well-equipped IRA columns were assembled throughout this area. However, their participation in the rising was called off by Aiken, only hours before they were to move out. This resulted in a poorly coordinated offensive, which proved impossible to sustain. The same evening that Aiken called off the operations the Northern Government introduced internment. The lack of engagement of Aiken's Division also facilitated the Specials in raiding Armagh and south Down, to make numerous arrests of inactive members of the IRA columns, and to transfer more Specials to Martin Connolly's area of East Down. Despite the unexplained failure of the 4th Northern Division to engage, their O/C Frank Aiken, was directly involved the following month in a sectarian attack on an isolated Presbyterian farming community at Lisdrumliska and Altnaveigh, near Newry in south Down. On 17 June 1922, 30 IRA members, under orders from Aiken, attacked this community burning over a dozen houses and shooting dead six people, including a father and son and an elderly woman. The IRA subsequently claimed that it was a reprisal for the killing of four of their members by the B Specials.

Defeat of Northern Offensive – Internment introduced

While a wide range of individual attacks were mounted as part of the Northern Offensive, the combined effort was disorganised, ineffective and proved a disastrous failure for the Northern IRA, both because of the level of sectarian reprisals against the Catholic population and the rapid defeat and total disintegration of the IRA Battalions, across the six counties. In addition, the assassination of a Unionist MP William Twaddle in Belfast, who had encouraged sectarian violence, resulted in the introduction of internment on 22 May and the formation of the new Royal Ulster Constabulary, on 1 June, with 30,000 members, provided the Northern Government with a heavily armed and well-equipped sectarian police force, under their control. Many of those first interned, across the Six Counties, were nationalists and pro-treaty rather than IRA members, many of whom had moved across the border. Almost half of the IRA internees were rounded up on the day it was introduced, and this effectively finished the IRA as an effective force in the six counties. Among those captured in south Derry was Anthony McGurk, Martin Connolly's officer from Gulladuff, and his brother Frank, who were interned in the prison ship Argenta, in Belfast.

However, the initial impact of the first Internment sweep, on the 3rd Northern Division, was limited with only forty-one of their members lifted. Twenty-eight of Martin Connolly's comrades from East Down were captured, including nineteen staff officers. On 23 May 1922, Northern prime minister James Craig declared 'what we have now we hold and will hold against all combinations' discounting the Boundary Commission which he described as the root of all evil. General Macready, British GOC, reported that

> The disorganization of the IRA caused by the action of the Police since 22 May has been greater than supposed. The majority of the IRA gunmen of the North (were) either wiped out of the Six Counties or are in hiding.'

A report by the IRA Belfast Brigade also concluded;

> Under the present circumstances it would be impossible

> to keep our Military Organisation alive and intact, as the morale of the men is going down day by day and the spirit of the people is practically dead.

Two months after the 'Northern Offensive', the O/C of the 3rd Northern, Seamus Woods, sent a detailed report on the rising in the area to General Mulcahy, in July 1922, which stated:

> Each Brigade made a good start, and the men were in great spirits anxious to go ahead, but in a few days the enemy forces began to pour into our area as no other Divisions were making a move. Things became so bad in No. 3 (East Down) Brigade where-lorry loads of Specials were coming from Newry (4th Northern Division area) that on the 24th May the Divisional V/C (Vice Commandant) went and saw the Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff said he would order out the 4th Northern immediately: we kept the men in No. 3 [Brigade] under arms in the hope of the enemy having to bring back their Specials to Newry.'

Referring specifically to Martin Connolly's area in East Down, Woods also reported that:

> . . . as nothing was happening in other areas, we found it necessary to disband the Columns and leave the men in groups of three or more to move about as best they could, in the hope of re-mobilising them when operations became general. After a period of over five weeks the demoralisation has practically completed its work and the position in Nos. 2 and 3 Brigades today is that the Military Organisation is almost destroyed.

Northern Volunteer Reserve (NVR)

On 3 June 1922, the Dublin Government decided that a policy of peaceful obstruction should be adopted towards the Belfast Government, viz., 'No troops from the twenty-six counties either those under official control or attached to the Executive should be permitted to invade the six-county area.' As a result of the failure of the offensive virtually all the active members of the IRA in the two

Northern Volunteer Reserve at Curragh camp, including W J Hinphey

Northern Divisions had to go on the run. Many of the remaining IRA members in south Derry and Tyrone moved to Donegal, in late May, where it was planned to regroup and form a fighting force that could be raised to invade the six counties once more. However, following the failure of the other three Northern Divisions to act, and after severe sectarian reprisals on the Catholic population, it was decided to cease the offensive. The 3rd Northern Division was dissolved in July 1922, when many of the IRA members who remained free moved across the border. In Donegal, initially, there were about 150 members under Paddy Diamond, O/C of South Derry, who called themselves the Northern Volunteer Reserve and were involved, alongside southern units as part of a joint-IRA initiative, in a sporadic guerrilla war which was mounted across the Border, led by Charlie Daly and Sean Larkin.

However, over the months following the defeat, IRA members

from the two Northern Ireland divisions were transferred to the Curragh army camp in county Kildare. A new 6th Northern Division was set up in the Curragh, to provide a base, accommodation, and training for northern IRA members, who were on the run. The stated purpose of this new division, which was supported by Collins and Mulcahy, was to prepare a new offensive for the six-counties. The 500 IRA members of the Northern Volunteer Reserve in the Curragh remained strictly neutral. They were assured that no pressure would be placed on them to join the Free State army, and they remained there on the understanding that active planning for a new offensive would be initiated. Despite the defeat of the Northern Offensive and the transfer of IRA members to the south there was still a belief and hope that another offensive was possible, but the outbreak of Civil War ended this hope. The majority of the Northern IRA viewed the Civil War as a fight that was irrelevant to the six counties, where Partition was the main issue. Some, including Sean Larkin, joined the anti-treaty side under Charlie Daly, while others joined the National Army.

Martin Connolly returns home

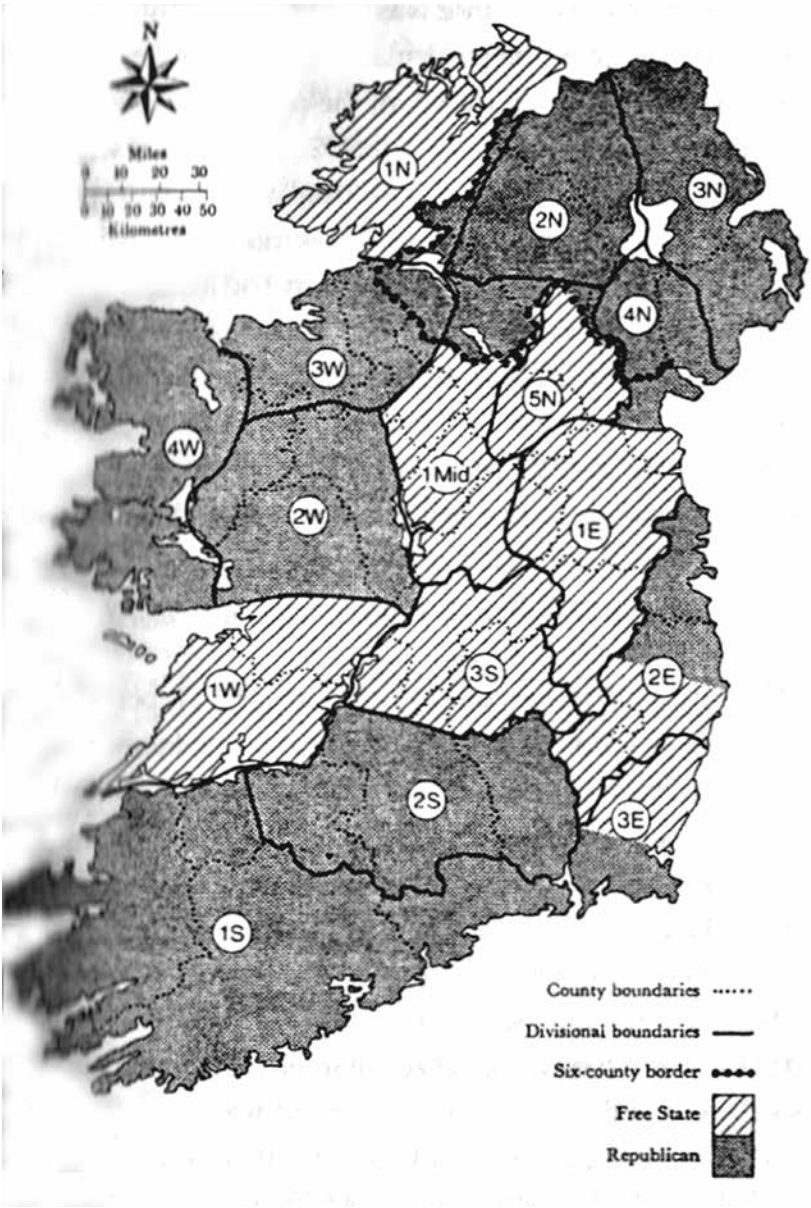
After their defeat at Castlewellan, Martin Connolly was on the run for five weeks in the Mourne mountains, with a few of his comrades from the East Down Battalion. They were hunted by the B Specials and RUC and were forced to leave the six counties by the middle of June 1922. Martin was transferred by the IRA command, back to his native Galway. In the three years from July 1919, that Martin Connolly was in the north, from the effective commencement of IRA northern activity during the War of Independence to the defeat of the Northern Offensive, there was a high toll of war casualties. Within the six counties, in the two years from June 1920 to June 1922, a total of 492 people were killed and 1,149 were wounded. In Belfast, of the 417 killed, 258 were Catholic and of the 1,023 wounded a total of 691 were Catholic. Among the armies in conflict, the Crown Forces had 43 killed and 75 wounded and the IRA had 14 killed and 15 wounded, again 80 per cent located in Belfast. In a short summary, which Martin submitted to the IRA Pension Board in 1951 when applying for a Service Medal, he covers the range of his military activity over these three years.

Joined Volunteers 1919 in Gulladuff Co Derry and took part in all activities during period & up to 1921, attached note herewith from Mr McGurk who was in charge in that area; Transferred to Castlewellan Co Down attached to (3rd) Northern division approx. end 1921 took part in all activities and attacked Barracks Castlewellan Forced to leave my employment and transferred to Volunteers in my home address Milltown Co Galway.

During this period, Martin's experience in the North must have had a significant impact on his physical and mental health, living for three years in constant danger, in a deeply sectarian society, involved in regular military activity and armed conflict, while on Active Service as an IRA Volunteer. In addition, he and his comrades remained fully active during the year from the initial Truce and ceasefire in July 1921 to the defeat of the Northern Offensive in May 1922. In his final military engagement, at Castlewellan RIC barracks, three of his comrades had been shot dead and ten captured. He was unable to return to his job and was almost five weeks on the run, with three of his comrades, in the Mourne mountains actively pursued by the RUC and B Specials, awaiting orders to remobilise. Following this intense phase, he was returning home, physically exhausted, to an area where the IRA combatants had spent over twelve months in training camps, recuperating, retraining, and debating and arguing the Treaty terms. However, they were now about to embark on a violent course, much more aggressive and bitter, than the previous armed campaign against the Crown Forces, in the continued struggle for national Independence and the Republic.

PART THREE:

CIVIL WAR DIVISIONS



Civil War Divisions pro and anti-treaty

Chapter Five:

"With the Flying Column" North Galway Brigade

When Martin Connolly returned to Milltown around the 20 June 1922, just over six weeks after the death of his father on 3 May, this was the first time in three years that he was able to visit his mother and his wider family. Unfortunately, his arrival back in Galway coincided with the attack on the Four Courts, so his period of respite lasted for less than two weeks, and he reported for duty again on 1 July. Over the three months prior to Martin's return home, there was increasing tension and conflict among republicans in North Galway. Following the formation of the IRA Executive, at the Dublin Convention in March 1922, which was attended by Patrick Dunleavy for the north Galway IRA, there was considerable unrest among the IRA units across the country and many increased their militant activities, raising funds and securing supplies.

In the north Galway area, to secure funds for the local Brigade, there was a series of bank raids and robberies carried out by the anti-Treaty IRA, under the command of Martin's senior officers, Patrick and Thomas Dunleavy. Prior to the outbreak of Civil War, the north Galway IRA units were in training camps, sometimes billeted in loyalist stately homes such as Castlegrove, near Milltown, and Castlehackett, retaining a significant number of their active members. After he returned to Galway, during July, Martin was initially based in the IRA training camps at Clydah and Lavally near Tuam, where General Tom Maguire attended several parades. When the Anti-Treaty forces, occupying the Four Courts in Dublin, were attacked on Wednesday 28 June 1922 by the Free State National Army, this signalled the beginning of the Civil War in north Galway. The anti-treaty IRA, under Commandant Patrick Dunleavy was in full control in Tuam and occupying the former RIC barracks and the Workhouse, which was the former barracks for the Crown Forces.

Officers North Galway Brigade IRA (during Truce, from left) Commandant Patrick Dunleavy; Captain Tom Mannion Dunmore; Dr Michael Mangan Medical Officer, Glenamaddy Battalion; Tom Nohilly, Adjutant, Tuam Battalion and seated Tom Kilgarriff, Intelligence officer.
Courtesy of Dominick and Mary Dunleavy

Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, May 1922

In the six months prior to the outbreak of Civil War, the Republican movement was splitting into different factions, both among Republicans in the Dail and in the IRA. However, Sinn Féin and the IRB continued to attempt to resolve the divisions internally. On 17 May 1922, Sinn Féin convened an Ard Fheis in Dublin. Galway Sinn Féin had adopted a pro-Treaty position in January but some of the local Sinn Féin Clubs put forward delegates in support of the anti-treaty position, including Headford, with 300 members the largest in the constituency, Milltown, Kilkerrin and Mountbellew. While Dunmore, Tuam and Corofin selected pro-treaty delegates. In a final push for unity, Collins and De Valera agreed a joint Pact for the forthcoming June elections. This agreed that Sinn Féin candidates would be selected by each side and imposed on constituencies with the purpose of a balanced Dail representation. The Pact

also allowed for non-Sinn Féin candidates. The Pact was enthusiastically approved by the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, where Collins stated,

> Unity at home was more important than any treaty with the foreigner, and if unity could only be got at the expense of the treaty -the treaty would have to go.

However, the Pact was signed by Collin's without consulting his Cabinet colleagues. Arthur Griffith was very unhappy with the thrust of the agreement, as was Eoin McNeill, criticising it as removing the democratic right of the electorate to decide. The Cabinet reluctantly accepted the Pact, affirming that,

> They were not prepared to wage war against Bolshevism sheltering under the name of Republicanism, and it was essential that there should be unity of the political forces in the country to cope with disorder . . . It should be made quite clear that the Provisional Government are determined to stand by the Treaty.

The British Government was also very opposed to the Pact because there was no reference to the Anglo-Irish Treaty, and Churchill stopped the supply of arms to the Irish Government, for a short period.

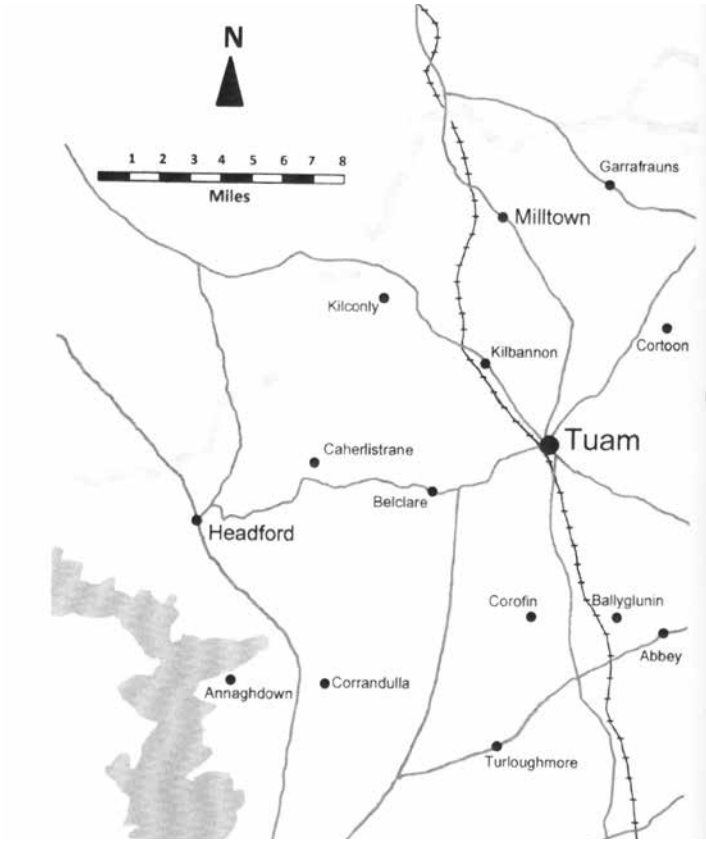
June Election and attack on Four Courts

In the general election on 16 June 1922, based on Proportional Representation (PR) and with a turn-out of less than 60 per cent, the electorate demonstrated that there was a substantial pro-Treaty majority. From a total vote of 620,283, pro-Treaty panel candidates won 239,193; anti-Treaty candidates won 133,864 and non-panel candidates won 247,276, including Labour with 29.4 per cent of the vote. The non-Sinn Féin candidates were almost all pro-Treaty. The Republicans received less than 22 per cent of first preference votes. In Leinster, anti-treaty won only five out of forty-four seats. Only Sligo and East Mayo were won by anti-Treaty candidates. In Connacht, the Republican vote was slightly in the majority, the only province they won. In Galway, the pro-treaty parties received 68 per cent of the vote and the anti-treaty, Sinn Féin, received 32 per

cent, with five pro-treaty TDs and 2 anti-treaty TDs elected and Liam Mellows lost his seat. The result was not a vote of confidence in the Provisional Government, or a rejection of Republican ideals, but instead demonstrated a need for stable government, and acceptance of compromise, mainly regarding Anglo-Irish relations, following a pro-longed period of struggle and disruption.

After winning the election the new government decided to attack the Four Courts, before the new Daíl could sit. While it remains unclear when precisely the Provisional Government decided on the assault, it appears that on 26 June, only ten days after the Election, the Cabinet decided to make the move. The justification for this was provided by an incident in London, when on 22 June two IRA men assassinated Sir Henry Wilson, the Unionist MP for North Down, outside his house in Eaton Square. This assassination was carried out on the orders of Michael Collins but blamed on the anti-treaty IRA in the Four Courts. Collins told Sean Moylan, a Republican leader, that Henry Wilson had been a thorn in his side, blocking arms procurement and because of his role in the North, in relation to the formation of the Specials and his vociferous support for the Loyalists and opposition to the Treaty. The British conference of ministers, who met the day after Wilson's assassination, decided on a policy of retaliation. General Macready, head of the British Forces in Ireland, was also in attendance and plans were laid for British troops to take over the Four Courts, on the following Sunday (25 June), using tanks, howitzers, and airplanes. British navy ships were also dispatched to Dublin for prisoners. Macready confirmed, from a military perspective, that it would present 'no great difficulty', however it was likely to incur heavy civilian casualties and result in rallying public opinion to the Republican side.

After further consideration, the order for attack was withdrawn on the day proposed. Instead, Churchill wrote to the Southern government stating that the Treaty could not be proceeded with unless the Four Courts were cleared. In addition, before the projected British attack had been decided upon, senior British military officers met with Griffith and Emmet Dalton and raised the possibility of war material and equipment being loaned to Provisional Government forces, to enable them to attack the Four Courts. On the night of 27 June, the Four Courts was surrounded, at 3.30am an ultimatum was given to evacuate the building and the bombardment



North Galway map

commenced at 4.15am. The Government troops were unable to use the two eighteen pounder guns that the British had provided and so Collins had to locate experienced ex-army gunners and had to seek assistance from the British Military to provide the men. Macready provided ammunition and offered more powerful guns. The IRA in occupation had never expected an attack and so were totally unprepared. There had been continuous efforts over many months to find agreement and unity. They had cooperated on the Northern Offensive, on the pre-Election Pact and the new Constitution. The IRA Army Executive entered the Civil War because war had been declared on them.

Civil War commences but North Galway Brigade splits

In response to the Four Courts attack a large gathering of anti-treaty IRA congregated in Tuam on Sunday 2 July as a show of strength. The same night as the mobilisation in Tuam, the first action of the Civil War in north Galway took place at Mountbellew, near the Lavally IRA Camp, when anti-treaty forces attacked the police barracks there, using rifles, machine guns, bombs, and grenades. Over thirty-armed IRA Volunteers were involved. The attack lasted over half-an-hour, with the objective of driving the pro-treaty forces out of the area. The Commandant of the National Army, Patrick Reynolds, was shot and injured and six of his soldiers were captured. Stores of ammunition were taken before the barracks was blown up. The local Workhouse Building, situated outside the town and occupied by about forty pro-treaty troops, was not attacked. The Volunteers were drawn from seven Companies including Barnaderg, led by Tim Dunleavy, Tuam, Sylvan and Milltown Company, which included Peter Burke, Patrick Walsh, Dan McCormack, and Martin Connolly. Following the attack at Mountbellew, a large IRA force, under the command of Tom Maguire TD, arrived in Tuam with the intention of burning the barracks, but were convinced to desist by the Archbishop, Dr Gilmartin.

However, the following week, on 15 July 1922, most of the IRA Volunteers in the Tuam garrison, under Patrick Dunleavy, decided they could no longer support the anti-treaty stance of their Divisional commander, Tom Maguire. The Brigade officers and forty men resigned and many subsequently joined the National Army. The decision by Dunleavy with his senior officers and some of his men to transfer their loyalty to the pro-treaty side is very significant. Patrick Dunleavy was the most prominent Republican leader in north Galway and a member of the IRB since 1913, who had recruited Martin Connolly to the IRB when he was working in Tuam in 1919. Subsequently, Dunleavy explained, "I resigned about the 3rd of July. I was with the Irregulars till then & I resigned on account of (the) 4 courts captured by Irregulars". After Patrick Dunleavy split from his comrades in Tuam, he was kidnapped by the IRA and held for five weeks in a camp in Tourmakeady, county Mayo, until he escaped in early September and joined the National Army, on 5 September 1922. He was attached to the staff of the 2nd

The workhouse in Tuam, formerly the base of the British Army, became the garrison of the National Army after they took control of the town on 26th July 1922.

Western Division as a Captain based in the Claremorris command, about fifteen miles from Tuam.

Following the departure of most of the men from the building, the Tuam barracks remained in the hands of a small number of the anti-treaty IRA, under Con Fogarty, who was elected by the remaining Volunteers. As Martin Connolly explained subsequently, 'The split came and our company decided to carry on under Capt Fogarty and Lieutenant T Ryan and went on the run.' Captain Michael 'Con' Fogarty was a very prominent republican, a member of the IRB, who had first organised the Battalion in Tuam in 1917 and was the first Brigade O/C, until he was arrested in late 1920 by Crown Forces. Lieutenant Thomas Ryan was the former Quarter Master of the Battalion. Two of Dunleavey's brothers, Thomas, and Tim, were also active as officers with the IRA during the War of Independence. Thomas joined the National Army in August 1922 and Tim remained with the anti-treaty Flying Column for the initial months. He resigned from the IRA, early in the Civil War, but was kidnapped by his former comrades and held for a period before

he emigrated to America. Martin Connolly named him as a reference in his Pension application. All the officers that Martin provided as references in his IRA Pension application, were part of the anti-treaty forces in Galway, Peter Burke, Peter Brennan, Patrick Walsh, Thomas Ryan, and Con Fogarty, as were his comrades and friends from the Milltown area, the McCormack brothers, John and Dan, and Thomas Hannon from Belmont, with whom he had originally joined the Irish Volunteers in 1917. In the West, only some parts of Galway and south Roscommon went pro-treaty, almost all the IRA in Mayo, Sligo and Galway were anti-treaty.

National Army reorganized

In early July, as the Civil War escalated, a National War Council was formed to take control of the Provisional Government's military forces, centrally. This was undertaken in a secretive manner and has been subsequently described, as in effect, a military dictatorship, comprised solely of senior IRB members. Collins wrote to Griffith:

> It would be well, I think, if the Government issued a sort of Official Instruction to me nominating the War Council of three and appointing me to act by special order of the government as Commander-in-Chief during the period of hostilities.

Mulcahy remained as Minister for Defense and again became Chief of Staff, Eoin O'Duffy took over control of the newly formed Southwestern Command. The three of them comprised the War Council, which was, however, never to meet again after they had established it, leaving absolute control with Collins. Five military command areas were set up across the country. At the beginning of the Civil war, Munster and the West were dominated by the Republican IRA, fighting for the separatist ideal, whereas the National Army of the Provisional Government, formed in January 1922, was, for the most part, a mercenary force, recruited extremely hastily and fighting for a limited aim, to repress and defeat the 'Irregulars', and armed primarily by the British. However, the anti-treaty side was better armed than during the War of Independence. The Provisional Government estimated, at the beginning of the Civil

War, that there was a total of 12,900 IRA, anti-Treaty Volunteers, with 6780 rifles. The number of Government troops was 9,700, at the time of the Four Courts attack, mainly concentrated in Dublin. Before the outbreak of the Civil War, between February and June 1922, the British Government had supplied the Irish Provisional Government with 11,900 rifles, 79 Lewis machine-guns, 4200 revolvers and 3,504 grenades. By September 1922, the British had supplied, to the National army, 27,400 rifles: 6,606 revolvers, 246 Lewis guns, eight 18-pounder guns and five Vickers guns.

Formation of IRA Flying column

In the early stages of the Civil War the local IRA was mainly defensive and retreated in the face of the deployment of National Army troops in their locality. Little attempt was made to hold barracks and the organisation was generally poor. In July 1922, Con Moloney, Adjutant General of the IRA, issued instructions to Republican Divisions, which recommended the formation of Active Service Units, drawn from the most dedicated and experienced Volunteers. He also authorised that Unionist property should be commandeered to accommodate the men. This happened in north Galway when the North Galway Flying Column was formed and Castlegrove House, near Milltown, which was the home of the landlord Lewin family and a site of much agrarian activity prior to this, was occupied by Martin Connolly and his comrades and used as a base, for a short period. The National Army troops arrived in Tuam at 6am on Wednesday 26 July, with 70 soldiers. The weakened anti-treaty IRA withdrew from the town the night before and were again dissuaded, by the archbishop, from burning down the police barracks before they left, because it was adjacent to houses in the town. On the same night, Castlegrove House, where Martin Connolly was based close to Kilgevrin, was burned down. Although, after the burning, Con Fogarty stated that it was not done by the IRA, and it was subsequently reported that the burning was carried out by local tenants, due to the previous agrarian conflict with the Lewin, landlord family. The following night anti-treaty forces in Dunmore, ten miles from Milltown, evacuated and burned the police barracks there.

Martin Connolly stated that, after the withdrawal from Tuam and the burning of Castlegrove, he and his comrades in the Flying Column were forced to go ‘on-the-run’, for the remainder of

the Civil War period in north Galway. Martin was on continuous active service with the North Galway Flying Column for the next eight months, which involved permanent movement with temporary camps, sometimes staying in safe houses, remaining mobile and mainly living outdoors. This new phase of guerrilla war proved physically difficult for the anti-treaty IRA, who were forced to live in mountainous or isolated areas of north Galway and south Mayo, constantly on the move, with less availability of supporters willing to accommodate them and having to commandeer essential supplies. They had to adapt to an expanding, well equipped, National Army pursuing them, which was sanctioned to increase to 35,000 men. While the north Galway area managed to continue the struggle until the early months of 1923, it was a period of severe hardship and constant personal danger, for the Volunteers involved. Martin Connolly's IRA activity included a significant number of armed engagements, destroying bridges and roads, commandeering supplies, attacking army barracks, and carrying out ambushes on army patrols and convoys. The North Galway Flying column proved highly effective, but eventually were overcome by overwhelming numbers of National Army troops, who were moved to north Galway and south Mayo to confront them.

An intense and dangerous armed campaign

During the conflict, several of Martin's comrades were killed and injured, most of his officers captured and ultimately six of his comrades were executed in Tuam. One of Martin's officers in Galway, Peter Brennan, provided a reference for the Pensions Board which describes his early involvement in Milltown and sets out some examples of the activity they were involved with, during the Civil War period.

> *Kilconly, Tuam, Co. Galway. 14-12-41.*
> *To whom it may concern.*
> *I wish to certify that Martin Connolly of Kilgevrin, Milltown Co. Galway, now resident of Barrack St. Carlow, joined the Milltown I.R.A. Coy., in or about July 1917. He took part in all operations in this Company area, including delivery of dispatches and other necessary duty in connection with the I.R.A. organisation. He carried out all du-*

Peter J Brennan
Engineer North
Galway Brigade IRA

tys entrusted to him, & was a real active member up to the time he was transferred to Derry County in or about 1919. A short time after the Truce he returned to the Milltown Company, & reported for duty, & served with this company until ceasefire. He was in training camps at Clydah, Lavally, & Crumlin, & was a member of the Flying Column, & took part with me in an attack on F. State forces at Horseleap Tuam, in or about August 1922. He took part in an attack on F. State post in Tuam Workhouse, & several other engagements against F. State Forces in the Tuam Brigade Area & served up to the cease fire order.
Signed, Peter J. Brennan, Ex Brigade Engineer, Tuam.'

This account can only provide a small sample of the action, because in fact there was a significant number of engagements, involving the Flying Column, which are recorded in a subsequent detailed report submitted by the Tuam Old IRA Veterans Committee to the Pensions Board in 1940 and, together with contemporary newspaper reports, this can provide an eye-witness account of the

war in north Galway as articulated by the participants themselves. During the initial period of the Civil war in north Galway, according to National Army intelligence reports, anti-treaty IRA columns comprised of local IRA companies such as Milltown, were primarily located in Headford, Castlehacket and Ballyglunin, all around Tuam. These units, comprised mainly of part time Volunteers, would operate separately for ambushes in their own areas or collectively, alongside the Flying Column comprised of full-time Volunteers, for attacks on larger targets, such as Tuam Barracks. However, as the war developed the Flying Column had to keep on the move and Martin was also located in different places in north Galway, such as Caherlistrane and Dunmore, and in south Mayo, where his Column was based, for a period, in the hills near Hollymount, Mayo, where they were provided with supplies by a the local Cumann na mBan.

Increased ambushes and disrupting the railway

After the initial assault on Mountbellew barracks, on 2 July, in response to the Four Courts attack, the first military engagement that Martin Connolly was involved in with the Flying Column, was an ambush that took place at Barnaderg on Saturday 5 August 1922, when about twenty-four National Army troops were returning from Mountbellew to Tuam, in six motor cars. The patrol was fired upon, with one of the soldiers suffering a minor injury. The Flying Column was involved in two further local ambushes of Free State troops during August. Con Fogarty led the Mount Talbot attack on a National Army outpost, which lasted for two hours with a heavy exchange of gunfire. Both the Tuam and South Mayo Brigades took part, with twenty-four Volunteers drawn from six Companies, including Barnaderg, Belmont and Milltown, which had over ten men present, including Peter Burke, Patrick Walsh, Thomas Ferrick, Dan McCormack, and Martin Connolly. The attack was called off by the O/C, owing to daylight appearing and reinforcements arriving from Roscommon. At Castlemoyle, after a brief attack on National troops, the IRA Companies had to retreat owing to the arrival of military reinforcements from Tuam and a heavy exchange of gunfire.

One of the most successful tactics, adopted nationally by the Republicans, was the destruction of the railway, a key infrastructure which was used to transport troops and the main means to

move essential supplies to the main towns and cities. This was a key military policy for the IRA, and by August all railway routes to the south and west were not functioning. IRA leader, Liam Lynch, reminded his colleagues that 'a hundred bridges blown up was just as effective a blow . . . as a hundred barracks blown up.' From early August, north Galway IRA attempted to isolate National Army troops, now in control of Tuam, by blowing up bridges, blocking roads and destroying the railway. The intention was to sever transport links to prevent reinforcements from Athlone and Galway city. In two separate actions seven different bridges around Tuam were destroyed. As a result, the only mode of transport out of the town, by the end of August, was by horse and cart to Athenry, on a partially disused road. The North Galway Flying Column was proving particularly successful in disrupting the government functioning of their area and putting pressure on the National Army, through their guerrilla tactics. This approach quickly proved successful and as a result IRA Column activity was most widespread and effective in remote areas, such as south Mayo and north Galway, often where the communities best supported them. During this period Martin and his comrades were often based in his home area, around Milltown and Dunmore, where there was significant local support.

Landlord Blake shooting, August 1922

In Galway and other parts of Connaught, despite the outbreak of Civil War nationally, there was also increased agrarian tensions between tenants and landlords. The lack of government authority contributed to a revival of land seizures and disturbances during 1922. There was widespread withholding of land annuities and many examples of cattle stealing. This land disturbance went on during the Civil War period and it was often difficult to distinguish between agrarian protest and armed resistance to the State. Initially the anti-Treaty Army Council showed some interest in relating its aims to those of land protest and some local commanders were instructed 'to seize certain land and properties and hold them in trust for the Irish people', however this policy proved difficult to maintain during the Civil War. A major landlord, Lord Middleton, told Churchill of,

> . . . the mischief which is being done by the withholding of

rent . . . The farmers who have purchased their tenancies had begun in the last two months to pay their instalments again . . . but the general spirit of Bolshevism, which is being cultivated by the revolutionaries all over the West, will undoubtedly land the Provisional Government in further difficulties, while the land-lords in the districts affected are living on their capital and have not the money to pay their labourers.

Even though the Civil War was raging all around the Milltown area, the agrarian dispute with the Connolly's landlord in Kilgevrin continued. In late August John D. Blake was again the subject of an armed attack. The *Evening Herald* of 21 August 1922 reported:

A dastardly outrage was perpetrated near Tuam on Saturday when a further attempt was made on the life of Mr. John Blake of Brooklawn. Mr Blake had been speaking to his herd about 200 yards from his residence, and on his way home three young men appeared from behind a stone wall and deliberately fired with revolvers at the old gentleman, who fell to the ground wounded in the leg. This happened in broad daylight, at 2pm.

His assailants immediately fled in the direction of the village of Milltown. Mr Blake's neighbours ran to his assistance and carried him to his house. Dr. Hosty of Tuam, was sent for. It is understood that the wound is not of a serious character, but the patient is suffering a good deal from shock. The motive of the crime is supposed to be agrarian.

Mr Blake is an extensive landowner, and a previous attempt was made on his life at the same spot in May 1920. When on his way to mass one Sunday morning he was seriously wounded in the face body and legs by a discharge from a shot gun. He was recently under protection.

The people of the locality are horrified at the foul treatment which Mr Blake has received, and the parish priest, Father O'Dea, Kilconly, after devotions on Sunday strongly condemned the crime, which he said was not committed by any of his parishioners. The lawlessness which pre-

> vailed was directly attributable to (the) reckless decision of those Irish leaders who ignored the majority decision of our native Parliament and plunged the country into a state of civil "war."

The details in the account would suggest that the military action was sanctioned locally by the IRA. This is indicated by the use of revolvers, whereas the previous attackers in 1920 used a shotgun, and the fact that, given the assailants were experienced gunmen, this is more likely to have been a punishment shooting, as Blake was only injured in the leg rather than killed outright. The brutal assault by the Auxiliaries on the Connolly family in November 1920, indicates that Martin Connolly was suspected of the first armed attack, however he had left Kilgevrin for Derry the previous year, so it is unlikely that he was present. However, in June 1922 he had been transferred back to the Milltown IRA company, and as a member of the North Galway Flying Column, he was in the Milltown area. Given the previous experience of the Connolly family and the recent death of his father, it is a distinct possibility that he was involved in this attack on landlord Blake. As a direct consequence of the shooting, in December 1922, Blake submitted a compensation claim for damages to Tuam District Council, with the Minute recording "John D Blake Brooklawn claims £1000 for being maimed on August 19."

The local animosity in Kilgevrin with the landlord continued for a few years, until John Blake died in 1926. After Blake's death the Land Commission finally secured control of his leased holding in Kilgevrin. The division of the Lynch and Blake holdings, by the Land Commission in the 1920s, eventually resulted in the permanent transfer of additional farming land to the Connolly family. When my great grandfather, Martin Connolly, died in May 1922 his son John succeeded to the land, and his mother Mary and brother William remained living with him. He inherited approximately nineteen acres from his father and, several years later, a further nine acres was allocated by the Commission, located on the Milltown Road, some distance from the Connolly farm.

Death of Griffith and Collins

The Provisional Governments resistance to Republican control of

much of the West, began in earnest at Westport County Mayo, on 24 July 1922, with the landing of an expedition comprised of 400 men with 600 rifles for recruits when they landed, one eighteen-pound gun, an armored car and 150 bicycles. With a small garrison left in Westport, the expedition moved to Castlebar, which was taken the following day, by Commandant Tony Lawlor, General McKeon's second in command. In a bid to isolate the North Galway Flying Column, Lawlor also led a large force to occupy, the main towns around Milltown, namely Castlerea, Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis, and finally Claremorris, only ten miles from Milltown. General Mulcahy had expected that, Michael Kilroy, O/C North Mayo, and Tom Maguire O/C South Mayo would resist the landing, but instead the Republicans retreated from the major towns and headed for the mountains to engage in guerilla warfare, as full time Flying Columns. In response to this new guerilla warfare campaign, General Collins, in early August, established a new Western Command under General Sean McKeon, controlled from Athlone, closing small outposts and with twenty-two garrisons and four mobile columns, amounting to 2,200 men, with excess troops ordered back to the Curragh for training.

On 12 August 1922, Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Féin, lead negotiator of the Treaty and President of the Second Daíl, died of heart failure. Ten days later General Michael Collins was shot dead, in an ambush at Béal na Bláth, west Cork, on 22 August. The death of Michael Collins ended all hope of a further Northern incursion for Martin Connolly's comrades, the over 500 IRA members from the Ulster Six Counties, who remained in the Curragh camp. Three weeks before his death Collins convened a meeting between the GHQ of the pro-treaty IRA and officers from the Northern IRA including Seamus Woods, O/C of the 3rd Northern Division. Woods recorded,

> The late C-in-C made it clear to us that the Government of Ireland intended to deal with the Ulster situation in a very definite way . . . every officer present felt greatly encouraged to carry on when we had a definite policy to pursue and an assurance that the Government . . . would stand by us.

However, despite Collin's promises, five days before his death, in an ominous letter from General Mulcahy to Paddy Diamond, Commander of the 2nd Northern Division who were based in Donegal, he ordered that they surrender their arms and ammunition and transfer command to Comdt. Joe Sweeney and make immediate arrangements to transport their members to the Curragh camp. After the untimely death of Michael Collins his commitments to a new Northern offensive were reneged upon, by Mulcahy, O'Higgins and Cosgrave. W J Hinphey from south Derry, noted 'we were all terribly disillusioned people'. Moreover, Roger McCorley from Belfast admitted 'When Collins was killed the Northern element gave up all hope'. A month after the death of Collins, Seamus Woods, O/C 3rd Northern Division, complained to General Mulcahy that the attitude of the Southern government

> is not that of the late General Collins . . . the breaking up of this organization is the first step to making partition permanent . . . recognition of the northern government, of course, will mean the breaking up of our division.

New Daíl convenes and approves the Public Safety Act

Following the death of Michael Collins, W. T. Cosgrave replaced him as Chairman of the Provisional Government. General Mulcahy continued to act as Commander in Chief and Minister for Defense. The new Daíl, elected in June was finally convened on 5 September 1922. However, the Republicans who had been elected, refused to attend, and participate in the Daíl, so the only official opposition was provided by the Labour Party. The first major Daíl business was the ratification of the Free State Constitution. In response to demands from government politicians, a Public Safety Bill was introduced on 27 September, setting up Military Courts, with powers of execution. In the first three months of the Civil War, 308 soldiers in the National Army had been killed by Republicans and by September, there were 5,000 IRA prisoners, so the British made their army camp available, at Gormanstown, county Meath.

On the Republican side, in the first three months of the Civil War, 262 IRA Volunteers had been killed, including twenty who had been assassinated, mainly by the new Special Police squad in

Dublin, the CID. Even though the National Army deployed heavy armaments, such as field guns and mortars, significant progress was achieved by individual IRA Divisions, mainly located in south Tipperary, Limerick, Kerry, north Galway, Mayo and Sligo but there was little coordinated action between these Divisions and most other parts of the country were quickly occupied by Government forces. In early August 1922, Frank Aiken, Commandant 4th Northern Division, declared for the anti-treaty side and his forces captured Dundalk barracks and prison. As the Republicans abandoned towns in the different areas, on Liam Lynch's orders, they quickly adopted guerrilla tactics. However, this increased their isolation and presented difficulties in supply and strategic direction from GHQ, over the course of the Civil War.

The capture of Con Fogarty

Martin Connolly was among thirteen Volunteers involved in another IRA ambush at Barnaderg, on Friday 1 September 1922. A convoy of five National Army lorries, travelling from Mountbellew to Tuam, was forced to stop, due to a landmine planted on the road. Fire was opened on the convoy by Volunteers concealed behind a wall, killing Private Michael Walsh from Tuam, and injuring Private Cooney. After a further brief exchange of fire, the IRA unit retreated and were pursued by the army, who managed to capture the O/C, Con Fogarty, and two of his men. The IRA prisoners were compelled to remove the mines to allow the convoy to proceed. The *Freeman's Journal* reported that at least two of Martin's IRA comrades were either killed or seriously injured in this encounter and carried away by their comrades, but this was not subsequently confirmed. After the ambush, the body of Private Walsh was conveyed to Tuam. Patrick Walsh, who was 29 years old was a Volunteer in the War of Independence and had also fought in the Great War. He was buried in the new cemetery in Tuam the following day. That night, a large attack was mounted by the IRA on the Tuam Workhouse barracks, to free Fogarty. This proved unsuccessful and he was subsequently transferred to prison in Athlone on 16 September. The same day that Fogarty was transferred, the IRA in Dunmore arrested Tim Dunleavy, who had remained with the anti-treaty side for the first two months but decided to quit. He was released when he agreed to emigrate to America. The following week Martin's cousin, Thomas

Hannon, O/C of the Belmont IRA Company, was captured in Milltown by the National army troops.

Following Fogarty's removal to Athlone prison, the largest attack on Tuam occurred on Thursday night, 20 September, between eight o'clock and 9, when between three and four hundred IRA Volunteers, led by Tom Maguire, arrived in the town in cars, bicycles and on foot and made prisoners of all Free state soldiers that they encountered. An attack was mounted on the Workhouse barracks from the adjacent racecourse and the Dublin Road, with incessant firing for two hours and the occasional bomb explosion. At about 2.30 am the Republicans departed with lorry loads of supplies, commandeered from homes and shops. No casualties were reported, because of the engagement. Two weeks later a further incursion of the town occurred in a surprise raid by forty IRA men who searched pedestrians for arms and proceeded to several shops to commandeer supplies and departed taking two cars as transport. The following Sunday a type-written notice, signed by General Tom Maguire, was posted on the pillars at the Cathedral entrance, warning that persons that repaired bridges or removed barricades would be fired upon and threatening anyone who provided information to the National Troops about the movements of Republicans. There were also reports that National Army troops were wary of going to Milltown due to the location of a large column of anti-treaty IRA destroying bridges and placing mines on the road to Claremorris, the main base for the army.

National Army action in North Galway

By Autumn of 1922, the National Army had seized control of most of Galway and Mayo. However, the areas around Tuam and Headford continued to present serious obstacles to the advancing troops, so a major effort was concentrated on north Galway in a bid to clear these areas over the following months. Sweeps of the surrounding countryside by combined units of the National Army were initiated, involving large numbers of troops from Galway, Tuam, and Claremorris. A major operation was mounted on 18 October 1922. In one of the first raids a large force of Free State soldiers from Ballinrobe surrounded a group of houses near Shrule on the Mayo border and after a brief gunfight, one of the Republicans was killed and General Tom Maguire was captured and transported to Athlone Bar-

racks. On the same day another contingent of sixty Free State soldiers from Tuam, raided IRA camps at Castlehackett and Sylane, where seven Republicans were captured. On their return they were ambushed by an IRA unit near Caherlistrane. The IRA unit led by Thomas Ryan, comprised eighteen men from five Companies, mainly drawn from Barnaderg and Milltown, including Peter Burke, Patrick Walsh, and Martin Connolly. A Free State soldier was shot and died from his wounds and a soldier was also wounded. Ammunition was also captured, but the IRA had to withdraw when they were fired upon by a machine-gun mounted on the Crossley Tender.

As a result of these intensified raids, it was claimed by the Government, that Connemara had been subdued by Autumn of 1922 but, most embarrassingly, on 29 October a large Republican force under Petie McDonnell, O/C 4th Western Division captured Clifden, the largest town in the area. Christie Macken, who replaced Tom Maguire as O/C when he was captured, was involved in the Clifden attack, and described the scene later. This provides a sense of the scale of some of the engagements, that Martin and his comrades were involved in:

> There were 100 men in the column with twenty to thirty cars, fifty bicycles and two or three Red Cross cars under Dr Tubridy and the column itself was a mile and a half long. They had an armoured car called The Queen of the West and to protect the armoured car they had twenty cyclists as links and cars of engineers with mines, then the armoured car behind. On Sunday at daybreak they went into Clifden (where) there were three barracks to be taken the fight went on from 7.30 am to six or seven in the evening.

While many of the local IRA Divisions were proving effective, nationally the IRA military command had not met since the commencement of the Civil War and there had been no meeting of the Army Executive. Liam Lynch, IRA Chief of Staff, eventually agreed to a meeting in Tipperary on 16 & 17 October. They reviewed military developments since the Four Courts attack, a peace proposal from Cork army officers was considered and rejected. The meeting unanimously agreed to the formation of an alternative Republican

government, with Eamonn de Valera as 'President of the Republic and Chief Executive of the State'. A covert meeting of Republican TDs, on 25 October, formed a Republican Cabinet, despite the fact that some of the Cabinet members were in prison. The intention of this strategic move was to support the military leaders and provide an alternative political focus to the Dail and Government, mainly for propaganda purposes. In late October also, while there were still almost 450 of the IRA Northern Reserve force training in the Curragh, Mulcahy dismissed a complaint from the O/C of the 3rd Northern about the delay in mounting a new northern offensive, stating, ' . . . that the policy of our Government here with respect to the North is the policy of the Treaty.'

Emergency powers and Executions

In line with the Public Safety Act the Government, at the beginning of October, offered an amnesty to anti-treaty IRA members, with little take up, and on 15 October the Military Courts were convened with the power to execute prisoners. The Government decision was given powerful support by the Catholic bishops, in their joint pastoral of 10 October, timed to coincide with the implementation of the Public Safety Bill. Referring to the Republican IRA, they declared:

> They carry on what they call war, but which, in the absence of any legitimate authority to justify it, is morally only a system of murder and assassination of the national forces-for it must not be forgotten that killing in an unjust war is as much murder before God as if there were no war.

It is generally accepted that the support statement by the Catholic Church Hierarchy provided the endorsement necessary to commence executions of Republican prisoners on 17 November when four Republicans, who were caught with arms in Dublin, were shot in Kilmainham Jail. In response, on 30 November, Liam Lynch for the IRA, issued an order for reprisals, which resulted in the shooting, on 7 December, of two Government TDs, Sean Hales, who was killed, and Padraic O'Maille (Galway), who was injured. Hales was the brother of Tom Hales of West Cork IRA, who had been involved in the ambush and death of Collins. The next morning, following a Cabinet decision, four Republican leaders, captured in the Four

Courts and therefore not subject to the Public Safety Act, were executed in Mountjoy Jail. Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Richard Barrett, one from each Irish Province and all members of the IRB. Each man was woken early that morning and told they were to be shot at dawn. Mellows last letter asserted,

> I shall die for Ireland-for the Republic; for that glorious cause that has been sanctified by the blood of countless martyrs throughout the ages. The Republic of Ireland is assured and before long all Irishmen . . . will be united against Imperialist England-the common enemy of Ireland and the world.

Despite the attempt of the Government to justify their action, these were killings of untried and un-convicted men. These extra-judicial executions occurred two days after the House of Commons approved the *Free State Act* on 6 December, when the Irish Free State formally became a Dominion of the British Empire. The establishment of the Free state resulted in the departure of the final British Troops. They had retained 5,000 troops in Dublin, as a contingency plan, in case a Republic was declared. The day following the establishment of the new state and two weeks after the shooting of two pro-treaty TDs in Dublin, General Mulcahy, for the Free State army, issued a Proclamation,

> That a conspiracy exists to assassinate the members of the nation's parliament. It has already claimed two victims.
>
> Any person in possession of bombs, dynamite, gelignite or other explosive substance, revolver, rifle, gun etc., or ammunition will be tried before any two members of the Army Council. In case the accused are found guilty such person will suffer death or other penalty prescribed.
>
> Signed: December 7th, 1922, on behalf of the Army Council, Risteard Ua Maolcatha, General Commander in Chief.

On the same day, as expected, the Northern Government opted out of the new state, asserting a separate existence. While the

General Richard Mulcahy
Commander in Chief
National Army

Free State was preoccupied with the Civil War, this immeasurably strengthened the Unionist government in Belfast. Despite former promises, a date for implementation of the Boundary Commission was not forthcoming, to the deep disappointment of Border Nationalists. In Enniskillen, James Craig, told his audience that 'the great question of the border had been thrown into the background, and would possibly never rise again.' By the year end the new Northern State had consolidated its control and had generally terrorised the nationalist population, by heavy handed security measures and by

turning a blind eye to excesses by its security forces, in the Special Constabulary and in the newly formed, Royal Ulster Constabulary. In the south, by the end of December, twenty-one Republicans has been executed by order of the new Free State government, in various prisons across the state. This figure reached seventy-seven official executions by the following April. Mulcahy later sought to justify the execution policy, stating, 'There can be no question but that I personally was the ultimate and supreme authority for these and at all times accepted the supreme authority'.

The final phase of the Civil War

In response to the continued effectiveness of the IRA Flying Columns, at the end of November and into early December 1922, a massive attempt was made by National troops to clear west and south Mayo and north Galway and Connemara. The efforts had little immediate success, other than the capture of Mayo O/C, Michael Kilroy. Christy Macken said they had received advanced warning of General Lawlor's attack, and some retreated to the Mayo islands, so the IRA did not lose many men. Lawlor declared that five of his troops were killed and nine wounded, during the action. He also claimed that eleven republicans were killed, nineteen wounded and twenty-three captured. Despite the significantly expanded presence of the National Army in their area and the increased personal danger and physical hardship, the two Galway Flying Columns continued their struggle, mainly from the more remote areas. However, the relentless pressure on the IRA Flying Columns began to prove effective. In early December 1922, C. O'Gaora, Brigade O/C, covering east Connemara, immediately adjacent to Martin Connolly's area, wrote to Christy Macken, O/C 4th Western Division, describing the deteriorating conditions for his Flying Column,

> Since the commencement of hostilities last June, our ASUs numbering about 80 men, are in a pitiable and most desperate condition in need of proper clothing and feeding, especially since the winter months. As you will see by the geographical position of our area it is the poorest in Ireland, and the shops in our area which are small did not stock the stuff required by our men, and therefore the necessaries needed could not be commandeered.

O'Gaora pointed out that their Columns were extremely badly clothed and often had to go without fresh meat.

> The people [who have stood with us] are the poorest type in Ireland,' he continued, 'and I consider it a crime to trespass much longer on their hospitality.' He concluded that if at least £800 was not provided immediately for their use, 'the fighting spirit of our men will get broken, and the best material in the Brigade will get disheartened in the fight for the Republic.

The leader of the North Galway Flying column, Con Fogarty escaped from prison with eighteen others, on 26 December 1922, and re-joined the ASU, early in the new year. There were newspaper reports that gunfire was heard from the IRA camps on New Year's Eve, as they used their rifles to welcome the New Year.

Increased Government powers of repression and execution

Early in the New Year a major restructuring, with new commands, was introduced in the Free State army, with Michael Hogan appointed to the Western Command, including north Galway, based in Claremorris. A Battalion organization was set up, a training period at the Curragh instituted for some officers and a disciplinary code laid down, for the first time. Generals Richard Mulcahy and Sean McKeon visited Tuam, on 9 January 1923, as part of the army restructuring. Two days after the visit Castlehackett House, near Tuam, was burned by 30 men to prevent Free State troops basing there, they told the caretaker they had no issue with the owner, Colonel Bernard. However, in another incident, Walter Joyce, a landlord from near Mountbellew, was shot on his way to mass in January 1923 and died the next day. He was deeply unpopular among his tenants because he refused to transfer his land to the Congested Districts Board. In early 1923, the pursuit of Republicans became more relentless and within three months, following Hogan's arrival, ninety-eight Republicans were arrested in the north Galway region.

In response to the upsurge in Republican activity, in areas such

as north Galway, the Free State Government decided on a more aggressive approach. Kevin O'Higgins and Galway TD, Patrick Hogan, two prominent ministers on the Governing Executive Council proposed extreme measures. O'Higgins argued that there should be executions in every county, as the news of executions in Dublin was having little effect in the provinces. Hogan stated that the unwillingness of local commands to implement execution orders, together with legal obstacles, should be overcome by further Dail legislation. He concluded that a policy of extensive executions could only be applied for a limited time, 'but within that time they ought to be going with machine-like regularity.' New powers were added to the *Public Safety Act*, which resulted in a 'hostage' policy being announced, whereby convicted prisoners sentenced to death would have their sentence suspended once there was no anti-treaty activity in their area. In addition, anyone found in possession of plans, uniforms, sending threatening letters, or found aiding and abetting Irregulars (IRA) would be subject to the death penalty.

The Government also decentralized and accelerated the execution policy, and on 20 January 1923, five men, all connected to the north Galway IRA, were executed at Custume Barracks, Athlone, including four from Headford in north Galway. They had been caught in Roscommon attending a training camp in Clonalis House, in late 1922. Commandant Tom Maguire was also informed that he was to be executed, but this was cancelled, partly because he was an elected representative. Attacks on Free State soldiers noticeably reduced after these men were executed, as part of an official government policy of brutal retaliation. Thirty-four executions were carried out in January around the state. A Free State army report on the north Galway IRA, dated 21 January 1923, commented, 'With depleted numbers, lack of resources and unified control, an almost complete ineffectiveness from a military standpoint, their policy of militant action is slowly changing to one of sheer destructiveness and obstruction of Civil Government'

However, several significant military encounters occurred in the north Galway area, over the next two months and, nationally, despite the growing evidence to the contrary, on 9 February 1923, Liam Lynch claimed that the IRA was,

> . . . in a stronger military position than at any period in its

> history . . . The war will go on until the independence of our country is recognized by our enemies, foreign and domestic. There can be no compromise on this fundamental condition. Victory is within our grasp if we stand unitedly and firmly.

But Liam Lynch's intransigence, and his refusal to appreciate how depressing the situation had become, was a major cause of the continuation of the Civil War in early 1923, with tragic consequences over the next few months. Lynch had little control over events and little knowledge of wider developments. He also opposed peace initiatives from within the IRA, from senior experienced officers, such as Tom Barry, particularly in the Munster region. He had the power to call Army Executive meetings, which were infrequent, and as a result, the failure to convene the IRA Army Council had serious implications for both the military and political struggle of the Republican movement. However, the opposing side was equally intransigent. In February 1923, W.T. Cosgrave met members of the neutral IRA who were searching for a Truce, which he rejected outright, stating 'I am not going to hesitate if the country is to live and if we have to exterminate ten thousand republicans, the three millions of our people is bigger than this ten thousand.'

Capture of Milltown IRA

The final action that Martin Connolly was involved in with the North Galway Flying Column, before he was transferred by the IRA to Carlow, was an attack on Free State troops in Milltown, on the 16 January 1923. The local IRA surprised a column of Free State troops, some of whom were drinking in a local pub in the town, and deprived them of their small and large arms, including a Lewis machine-gun mounted on their Crossley Tender. Thirteen men took part, from two IRA companies led by Brigade O/C, Vincent Corcoran. From Milltown, Martin Connolly and eight others including his friends Peter Brennan, Patrick Walsh, John P and Dan McCormack, Larry O'Sullivan, Willie Slattery, Willie J O'Donnell, and Peter Burke and four from the IRA Company in Claremorris, county Mayo. Two weeks later five of these Milltown men were captured in the town by Free State soldiers and Martin was not among them, he subsequently confirmed that he ended his active service in north

Galway at the end of January, as he was seriously ill and had been brought to a safe house in Hollymount in Mayo, for a period of rest and recovery, before transfer to Tullow in Carlow. The capture of the five men as well as two other Milltown Volunteers on the same day in early February was carried out by troops from Tuam and Claremorris. It is significant that the Commandant of the troops from Tuam was Patrick Dunleavy, who had previously been the O/C of all the IRA men detained, but had joined the Free State National army in September. The *Connacht Tribune* carried a full report on 10 February 1923, under the heading

> DASH FOR LIBERTY,
> A party of troops under Commandant Dunleavy left Tuam at eight a.m. on Friday and scoured the Milltown district, arresting two prisoners named T. Slattery and Raftery. It is reported that Rafferty tried to escape by swimming the local river but on the opposite bank he was fired upon by other troops with a rifle grenade which hit him. Troops from Claremorris were also operating in this district during the day, and on returning in the evening a sensational capture of five irregulars was made. It is reported that they were attempting to burn the roof of the Milltown barracks, which had been previously damaged. The names of the prisoners were: - John and Daniel McCormack (brothers), Liskeevy; Patrick Walsh, Liskeevy, Peter Burke, Knock; Frank Quinn Conagher and William Slattery.

The prisoners were conveyed to Claremorris from where, later in the week, the McCormack brothers and Peter Burke successfully escaped and re-joined the Flying Column.

The intense Free State army activity, with garrisons led by Patrick Dunleavy from Tuam and Colonel Madden from Claremorris, aimed at 'rounding up Irregulars', continued over the next few weeks. In a major success, in the early hours of 21 February 1923, a significant Republican base at Cluid, in north Galway, was captured by about thirty National army troops. Seventeen Republican soldiers were captured, including Martin's comrade, Peter Brennan from Milltown. Arms and equipment, including fifteen Lee Enfield

rifles, three Mauser rifles, revolvers, a large landmine, and several bombs, together with military clothing including leggings, Sam Brown belts and new Trench coats were also captured, all in very good condition. The IRA prisoners were marched the fifteen miles to Galway jail. Christy Macken, from Connemara a former member of the West Mayo Column, who had taken over as O/C of the 2nd Western Division after the capture of Commandant Tom Maguire, was at the IRA camp but he and four others managed to escape. Despite the increasing effectiveness of the Free State army, large parts of north Galway and much of Mayo, remained uncleared of Republican columns. A Free State military report in March 1923 concluded,

> Despite very considerable numbers, and ample equipment in Mayo, the Irregulars have not been inclined to indulge in any militant action. Extensive destruction of roads, raiding, looting, and burning of houses of supporters of the Government is the form their warfare continues to take.

However, the report also noted that the Claremorris command, which covered north Galway, was perhaps the only one where Republicans were able to continue to carry out operations on an extensive scale

> . . . the only county in the west where old Irregular regime still holds . . . north and west mayo yet present a problem calling for employment of a large body of troops and considerable equipment to clear up the area.

A National army intelligence report, at the end of March, described the activities of Republicans in north Galway as 'not very active, morale appears broken, merely evading arrest'. In early April, Christy Macken warned the O/C, 4th Western Division,

> I understand that Maj-Gen Hogan is transferring his forces to your Div. (4th west) . . . He has been rounding up No 2 Brigade of this division for the past fortnight.

Headford Barracks – the final military assault by north Galway IRA

The arrests at Cluid of so many Volunteers, was a major setback for the north Galway IRA, however, a short while later Christy Macken was involved in organising an attack on Headford Barracks. This was undertaken on the direct orders from Frank Aiken, IRA Army Council, to have an all-out, final effort, in the Civil War. The attack took place on Sunday, 8 April 1923. The ASU arrived from the mountains and across Lough Corrib by boat. Twenty-four IRA men descended on Headford, with eight needed to cover the roads on each side of the town, while about six occupied a pub opposite the barracks. The Volunteers involved were from six IRA Companies, including Milltown. After a bomb attack blew in the roof of the barracks the Free State troops, led by Captain Nugent, replied with a Lewis machine-gun. As a result, John Higgins of Tuam, a brother of a Sinn Féin councillor, was killed and Dan McCormack of Liskeevy, Milltown, a close friend of Martin Connolly, was hit by forty-five bullets, which nearly severed his arm and leg, they had to be amputated subsequently and he died of his wounds a few years later. On the Free State side, at least two men were killed, Sergeant Major McCarthy and Private Lyons, a number were also wounded. There was an intense military encounter, with hand-to-hand fighting for a period. Among those captured were Michael Connolly from Hollymount and Dan McCormack.

In a brutal reprisal, two days after the attack on Headford barracks, on 11 April 1923, six of Martin Connolly's comrades from the North Galway Brigade, including five captured at Cluid, were executed in Tuam Barracks. The men were Seamus O'Maile, Oughterard; Frank Cunnane; Michael Monaghan; John Newell and Martin Moylan of Headford and Sean Maguire of Cross, Mayo (Tom's younger brother). The men were transported from Galway jail to the Workhouse in Tuam, on the day prior to their execution. The reasons for the move have been debated, but it is suggested that the Free State Government wished to spread responsibility for executions to local senior army officers. However, it is more likely that, because the Bishop of Galway had died and his funeral was on 12 April in Galway, they wished to avoid executions in Galway jail at the same time.

The Tuam town council on 18 April condemned the attack on

Headford and the executions of prisoners by the Free State government. The Headford attack was the last significant attack of the Civil War in north Galway. On the same day as the Tuam executions, the newspapers reported on the death of Liam Lynch, IRA Chief of Staff, in Tipperary.

Recovering in Mayo and transfer to Tullow, County Carlow

For the months of February and March, between leaving the Galway Flying Column and joining the Tullow IRA Company, Martin Connolly remained in a 'safe house' in Hollymount county Mayo, receiving care and attention, from a qualified nurse Julie Fair. Julie had been a nurse in Dublin during Easter Week 1916 and was a member of Cumann na mBan. Her father owned a shop and pub in Ballinrobe and she lived in Hollymount. She worked to bring Martin back to the state of health necessary to smuggle him from Galway to Carlow, via the railway system. As a wanted Volunteer, 'on-the-run', because of constant army raids in the area, it was safer to move him to Tullow, where the Free State army would not know who he was, and where a full-time job was provided by a Republican supporter, from Killala in Mayo. However, it was highly unusual that a member, who was extremely ill, would be transferred to an IRA Company in another area for further Active Service. The fact that a Medical Certificate was provided to confirm the serious illness, presumably by a doctor available to the IRA Flying Column, suggests that the organisation retained a level of discipline and procedure, even though it was involved in a bitter armed conflict. Martin also confirmed that he had obtained formal approval for the transfer from his Commanding Officer, Con Fogarty, who returned to command in January, after his escape from prison.

In the two months that Martin was recuperating from his illness in south Mayo he would have been made aware of the executions of two of his former officers from south Derry, Charlie Daly, and Sean Larkin in Donegal, on 14 March 1923. Four IRA Volunteers, who were prisoners in Drumboe Castle, were executed by firing squad, in reprisal for the accidental killing of a Free State army officer. Three of the men including Daly were from Kerry and Larkin was from south Derry. Three former senior officers from South Derry IRA, Paddy Diamond, and John Haughey and Dan McKenna, who

had joined the Free State army, gave evidence in support of Larkin at his trial. Diamond said he was a fine IRA officer who went to Donegal in May 1922 'largely because he believed that there was greater hope for successful actions against the British in the six counties being waged by anti-treaty forces than pro-treaty forces.' Joe Sweeney, Commander of the Free State Forces in Donegal, who carried out the execution, subsequently admitted,

> The terrible thing was that Daly had to be executed . . . Daly and I had been very friendly when we were students, and it is an awful thing to kill a man you know in cold blood, if you're on level terms with him . . . I didn't agree with it, but they were orders and you had to do it.

By the end of March 1923, the 'Northern' operation at the Curragh was disbanded, when the Free State Government issued an order that they must either join the National army or Civic Guards, seek employment, or emigrate. While some went to America others returned home to the six counties and 'took the consequences', where many were arrested and interned and some were offered release, on condition they permanently stayed out of the geographical area of Northern Ireland. Dan McKenna and John Haughey remained with the army and received promotion. Many of Martin's former comrades, including Paddy Diamond, Henry McErlaine, Patsey and W J Hinphey joined the Civic Guards, where their former Derry O/C, General Eoin O'Duffy, was Commissioner. The 500 members of the Northern Volunteer Force (NVF), formerly of the 2nd and 3rd Northern Divisions, retained their neutrality until 31 March 1923, when the NVF was dissolved and almost half joined the Free State army.

Ending the Civil War

According to Martin Connolly's Pension statement he was attached to the Tullow IRA Company in county Carlow, from 1 April 1923 to 30 September 1923. He wrote

> *. . . owing to bad health had to leave and went to Tullow Co Carlow in employment as shop assistant tendered Medical Certificate and left with permission of Captain Fogarty . . .*

Took part in all activities in Tullow area forming clubs helping in every way . . .

He also stated that while with the Tullow IRA Company, due to continued ill-health he could not participate in armed action, so 'Active Service' was rendered 'organising & assisting Flying Column with food etc.' He provided three references who could testify to his statements, namely, Pat Dawson, Crosstown Tullow; Pat Byrne, Knockmore who was an officer in Carlow 'A' Company and P Fenelon, The Square Tullow, who was the chief centre for the IRB in the county and, according to newspaper reports, a prominent 'Irregular'. In Tullow, while Martin Connolly, was unable to participate with the armed campaign, which anyway, by this stage, was inactive and in the final phase of the Civil War, he acted in support of the Flying Column, providing necessary supplies and assistance to the men on the run. However, in line with new orders issued by the IRA Army Council, he also confirmed that he was mainly involved in organising and forming Sinn Féin clubs, which proved to be a more relevant contribution during that phase of the struggle. He was also provided with employment in Dempsey's hardware shop in the Square Tullow.

While Martin Connolly was recovering from his serious illness in south Mayo and transferring to Carlow, the IRA Leadership was actively seeking to end the Civil War, on the best terms possible. Due to a few peace initiatives and concerns being raised by senior IRA officers, Liam Lynch was under pressure to convene an IRA Executive meeting and one was held on 24 March 1923 in the Nire Valley, Waterford, the first since the previous October. Eamon De Valera was present as, what was termed, President of the Republican Government, but there was a debate as to whether he could attend which was agreed, but with no voting rights. It was decided that De Valera should conduct peace talks in line with Republican demands, subject to the Army Executive having a veto over any conclusion to negotiations. A proposal for a cessation from Tom Barry was defeated by six votes to five. It was also decided to convene a further Executive, three weeks later, to receive a report from De Valera. However, before this meeting could convene on 10 April, Liam Lynch was shot and killed by Free State army troops, in the Knockmealdown mountains in Tipperary, where he was accompa-

nied by Frank Aiken, Bill Quirke and Sean Hyde, who all escaped capture.

IRA cessation

The death of Liam Lynch removed the last barrier to a Republican acceptance of the need for the end of hostilities. The IRA Army Executive met on 20 April 1923. Frank Aiken was unanimously elected Chief of Staff, as he was one of the few remaining original members of the Executive. Aiken was much closer to De Valera than Lynch, both personally and ideologically. Liam Pilkington and Tom Barry joined the Army Council. Aiken proposed at the meeting that the Republican Government and Army Council should 'make peace with the Free State "Government", on the basis that 'The sovereignty of the Irish Nation and the integrity of its territory was inalienable' This motion was passed by nine votes to two. A joint meeting of the Republican Government representatives and the IRA Army Council followed, which directed the Chief of Staff to issue the 'Suspension of Offensive' Order, published on 30 April 1923. De Valera was made responsible for peace negotiations and the IRA HQ issued a message,

> Suggestions as to methods of ending the present struggle will be effectively dealt with by the Government. Such questions do not concern the army, whose duty is to prosecute the war with renewed vigour.

However, soon afterwards, Aiken urged support for De Valera's policy of reorganizing the Sinn Féin clubs as the best means of furthering the Republican cause and this was the main area of activity that Martin Connolly became involved with in Carlow.

The proposed peace terms were immediately rejected by the Free State government, who refused to accept 'intransigent demands'. A joint meeting of the Republican government and the IRA was held on 13 May, which instructed Aiken to issue an order to ceasefire and dump arms. In the order published on 24 May 1923, Aiken emphasized the need to join the Sinn Féin organization. On the same day, de Valera released a proclamation to the IRA, declaring,

> Further sacrifice on your part would now be in vain and

> the continuance of the struggle in arms unwise in the national interest. Military victory must be allowed to rest for the moment with those who have destroyed the Republic.

In response to the IRA decision there were no further armed confrontations of any scale with the National Army, from the end of April onwards. However, the Free State army continued to intensively search for Republican leaders and arms dumps. Liam Pilkington was captured after the ceasefire. A Free State army report of 26 May, pointed to the fact that,

> . . . in almost every (IRA) Command their organisation is absolutely broken or else hampered in such a way as to render it almost impossible for them to carry out any major operations. The large number of arrests and captures of arms during the week is evidence of the effective manner in which the troops are clearing parts of the country that yet call for attention.

Despite the end of the conflict the Free State Government carried out two further executions in Tuam. After the arrest of two men outside Athenry who were convicted in a Military Court of bank robbery and carrying arms on 22 May 1923, they were executed on 30 May 1923. This brought to seventy-seven the number of Republicans executed by the Free State Government, during the Civil War. By May 1923 over 12,000 Republicans were in prisons or internment camps and the National Army numbered 50,000 soldiers. The introduction of the new Public Order Act, in June, continued the Government hard line with powers to intern, to seize land and stock and flogging for arson and robbery. In June 1923, Kevin O'Higgins told the Dail 'There is going to be a pretty ugly aftermath to this whole business'. He further commented,

> . . . the aftermath of these last ten months is going to be more serious perhaps then the last ten months themselves. In many areas you have conditions bordering on anarchy . . . When you come face to face with stark anarchy, worse still if it masquerades as political idealism, you have got to be reactionary.

Chapter Six:

Post Civil War: Aftermath of conflict

A general election was called for August 1923 and De Valera came out of hiding to address an election meeting, on 15 August, in Ennis town square, in Clare. The Free State troops failed to recognize him when he started to speak but he was quickly arrested and moved to Arbour Hill prison, in Dublin. Martin Connolly remained active in the IRA after the ceasefire. In response to the order from Frank Aiken he was mainly involved in the formation of Sinn Féin clubs in Carlow. These clubs had to be developed nationally again. At the beginning of 1922, before the Civil War, there were almost 1,500 Sinn Féin clubs in Ireland, this had reduced to only sixteen by June 1923. A Sinn Féin Election Fund was established in early August 1923 with an appeal to the public to subscribe for the Party that 'stands for Truth & Justice' The newly formed Clubs provided the basis to organise and canvass for Sinn Féin in the elections in August 1923.

In late August over 400 people were present at a meeting convened by the new Government political party, Cumann na nGaelhael. The meeting was held after Sunday mass in Tullow, where General Sean MacEoin TD was on the platform. W. T. Cosgrave also visited Tullow representing the newly formed party. Speaking in Tullow he was reported as reacting to Sinn Féin statements, viz.,

> Referring to the threats uttered by their opponents he said they did not think much of them. They would get all the dumped arms in the future and would not allow them to drill, as their so-called Chief of Staff said they would. Attendance at the poll he continued is a national duty. The Irregulars he said acted without the will of the people. We want no possible misinterpretation about the will of the people in this election.

Despite the absence of many Sinn Féin candidates and organ-

isers, who were in jail, Sinn Féin did well in the election. Cumann na nGaedhael, had 63 candidates elected compared to 44 for the Republicans, standing as Sinn Féin; first preference votes were 415,000 for pro-Treaty and 286,000 anti-Treaty. The Labour Party was reduced from 17 in June 1922, to 14 and the Farmers Party, increased from 7 to 15, with 17 independents also elected. The prominent Republican leader, Ernie O'Malley, was elected in North Dublin with transfers from Richard Mulcahy's second preference votes. John Brennan from Kilgevrin, the former Sinn Féin councillor and neighbour of Martin Connolly, stood for the Farmers Party in north Galway in the election, but was not successful.

Hunger strike campaign

By the late summer of 1923 most active republicans were on the run or captured, with 12,000 imprisoned. Problems in the jails culminated with a hunger strike, which began on 13 October 1923 and lasted forty days, spreading over ten prisons and camps, involving 8,000 prisoners. The strike originated in Mountjoy as a protest, under Michael Kilroy, against conditions there, as well as the prolongation of internment. Following the instruction to Camp Councils, the strike spread to all the prisons and internment camps. The strike was poorly planned and badly organized, without the initial approval of the Army executive and political leadership. However, once it started Aiken and the Republican leadership fully supported the action. The local Sinn Féin clubs, where Martin Connolly was now involved, also organised the county-based campaign, in support of the Republican prisoners on hunger strike. After much confusion, by early November numbers dropped to 3,067 and by mid-November only 315, the strike was called off on 23 November. The collapse of the strike was very demoralizing for many of the men. However, Aiken wrote,

> The strike was really a great success for the nation. I am very sorry for Ernie (O'Malley) and others who were prepared to go on, but I'm very glad in another way that they are available for the work before us . . . Don't believe anyone who tells you that the IRA is down and out.

By the start of December 1923, more than six months after the

end of civil war, there were still 5,774 prisoners in military custody. The Government resisted the idea of a general amnesty, but significant numbers were released for Christmas.

Release of prisoners and funerals of executed Republicans, north Galway 1924

In Carlow, during the first half of 1924, Martin Connolly remained involved in organising Sinn Féin clubs and further developing the political party, in the county. He was a member of the Roger Casement Sinn Féin Club in Tullow, which had over fifty members. At their monthly meeting on 26 April, presided over by his former officer Pat Dawson, the main issue was the concern 'that ex-prisoners and persons with Republican ideas were being refused work on the roads by the County and Rural District Councils'. The Sinn Féin Councillors present assured the meeting that they would do all in their power to prevent victimisation of Republicans. Preparation for elections was the other main item discussed. A major issue for mobilising the Sinn Féin clubs was the continued internment of Republican prisoners. On Sunday 1 June there was a large 'Release the Prisoners' demonstration at 3pm in O'Connell Street Dublin. A special train was run from Tullow to transport supporters and the Tullow Brass and Reed Band. Following the National Demonstration, in mid-June 1924 there was a county demonstration which was held at Monacurragh, Carlow under the auspices of the local Sinn Féin clubs. The Tullow band also played at the event. Martin Connolly's comrade and former officer from the North Galway Brigade, Peter Brennan, was released from the Curragh internment camp in June 1924. By the end of June 1924 there were only 237 political prisoners, including TDs Austin Stack and Eamon De Valera, who were released in July 1924. De Valera visited Carlow after his release from prison. At some stage during 1924 Martin Connolly returned to Knockloughrim in south Derry, where his former officer Anthony McGurk and his brother Frank were also released from internment in the six counties.

When the Free State army vacated the Tuam Workhouse, towards the end of 1923, they exhumed the bodies of the six Republicans who had been executed there and brought them to Custume Barracks, Athlone, the Headquarters of the Western Command, under General Sean MacEoin. This was greatly resented by their families, but all

Poster commerating executed North Galway Brigade IRA members, four were executed in Athlone, and six in Tuam on 11 April 1923

requests to return the remains to the relatives were ignored. However, the Free State Government, when faced by local by-elections in Autumn 1924, decided to hand back the remains of the 77 men who had been shot, on the orders of the Free State Army Council, during the Civil War. On 28 October 1924, the Free State released twenty bodies- those executed in Tuam, Athlone, Drumboe, Co Donegal and Birr-through the back gate of Custume Barracks, at ten-minute intervals. The *Connacht Tribune* of 1 November 1924, described the funerals of Martin Connolly's comrades in North Galway as follows:

> . . . it was nearly 12 o'clock (midnight) on Tuesday night when the procession arrived in Tuam. It was the saddest funeral procession ever seen or ever likely to be seen in the country. Over 20 motor cars were in the procession-the first nine containing the remains of the deceased and the relatives followed in cars. The coffins were draped with the Republican Tricolour. There was a shell coffin in each case, covering the coffin in which the remains were placed at the time of execution. In Tuam a large crowd remained on the streets awaiting the arrival of the funeral and though there was a heavy downpour of the rain, and the remains did not arrive until 11.30pm the people stood waiting. As the funeral cars drove slowly through the town heads were uncovered and soldiers and civic guards saluted . . . There was no delay in Tuam, and all the cars proceeded on to Headford where they arrived at 1.30am. On passing Belclare church the bell tolled, thus lending a solemn sadness to the countryside around, at the late hour of night. The remains were left in Headford church where the rosary was recited. The North Galway IRA Brigade stood guard throughout the night . . . Arrangements were made to hold a general day of mourning in Tuam and surrounding towns by having all business suspended during the day.

Even though his brother, Sean aged 17, was one of the six members of the Flying Column executed at Tuam, by the Free State Government, General Tom Maguire, the O/C of Martin Connolly's 4th Western Division, later regretted the consequences of the Civ-

il War and expressed the difficulties faced by Republicans in the war, commenting, 'In the beginning our fellows would not kill the Staters'. He recalled:

> You could not bring yourself to want this sort of warfare. There was a different feeling altogether. The British were the enemy, the old enemy; there was a certain pride in having the ability to attack them. That feeling was entirely absent in the Civil War. It was very disheartening. We knew the Free state army comprising 50,000 newly recruited mercenaries would not hesitate to shoot us, but that made it no easier for us to pluck up enough anger to really fight them. You were in doubt too about approaching houses where before you had been welcome. How are they taking the situation, you would wonder? The people themselves are disheartened. When I heard of the deaths of people on the Free State side like Griffith, Collins, Sean Hales, I would not be glad. You felt these people who fought the British and now they are gone. Britain is really the victor.

Scale of casualties

The decade of the Revolutionary period in Ireland, from 1913 to 1923, was a violent time across Europe. The total casualties in Ireland during the Easter Rising, War of Independence and Civil War pale into insignificance in the context of the numbers of Irish men who died in the First World War from 1914 to 1918. Of the over 210,000 Irishmen who enlisted, almost 50,000 died and 37,000 were left suffering a disability, after the war. However, the scale of casualties in the Irish War of Independence and Civil War was also significant. While 504 people were killed in one week, during the Easter Rising in Dublin, there were 2,346 deaths due to political violence in the following five years to July 1921. Of this figure civilians accounted for 919, Irish Republican Army for 491, police of all kinds for 523, and British military for 413 (almost half accidental). In the six counties, 87 per cent of all fatalities in the five years from 1917 to 1921 were civilian, the majority due to intercommunal violence. During the Civil War an estimated 1,140 died including 200 civilians, over 400 IRA members and at least 540 national army

soldiers. In the first two months of the Civil War, July- August 1922, it is estimated that up to 400 men were killed in action. Whatever about the actual level of casualties inflicted on Republicans during the Civil War, by the National Army, the extrajudicial execution of seventy-seven IRA prisoners, often as reprisals, including eleven of Martin Connolly's former comrades and officers, from Galway and Derry, generated the most bitter memories of the conflict and recriminations that have continued to the present day.

Military Pensions provision, Pro-treaty

Prior to the election in June 1923, the Government had decided to drastically reduce the numbers in the Free State army. The aim was to reduce the army from 52,000 in April 1923 to 30,000 by the end of the year. This proved impossible to achieve and there was significant resistance among army officers to their demobilization. To rapidly reduce the numbers of soldiers in the Free State army, the Government introduced demobilisation grants and Military Pensions in 1924. While these were based on service since 1916 to the end of the War of Independence, it was targeted exclusively at those who had served in the National Army, between July 1922 and October 1923, and excluded those who fought on the anti-treaty side and female volunteers in Cumann na mBan. As a result of the compensation a total of 37,000 were demobilized, but less than 9000 secured employment. Despite being on the winning side, Martin Connolly's former senior officers from Galway, who joined the National Army, were badly treated, when many were forced to resign their commissions in 1924. Both Patrick and Thomas Dunleavy were accused of being involved in the Army Mutiny which occurred in 1924, as members of the IRA Organisation (IRAO). This group had been established by Free State army officers, who were previously senior members of the IRA during the War of Independence and who were dissatisfied with the direction of the Free State Government, after the end of the Civil War.

The two brothers were demobilised separately, in December 1923 and March 1924, amid allegations that they were responsible for armed robberies of banks and post offices near Tuam up to July 1922. On 30 March 1926, Patrick Dunleavy was granted a demobilisation payment of £150 and a Military Service Pension of £64.19s.3p, per annum, for his contribution during the War of

Independence. His brother Thomas received a grant of £50 and a Pension of £99. 14s.10p. However, Thomas had died the previous year. A brief note on his file quotes the General Officer Commanding stating "he was a bad officer. He joined the Army after deserting from the Irregulars where he served with his brother a "Brigadier" and robbed several banks". A further note on the file from the Secretary, Department of Defence, states "that since demobilisation this Officer has solicited help from a serving officer to capture some of our posts with a view to putting up 'some demands' to the Government!"

Most of the Northern officers, under whom Martin had served, also opted for retirement after the Civil War. However, many were forced to undergo a prolonged process to secure a pension payment. Patrick Diamond, who had resigned and joined the Garda Siochana in March 1923, when the Northern Division was disbanded, was finally approved a service pension of £55 per annum in July 1927, after appeal, when the Board had refused to accept that he had served in the National Army, while based at the Curragh with the Northern Divisions. Dan McKenna and John Haughey remained with the Irish army and McKenna eventually became a senior army officer. However, Haughey was in poor health, because of the hardships he had endured while on the run in Derry, and had to retire in 1928 with a modest pension. To place the pension amounts in context, in 1924 the Taoiseach, W.T Cosgrave, was on an annual salary of £2,500 and his ministers £1,700, while Free State soldiers were paid 25 shillings per week and their keep.

Treatment of Anti-treaty casualties

In contrast to those who were pro-treaty, the treatment for many of the anti-treaty Republicans was most severe. The Free State Government continued to pursue and harass activists, and many were excluded from employment for several years. They were also excluded from the initial Military pensions and had to wait until after the Fianna Fáil Government was elected for a new 1934 Act to apply, where subsequently over 80 per cent were refused, including Martin Connolly. Even those who were casualties of the conflict were impacted. Martin Connolly's neighbour and IRA comrade, Daniel McCormack, was shot and injured, by Free State forces, at the Headford attack in April 1923, which directly resulted in the

Tuam executions. He spent the following six months in hospital in Galway where his arm and leg were amputated, and he was treated for a serious face wound. Dan wrote to the Pension Board from Liskeevy, Milltown, in February 1928, explaining,

> I was wounded on the 8th April, 1923, and I am since at the loss of my right leg and left arm and also my jaw bone was broken with the result that all my teeth are decaying'.

He goes on to list the amounts he received from the Irish White Cross totalling £365, which he explains was used to get limbs and other appliances. He continues

> And as for the home conditions, I have no home except that my Mother is keeping me for the present, and if I had a way of living I would not wait around Milltown at all as it is a very desolate place for a person not able to work. I feel very good in my health, nearly as good as ever.

Dan was refused help and died of his injuries, the following year, in August 1929.

A similar saga ensued in response to a compensation claim in 1932, from Catherine Higgins, of Ballytrasna, Tuam, for the loss of her nephew John Higgins, on whom she was wholly dependent. John was a member of the North Galway Flying Column, with Martin Connolly, and was shot dead at the Headford attack, in April 1923. He was a farm labourer and worked the twelve-acre farm for his father, who was 65 and unable to work, and his elderly aunt Catherine, aged 59, who provided housework. His father died in 1926. Catherine's application was rejected on the advice of the Investigation Officer, who decided that she was not dependent on John. Eventually, senior anti-treaty officers were compensated, after the 1934 Pension Act, but this raised other contradictions. Michael Kilroy, O/C of the anti-treaty, West Mayo Brigade, during the War of Independence and leader of the Flying Column during the Civil War, was awarded nine years' service in 1934, totaling £225 annually. When Kilroy was shot and captured in the battle for Newport in November 1922, the incident resulted in the death of five National Army soldiers. In contrast to Kilroy's pension compensa-

2nd Northern Division, No. 3 Brigade
3rd Bellaghy Battallion,
E Company Gulladuff

MOBILISATION OF VOLUNTEERS IN LAVEY

Dan Mulholland Ballymacpeake (Captain)
John J McErlean Drumard (1st Lieutenant)
Patrick Young Mayogall (2nd Lieutenant)
Volunteers
William P McErlean Drumard
John McPeake Drumard
John Higgins Drumard
Charles McNally Philadelphia
John Diamond Philadelphia
James Scullion Curran
Mick Crilly Lurganagoose
William Dorrity Idaho USA
William Milliken Brooklyn New York
John O'Neill Snr Rocktown
Felix Diamond Ballymacpeake
Charles V Convery Garda Letterkenny

Felix Diamond Philadelphia
Peter Birt Ballymacpeake
John J Birt Ballymacpeake
James Young Ballymacpeake
Hugh Young Drumard
John Diamond Ballymacpeake
Anthony McKenna Kilrea
John Collins Philadelphia
John McFall Garda Limerick
Tom McPeake Drumard
Henry Mulholland Philadelphia

IRA 3rd Bellaghy Battalion E Company Gulladuff, 11 July 1921, produced for Pensions Board 1940s

tion their dependents received only small gratuities. The father of Thomas Ruddy received £50; the aunt of Austin Woods, £50; the mother of Patrick McEllin, £60 increased to £100 on appeal and the mother of Patrick Murphy only £40.

The new Free State saw large numbers emigrating, particularly former IRA veterans who were anti-treaty. An IRA report from Connemara estimated that there was a decline of up to sixty per cent of the IRA in the area due to emigration, in Oughterard, also in Galway, over 80 per cent of IRA members emigrated. For the six counties, Patrick Maguire, an officer in the 2nd Northern Division, noted that only a small number joined the National Army, but more emigrated to Britain or the US, and the rest eventually returned to their homes in the North where they worked on 'little farms, or in some cases as farm labourers or road workers'. Maguire claimed that he was unable to return because he was excluded by the Northern authorities. This view of exclusion from the six coun-

ties, is supported by the evidence of many other former IRA combatants, subsequently collected by the Pensions Board. The lists of former IRA members, of Martin Connolly's south Derry, Gulladuff "E" Company, who were Volunteers on Active Service in July 1921, the date of the Truce, were compiled in January 1940 for Pension purposes. Of the twenty-six listed, ten had left the six counties, including seven who had emigrated to America. This pattern of emigration is repeated across the membership of Martin's 3rd Battalion in south Derry, which had 153 members listed in five IRA Companies in July 1921. By 1925, an IRA inspection report noted of Derry that 'no organisation existed' in the city or county or that it was 'purely nominal'.

Martin Connolly – seven years on active service

When Martin Connolly replied to the refusal of his initial pension application, in February 1942, as evidence of his IRA involvement he enclosed the reference letters from two of his officers, Peter Brennan and Anthony McGurk, and concluded

> *I may also add that I devoted 7 years of my time and lost 2 good positions in order to do what I could at time required, now I am told I am not entitled to any compensation.*

This very brief and unemotional statement, of his direct involvement in armed conflict, from the age of twenty, cannot capture or reflect his personal commitment and active engagement with activities that must have been at times both terrifying and traumatic, especially for a young man *(see Appendix Two)*. Given the prolonged involvement of his family in the land struggle and the regular confrontations with the local landlords, Martin must also have experienced an almost continuous tension and anxiety during his younger years. The land occupation, arrest and imprisonment of his brothers required his involvement in response and must have personally affected him.

Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, Martin spent the previous five years continuously active with the IRA and the IRB and was engaged in direct military conflict for three of those years, in Derry and Down. After the defeat of the major IRA attack at Castlewellan, where three of his comrades were killed and ten cap-

Martin Connolly portrait Summer 1925, aged 27 years old

tured, and almost five weeks 'on-the-run', pursued by B Specials and the RUC, he returned to Galway, where two weeks later he was actively involved at the commencement of the Civil War. He spent almost nine months constantly on the move, mostly living in the open in remote locations and travelling as part of a Flying Column involved in guerrilla warfare against the overwhelming force of the National Army. He spent two months in hiding, seriously ill, and, not fully recovered, he was politically active for a further eighteen months in Carlow, supporting the Flying column, organising Sinn Féin clubs, fighting an election and campaigning for prisoners on hunger strike. Almost a decade of his early adult years was spent in relentless militant activity.

A photograph taken of Martin in mid-1925 shows a gaunt, thin

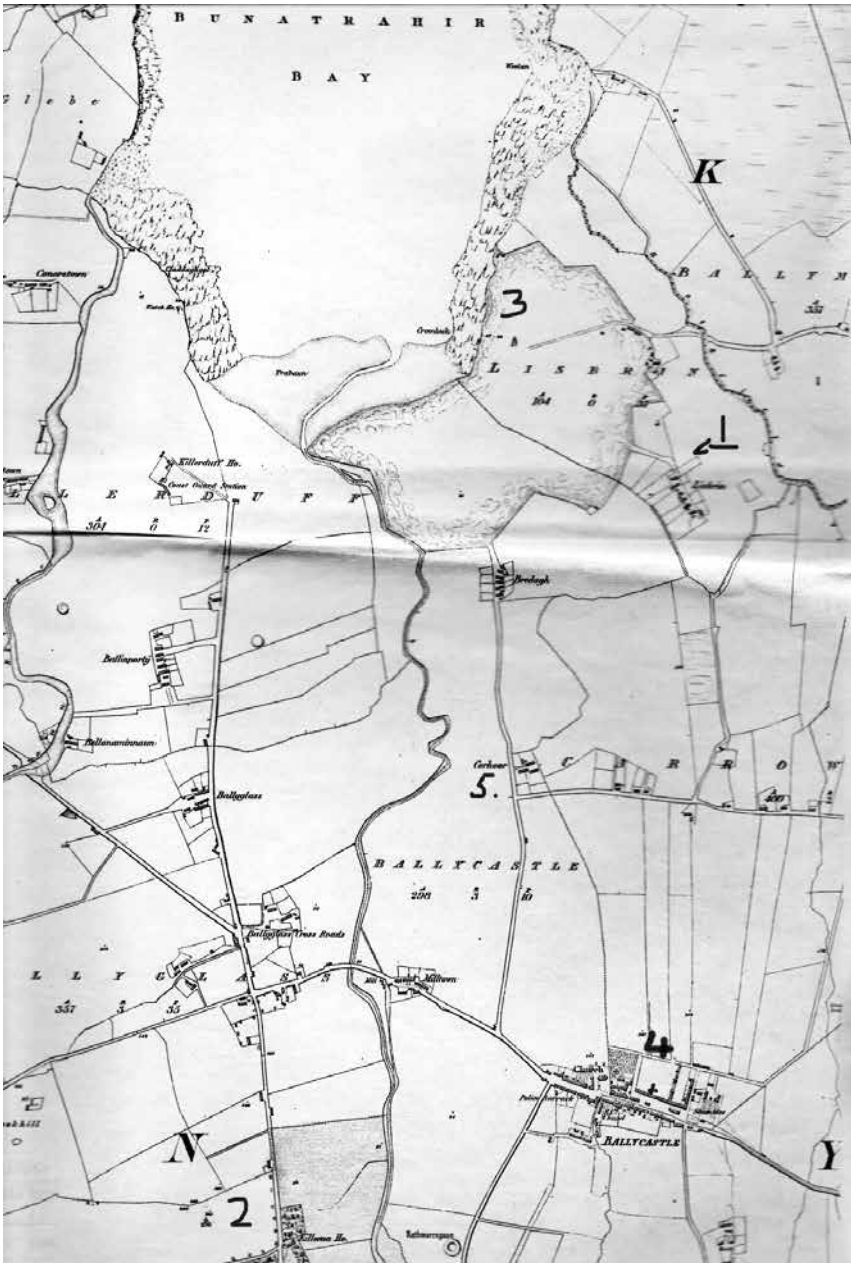
figure, unlike subsequent photographs, so it is possible that his health remained poor, for a few years. Given the nature of the prolonged guerrilla war, the intensity, the personal risk and the tragic loss of friends and comrades, there must also have been a heavy toll on his physical and mental health, especially due to the general trauma of the War of Independence and the hardship and bitterness of the Civil War, where many who been close friends and comrades in the early stages of the conflict were sworn enemies at the end. This tragic outcome must have left a deep residue of regret and remorse among all the participants of this internecine warfare. Nine of Martin's comrades on the North Galway Flying Column were executed, four were shot dead in action, many were injured, and the majority were captured and imprisoned. Despite their brave and valiant effort, the anti-treaty Republicans were comprehensively defeated in the Civil War. They were faced by a large well-equipped army, supplied with armaments and transport by the British Government, and led by senior officers who were their former comrades, and by a significant number of experienced officers and recruits from the British army.

Regarding the Civil War period, most of the Volunteers, who had originally joined the IRA with Martin in Milltown, remained with the anti-treaty side including Peter Brennan, Pat Walsh, the McCormack brothers, and Peter Burke; they were led by Con Fogarty, who had been Martin's first IRA leader in north Galway, in 1919. But, in retrospect, it is of some significance that so many of his senior officers joined the Free State, pro-treaty side of the conflict. From south Derry, Dan McKenna, John Haughey, and even Paddy Diamond, for a short period, served in the National Army and from Down, Seamus Woods. From north Galway, Patrick and Thomas Dunleavy and also Thomas Ferrick, Martin's Captain in Milltown, fought with the pro-treaty side. In contrast, from the 2nd Northern Division, Charlie Daly, originally from Kerry, and Sean Larkin from south Derry, were anti-treaty and were executed by the Free State forces in Donegal. Martin's direct officer in south Derry, Anthony McGurk and his brother Frank were captured by the RUC and interned, and the original leader of the 2nd and 3rd Northern Divisions, Joe McKelvey, from Belfast, was among the first executed by the National Government. Despite the brevity of his reply to the IRA pension Board in 1942, it is difficult to believe that

this formative experience and prolonged traumatic stress did not have far-reaching and profound consequences for his physical and mental health, in later years. In this context Martin's subsequent achievements in building and maintaining a family and working life is very impressive.

PART FOUR:

BALLYCASTLE COUNTY MAYO



1830-50; 1. Lisbrin, Loughney; 2. Killeena, Tuohill 1830s; 3. Mary Connor, widow (nee Loughney) 1860; 4. Ballycastle main street, Thomas and Mary Connor (nee Tuohill) 1887 and 5. Moved to Corhoor circa 1917.

Chapter Seven:

The O'Connor family

Despite the obvious danger, it appears that Martin Connolly returned to Knockloughrim in Derry for a period during 1924. It was there that he met his future wife, who was working as a milliner in McGlades, Martin's previous employer. According to my grandmother, Kate (Bea) O'Connor, she contacted Martin in Knockloughrim when, as a member of Cumann na mBan, she was carrying a message from her brother, Willy O'Connor, who was also an active member of the IRA, and was employed in Cargin, county Antrim, less than ten miles from Knockloughrim, during 1924. Willy had been released from Dundalk Jail at Christmas 1923 and had moved to the six counties for his own safety, where he was out of the Southern jurisdiction. It was very significant that Bea and Martin met through their republican activities because the wider Connor family of Ballycastle, County Mayo, had also been active for a long period in the struggle for land and independence. Three of Bea's brothers, and many of her cousins, were involved in the IRA and their marriage brought Martin into contact with wider family connections and political involvements, that were sustained over his lifetime.

After meeting Bea, Martin returned to Tullow in County Carlow and was married early the following year, in 1925. It seems likely that Bea also returned, from Derry, to her family home in Corhoor, Ballycastle as she was resident there for the wedding. Martin Connolly and Katie (Bea) Connor were registered as married on 3 February 1925, by Fr. W. Moyle PP, in the old church on the Ballycastle main street, directly opposite the house where she was born. Bea was thirty-four years old, and Martin was aged twenty-nine. Martin is recorded as living in Tullow, county Carlow. Their parents are recorded as Martin and Julia (McGagh) of Milltown, Tuam, and Thomas and Mary (Tuohill), Ballycastle. The witnesses were William Aubrey Gannon of Ballina and Mary Connor of Lisbrin. William Gannon was aged twenty-six and from Abbey Street, in Ballina. It is not clear what the relationship was, but his two older sisters were dressmakers and milliners, so they may have worked

Ballycastle town circa 1900

with Bea in Ballina. Ironically, their father was a retired RIC Constable. Mary Connor was Bea's first cousin, from Lisbrin.

Childhood

In 1901, Ballycastle, in north Mayo, was a busy market town, hosting a monthly fair-day, with a total population of three hundred and eight people, there were seventy-six dwellings, including seven shops, sixteen pubs, two schools, two churches, a hotel, post office and RIC barracks. My grandmother, Kate Connor was born in Ballycastle town, in September 1891 and baptised on 7 October 1891 in the church of St Bridget, across the street from the house on the main street, where she was born. Her sponsors were her uncle Michael and aunt Mary Connor, of Lisbrin. Kate (later called Bea O'Connor) was the third child in a family of eight children, with two girls and six boys, living in a rented two-story house, halfway down the town. Her father, Thomas, who was a master tailor, operated his trade from this building, which was rented from Anthony Thomas and had four rooms and a slate roof. Kate attended the local primary school and, in old age, still remembered the use of the Tally stick, which was hung around the child's neck and used to punish children for any use of Irish at school. This was a problem because both of her parents spoke only Irish at home. She also participated in learning activities in the local Protestant school, which was supported as an Erasmus Smith Trust. This was considered as a radical education at the time and most unusual for Catholic children to attend.

Mary O'Connor and children in London, Patrick (PJ), Kathleen, Albert, Maureen and Anna

After leaving school, Bea undertook an apprenticeship and by the age of nineteen, in 1911, she was qualified as a dressmaker and milliner. By that year her father Thomas was aged 54, and her mother Mary was 46. Her brothers, John aged twenty-four, was also a tailor and Peter, aged seventeen, was an assistant teacher. The other children at home were Patrick (13), William (10), Michael (7) and Joseph (5). Her older sister, Mary was married to Thomas Mone and living in Keady, County Armagh, where she had two children Patrick (PJ) and Kathleen. Thomas Mone died of TB in 1918, while Mary was pregnant. Mary lost her third child Thomas at age three and she subsequently emigrated to England, where she married Harry Cranshaw. The two Mone children, Kathleen and Patrick (PJ) were brought to live in Ballycastle, after their mother emigrated. The eldest son, John, married Kate Nallen, but he died shortly afterwards of TB and his wife emigrated to America, where she was again married. Peter also emigrated to America, but shortly after his arrival he also died of TB, on 30 March 1914, only twenty years old. He was buried in New York by friends of the family. Sometime

Big Matthew Loughney, Lacken, with General Humbert, Kilcummin Bay, 1798

before 1920, the Connor family was allocated a Labourers cottage on the Sea Road, at Curhoor, where they remained living.

The Tuohills and Loughneys

The grandparents of the O'Connor children were also from Ballycastle. Their mother, Mary Tuohill, was from Kileena townland in the hills above Ballycastle and their father Thomas was from Lisbrin, which was located beside the sea below the town. Mary Tuohill was born in 1865 at Kileena, where her family had lived since the early 1800s. Her direct ancestor was one of seven brothers, who left Wicklow after the defeat of the United Irishmen in 1798. The brothers settled at Ballyglass townland, adjacent to the Mill below Ballycastle, and carried on the craft as coopers, constructing wooden barrels and watertight containers for milling, brewing, butter, and farm use. Possibly reflecting their military background in the rebellion, one of the brothers subsequently joined the French army, under Napolean Bonaparte, and was part of the campaign that end-

Connor Headstone Kilbride churchyard Ballycastle, reads "Lord have mercy on the soul of Thomas Connor who died in 1856 aged 29 years erected by his son Thomas"

ed with the defeat of the French forces at Moscow in 1812. It was subsequently reported in a local newspaper, that he walked home from Moscow to Ballycastle, through the freezing Russian winter months, where thousands of his comrades froze to death. Some of the other brothers died during the famine in 1845-49, and only one married and moved to Kileena. Mary's father, Thomas Tuohill, was a landless farm labourer (cottier) on the Ormsby estate at Ballinglen, one of the largest landlords in the Ballycastle area. Mary had two brothers, Peter, and Anthony.

Bea's father, Thomas Connor, was born in 1857. Thomas Connor's mother, Mary Loughney, was born in Lisbrin townland, which is close to Bunatrathair Bay. Her grandfather, Martin Loughney, was a tenant farmer, with a holding in the area in the 1830s, and his son Dominick succeeded to the land in the 1840s. Dominick Loughney rented a cottage, where Mary was raised, and five and a half acres from the landlord, Earl of Arran. In 1850 there were six houses in Lisbrin, including McClean's, Brownes's, Doherty's and Loughney's. The Lisbrin families also shared a further thirty-five acres.

Peter O'Connor
Philadelphia circa
1913 died 1914

Members of the extended Loughney family also lived, close by, in Beltra townland in Lacken, where they were small farmers and fishermen. Mary had three brothers living in Lacken. They were renowned as skilled sailors who acted as pilots to the port of Killala. One of Mary's ancestors, Matthew Dominic Loughney, guided the French fleet, under General Humbert, into Kilcummin when they arrived in 1798, in support of the rebellion. He was out fishing and was invited on board by a local priest who recognised him and who was accompanying the French soldiers. Matthew advised Humbert on the safest place to land to avoid capture and led them in safely.

Mary Loughney married Thomas Connor, senior, and they had three children, Michael, Thomas, and John. According to his headstone, their father Thomas died in 1856, at the young age of twenty-nine, and is buried in Kilbride churchyard. As a result of his death, his wife Mary was evicted from her home and returned to her family in Lisbrin, who built a small two roomed thatched cottage, for her and her three sons, on reclaimed bog at the edge of their rented holding, next to the sea. Mary Connor, who had sight in one eye only, lived in great hardship as a widow in the cottage, which was on very poor land. The ruins of her house remain stand-

ing, beside a house that was constructed by her son Michael. Her son John was married, in 1877, to Bridget McHale of Curhoor. They moved to live at Castleconnor north of Ballina, where he was a small farmer. Her eldest son Michael married, in 1888, to Bridget Farrell of Killeen and they had eight children. It is not known when Mary Loughney died or where she is buried, but her son Michael remained living in Lisbrin, and reclaimed the land surrounding their house. In 1901 he was living in Lisbrin, aged 47, with his wife Bridget (nee Farrell), her mother Catherine, aged 80, and six young children.

Bea's father, Thomas, served an apprenticeship and qualified as a master tailor by completing the London, City & Guilds examinations. He is reputed to have purchased a new sewing machine, by cycling to Glasgow from Ballycastle and carrying the machine home on his bicycle. On 20 February 1887, he married Mary Tuohill. The witnesses were Martin and Maria McDonnell. Thomas and Mary Connor rented a house on Ballycastle Main Street, where he operated as a master tailor for many years, advertising seasonally for journeymen tailors 'at a good wage'. One of Mary's brothers, Anthony, remained living in the Tuohill house in Killeena and had three children, and her other brother, Peter, moved to Killala and had five children.

Ruin of cottage of Mary Connor (nee Loughney) Lisbrin, with Michael Connor's house behind.

Chapter Eight:

Republican involvement

The Tuohills were known, locally, as Fenians and were involved in many of the land campaigns in Mayo, such as the Land League and the United Irish League. Thomas Connor and Anthony Tuohill are listed among the contributors to the Ballycastle UIL Branch and the Parliamentary Fund in 1911. Both families were politically engaged and active over a prolonged period, which must have influenced their children. Bea O'Connor joined Cumann na mBan when it was established in Ballycastle and remained with the organisation as she moved to different areas, to find work as a skilled milliner and dressmaker, initially in Belmullet, then Ballina and eventually south Derry. Four of the Connor siblings were actively involved in the Republican movement during the Revolutionary period. Her brothers, Patrick (Paddy), William (Willy) and Michael were in the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Michael was also in the National Army during the Civil War. Willy joined the Irish Volunteers in Limerick in 1917, at the age of 16 years, and gave active and continuous service from then until he was captured, during the Civil War, in October 1922 and imprisoned until December 1923. Paddy joined the Ballycastle IRA in 1919 at the age of twenty and working as a local postman. He remained actively involved until he had to go on-the-run in early 1921 and emigrated to England. Michael was involved from the age of 16, first as a despatch rider, until he became a full time Volunteer in October 1920.

Several first cousins of the Connor's also joined the Republican movement. Their cousins in Kileena, Michael and Jack Tuohill, both joined the Ballycastle IRA and their cousins in Killala, Michael and Anthony, were members of the local IRA company. Their sister, Cissie, moved to Dublin, where she was the housekeeper for many years in Rathmines, for Dr Kathleen Lynn a leader of the Irish Citizen Army, also from Killala, and her life partner, Madeleine ffrench-Mullen, from Tuam in Galway. The Loughneys in Lacken, were also IRA members as was Martin Loughney in Killala, and his wife Ellen was a local leader of Cumann na mBan, and

very active in the general Ballycastle and Killala area, to the end of the Civil War. Ellen was a nurse and provided first aid training for the local Volunteers. During the War she was involved in providing safe houses in the area, the transport of arms, attending some ambushes as first aid and concealing weapons. Her husband Martin was seriously assaulted by the Crown Forces and spent over a month in hospital. She and her daughter were also accosted by the soldiers.

War of Independence, North Mayo

For the first eighteen months of the War of Independence there was a comparatively low level of activity in North Mayo, and in Ballycastle in particular. While the bigger towns of Ballina and Crossmolina had large RIC barracks and an army presence, in Ballycastle the small RIC barracks only became a target when the scale of general activities increased. By the second half of 1920, Paddy and Michael O'Connor became more active as the North Mayo Brigade stepped up its activities in Mayo and Sligo. In Bangor, near Belmullet, and at Enniscrone, in Sligo, the local barracks of the Royal Irish Constabulary were burned. The Ballycastle IRA burned down the local RIC police barracks, on 7 August. By September 1920 there were twelve IRA Battalions in county Mayo and the North Mayo Brigade had 22 Companies, which also included, Ballina, Erris and Crossmolina. Patrick Hegarty, from Crossmolina in his Witness statement on the north Mayo Brigade, listed a number of prominent IRA members from Ballycastle, including, Paddy Bourke, Dr. Crowley, Dr. John Madden, Anthony Farrell, Sean Langan, Michael O'Connor, and Edward Nealon. Ms. Bridget Lynn from Ballycastle became the communications officer for Cumann na mBan, in north Mayo and John Deane was local communications officer.

Paddy and Michael O'Connor were members of the "A" Company, 3rd Battalion, North Mayo Brigade, Western Division. The Senior Brigade officer for Mayo, was Tom Derrig of Westport and, when he was arrested and interned in January 1921, Michael Kilroy became the Brigade O/C. Michael O'Connor was promoted to Lieutenant and Intelligence Officer for the 3rd Battalion, under O/C Michael Kilroy of Newport, and held the position of Lieutenant in the Active Service Unit (Flying Column) which was formed in April 1921. At one stage Michael, as Intelligence Officer, had to travel to Dublin

for a clandestine meeting with Michael Collins, who was Head of Intelligence. He was collected from the railway station, hooded, and brought to a secret location to brief Collins. He remained devoted to Collins in later life. The 3rd Battalion included the main areas around Ballycastle, Lacken, Moygownagh, Killala and Kilfian. There were over 300 Volunteers in these five IRA Companies with 88 Volunteers, located in Ballycastle. The IRA Companies in North Mayo remained active from mid-1920 to the ceasefire in July 1921. There were several incidents around Ballycastle, including attacks on the local barracks, ambushes on Crown forces and acting in support of the Ballina and Crossmolina IRA units in their military operations.

Attack by Black and Tans

The infamous Black and Tans arrived in north Mayo during November 1920. Large numbers of Sinn Féin suspects were arrested under the new British repressive legislation, including eighty-two IRA officers in Mayo. In response to the increased military resistance, the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in Mayo received the second highest numbers of British recruits, Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, in the final months of 1920. There was also a so-called 'Murder Gang' based in Ballina Barracks, carrying out violent and ruthless reprisals against 'Sinn Féiners' and their families. In January 1921, the Auxiliaries replaced the British Border Regiment in Ballina and commenced a reign of terror on the general population. The same month the RIC Inspectors report recorded that the sheer ferocity of the retaliation offensive of the Crown Forces had confined Republican attacks in north Mayo to a few assaults and attempted kidnappings of RIC Constables. In the first week of February 1921, the Black and Tans raided Ballycastle and confronted and assaulted several young men, who were attending a Gaelic League dance in Polkes, on the main street.

This incident occurred after an RIC Constable, Thomas Heffron aged 26, who was from outside Ballycastle town, was shot in a hotel in Belfast, on 26 January, by the 3rd Northern Division, IRA, before he was to give evidence in a trial of Cork Volunteers. Two other policemen were also shot. He was brought home to Ballycastle for burial, in Doonfeeny graveyard. The following week as Heffron's coffin lay in Ballycastle church, another local RIC man, Thomas

No 1 ASU North Mayo Flying column, includes Joseph Healy (front right)

Moyles, was being buried in Moygownagh, a town nearby, after being shot dead in Cork. These two RIC deaths were the trigger for the Crown forces to unleash a night of terror on the natives in Ballycastle. While the dance was in progress a lorry-load of Black and Tans arrived in the town. They lined up the men outside Polkes and forced a number at gun point to destroy the roof of the hall, they beat-up many of the young men and forcibly sheared their hair with razor blades. When daylight came the Gaelic League house was sprinkled with petrol and set on fire. The Black and Tans also raided the Connor house on the Sea Road, at Curhoor, that night, searching for Paddy O'Connor. However, Paddy had been warned of the raid and had gone into hiding, in a safe house in Palmerstown, and then had to emigrate to England, to avoid arrest. Michael was caught by the raiding party and severely assaulted and left for dead, beside the river close to his home. However, as a full time Volunteer in the IRA, Michael was lucky to survive and remain free.

Stephen Donnelly (on left) No 1 ASU, North Mayo Flying column

Formation of North Mayo Flying Column

Despite the reign of terror by the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, by April the north Mayo IRA Brigades returned to the offensive, with on-the-run Volunteers mounting ambushes on Crown Forces. Two Active Service Units (Flying Columns) were formed, to operate on each side of the Moy River. The West unit, Number 1 ASU, under O/C Eamon Gannon, which comprised thirty-seven men, including Lieutenant Michael O'Connor, operated initially around Crossmolina and Bangor, targeting British army lorries going to

Belmullet, they later moved to the Ballycastle district. The final armed confrontation involving Michael Connor's, North Mayo 'Flying Column', (No. 1 ASU) occurred on 26 June at Clydagh, in Kilfian parish, about four miles from Ballycastle. The RIC report of the incident stated that Police from:

> . . . the recently reopened station [at] Ballycastle [. . .] in an encounter with rebels in the early hours of the morning, eight of the patrol which was sent to look for illicit spirits as per information believed [. . .] met a party of rebels. They killed one and captured six. Of the latter one was an acting Commandant of a Brigade, one an Adjutant and one believed a Company Commander.

However, in contrast to this report, a comrade of Michael's in No. 1 ASU, Stephen Donnelly, in his Witness statement, recalled that they arrived at Clydagh to stay the night, in some safe houses. This was in preparation for a planned attack, early the following day, on an expected RIC patrol from Ballycastle,

> The Ballycastle Company supplied guards, and we retired to bed in the houses in the village. About 3 a.m. heavy firing awakened us. We jumped into our clothes, and got our rifles, and came out on the street. Fire was immediately opened on us from two or three different directions. We took shelter and returned the fire. Denis Sheerin, Jordan, McHale, and I were together. After some time firing, we retreated. And got away through the mountains. One of the guards (Tommy Nealon) was shot dead and two police wounded. Seven of the Column, including Eamon Gannon, Anthony Farrell, C Munnelly. M Waters were captured.

Tom Nealon was an unarmed local Volunteer, from Aghoose, Ballycastle. He was shot by the RIC, while running to raise the alert. Subsequently the Column reformed in Crocnacally in the mountains near Moygownagh and elected Johnny Barrett of Crossmolina as O/C. It was later claimed that the RIC in Ballycastle were tipped off about the presence of the ASU. Matt Kilcawley, Vice O/C, No2 ASU, interviewed by Ernie O'Malley, noted that fifteen RIC from

Ballycastle took them prisoner, and that the Column only had 'ten to twenty rifles and few advantages.'

Kilcawley's, No. 2 ASU, operated east of the Moy and was better armed. During April, Easky Barracks in Sligo was attacked and later in Ballina two Black and Tans were shot. After a further attack on an RIC detective in Ballina, IRA Volunteer Howley was shot dead and the local IRA Intelligence Officer, Michael Tolan, was murdered while in custody, in retaliation for the earlier attack on the Black and Tans. Matt Kilcawley was directly involved in the final action in the north Mayo Brigade area, prior to the Truce. On 1 July, at Dromore West, north of Ballina, the ASU set a trap for the Crown Forces, where, after an intense fight, they captured two RIC Officers. As the IRA ASU escaped over the mountains, pursued by the military, Kilcawley claimed they 'had a short Council of War, and we decided to shoot them'. One of the RIC, John King, had led several Police and Auxiliary raids, and knew most of the men, so they killed them both. This was one of the last incidents of the War of Independence in North Mayo.

Michael O'Connor, Civil War years

The membership lists for the Ballycastle IRA Volunteers, on 11 July 1921, the date of the Truce, includes both Paddy and Michael O'Connor, as well as their cousins Michael and Jack Tuohill, of Kileena. Only four Battalion Officers are listed, including the O/C, Sean Langan and Vice O/C, C. Munnelly, Michael O'Connor is not listed as Battalion Intelligence Officer although, in 1924, two Officers Thomas Kneafsey and Commandant Joseph Healy, who was also an officer of the No 1 ASU, refer to him as a Lieutenant holding this position. Michael is also included in the list for 11 July 1922, but at this stage he was no longer with the IRA. Even though most of the north Mayo IRA joined the anti-treaty side under Michael's former officer Michael Kilroy, ten months after the Truce, Michael, together with his close friend, Thomas Kneafsey, joined the pro-Treaty side, just after the formal split in the IRA. He subsequently explained that he remained loyal to Michael Collins. He joined the National Army at Custume Barracks, Athlone Command, in April 1922, under General Sean MacEoin and, according to my grandmother, acted as the General's aide-de-camp for a period in Ballina. In the National Army he was initially an officer Cadet and

member of the Roscommon Flying Column, under Colonel Patrick Madden. He served in Roscommon, north Galway and Mayo, as he stated in his army file, "Rounding up Irregulars (from) August 1922 to February 1923".

From the time Michael O'Connor joined the National Army in April 1922, until the cease fire in July 1923, his Column, as part of the 2nd Western Division under General Sean MacEoin, was in almost continuous action during different phases. Each of his direct officers, Frank Simons, Patrick Madden and Luke Duffy, had been the main officers in the IRA south Roscommon, 3rd Battalion during the War of Independence, and had chosen to support the Treaty and join the National Army, together with the majority of their men. The attack on the Four Courts in Dublin by the Government provided a signal for the IRA in the Western Division to commence armed activities. The town of Ballina was overrun by the Republicans and several public buildings were occupied. Following an intense battle with the National troops the IRA withdrew from Ballina in the last week of July, burning the barracks as they left. The National army then captured Ballaghdereen in Roscommon with a force of 200 troops and Castlebar, Westport and Claremorris, which was in Martin Connolly's Brigade area and ten miles from Milltown, were quickly occupied. The *Irish Independent* of 28 July 1922 reported, under the headline,

> Mayo's Joy Unbounded- National Army Feted: Major-Genl. Sean McKeon, T.D., reached Claremorris on Tuesday night by special train from Athlone, the first train to run so far for the past month, and was met at the station by the residents of the town who accorded him a most enthusiastic reception. The distinguished soldier, who was accompanied by a bodyguard of 60 picked men, was escorted to the Imperial Hotel, where he delivered a brief address. Along the route there were wonderful scenes. Ladies, in the exuberance of their joy, rushed from their doors to embrace him. A dance in his honour was held in the Town Hall continued through the night.

The National Army were celebrating their victory of reoccupying the large urban areas in Mayo and Galway, within a period of

one month. However, this was mainly achieved using superior force, including large numbers of troops, artillery, and motor transport. But, in effect, this was only the beginning of a prolonged and bitter conflict, as the IRA took to the mountains and remote rural areas, to use guerrilla tactics. By August 1922, MacEoin had only 2,100 men stationed in all the Western Command area.

In Roscommon and Mayo, he decided to break up those forces into smaller units in order to confront the anti-treaty Flying Columns. The three main IRA leaders in south Roscommon who had joined the National Army were given control of the different columns. Pat Madden the Roscommon Flying Column, of which Michael O'Connor was a member, Luke Duffy for the north Roscommon and Sligo area and Frank Simons, was put in charge of gathering intelligence. The estimated number of IRA Volunteers, in the same area, totaled 37 officers and 608 men, of which 250 were in Roscommon and 400 in Mayo, located in north Mayo, under Michael Kilroy; east Mayo under Frank Carty and south Mayo, under Tom Maguire.

The battle at the Ox mountains

One of the most spectacular combined attacks mounted by the IRA occurred in mid-September when they successfully invaded Ballina and engaged in a prolonged battle with MacEoin's forces. The north Mayo Brigade had captured one of the armored cars from the Army and used it very effectively when they mounted a surprise attack on the town, led by Joe Baker and Michael Kilroy of the West Mayo Flying Column. Using the 'Ballinalee' armored car, the IRA captured the Moy Hotel garrison of Free State troops.

The Republicans withdrew the next day and split into two groups one heading east through Bonniconlon, to the Ox mountains, and the other along the north coast road towards Sligo. In response, General Lawlor, and Brigadier Joe Ring, who had been one of the Mayo IRA leaders in the War of Independence, arrived with a party of National troops from Athlone. They pursued the retreating Column, but their car was ambushed at Bonniconlon, where Ring was shot dead, and Lawlor injured. The driver of the car was also killed. After the death of Joe Ring, and as the IRA Flying column withdrew to the Ox Mountains, there was an intense two-day battle when national troops advanced on the mountains from different sides. Maj Gen MacEoin directed the operations from the Sligo side,

with Brigadier Luke Duffy and troops from Swinford and Ballina, Michael O'Connor's Flying Column, led by Commandant Madden, advanced from the Foxford side. The national army had their own armored car called "The Big Fella", named after Michael Collins, and the two armored vehicles were involved in a running fight for twelve miles on the road to Tobbercurry. The National Army also possessed field guns, which were used for heavy shelling of the Irregulars in the surrounding hills.

The Free State Army offensive

The National Army Census taken on 12 November 1922 includes Cadets Michael O'Connor and Joseph Kavanagh (20), both from Ballycastle, as based in Roscommon Barracks, with 118 soldiers of which 51, including Michael are members of the Roscommon Flying column. The Claremorris return records the Officers, including both Colonel Commandant Patrick Madden from Roscommon and Captain Patrick Dunleavy from Tuam, Martin Connolly's former O/C. Michael's friend, Thomas Kneafsey, was based in the Ballina barracks, among 255 soldiers of the 3rd Western Division, including six other men from Ballycastle. In early 1923, as a new offensive was commenced, the Claremorris command and Michael O'Connor's Roscommon Flying Column, extended their operations to north Galway as far as Tuam, in active pursuit of Martin Connolly and his comrades. In February 1923 it was troops from the Claremorris command who captured five IRA men in Milltown, who were in the act of setting fire to the police barracks. The prisoners were all close friends of Martin Connolly, who had been transferred to Hollymount in Mayo, just before this incident. It is likely that Michael O'Connor's Flying Column was part of the raiding party. Military Intelligence Reports, for early March 1923, refer to Commandant Bannon, who had been in Ballina with Michael O'Connor, leading a party of troops in raids on houses in Ballycastle, where four prominent 'Irregulars' were captured but 'no rifles, documents or ammunition was found on the prisoners'. Other records on his army file confirm that Michael was in the Ballycastle area during this period. However, in March 1923, Michael was transferred to the Officer Training Corps at the Curragh camp, where he was promoted to Lieutenant.

Michael O'Connor, Post-Civil War

In a strange coincidence, two Free State Officers, closely associated with Martin Connolly and Michael O'Connor, namely Patrick Dunleavy and Patrick Madden, who had each been very significant and successful Republican leaders in Galway and Roscommon during the War of Independence, had opted for the pro-Treaty side and served alongside each other in Claremorris. After the Civil War they were each forced to resign from the National Army, due to their Republican sympathies and involvement in the 'Army Mutiny'. Dunleavy was Martin's former IRA O/C in Tuam and his IRB centre, while under Colonel Madden, Michael was involved 'In rounding up Irregulars' who were close friends of his future brother-in-law. Michael O'Connor's commission was also terminated, on 7 March 1924, with a grant of £65, equivalent to a year's wages, in recognition of his previous IRA service. As his officer Colonel Madden was a leader of the Army Mutiny and was also demobilised on the same date, it is possible that Michael was associated with this dispute and removed from the army, as a direct consequence.

After Michael O'Connor was demobilised from the Free state army, he returned to Ballycastle in April 1924. It seems likely that he remained living at home in Ballycastle for the year, surviving on his Demobilisation Grant. In early 1925 he secured a job in Mone's shop in Keady in Armagh, relations of his sister Mary. In June 1925, at age 22 years, Michael re-joined the Free State army, as a Private in the Artillery Corps, for a two-year term. Seven months later, in January 1926, after a week's official leave, he deserted. His army files, in addition, to the details of his initial IRA involvement in Mayo and his service during the Civil War also contain a detailed record of the Military Court of Enquiry for Deserters, held in February 1926, in relation to his continued absence. The three Officer Court found that Michael, 'illegally absented himself from his duty without lawful authority' and, also took with him military equipment and clothing, worth £7. 5s. He subsequently explained that he had secretly re-joined the IRA and was ordered to join the National Army, to receive further arms training.

Willy O'Connor on Active Service

Willy O'Connor was also very active in the IRA during the War of Independence, based in numerous locations across Ireland. He

joined the Irish Volunteers, at the age of 16, in Limerick in 1917 and served for a short period in the South Mayo Brigade. During the War of Independence, he served in the West Cavan Brigade, where he was involved in the capture of the Arva RIC Barracks, under General Sean MacEoin. In January 1921 he transferred to North Wexford Brigade, and the following month was arrested by the British Military, in reprisal for the burning of County Council records. He was described by the British officer as 'a well-known rebel' and detained as a hostage, with nine other Volunteers. He was seriously assaulted by the soldiers while in custody and was used for protection from IRA attack, by being chained to the front of army lorries during patrols. After the Truce he was transferred to the 4th Northern Division and, when the split occurred, he was involved in setting up the Independent HQ, in Castleblayney, county Monaghan, under Frank Aiken.

He was arrested in Dundalk by Free State soldiers, on 28 June 1922, the same day as the attack on the Four Courts. He disarmed the guard and escaped but was recaptured shortly afterwards. He was subsequently involved in the dramatic prisoner escape from Dundalk jail. The IRA prisoners were formed up in military formation, standing to attention, when a large hole was blown in the side of the prison wall and the hundred Volunteers marched out to freedom. They continued to march in their ranks, for at least ten miles. Their O/C, Frank Aiken, then declared for the anti-treaty side and Willy joined the South Monaghan Flying Column. He was involved in a raid on the Kingscourt bank, the transport of captured arms, the blowing up of Essexford Bridge and a series of attacks on the National army at Culloville, Carrickmacross and Dundalk. In October 1922, he was captured under arms, after an intense gun battle that lasted for hours. He was interned in Dundalk jail and took part in the general hunger strike for political status, which lasted for eighteen days. He spent fourteen months in prison and was finally released in the general amnesty at Christmas 1923. After his release from prison Willy O'Connor moved to the six counties for his own safety, outside the jurisdiction of the Free State, where Republicans were still being pursued and harassed.

In the North he was known as Liam O'Connor and worked initially in Glenullin, near Coleraine and then Cargin in Antrim. In 1926 Willy moved to Lavey, where he found work with Mick Mc-

Glade in Knockloughrim, where both his sister Bea and Martin Connolly had previously worked, at different times. Willy founded the first Gaelic Football club in Cargin and then in Lavey, both of which he named as Erins Own, after his former club in Ballycastle, county Mayo. He was the first chairman of the club and was joined by Martin Connolly's former officer, Anthony McGurk, as club Secretary. Willy was instrumental in the formation of the first Derry County Board. He played football locally and was captain of the Derry football team. He was unable to secure a job in the south during this period, due to the treatment of former Republican prisoners, so he emigrated to America in 1928. He was presented with a gold medal by the Derry County Board at a reception to mark his departure. In America, Willy secured a job as a manager of a hardware shop in Queens, New York. His future wife Kathleen, from Carlingford, county Louth, followed him to America where they were married and their first daughter, Mary, was born. According to Willy they arrived just in time for the 1929 economic crash, which resulted in widespread unemployment and poverty, with many food kitchens set up in his neighbourhood and significant homelessness. They returned to Ireland and, luckily, Kathleen secured a teaching job. They subsequently moved to Tullow, where, at Bea's suggestion, he opened a shop at the Square, around the corner from where the Connolly's lived on Barrack Street.

PART FIVE:

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Chapter Nine:

From Sinn Féin to Fianna Fáil

After their wedding in Ballycastle in February 1925, Martin returned, with Bea, to Tullow in county Carlow, where he was employed in Dempsey's Hardware, which was owned by James Dempsey, a Republican from Killala, in Mayo. A few months later, during the summer, Bea and Martin travelled for a weekend in Dublin to celebrate their wedding. The official wedding photograph was taken in a studio there and Martin also reported to the IRA headquarters, which confirms that he remained involved with the organisation. In fact, he also retained his IRA revolver, until he sold it in the 1940s. In the early years in Tullow, Martin was involved in forming Sinn Féin Clubs, organising in the election, and campaigning for the Republican prisoners on hunger strike. According to Una, Martin was also a member of a long established, nationalist organisation, the Irish National Foresters (INF), which had first formed a branch in Tullow in early 1925. He was involved in organising a large demonstration in Tullow in June 1925, with every INF district in Carlow and the surrounding counties in attendance, and a special train which brought 1,500 from Dublin. The purpose of the event was to commemorate the unveiling in 1905 of the monument to the 1798 leader, Fr John Murphy, who had been hanged in the Square in Tullow.

However, while Martin remained active with Sinn Féin and the IRA during 1925, it is likely that he transferred his allegiance to the new party, Fianna Fáil, after it was formed in 1926. Despite increasing success in the national elections, anti-treaty Sinn Féin members continued to boycott the Daíl, and those elected refused to attend. At a special Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, in March 1926, Eamon de Valera, proposed that elected members be allowed to take their seats in the Daíl, if the controversial Oath of Allegiance to British Royalty was removed. When this motion was defeated de Valera, and the majority of Sinn Féin TDs, resigned from the Party and formed Fianna Fáil, on 16 May 1926. By November Fianna Fáil in Tullow was holding public meetings, where the main issues raised by speakers were, unemployment and emigration. In the following

Bea Connor and Martin Connolly Wedding portrait 1925

General Election, Fianna Fáil won 44 seats and Sinn Féin only retained 5 seats. Cumann na nGaedheal, the Government Party, lost 13 seats and only retained 47 seats. Labour increased to 22 seats, while the Farmers Party retained 11 seats. Fianna Fáil formally entered the Daíl for the first time and, six years later, after the 1932 election, they formed a government, retaining power for sixteen years.

Developing Fianna Fáil in Carlow

The two Carlow IRA officers that Martin Connolly named as his references for his pension application, Patrick Dawson of Crosstown and Patrick Fenelon of the Square, Tullow, both became prominent local members of Fianna Fáil and sought nomination for election. Many former IRA members also joined Fianna Fáil, including one of the most prominent nationally, Frank Aiken, who had been IRA Chief of Staff at the end of the Civil War. A Fianna Fáil Convention was held in Kilkenny in January 1932, presided over by Frank Aiken TD, to select three Fianna Fáil candidates for the Carlow-Kilkenny constituency in the general election, with almost 170 delegates in attendance. Patrick Fenelon was put forward for Tullow, as one of eleven names. Frank Aiken ended the proceedings with a rousing speech stating that the reason they were in the Fianna Fáil organisation was because,

> . . . they believed in independence and fair play for the real Irish people; their opponents were the King's English and the King's Irish, while they represented the people who would not be comfortably off unless the producers, working class and business people were prosperous and that Cumann na nGaedhael represented the big importers and old ascendancy crowd who fattened as the people grew thin.

After the successful election result in 1932 a demonstration was held in Tullow to celebrate the victories of three Fianna Fáil TDS in Carlow Kilkenny, with Patrick Fenelon as one of the Platform speakers. A Fianna Fáil contingent from Tullow, over one hundred strong, also joined thousands of supports in Carlow town to celebrate the significant election victory. In June 1934 Patrick Dawson

An Comhdáil Poblachtach
REPUBLICAN
CONGRESS

"We cannot conceive of a Free Ireland with a Subject Working Class."—Connolly.

Vol. I. No. 13. SATURDAY, JULY 28, 1934. Price: TWOPENCE.

DATE FIXED FOR THE CONGRESS

JAILED FOR PICKETING
CONGRESS WORKERS ARRESTED

MAYO GETS READY
Delegates Are Coming

SMASHING THROUGH OBSTACLES

TRIBUNAL MUST GO
STREET, NOT COURT FIGHT

UNEMPLOYED JOIN UP
Messenger Boys Too

Republican Congress newspaper July 1934

was selected to run in the local government elections for Fianna Fáil.

Despite the shift to Fianna Fáil and the consequent reduction in electoral support for Sinn Féin, the IRA still retained a major influence nationally, with many former members now in Fianna Fáil. Willy O'Connor attended the Republican Congress in 1934, an attempt to develop a socialist alternative which came into conflict with the mainstream IRA. In June 1934, the annual pilgrimage to the grave of Wolfe Tone, organised under the auspices of the IRA, saw an estimated attendance of 17,000, the largest ever. Thirteen special trains and thirty-two buses were organised from all parts of Ireland. Fourteen hundred came by special trains from the six counties and two hundred attended from Tullow and is it likely that this included Martin Connolly and Willy O'Connor among others. While Willy supported Clann na Poblachta and Sinn Féin, Bea and Martin maintained a life-long loyalty to De Valera and Fianna Fáil, even to the extent of purchasing shares in the Party newspaper, The Irish Press, when it was launched in 1931.

Chapter Ten:

Old IRA Veterans, Pension campaign and commemorations

The new Fianna Fáil Government quickly introduced amendments to the IRA pension schemes. The 1934 Pension Act expanded eligibility to previously excluded groups, including anti-treaty Republicans and Cumann na mBan, with over 50,000 veterans applying. During the 1940s, Willy O'Connor and Martin were central to the organisation of the Old IRA Veterans Association in Tullow and Willy was elected as Secretary of the Carlow branch of the organisation and was involved in the development of the Old IRA Veterans, nationally. The main purpose of the Old IRA was to commemorate the War of Independence and to campaign for military pensions for former IRA members, who had been excluded or refused pensions. Willy O'Connor submitted his first claim for a pension in January 1939 and received a rejection letter in March 1940, even though he had provided five letters from his former officers detailing his IRA activities in their respective areas. Martin Connolly made his first application in November 1940. Three weeks later, the report to the Minister for Defence from the Pension Referee, dated 11 December 1941, confirmed that the Act did not apply to him. He appealed this first rejection and the Department replied to his letter on 12 March 1942 regretting that, it had been decided that the Act did not apply to him, and that no further action could be taken in the matter. In contrast Willy O'Connor was formally interviewed by the Pensions Board in January 1942, where significant detail on his activities was presented and questioned. However, he was again rejected.

In 1943 a meeting of the Old IRA in Tullow decided to affiliate with the Old IRA Comrades Association, to pursue the pensions issue nationally and challenge the exclusion of activists, such as Martin and Willy, from pension entitlement. Willy O'Connor was elected as Honorary Secretary and part of a delegation to the Annual Convention in Dublin in January 1944. Willy reported back to his comrades, stating,

Willy O Connor and Old IRA Tullow

Men who had fought, suffered and lost much have been informed that they are persons to who, according to the official notice from the Minister, the Act does not apply. Stripped of legal verbiage, this means that they were not accepted as having participated in the fight for freedom. This is an insult that will not be taken lying down. We shall agitate for recognition. Obtaining such recognition does not necessarily mean monetary reward. Most men are proud of what they did and while they are blessed with normal health will not be concerned with pensions. Our's is a national organisation: we are established in the 32 counties and its determination to carry on the struggle should appeal strongly to those who are keeping aloof that the movement is a driving, living force worthy of the support of every Old IRA man and Cuman-na-mBan who served in the National struggle from '16 to '21 and '23.'

In addition to the campaign on the pensions, the Old IRA Veterans, of which Martin was an active member, ensured that their efforts during the recent war continued to be recognised and regular events were organised to commemorate their fallen comrades. In July 1932, in an echo of the Civil War, a memorial was unveiled by former IRA leader Michael Kilroy, at Foxhall near Tuam, to commemorate Captain TJ Prendergast, a comrade of Martin's who was killed the day after their attack on Mountbellew barracks, on 3 July 1922. In 1935 the former IRA members of Martin's, 2nd, and 3rd Northern Divisions, met in Wynns Hotel, Dublin, because they were banned from the six counties, where former leaders Frank Doris and Seamus Dobbyn presided.

The Second World War

The IRA was suppressed by the De Valera led, Fianna Fáil Government, during the Second World War, from 1939 to 1945, a period in Ireland referred to as the Emergency. Gerard Boland was the Minister for Justice from 1929 to 1948, who introduced internment, flogging and the death penalty for subversive activity. While five members of the Gardai were shot by the IRA, during the Emergency, six IRA men were executed by firing squad, one was hanged and three died on hunger strike. Bea and Willy's brother, Michael O'Connor, who had been pro-treaty during the Civil War, re-joined the IRA during this period and was sent to Britain on the IRA bombing campaign in 1939. However, when he met his contacts, in a public house in Soho in London, he was not impressed by their military capacity or personal security and quit the organisation. They were subsequently arrested and executed, and the bombing campaign proved a failure. Michael subsequently joined the British Army during the Second World War and participated in the D-Day landings, as a driver of a military transport lorry. His nephew and close friend, P J Mone, joined the army alongside Michael, as a radio operator, and was assigned directly to General Montgomery, for the whole period of the war in Africa and Europe. Martin Connolly's brother, Luke, also fought in World War Two, with the US army, after he was drafted in 1942, at the age of 54 years, when he was still living in the Bronx, New York, with his wife Katherine and their four children, Martin, Mary, John, and William.

Michael O'Connor
British armed forces
Berlin 1946

Honouring their fallen comrades

Martin's IRA comrade and friend, Peter Brennan, died in Galway in June 1948, aged 49 years. After his release from internment in 1924 he had returned to farming but was subsequently employed as an engineer in the Irish Sugar Company, when it was set up in Tuam in 1933. During the emergency he joined the Irish army to provide training to the recruits. Among other acknowledgments, his widow and family expressed their appreciation to the Martin's comrades in the Old IRA for the guard of honour and three-volley gun salute, at his funeral. The *Tuam Herald* printed the eulogy, which in part stated:

> When the Civil War came and the ranks were sundered, his loyalty was never in doubt. He had sworn to defend

> the Republic "against enemies foreign and domestic", and when the crucial test arrived "Pete" as he was familiarly termed, gave the literal-in Irish- interpretation of his oath. For he was a worthy inheritor of the Fenian tradition for whom the spirit of evasiveness and conditional loyalty were negative things possible only in an alien mentality.

Each year there was a large commemoration at Donaghpatrick graveyard, near Tuam, where Martin Connolly's executed comrades from the North Galway Brigade were buried. On the thirtieth anniversary, over 400 veterans and their families, led by Martin's former officer, Vincent Corcoran, walked the three miles from Headford, and over 2,000 attended the event. Former IRA leader, Tom Maguire, gave the oration and said that the unity of the country, in one All Ireland Republic, remained to be achieved. He stated that the six young IRA men who were interred in the plot were members of the 2nd Western Division, four of them in north Galway Brigade, one a west Galway man and one a Mayo man (his brother). He also named three others from the area who had also given their lives in defense of the Republic, Tony Darcy, who died on hunger strike, Martin's close comrade, Lieut Dan McCormack, from Milltown, who died of his wounds and John Higgins of Kilbannon, who was also shot at the Headford attack. As he unveiled the memorial, Maguire concluded,

> It was no shame to the men buried there or in hundreds of graves all over Ireland that the attainment of an Irish Republic for the whole country was still unfinished and that six counties remained occupied by the enemy. Those shackles must be broken if they were to be true to the memory of all those generations who had died for Ireland.

PART SIX:

THE CONNOLLY FAMILY

Chapter Eleven:

Growing up in Tullow, County Carlow

Just nine months after their wedding in early February in Ballycastle, Bea and Martin's first child, Francis Joseph, was born, on 31 October 1925. They had three further children, Eamon, Turlough and Una. For most of their twenty-five years in Tullow, they lived in a rented flat, ironically in the former RIC Barracks on Barrack Street, just off the Square in the town. This building was owned by a local solicitor who operated his business from the ground floor while the Connolly family occupied a small space in part of the building. This was described as a small, dark premises with a living room and tiny kitchen located in an extension built on to the Barracks, which was later demolished. Eamon was born in 1926, Una on 30 September 1927 and Turlough on 11 July 1932. For some reason, other than Eamon Martin, the names they selected for the other three children do not relate to either of their families and were original. Frank was baptised Francis Joseph, named for the German Emperor Franz Joseph, Una was named Winifred Mary and Turlough is recorded as William Terence Lorenzo, on his birth certificate. After Willie and Cathleen O'Connor returned from America, they visited his sister Bea in Tullow who suggested the rental of a vacant shop. They moved to the town and Kathleen secured a job as a local teacher. After a few years Willie acquired a larger shop on the Square, Tullow and operated successfully, selling toys, ice cream, sweets, papers, fishing gear, among other items. Kathleen was eventually appointed Principal, of Rathmore national school in Tullow.

Over the years Martin worked in different jobs and endured periods of unemployment. Martin's occupation on Turlough's birth cert in 1932 is recorded as a Commercial Traveller. He worked in Jack Dempsey's General store, located in the Square in Tullow, which sold, footwear, drapery, millinery and was also a builder's providers and funeral undertaker. Dempsey was a prominent businessman in Tullow who was married three times and had only one child, a

Martin and Bea Connolly portrait 1930s

daughter. Jack Dempsey, died in 1939, after which the store was closed, and the stock sold off. Martin subsequently worked in Callaghan's, a large shop in Tullow. Bea for a period ran a small, sweet shop from the house and did various jobs to earn an income. She also took in boarders, to earn additional income. Bea maintained contact with her family in Ballycastle, where Paddy had returned after seven years in England and secured a job as post-man in the town, reportedly with the help of Frank Aiken. Bea and Willy's fa-

Mary Connor (nee Tuohill), with sons Paddy and Joe at Corhoor Ballycastle

ther, Thomas Connor of Curhoor, died on 2 November 1937 aged 74 years and his wife Mary died on 17 July 1952, aged 91 years. Their headstone in Doonfeeney graveyard is in Irish, reflecting their interest in the language. In Kilgevrin, Martin's sister, Mary who had been married to Mannion, died in 1934 and his brother John married Delia McGrath, of Lehid in December 1943. They moved into a new house, with his mother Mary and brother William, built on the main road in Kilgevrin, on the land formerly occupied by his grand-uncle, William snr, in 1850. Their mother Mary died in 1945 and, when their first child Martin was born, in 1947, William left home without warning and was reported as a missing person. He lost all contact with the family until he finally returned, in 1961, and died shortly afterwards. All trace of the original Connolly and McGagh cottages from the 1880s has been removed, but the land is part of the current Connolly farm.

Bea Connolly and her children in Tullow

Education

Bea and Martin's children attended the local primary schools, up to the age of thirteen years, but a scholarship was required to attend secondary schools, which were fee-paying. Frank was at the Monastery primary and secondary schools, run as a small day school, by the Patrician Brothers, who also had a Noviciate in a large building in the town. The Folklore collection (duchas.ie) records a folklore story, submitted by his Primary school and written by Francis, as related to him by his father, Martin. Entitled 'Hidden Treasure' and dated 30 January 1939. A short newspaper report in January 1940 reported that Francis Connolly was Dick Turpin in the school drama production of Little Lord Fauntleroy. The report commented on his acting ability, '. . . of the demonstrative emotion displayed by the other characters . . . F Connolly (Dick Turpin) being realistic was

convincing.' The local newspaper also reported that Frank was a member of the St Pats. GAA, minor team, in May 1940.

Bea retained the school Certificate for Francis who attended the First-Year course of studies, in 1939-40, in the Monastery Secondary school Tullow. He passed English; Irish; Latin; History; Geography; Science; Arithmetric; Algebra and Geometry under Brother Dermot P Dunne, Principal. In September 1941, the *National & Leinster Times* reported on local Examination success, stating, ' . . . In the Intermediate Examinations in the Patrician Day School, the following 6 passed with honours. . . (incl.) Francis Connolly, Barrack Street.' This achievement was important, because Secondary school access was fee paying at this time and poorer families, who could not afford the fees, depended on a scholarship, mainly from the Local Authority. In 1948-9 there were only 1,870 scholarships for secondary schools across Ireland, so this was a notable achievement.

Eamon completed his secondary education with the Intermediate Certificate in 1944. Turlough passed the examination for Sixth standard in June 1946 and completed school at First Year with a Certificate for 1946/47. Una attended the Brigidine convent and was awarded certificates, for piano, in 1938 and 1939 and for advanced Book-keeping, in June 1942 and 1945. She also retained a diploma of membership of the Sodality of Our Lady, Brigidine convent from June 1943. The local newspapers, reported on extra-curricular activity that Francis and Una were involved with. In January 1943 there are short reports that mention Francis as playing for St Patricks Gaelic Football club, as vice-captain of the Minor footballers. In the same month, a report on The Choral Society mentions that it is comprised of thirteen girls and thirteen boys, listing Una and Francis as members. During the summer school holidays, to earn money, Francis worked for his uncle Willy, operating an ice-cream service from a fridge mounted on the front of a bicycle. He was required to cycle to the various football matches to sell the ice-cream, returning only when he had sold the stock.

Progressing to Third Level education

The most important outcome for the Connolly family, from the secondary education of their children, was the fact that Francis secured a scholarship to University College Dublin (UCD) and Una was able to undertake training in nursing in Dublin. It was a con-

siderable achievement to obtain a university scholarship at that time and it was the only way poor families could get access to third level education. These Scholarships were awarded by the local authorities and were granted on the results of the Leaving Certificate. They were specifically for families of small means. At that time, nationally, there were about 85 scholarships granted each year, with the usual number in each county of three. This was in the context of a total student population in UCD in 1943-44, circa 3,000 students, with 700 women and 2300 men. The *Nationalist & Leinster Times* of 18 September 1943 carried a small report:

> Examination Success. In the recent Leaving Certificate examinations in the Patrician Brothers Day school, Tullow the following three students were successful (incl) . . . Francis Connolly, Barrack St. Mr Francis Connolly secured first place in the Co Council Scholarships to the University, for 3 years at £75 per year. We can congratulate him and his teachers on the fine achievement.

Bea was opposed to Francis taking up the university place as she believed that it was necessary that he should find a job to earn much needed income for the family. The local priest intervened and convinced her to let her son attend college, having won a scholarship. Una also moved to Dublin, to the Royal Victoria Eye & Ear Hospital, in March 1944 at the age of sixteen, as a student nurse for two years. She received a small payment and was provided with accommodation and worked on the wards in the hospital on day and night duty. She received her nurse's certificate in March 1946, passing the examination in Opthalmic and Oto-Rhino-Laryngological nursing. Two years later, in June 1948, she moved to Doctor Stevens' Hospital for a further three years training in medical and surgical nursing and became a "Registered Nurse" in July 1951, when she was living at 63, Rathgar Road, with her family.

Frank in UCD

Frank moved to Dublin in 1943 to attend UCD and returned to Tullow during the holiday periods, when he worked to earn money in various jobs, including for Willy O'Connor, in his shop, and in the local Fenelon's mill. He attended UCD in Dublin for three

years, where he completed a Batchelor of Arts degree by summer of 1946. He then studied for a one-year, Higher Diploma in Education, while working part time in a Primary school, which he completed in 1947, with the intention of becoming a primary teacher. Charlie Haughey, the son of John Haughey, from Swatragh in south Derry, one of Martin Connolly's senior officers, who was also a scholarship student from Dublin, became a close friend of Frank at UCD. They were both involved with Republican politics in the college, and it is likely that they were aware that their fathers fought together in Derry, although on different sides in the Civil War. They were centrally involved in organising a riot at Trinity College, on College Green, on the night that victory in Europe was declared by Britain, ending the Second World War, and called VE Day. The conflict between the students of the two colleges arose because the Trinity students insisted on flying the British Union Jack from the windows in front of College Green to celebrate the victory and the Republican students from UCD objected.

During the day, opposing groups of students, wore red, white, and blue ribbons or green white and gold, as they paraded around the city streets. This developed into a physical conflict. The *Irish Press* of 9 May 1945, reported, under the front-page headline:

> BATON CHARGES TO CLEAR DUBLIN STREET
> There were many baton charges in the vicinity of College Green, Dublin, last night. Several thousand people had assembled near Trinity College and after flags had been displayed for an hour from the windows, stones were thrown at them. Many of the windows were broken. The flags were then withdrawn . . . . Gardai with drawn batons drove back the demonstrators on numerous occasions, but the fact that ten streets, inter-connected by bye-ways, converge on the college, prevented them from restraining the crowds at all points.

When Una met Frank the following day, in Bewley's of Westmoreland Street, his arm was in a sling from being hit by a garda baton and he claimed that he was on the run, because the Gardai were attempting to identify the UCD student leaders for arrest. Frank was also an active member of Clann naPoblachta, which was

formed in July 1946, by former IRA leaders, including Sean McBride and Con Lehane from Cork, who had commanded the IRA Northern Divisions in 1922, when his father Martin was a Volunteer. He may have been influenced by his uncle Willy O'Connor, who was active in Clann na Poblachta and employed him during the college holidays. Willy also involved Frank in local IRA clandestine mobilisations, during the war years, in Tullow. His uncle Willie remained a radical republican and supported the IRA 1950s, 'Border campaign'.

Meeting Madeleine

My mother, Madeleine Healy, also attended UCD for a year, during this period, as a fee-paying student. Garrett Fitzgerald and his future wife Joan were among her good friends at college. Many years later, I spoke with Garrett Fitzgerald, the former Taoiseach, about his time at UCD and his association with his future rival, Charles Haughey. He told me he was on his way to the VE Day protest, at Trinity, but changed his mind and went to visit his future wife, Joan, instead. With reference to the student leaders he claimed, '. . . you understand, they were pro-German during the war!' referring in particular to Haughey. Frank and Madeleine met at UCD, but she dropped out before completing the degree, to take up a job with the Central Bank. After they met, Madeleine did not introduce Frank to her family, in referring to their attitude to her future husband she commented:

> He was at UCD, he was doing a BA. He was a scholarship student. There were only two scholarship students, himself, and Charlie Haughey. I didn't say (at home) they were scholarship students. My mother wouldn't let me out with a scholarship student no matter who he was. "If the parents can't afford to pay for them what kind of dregs of society would they be coming up from" (she would say). That would be her attitude to scholarship. They are very nice and Christian and everything else, but scholarship students are one thing. So, I was going with somebody else when I was at University, somebody else who was doing medicine, who had lived in Kilkenny.' She continued, 'Charlie Haughey was a chancer and we were never sure

Frank and Madeleine at dance circa 1948

> whether he was from the North (of Ireland) or Dublin or where he came from. He was a complete enigma . . . He had the same jumper for all the time he was in college . . . He wasn't anything then. It was Lemass' daughter that gave him the credibility.

Frank completed the BA and then undertook a further year for a Higher Diploma, which was required for teaching and involved some time in a school classroom. Frank lived at 150 Upper Leeson Street Dublin, during this time. Rather than take up a teaching

post, because as my mother commented 'He couldn't handle children', Frank applied for a job on the ESB, Rural Electrification Scheme, which he secured with the assistance of a good reference from his future father-in-law, Dan Healy, who was a senior civil servant, at the time. Frank graduated in July 1947 but was not present for the ceremony as he had moved to Clare to work for the ESB, in the accounts and audit department. He commenced work in Dublin with the ESB on 19 June 1947, as a clerical trainee in central stores on a one-year probation, at a salary of £190 per annum. At the end of the probationary period, he was on a salary of £260. In October 1948 he was transferred to Limerick.

Even though they were in full time jobs, and in separate counties, the relationship between Madeleine and Frank continued to develop. During 1948, despite the strong disapproval of both their mother's, they decided to marry, rather than stay separate for a few years. Madeleine's mother, Peig, believed that her daughter was destined to marry someone of her own class and had identified a doctor from Kilkenny, the son of a doctor neighbour, as a suitable match and even considered Garrett Fitzgerald as a possibility. She insisted that her father Dan try and dissuade Madeleine, from marriage to Frank, and he suggested they put it off for a year, in the forlorn hope that it might never happen. He also visited the Connolly home in Tullow and returned very unimpressed with the living conditions and family prospects. According to Madeleine:

> My father, went down to Tullow where they were living and he was absolutely horrified at the way they were living and the conditions they were living in. Well his father . . . was in and out of jobs and granny (Bea) was doing her best on a kind of a . . . having boarders and that kind of thing . . . They didn't own the house they had in Tullow. They didn't want him to marry me either. They didn't want him to be in college. They wanted him out getting a job and not wasting his time in college when he could have been out . . . They didn't want him to get married. He was the only one of the family that was doing anything . . . Actually he had to support granny which nearly killed me. For about three years after we were married he had to support granny. To send her so much every week which

I took a very poor view of, but I got it back from my father . . . The conditions were just unbelievable then.

Madeleine and Frank marriage

Frank's mother Bea had a different, but no less compelling demand that he should not marry. She believed that his primary responsibility should be focussed on bringing in a steady income for his family. It is not clear what position, if any, was taken by his father, Martin, but he had experienced periods of unemployment and it was proving more difficult to secure steady work at that time in Ireland. According to Madeleine, under pressure from both sets of parents, Frank was prepared to delay the date for marriage, until he was in a more secure position in the ESB. However, rather than face a further year of separation Madeleine insisted that they would marry, during the Christmas holidays in 1948, and that she would return with him to Quilty in Clare, where he was based. On 28 December 1948 they were married in Blackrock Church by the Parish Priest. The two witnesses were Madeleine's sister Nell and Frank's brother Eamon. Their fathers occupations were recorded as Civil Servant and Businessman, respectively, which suggests that Martin may have been unemployed at the time. After a very short wedding reception in the Healy family home, at 17 Idrone Terrace, Blackrock, which was the first time that Frank was invited to the house, the happy couple left for the early train, from Kingsbridge station to county Clare, where Frank was assigned, as part of the Rural Electrification Scheme. It was highly unusual for a wife of a worker to live in the area, so they rented a cottage overlooking the sea in Quilty, which was owned by a brother of Patrick Hillary, the local doctor, who subsequently became a Fianna Fáil Minister and President of Ireland.

Madeleine travelled back to her family in Blackrock while expecting her first child. David was born on 15 December 1949, in Holles Street hospital, while Frank remained at work in Quilty, where he received the news by telegram. Frank first saw his child during the Christmas holidays, when he was allowed to visit the Healy home. In fact, Madeleine remained living with her parents in Blackrock, in Dublin, for the next two years, where her second child Martin was born. Meanwhile Frank was transferred to different towns in Limerick as the rural electrification scheme progressed,

Frank and first child David, Christmas 1949, Blackrock, County Dublin

spending short periods in the towns of Silvermines, Pallasgreen, Dundrum and Rathkeale. He returned to Dublin for promotion for six months and then applied for a transfer to Barna in Galway where Madeleine and their two children were able to join him. Tragically the third child, named Francis, died shortly after birth, on 4 March 1953, and, at Frank's insistence, was buried in a new grave purchased in Deans Grange cemetery. Shortly after this loss, Frank was transferred to Dublin and employed in the ESB audit division in Fleet Street, from April 1953, on an annual salary including bonus, of £750. They lived in the basement flat in the Healy home for over six months, while awaiting the completion of their new house at Springhill Park, Deans Grange, which was adjacent to the burial site of their lost child.

Chapter Twelve:

The Connolly's in Dublin and London

During 1949 the Connolly's had decided to move to Dublin, from Tullow. Turlough had completed his schooling, Una was training to be a nurse in Dr Steevans Hospital, Frank had obtained a well-paid job and Martin had been out of work for six months due to an abscess on his leg, which Una said was misdiagnosed at the time. As a result of his long absence the employer refused to allow him to return to work. A woman, whom Martin had befriended while on the run with the Flying Column in Hollymount county Mayo, visited the Connolly's in Tullow during 1949. Her name was Julia Adey Curran (nee Fair) and she had married a prominent Dublin doctor. She had been a nurse in Dublin in 1916 and supported the Republican cause. She was from Hollymount in south Mayo and had assisted the North Galway Flying Column, with food and medicines, while they were staying in the hills above the town, and when Martin was responsible as Medic/ First Aid for the ASU. She had also been responsible for his care in a safe house, when he was recovering from serious illness while on the run in February and March 1923, before he was transferred to Tullow. When she arrived to visit the family in Tullow, Martin claimed that his family was related to the Fairs, of Hollymount, and that Julia was his cousin, but Bea later denied this and was not happy with the connection.

According to Una they moved during 1949 into a basement flat in a large house at Rathmines Road, Upper. This was called Esker House, the family home of the Adye Curran's, a prominent Anglo-Irish family, with members who were judges and doctors in the British army. The flat was made available by Julia Adye Curran to Martin and his family. In the late 1920s Julia had married a Dublin surgeon, Dr. F. G. Adye Curran, who was in his 80s. Her husband had been a lieutenant colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) in World War One. They had one son, Oliver, who graduated as a barrister in 1952. Julia's husband died in March

1935, and she remained living in Esker House. In June 1935, three months after the death of her husband, she advertised the unfurnished basement flat for rent, describing it as five large rooms, with bathroom and kitchenette with a small front garden and yard at rere, for £10 per month rent. This provides a good description of the accommodation that the Connolly's moved to in 1949, which was clearly larger and more comfortable than their flat in Tullow. Julia also owned a row of small residences for rental, called Esker Villas, which had been converted by her husband in 1932, from the former coach house and stables of Esker House.

Martin Connolly emigrates

According to Madeleine, she and Frank paid the boat fare for Martin Connolly to emigrate to England in 1950, because he was unemployed at the time. He was aged 53 years and Bea was 58 years old. In one of his final arrangements before he emigrated Martin, on 8 May 1950, took out a life assurance policy for his wife, Catherine Connolly, with the Industrial Branch of the Irish Assurance Company, O'Connell Street, Dublin; with a weekly premium of 2s 0d. and sum assured £40.16. Bea was guaranteed a cash bonus of £10 4s. every seven years to 1978. In June 1950, with the help of a friend, he commenced a job as a storeman in the SKEFCO Ball-bearing Company in Luton, thirty miles outside London. In the absence of reliable information, it is difficult to be certain as to how Martin lived in Luton for the twelve years that he was there, from 1950 to 1962. It appears that he remained in rented rooms in houses in Sundon Park estate Luton, which had originally been built by the company Skefco, for their workers. He stayed in "digs", which was the usual way for emigrant Irish workers to live at the time. This meant that the accommodation was provided by a landlady who would have kept several single men in separate bedrooms, with a common living and dining room, where they ate their evening meals together. When I asked my father, Frank, if he had ever visited his father in England, he told me that he did once and that it was a very lonely existence between the "digs" and the pub. However, there was a large population of Irish emigrants working in Luton at the time, so there were several Irish-run social and sports outlets. According to Una, in a pique of anger or frustration, Bea destroyed all the letters that Martin had sent to her over the years. However,

some of the official documentation that remains, provides some insight to his emigrant life.

He joined the Skefco Ball Bearing Company Limited-Group Life Assurance and Pension scheme (Works Scheme No 1757) with the Certificate signed by Martin Connolly on 1 June 1950, which suggests a start date for the job as Storeman. As a manual worker in Skefko, he was a member of the National Union of General & Municipal Workers, who were based in Thorne House, London. Una retained his Union Diary for 1960, which shows his home address at 32 Tenth Avenue, Sundon Park, Luton which is different from his initial "digs", but on a street close by. In his Diary he lists the address for Kathleen Antoine, American Embassy Paris, who was Bea's niece and P J Mone's sister. The only personal addresses were Mrs Connolly Beechlawn (Bea); Michael O'Connor, Ealing (Bea's brother), his son, Frank Connolly, Sydney Avenue (Blackrock) and E Connolly, (his son) with no address. He also lists a James Kavanagh Insurance official, Boghall Rd. Bray. There are very few dated entries in the diary, but the brief details provide some limited indication of his life at that time, viz.

> . . . Easter Saturday, 16 april nb 5.30 Ritz b. breakfast £4-5; Fri. 20 May 2.45 Luton Dunstable hospital; Fri. 15 july holiday - Mon. 1 august, finish holiday nb call on Mr Grant, Mooneys Strand via Mr Camdon union secretary Dublin; Sat. 13 August advert. box 270 Luton News for Luton Insurance Agents . . . part-time evening work; notes Barclays bank Town Hall Branch Luton . . .

Final refusal of IRA pension

A year after Martin emigrated, he submitted a formal Petition on 30 May 1951 to the Minister for Defence, under the Pensions Act 1949, requesting the re-investigation of the claim that had been refused, on the ground that he was able to prove facts to establish his entitlement. The petition includes a two-page written statement, detailing his activities in the North, supported by the letter from Anthony McGurk, and in the Civil War. He offers further evidence from Castlewellan, Milltown and Tullow, which he claims was not requested with his original submission nor was he invited for interview. This petition was formally rejected and, three years later

a final letter was sent by the Department of Defence, on 14 September 1954, stating that the Referee concluded that there was not a prima facie case that he was eligible for a pension. Thus, ended a fourteen-year process, where Martin Connolly sought to secure what he termed 'compensation' for seven years of his time, and two job positions lost, in supporting the struggle for Irish freedom and independence. His applications were rejected, as were over 80 per cent of all applicants, in a deliberately restricted system which, in the early stages, discriminated against those involved on the anti-treaty side. To qualify for IRA military service pensions participants had to provide evidence of being involved in at least two major engagements. Martin clearly met this requirement. He was also refused an IRA Service Medal, which required proof of a minimum of three months membership of the Irish Volunteers or the Irish Republican Army, although he had been a member of both organisation for a total of five years. In contrast, Michael O'Connor received a severance payment in 1924 for service in the IRA and National Army, Willy O'Connor, in February 1951, also submitted a Petition after further rejection he appealed and finally, in February 1956 he received a full IRA Pension and Service Medal. Paddy O'Connor also received an IRA Service Medal. In this context, Bea Connolly was entitled to be bitter about Martin's failure to secure a pension, but it was unfair to blame him for lack of effort in pursuing the matter, he was among the eighty per cent rejected.

The Connolly's in Dublin

Bea, Una and Turlough moved to a flat at 63 Rathgar Road in May 1951. Una received her Certificate as a Registered Nurse in July 1951, when they were living at this address. Turlough had been diagnosed with severe schizophrenia when he was twenty-one years old. One of the reasons for moving to Dublin was to be close to medical treatment for Turlough. He was prescribed medicine which he had to take permanently. While he experienced a few serious psychotic incidences, which required treatment in hospital, he was able to maintain steady employment and secured consistent work in Dublin, primarily in the bar trade. He was also able to maintain a hectic social life, which is attested by the number of photographs of Turlough with different women friends. In 1955, the Connolly's moved to a large, rented house, called Beechlawn, at 330 Harold's

Eamon Connolly and friend London 1950s

Cross Road, Kenilworth. The higher rent was affordable because, by this stage Martin was still working in Luton, providing remittances to Bea from his wages. He returned home each year for the two-week August holiday and for a few days at Christmas.

Frank was employed in the ESB and had returned to Dublin and, despite Madeleine's objections, continued to provide regular payments to his mother. In 1955, Frank was promoted in the ESB and selected to study for six months in Chicago University, in preparation for the first introduction of computerisation to the ESB. During this period Madeleine moved with her five children to the basement flat in her family home at Blackrock and their house in Deans Grange was sold, prior to the purchase of a large house on Sydney Avenue, Blackrock, with financial assistance from her father, Dan Healy. Over the next twelve years a further nine children were born. During the 1950s and 60s, Una was working full time as a nurse in Dublin and Turlough was also employed. They both remained living at home, contributing to the costs. Eamon had also emigrated to England, for occasional work, and spent periods of time unemployed and homeless over there, when he lost contact

Turlough Connolly and friend Dublin 1950s

with the family in Dublin. Sometimes he would turn up at Michael O'Connor's house in Ealing in London and his wife Babs, would take care of him. On one occasion, when Martin was returning to Dublin for the annual holiday, he met Eamonn in Euston station, sleeping rough. He arranged to contact him on his return to London and when he found him again provided the fare for him to return home. Eamon suffered from severe depression all his life and experienced mental breakdown a few times.

Over the years, Una worked as a nurse in several Dublin Hospitals, including Dr Steevans', the Mater and eventually St Marys in the Phoenix Park, which was dedicated to the elderly. She was a highly skilled nurse and developed many friendships, particularly among her work colleagues. She also had a steady relationship with a doctor, and they planned to marry and move to Kerry. Tragically, after a falling-out, they parted. My mother convinced Una to try to resolve the issue, but when she contacted his family, they informed her that he had taken his own life. Bea's youngest brother, Joe, obtained a position with a large store in Dublin. H. Williams, where he worked for many years and maintained regular contact with the

Frank Connolly, University of Illinois, Chicago

family and helped financially when required. To earn a consistent income, Bea also maintained lodgers in the house in Harold's Cross, mainly the children of her or Martin's family from Ballycastle and Kilgevrin, who obtained jobs in Dublin, but also other people. Each paid for 'digs', which involved bed and breakfast and an evening meal, in shared accommodation. They were also subject to the supervision of their Aunt Bea, who, by all accounts, was a hard taskmaster and very strict.

Martin retired in 1962 and returned to live with his family, Bea, Una and Turlough, in Harold's Cross. Several of his nieces and nephews from Ballycastle, Kilgevrin and Tullow were boarding in the house after he came home. They all retain very positive memories of their uncle Martin. However, my grandmother, Bea Connolly, was considered stricter and more demanding by her young relatives. To enhance his work pension and in the absence of an IRA Pension, Martin secured part-time work selling the MH Pools, door-to-door. Other than going to Doherty's pub in Harold's Cross after mass on Sunday, he only socialised occasionally and mainly remained at home. His sister-in-law Delia also visited the house, as did Bea's brothers, sister Mary and cousins. Fidelma O' Connor was in her final school year in Dublin when Martin Connolly

Nurse Una Connolly (on right)

returned home. Fidelma really liked Martin and described him as a lovely person and a 'fine tall man'. His nephew, Martin Connolly from Kilgevrin, stayed for two years. He also described his uncle as a kind and interesting man, but he never spoke of his past life in Kilgevrin, Tullow or England, so Martin had no knowledge of his uncle's Republican involvement in north Galway.

A few years before he died, Martin suffered a stroke and remained in hospital for a few weeks. His niece Mary O'Connor, who worked as a nurse in St Lukes Hospital, visited him and reassured him 'that after the stroke he would recover'. He thanked her for telling him, because neither Bea nor Una had informed him that it was a stroke. Three years after the death of his brother John in Kilgevrin, and five years before his older brother Luke, in New York, Martin passed away in April 1973 at the age of 76 years. The Death Certificate records:

Kilgevrin wedding of Catherine Connolly April 1968. From left Delia's brother, Myra Morris, Frank Morris, Freddie Morris, Martin Connolly, Delia Connolly (nee McGrath), John Connolly, Madeleine Connolly (nee Healy), Frank Connolly, Una Connolly.

(No. J 1627) 1.04.1973 at 330 Harold's Cross road; age 76 years; Occupation, retired storeman; cause of death- Cardiovascular accident 3mins., Arteriosclerosis 5 years, Diabetes 12 years, informant Una Connolly

Despite his expressed wish, Martin was buried in Ballycastle graveyard in Mayo, rather than Kilgevrin, where his parents were buried. According to my mother Madeleine, he had asked her to ensure that he would be buried in Galway, because he could not trust his wife Bea to honour his wish. When he died Bea insisted that he be brought to Ballycastle, despite Una's reservations. When asked about why she failed to honour his final request, Madeleine said "It's what Bea wanted, and sure the wishes of the living are more important than the dead!"

The final years

After Martin's death Una took early retirement, in the late 1970s, to care for her mother Bea who was over eighty. When Una retired,

O'Connor family wedding Tullow includes Joe, Michael and Paddy O'Connor, PJ Mone, Martin, Una and Turlough Connolly

she was working in St Marys Hospital in the Phoenix Park, which specialised in the care of the elderly, so she brought considerable skill to minding Bea. Una was obviously a popular nurse, as over fifty of her colleagues signed the retirement card wishing her good luck, with very many positive comments and best wishes. She was also active in the Nurses Union, as reflected in one of the comments from a fellow nurse. 'The power struggle is over'. During the 1970s Eamon secured regular work as a film and TV extra. He appeared in major films, such as, 'The Blue Max' and 'The siege of the Widow Wilkens' and on RTE programmes, as an Equity extra, in "The Spike", in April 1977, for a payment of £7, plus 50p location fee and, in September 1977, as an extra on the first episode of the RTE soap-opera, "The Riordans". Six hours over two days, rehearsal, and recording, earned him a total fee of £15. He made numerous other appearances in "The Riordans". Eamon died in May 1985. Despite his serious diagnosis of acute schizophrenia, with the help of medication, Turlough remained working in the bar trade and was employed for many years, near home, in the Leinster Arms pub in Har-

old's Cross, however, although he was an active member of the Irish National Union of Vintners, Grocers and Allied Trades Assistants, he was made redundant without notice in the late 1980s, which was a great blow. Both Una and Turlough remined living with their mother for most of their lives. They were regularly visited by many family relations in Harold's Cross and Bea maintained contact with her various cousins.

Meanwhile, Frank was involved in his workplace in the ESB Officers Association and progressed through the ESB to management in Personnel and finally, Director of Future Strategy by the 1970s. An indication of the persistent financial pressure that continuously concerned him, is provided by a letter that he wrote to the Irish Times in August 1973, where he objects to the Coalition Government reneging on a pre-election promise to increase Children's Allowance. He points out that as a household with eleven school-going children and one at university, the income "claw-back" introduced in the recent Budget resulted in a net gain to his family of about 30p per child per annum. My father lived under an immense strain, striving to consistently earn the money necessary to provide for his large family. This also influenced their decision to sell the house in Sydney Avenue when the family moved to Glenageary and Frank took early retirement from the ESB, which helped to clear their mortgages and most other debts. He was retained by the Company to undertake short term overseas contracts with ESB International, advising on UN capital infrastructure projects, in countries such as Greece and Somalia but due to recurring ill-health he had to finish the contract work.

In their later years, Bea, Una and Turlough would make an annual visit to Ballycastle for a short holiday each summer, where they would stay with her brother Joe, in Curhoor on the Sea Road, next to her parents' home. Turlough, died at the young age of forty-eight, on the 26 July 1990, after he collapsed at the front door of their house and was brought to the Meath hospital. The following summer, at my father's request, I drove him to Ballycastle to visit his mother. It was a very moving experience, and he clearly deeply loved Bea. Their farewell was so prolonged that I assumed that he believed, given her age, that it would be the last time that he was going to see her, not realising that it was he who was very ill. The Connolly and O'Connor families celebrated Bea's 100 birthday

Frank Connolly, Seminar Director, ESB International

in Ballycastle during September 1991. She also received a cheque for £250 from the President, Mary Robinson, whose ancestors the Burke's were prominent landlords in Ballycastle. Bea was unable to attend her birthday, due to a short hospital stay, and tragically six months later, in April 1992, her eldest son, Frank, died in hospital in Dun Laoire, after a period of illness. The three sons died before their mother, who lived to the age of one hundred and one years but passed away peacefully in Dublin, in September 1992.

Una in Ballycastle

After Bea's death, Una remained living in the large, dilapidated house in Harold's Cross, rented from Laurence B Citron, who was one of Dublin's most substantial and wealthy landlords. In the true Connolly tradition, Bea had maintained a long and bitter dispute with her landlord, over many years. She was on a very low rent, which was fixed by law, and consequently the landlord refused to carry out any maintenance and repairs. When Citron applied under the new Landlord and Tenant Act, in 1982, for a significant increase in rent, Bea went on rent strike for six months, we confronted him

Kate (Bea) Connolly (nee Connor) at 100

directly and opposed him at the Rent Tribunal. He secured an increase from £35 to £116 per month, which was significantly below the demand, and he was obliged to carry out extensive repairs. This tenancy was transferred to Una in April 1994, and the landlord again submitted a case to the Rent Tribunal for an increase. However, Una was represented at the Tribunal and the outcome was a statutorily protected tenancy at a weekly rent of £48, with no increase allowed for five years, with her right to retain possession until July 2002.

Following the Tribunal Order the house was transferred to Joan Davis, sister of the landlord, Laurence Citron. The following month she asked Una to surrender possession of the house offering a derisory £2000, from her "emergency savings", with three months' notice to quit. This was rejected and a solicitor, architect and valuer were retained and Una's interest as a tenant was estimated at an £18,000 payment, for the surrender of the house. After some further negotiation Una was happy to accept a somewhat lower sum, and, just over two years after her mother's passing, with a monthly HSE pension of £300 and a lump sum from the landlord, she moved

Una Connolly at 90, in Ballycastle

permanently to live in Ballycastle, and continued living there, for almost twenty-five years, in rented accommodation. Una remained active in the local community and in cultural activities, where she made many friends over the years. She was mainly involved with the Ballycastle Writers Group, originally formed in 1994, and who produced several publications including short stories, poetry, and personal reflections. In their 2010 publication Una, in her eighties, included a few short pieces, including one entitled The Easter Lily, which reflected her abiding interest in the political perspective and priorities maintained by both her parents, over many years, in support of the Republican cause. Under the Irish version of her name, Úna Ní Chonghaile, she wrote,

> I wore my Easter lily in memory of the men who died in 1916 to make our country free in the years to come. "Not free merely, but Gaelic also. Not Gaelic merely, but free also." I began to wonder what would they think if they could come back and see what they gave their lives for? They would weep bitter tears to see the rape of the beau-

tiful countryside, the ghost estates, the one off housing, the thousands of people walking around without jobs. The schools and the hospitals neglected.

They would see the people that got into power, over their dead bodies wantonly enriching themselves, the bankers, the builders and all their friends building up property empires in other countries . . . The men who died in 1916 and did not hesitate to give their lives for their country would say to those who hesitated to obey their conscience, but put their status and assets first. "On the sands of hesitation bleach the bones of those, who, close to victory, rested, and having rested, died."

Una retained a close interest in politics and, like her father Martin, was initially involved with Fianna Fáil in Mayo and subsequently with Sinn Féin. She was also a prolific reader and visited Ballina library every week. Each year, Una would travel to Dublin to celebrate Christmas with the Connolly family, staying with her sister-in-law, Madeleine, or with different nephews. In her more advanced years Una was supported and looked after by her O'Connor cousins in Mayo and often visited her Connolly relations in Kilgevrin. In her final years she lived in a social housing facility for older residents, in Ballycastle town, until she passed away on a family visit to Dublin, on Christmas day in 2018, aged over ninety. We brought her for burial to Ballycastle, where she was laid alongside two of her brothers, Eamon and Turlough, and her parents, Bea O'Connor, and Martin Connolly.

CONCLUSION:

A personal journey

Una retained her deep love and appreciation for her father over her long life. She also reflected his political views in relation to republican beliefs, although she had reservations about some of the IRA activities in the north, during the Troubles. She visited her Connolly relations in Kilgevrin regularly and had very pleasant memories of her time there, especially when she was young. I have few direct memories of my grandfather, Martin.

I have an image in my mind of the man I met on several occasions, when I was young. He was physically tall and thin with black rimmed glasses and a ready smile, and I retain a sense of an individual who was welcoming, friendly and warm-hearted. Although I was twenty-two years old when he died in 1973, I have no strong recollection of meeting him in his final years and I was not aware that he was almost ten years living in Harold's Cross after he retired. I have no memory of his death, which is strange, and I did not attend his funeral in Ballycastle in Mayo in April 1973. The fact that Bea lived until the age of 101 years, meant that I had more contact with her when I was older, but I spent most of my early years with my mother's parents, Dan Healy and Peig Brady, and was greatly influenced by them.

In our younger years, my mother, brought her children to visit their grandmother in Harold's Cross, on a regular basis, sometimes accompanied by my father. There are several photographs recording these visits in the early 1950s, and Martin was present on a few occasions, usually during the two-week annual workers holiday in August. According to Madeleine, Bea Connolly only visited our house on one occasion and complained about the distance she had to travel. While there was constant family interaction with my mother's parents, who lived nearby in Blackrock, it was only through the continuous efforts of my mother that contact was maintained with my father's family in Harold's Cross, where I first met his cousins from Galway, Carlow, and Mayo.

A truly remarkable generation

Other than my own vague recollection of Martin, until I undertook the research for this book, I relied on the information provided by my grandmother Bea and aunt Una, for details of his life and times, their stories focussed mainly on the fact that he was involved in the War of Independence and Civil War, with only a general mention of his home place in Kilgevrin, and little on his time in Tullow and Luton. The War of Independence, particularly in Mayo, was a constant theme in conversation with my grandmother and she also retained a great interest in the troubles in the north of Ireland from the 1970s. As with many of my generation, after the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, and the subsequent outbreak of the Troubles in the six counties, I had a particular interest in Republican history and I was aware that my grandmother and Una retained a strong loyalty to the cause that Martin and Bea, and her brothers, had fought for.

In relation to the O'Connor family, I met four of Bea's brothers Paddy, Willy, Michael, and Joe, but much to my regret, I was not aware that her only sister Mary lived in London, so I never managed to meet her. I stayed with Michael in Ealing in London on several occasions. After he returned from Germany he married Margarite (Babs) Seabright, a war widow, in December 1949 and they had three children. He was a factory worker and did not retire until he was over 70 years old. I had many long conversations with him, particularly because of his interest in the northern Troubles. He remained a strong republican and derived a grim satisfaction from the regular disruption by the IRA in the city in the 1970s. He spoke about his involvement in the War of Independence but not the Civil War, other than his great respect for Michael Collins. He told me about his initial involvement in the 1939 IRA bombing campaign in London and that, subsequently, he joined the British army. When I asked him about this experience, he said he was involved in troop transport, which he described succinctly as, 'On D-Day, landing on Normandy beach; driving a truck; keeping his head down; watching the road and not stopping until he reached Berlin!'

When Michael and his family visited Ireland for a holiday in 1973, I followed them to Ballycastle, six months after my grandfather died, which was the first time I visited the town. I stayed with Bea's brother Paddy, who lived with his wife Catherine Munnelly, in the house in Corhoor. They were married in October 1939 and

had four children. Paddy worked as a postman in the town, a position he had secured when he returned from England. The labourer's cottage where they lived had been allocated to my great grandparents before 1920 and was raided by the Black and Tans in 1921. I stayed with Paddy several times when I first went to Ballycastle and he introduced me to a few of his former IRA officers, including John Deane who owned a pub and shop in the town. I arranged to visit Willy O'Connor in Tullow in the 1970s, because Bea referred to him often as being very involved in the Republican cause. He welcomed my interest and provided me with the summary of his pension statement and spoke at length about his IRA experiences and his time in America during the 1929 economic collapse. He told me that he retained an involvement in republican activity in the 1950s and 1960s. My grandparents and their relatives, given the tough circumstances that they emerged from, were a truly remarkable generation, both because of their selfless commitment to the struggle for independence and the productive family lives that they developed subsequently. It was a great honour and humbling experience to have known them.

Class distinction

Martin and Bea only visited Madeleine's parents on the day of her marriage in December 1948 and never met subsequently. This was not unusual in that they were from very different class backgrounds, with little in common, and certainly their political and social positions were poles apart. A significant aspect of this fundamental difference becomes clear as their respective circumstances are examined. While Madeleine and Frank were born in the same year only thirty miles apart, in Kilkenny and Tullow, respectively, in terms of class difference they were from two very different worlds. My mother's parents came from a wealthy middle-class background. My grandfather's mother, although a widow from a young age, owned a pub in Kilgarvin in Kerry, which allowed her to send him to a private school in Dublin and to secure a position in the Civil Service, where he was promoted to senior management. My grandmothers' parents, the Brady's of Killeshandra, owned a hotel, transport service, food wholesale business and a large farm. Her father was also a Nationalist Councillor and prominent member of the local Catholic middle class. It is no wonder that Made-

leine's mother was shocked at her decision to marry outside her class, especially to a mere scholarship student, whose parents lived in a house they did not own and where the father was unemployed. While their economic situation was of concern it is also likely that the political differences were significant. Dan Healy, because of his Civil Service position, as Chief Inspector in the Department of Social Welfare, would have ready access to senior Gardai and was likely to have checked the political background of his potential son-in-law. This is relevant because of the continuing political tensions during the World War (Emergency) period. Living in Blackrock, the Healy family had friendly connections to senior Government ministers, including the families of Michael Collins and Kevin O'Higgins. Both her parents deeply disliked De Valera and blamed him for the Civil War. In fact, his daughter Madeleine, had spent some of her school holidays during the Second World War period, with the family of Gerard Boland who was the Minister of Justice, directly responsible for the executions of Republicans in the prisons. Bea also had compelling reasons why her son should not attend university and certainly should not marry. It was an expectation among the working class that a first priority must be to your family and in circumstances of consistent poverty, with his father unemployed, Frank's immediate responsibility was to earn an urgently needed income, when he left school. Given their young age, their decision to effectively elope, against the wishes of both sets of parents was courageous but clearly caused great strain, at the time. The production of this family history has shown that my father and his family, like other working-class families at the time, survived in very difficult living conditions, with constant insecurity due to low wages, depending on poor rented accommodation and facing the constant threat of unemployment. In these circumstances it was a remarkable achievement, for all the family, that both Una and Frank progressed through education to third level. For Frank, meeting and marrying Madeleine, at the end of this journey, despite the resistance of her middle-class parents, must have also generated extremes of pleasure and acute anxiety.

A voyage round my father

In many respects, undertaking this history of my father's family is an attempt to comprehend and locate him in the real context

of where he came from, and, on reflection, to seek to understand my own relationship with him, over the forty-two years of our connection. As with many of my generation in the Fifties and early Sixties, our relationship as father and son was an often fraught and conflictual engagement. Some of this, undoubtedly, came from being the eldest of a large family, but more because fathers in the fifties performed a role that tended to be more remote, asserting authority and imposing discipline, which of course tended to generate resistance and resentment. Needless to remark, the regular clashes that arose from him demanding obedience and me asserting rights, often resulted in bitter stand-offs that required interventions from my mother, but I knew from my friends, that this was the reality of growing up at that time in Dublin. As I grew up, I certainly had a sense, as we visited and sometimes stayed in my grandparents home in Blackrock, that my father was like 'a fish out of water', not comfortable there but not intimidated either. I now realise that this was related more to class differences than to dislike and I can also now accept that some of the dismissive and sometimes superior attitudes that I developed to my father were grounded more in my middle-class prejudices than in reaction to his treatment of me. This is difficult to acknowledge, but I really regret that I was not able to find some common ground to develop a positive and enduring relationship with him. The other key factor that emerges from an examination of his early years, is that the constant insecurity and difficulties encountered within the family, must have created serious anxieties for him later in life. This is important because he and Madeleine decided to have fifteen children, even though they had to survive on a comparatively low income from his job in the ESB, which was based for most of his working life in the audit division and then personnel. It was only in his final years that he achieved promotion to the management levels of the organisation. The first seven children were put through fee paying secondary school and five went to university. Although my mother had excellent social and survival skills, it remains difficult to comprehend how this was achieved, over such a long period of constant debt and demand. On reflection, what they jointly achieved in raising and providing for such a large number was quite incredible, especially given the prevailing circumstances.

This pressure and anxiety must have taken a heavy toll on

Frank Connolly portrait

Frank over the years. However, the fact that he was promoted to such a senior level in the ESB shows his capacity to handle responsibility and stress, while the motivating factor may also have been the constant need for increased income to meet his outgoings. One main characteristic of my father, that I recognised at an early age, was his absolute integrity. He reflected this in his approach to work, in his relationships with others, in managing personal debt and in his political beliefs. At work he was actively involved with the ESB Officers Association and, in time he was promoted to the Personnel Department, where it was acknowledged, 'he always brought a human and humane approach to the concerns of his fellow workers'.

He retained the republican values of his parents and, in many respects, was part of the succeeding generation who worked through the public service to build the Republic they fought for. Happily, for the wider family, Frank got to the stage of retirement, but tragically he died too young, at the age of sixty-six. With such a large family, inevitably, there were many different perspectives and relationships with my father and while I can attempt to record a personal view it is not possible to reflect the wide diversity of experience, both good and bad. However, the eulogy presented at his funeral, on behalf of the family, captures some of this collective emotion,

> Our father was a private man, with deep moral and political convictions, yet unhasty in his opinions, sometimes to the frustration of a younger generation who sought results and change the day before yesterday . . . Frank was liberal and progressive in his views with a strong sense of justice . . . That he passed away without the opportunity to spend more time travelling and enjoying his retirement is sad. His life was full, but his responsibilities and duties were heavy . . . His courage in his final struggle was huge and his loss a shock to us all, not least his grandchildren, some old enough to recognise that he is gone and others, including those yet unborn, who will seek out and preserve his memory for the future . . . We appreciated the time and effort and pain that went into his understanding of our lives and those of our children, to whom his last years were devoted.

The process of discovery

In undertaking this family history, I have benefitted from many relevant sources but, most importantly, the process of discovery brought me into contact with several individuals and family relations who were prepared to offer information and insight. I have spoken to ten of my father's first cousins, who remembered Martin and Bea, and I met with the descendants of two of Martin's former officers, in Galway and Derry, who had provided written references to the IRA Pensions Board. This has proved to be an essential part of the research, but the most impactful and emotional aspect of this personal journey has come from visiting the various locations linked

to the family narrative. In Kilgevrin, the field where the Connolly and McGagh cottages were originally sited, now removed, and the current Connolly home; in Ballycastle, the Ring Fort in Lisbrin, the narrow two story house in the main street, now derelict, where my grandmother and her siblings were born, the cottage ruins next to the sea at Lisbrin and the graves of my great grandparents in Doonfeeney and Kilbride churchyards, and in south Derry, the villages of Gulladuff and Knockloughrim, where Martin was located during the War of Independence and where Bea and Willy O'Connor subsequently worked.

However, it was my visit to Derry that unexpectedly proved the most emotional experience and left a lasting impression. In the context of seeking to understand Martin Connolly's motivation and commitment, I decided that it was necessary to explore south Derry, where he had spent three crucial years of his early life. He volunteered to serve, most likely as a member of the IRB, in an area that was particularly dangerous. I initially called the Lavey Gaelic Athletic Club (GAC), to explain my research, and they were most welcoming. I was contacted by the grandson of Anthony McGurk, one of Martin's former officers, and he invited me to visit. I had never been to south Derry before, but what seemed a great distance turned out to be a two-hour drive, from Ballyfermot to Bellaghy, in August 2021. Over the day, I visited the major sports complex opened in 2009 by Lavey GAC and Termoneeny Community Association, where Willy O'Connor's portrait is at the main entrance and where I met the club officers and some Derry County players. I was taken to visit St Mary's cemetery in Lavey, where Anthony McGurk, his brother Frank and their parents are buried, with the McGlade family grave nearby. We went to Knockloughrim to see the former McGlade premises, where Martin Connolly worked and lived from 1919 to 1921, and Bea and Willy O'Connor also were employed. The large house and shop, converted to social housing, is in a village now almost exclusively Protestant, marked by loyalist flags and symbols. We drove through Magherafelt and Maghera, to get a sense of the size of these towns, with again displays of flags and symbols marking Protestant enclaves, including, given Derry City's tragic history, a flag with the crest of the British Parachute Regiment. Finally, we visited the Sinn Féin offices where I met some local councillors and the Member of the Stormont Local Assembly

(MLA). The Party office is in a building that was previously the Lavey GAA club and formally the site of the RIC barracks, which Martin and his comrades occupied in 1921.

The cumulative effect of these visits and meetings was very informative but the most striking and forceful impact was that everywhere there are stark reminders of the more recent 'Troubles'. In the Bellaghy Cemetery, where we visited the grave of the renowned local poet, Seamus Heaney, nearby is a monument to the leading Republican Francis Hughes, who died on hunger strike in May 1981 and the graves of the INLA leaders, Dominic, and Mary McGlinchey. Some places where there were fatalities, from armed conflict or sectarian attack, are marked with monuments and, in Gulladuff, the actual site was pointed out where the former Lavey GAA President, John Davey, was assassinated by British agents in 1989. Behind the Sinn Féin offices there is also a wall memorial, naming the twenty-eight local republicans who died from 1916 to 1923. In some ways, when you visit these sites in one day it can prove emotionally overwhelming, but in another respect, it is a reminder of the continuity of the struggle and conflict, that Martin Connolly was originally associated with, and which has continued as an inevitable outcome of the partition that he and his comrades forcibly resisted. The people of south Derry have had to live with the consequences of the partition enforced on the island in 1922 and, while the level of local and community development that has been achieved in south Derry, particularly through the Irish language, cultural and sporting organisations, is very impressive, it remains apparent that the sectarian divide continues to prevent productive cross community engagement. A century after partition, surely there is an obligation on all of us on the island to seek to resolve this division. Thankfully, in recent years, there is increased focus on reconciliation nationally and the case for integration, to build an agreed Ireland, is hopefully underway. We owe it to the memory of the previous generations of our family, recorded in this narrative, to finally realise the vision that they fought for.

Acknowledgements

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Cover Image: Family gathering at Harolds Cross Dublin 1961, includes, Martin, Bea, Una and Turlough Connolly, Joe O'Connor, Michael Anthony O'Connor, (Ballycastle), Michael O'Connor (London) with children Roisin, Kathleen and Frank. Madeleine and Frank Connolly with children David, Martin, Francis, Daniel, Freddy, Elenor, Margaret, Catherine and Madeleine.

APPENDIX ONE

The Connollys of Kilgevrin: Local family connections

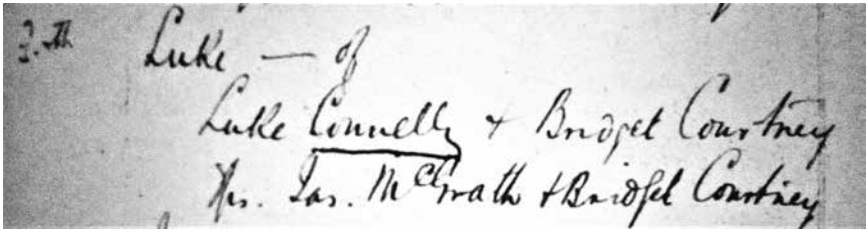
The 1901 census lists three Connolly families living in Kilgevrin townland, headed by Julia, Patrick, and Martin and these are likely to be the direct descendants of the three Connolly brothers, Luke, William and Martin. My grandfather Martin's mother, Mary McGagh, was from the adjacent townland of Liskeevy and her mother Mary Hannon was from Belmont townland. In relation to Martin's grandfather Luke Connolly, the earliest record available is the Tithe Applotment Book for 1825 which, under the name Killgeverin House Division, records eight holdings, including one for a Michael Connolly, with 6 acres of farmland and 14 acres of bog. Given the date, location, and size of the holding, this is most likely to be the father of Luke Connolly. This assumption is supported by the Griffiths Valuation of 1850, which shows the same tenancy with a Luke Connolly listed as a tenant on a landholding in Kilgevrin, while two other Connolly's, William and Martin, are also listed on the same holding so therefore are, most likely, his brothers.

The three Connolly's are tenants of the local landlord Charles Blake, who holds 278 acres from the main Landlord, Catherine Lynch. The Connolly's were sharing a holding of ten acres, divided between Luke with seven and half acres; William with one and half acres and Martin with a half-acre. Each holding has a thatched cottage and a vegetable plot, but given the small size of the acreage, they could be described as Cottiers, working for, and wholly dependent upon, Landlord Blake, who at this stage lived at Brooklawn House, in the adjacent townland of Fartamore, where he also owned extensive acreage.

The 1851 census has a listing for Luke Connolly in Kilgevrin, married to Bridget. Luke and Bridget Connolly (nee Courtney) were married in 1841 and their first child Mary died at 4 months in 1842. The Census also lists their children, Mary, Catherine (8), Bridget (5), James (4) and John born in June 1850 (Martin, aged 9

months). The Catholic Church records list a baptism on 3 May 1862 of a further child, Luke, to Luke Connolly and Bridget Courtney, with witnesses- James McGrath & Bridget Courtney.

Catholic Church Record: 3 May 1862

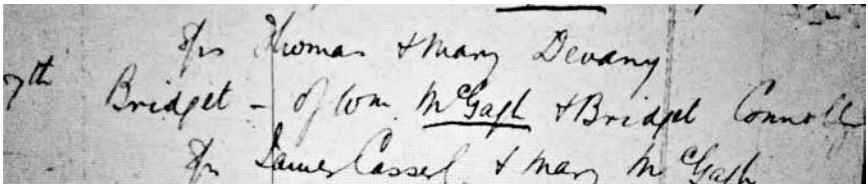


Catholic Church Baptism Record: 3 May 1862 of Luke Connolly

McGagh's of Liskeevy

The year of marriage for Martin and Mary (McGagh) was 1884, when Martin was thirty-four and Mary was fifteen. As was common at that time, this was most likely to have been a marriage arranged between Martin and, possibly, Mary's stepbrother, Thomas McGagh, who lived beside the Connolly's in Kilgevrin. By that date, Martin Connolly was living in a two roomed thatched cottage on a different site than the Luke Connolly holding from landlord Charles Blake. Two houses adjacent to each other, which had been occupied by James Ferrick and John Coen in the 1850s Griffiths valuation, with over thirteen acres shared equally, from the main landlord, Catherine Lynch, were subsequently rented by Martin Connolly and Thomas McGagh.

Martin's wife, Mary McGagh, was from the townland of Liskeevy, where, in the Tithe Books for 1825, there is a Thomas McGagh & Co. listed as renting 22 acres and 16 acres, divided between arable land and bog. The designation "& Co", which relates to the old Gael-

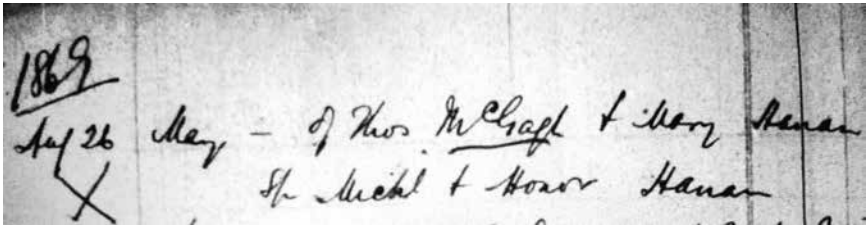


Catholic Church Baptism Record: 7 August 1865 (Billy's first wife)

ic 'Rundale' land system, determines that this is a collective holding involving a few related families. The Griffiths Valuation in 1850 for Liskeevy also lists a collective holding of 39 acres, from Landlord Catherine Lynch, in the names William, Thomas and John McGath, each with a house and land. William McGagh (Billy) was Mary's father. He was married twice. The first time to a Bridget Connolly, when their son, Thomas, was born circa 1846. The Census return for 1851 confirms that Thomas's parents were William and Bridget McGagh (nee Connolly). They lived in the townland of Liskeevy. William and Bridget also had a child Bridget, baptised on 7 August 1865, with the sponsors, James Casserly and Mary McGagh. It is likely that his wife, Bridget, died following the birth of Bridget and William then married Mary Hannon in 1866.

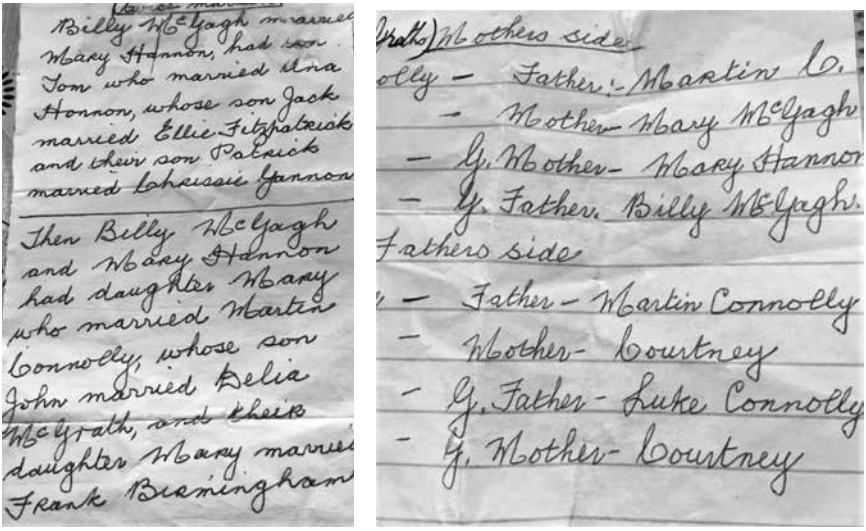
Hannon's of Belmont

Martin Connolly's maternal grandmother was Mary Hannon of Belmont townland, who married Billy McGagh. The Griffiths Valuation of circa 1850 for Belmont lists James and Thomas Hannon with 33 acres, from Landlord James D. Meldon and a John Hannon (Tom) with fourteen acres and John Hannon (Patt) with eleven acres and sharing six acres of bog. The names in brackets, listed on the Valuation return form, are to distinguish two separate families, indicating their father's names. This would suggest that they are most likely to be the two men listed in the 1851 census returns



Catholic Church Baptism Record: 26 August 1869, Mary McGagh.

and Delia Connolly's information would indicate that John Hannon (Patt) may be the father of our ancestor, Mary Hannon, and John Hannon (Tom) may be the father of Winifred (Una) Hannon, who married Thomas McGagh. The 1851 census records Mary's parents as John and Mary Hannon who married in 1838 and had three chil-



Delia Connolly family tree

dren by 1851, Michael in 1844, Mary in 1847 and Winnie in 1849. Mary Hannon was eighteen when she married Billy McGagh. Billy and Mary's first child, a son John, was baptised on the 28 December 1867. Their daughter Mary, who married Martin Connolly, was baptised on the 26 August 1869 and another daughter Winnie was baptized on 20 December 1873.

A family tree

By tracing the connections contained in the various official records we can identify the most likely ancestors located in the relevant townlands of Kilgevrin, Liskeevy and Belmont. In Kilgevrin townland, these records show:

Michael Connolly, who was born in the late 1700s, as a tenant on a small family holding in Kilgevrin of six acres in 1825.

By 1850 this holding, with some additional acreage, was divided between his descendants William, Martin and Luke;

Luke Connolly married Bridget Courtney and their son Martin married Mary McGagh from the adjoining townland of Liskeevy.

In the 1820s, in Liskeevy townland, there was a Thomas McGagh with a collective family holding of twenty-two acres:

His son William, who shared the holding with two brothers, married a Bridget Connolly, who died.

William then married Mary Hannon, from the adjacent townland of Belmont.

William McGagh and Mary (Hannon) were the parents of Mary who married Martin Connolly in 1884.

Martin Connolly and Mary (McGagh) had seven children, Luke, William, John, Mary, Martin, Delia, and Freddie.

William's first son Thomas married a Winnie (Una) Hannon, in November 1872, when he was twenty-six years old, and Winnie was thirty-six. Thomas, who was the stepbrother of Mary McGagh, lived beside the Connolly home in Kilgevrin. Thomas and Winnie had seven children who are all listed as living at home in the 1901 Census. Furthermore, it seems likely that Thomas McGagh may have arranged for his stepsister, Mary, who was twenty-three years younger than him, to marry his neighbour, Martin Connolly. While it is difficult to make sense of the range of direct family ancestral connections, listed above in the different townlands, it is possible to identify the families related to my grandfather, Martin Connolly and his parents Mary McGagh and Martin Connolly, back to the late 1700s.

The Connollys of Kilgevrin: local family connections

CONNOLLY
Michael (1770s-1840s)
CHILDREN
Luke, William, Martin

MARRIAGE
Luke and Bridget Courtney
CHILDREN
Mary (1841); Catherine (1843); Bridget (1846); James (1847); Martin (1850); Luke (1862)

MARRIAGE
Martin and Mary McGagh (1884)
CHILDREN
Luke (1889); William (1891); John (1893); Mary (1895); Martin (1897); Delia (1910); Freddie (1915)

MARRIAGE and CHILDREN
Luke to Catherine Finnigan (1919);
Martin, Mary, John and William
John to Delia McGrath (1943);
Martin, Mary, Joan, Catherine, Tommy and Sean
Mary to Mannion
Martin to Kate (Bea) Connor (1925);
Frank, Eamon, Turlough and Una
Freddie to Frank Morris;
Myra and Bridie

APPENDIX TWO

Pension Application-Petition: Martin Connolly. (A hand-written statement was included in the formal submission to the Pension Board in 1951).

'Joined Volunteers 1919 in Gulladuff Co Derry and took part in all activities during period & up to 1921, attached note herewith from Mr McGurk who was in charge in that area; Transferred to Castlewellan Co Down attached to (3rd) Northern division approx. end 1921 took part in all activities and attacked Barracks Castlewellan Forced to leave my employment and transferred to Volunteers in my home address Milltown Co Galway Mr T. Dunleavy was in charge at time of transfer Comdnt T. McGuire was at several parades during my time at Milltown Company; after some time at Castlegrove camp the split came and our company decided to carry on under Capt Fogarty Lieutenant T. Ryan and went on the run Milltown Tuam Area about end of 1922 owing to bad health had to leave and went to Tullow Co Carlow in employment as shop assistant tendered Medical Certificate and left with permission of Captain Fogarty; took part in several engagements during period Milltown Tuam area. Took part in all activities in Tullow area forming clubs helping in every way I may add that all this is from memory and dates etc approx. but I am enclosing letter from Mr McGurk Galloduff Co Derry to verify the Commencement and will forward evidence from Castlewellan & Milltown Galway- Tullow Co Carlow when and as required. Was not asked to submit any evidence when I made previous claim and did not receive any interview, I am presently employed in England but will be at home address 63 Rathgar Road Dublin from 27 July 1951 to in or about seventh August and can call for interview if necessary
Signature: Martin Connolly
Date:30 May 1951'
Present address: 52 Third Avenue Sundon Park Estate Luton Beds England

Primary sources

A special thank you to my friend, Catriona Crowe, whose work in developing Ireland's excellent archives, has greatly facilitated the production of local and family history.

The Military Archive. (www.militaryarchives.ie)

Thanks to Cecile Gordon, Noelle Grothier and Lisa Dolan who provided timely access to the relevant family pensions files, available online at mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie.

Martin Connolly, 34/SP/60388 & MSP34REF59471; Michael O'Connor, Officer record .2450 & 65888; Paddy O'Connor, MD46493; William O'Connor, MSP 34 REF 55729

Also, the Bureau of Military History-Witness Statements, war reports and images.

The National Archives of Ireland (www.census,nationalarchive.ie)

Census of Ireland 1901/ 911

National Library of Ireland. (www.nli.ie)

Tithe Applotments Books 1835

Griffiths Valuation 1850

Catholic Church records

Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive (www.ofiaich.ie)

Fr. O'Kane papers. (Thanks to Roddy Hegarty)

ESB Archive (esbarchives.ie)

Personnel records, newsletters photographs (Thanks to Tanya Keyes)

Irish News Archive (irishnewsarchive.com)

Local and national newspapers from 1738.

Milltown Heritage Group (milltown.galwaycommunityheritage.org)

Provides history of Milltown, information on townlands, local extracts from national census data, photographic archive, and community news.

(Thanks to Pauline Connolly for all her assistance and advice)

Secondary sources and further reading

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While this family history is mainly focused on Martin Connolly, of equal importance to the story is Bea O'Connor. From Ballycastle in Mayo, Bea was also active in the struggle for a Republic. She was an extraordinary woman, highly motivated, very resilient and well informed. After the Civil War, Bea and Martin, who met in Derry, married and lived in Carlow, where Martin remained politically active and Bea dedicated her energy to providing for her four children, often in poor circumstances.

In 1950 the family moved to Dublin and Martin emigrated for work in England. In her later years, any discussion about the militant activity, that she and Martin were involved with, rarely developed to a real understanding or explanation of the traumatic consequences of the war for her family, or the residual bitterness it engendered. Bea's reticence was not surprising, given the horrific experiences endured by her family members. Both the Connolly and O'Connor homes were raided and terrorised by the Black and Tans, resulting in her brother leaving Ireland for seven years, fifteen of Martin's comrades were killed in action or executed, one brother was captured and tortured, and later imprisoned for fifteen months, with many weeks on hunger strike, and two of her brothers fought on opposite sides in the Civil War. Despite these experiences, they each went on to live productive and fulfilling lives. This previous generation was truly remarkable, both in the challenges they faced and in what they were able to achieve. Our family history can provide an insight to their courage and commitment in their early years, presenting a coherent narrative of their contribution to the fight for Irish Independence and outlining their subsequent progress.