

The Whiteboys of Galway – As per the Ship Eliza 1832

Who were the Whiteboys or the Levellers in Ireland in the 18th century?

The Whiteboys (Irish: na Buachaillí Bána) were a secret Irish agrarian organization in 18th-century Ireland which used violent tactics to defend tenant farmer land rights for subsistence farming. Their name derives from the white smocks the members wore in their nightly raids.

As they leveled the fences at night, they were usually referred to at the time as "Levellers" by the authorities, and by themselves as "Queen Sive Oultagh's children" ("Sive" or "Sieve Oultagh" being anglicised from the Irish Sadhbh Amhaltach, or Ghostly Sally),^[1] "fairies", or as followers of "Johanna Meskill" or "Sheila Meskill", all symbolic figures supposed to lead the movement. They sought to address rack-rents, tithe collection, excessive priests' dues, evictions and other oppressive acts. As a result, they targeted landlords and tithe collectors.

Over time, Whiteboyism became a general term for rural violence connected to secret societies. Because of this generalisation, the historical record for the Whiteboys as a specific organisation is unclear. There were three major outbreaks of Whiteboyism: 1761–64; 1770–76; and 1784–86.

Whiteboy Acts Edit

Acts passed by the Parliament of Ireland (to 1800) and Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (from 1801) to empower the authorities to combat Whiteboyism were commonly called "Whiteboy Acts".

Ref. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whiteboys>

Who were the Whiteboys from Galway convicted in 1832

In March 1832, at the Galway Assizes, there were about 26 Galway men convicted of being a Whiteboy in that same month. I believe a lot those men convicted for whiteboy activities came from the Gort, Loughrea, Kinvara area and near the Clare border. This was during a period where many tenants were in arrears and there was a lot of unrest. At first they were called Levellers, but when other grievances concerning tithes and rents became an issue, the movement increased and the men took to wearing white shirts in their nightly raids. They then became known as Buachailli Bana, or Whiteboys.

Transportation to Australia

Many of the prisoners of the ship Eliza that departed May 10th 1832 to New South Wales, were petty criminals convicted of stealing, and petty theft, however, there were also twenty-six men from Galway who had been convicted of White Boy crimes. They were transferred to Cork from counties throughout Ireland. In Cork they were held in the Hulk moored at Cobh. From there they departed Ireland never to

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return. The voyage took 119 days. The Surgeon Superintendent was Thomas Bell. There were 2 deaths on the voyage. They arrived in Port Jackson Australia on September 6th 1832.

The following men were transported together on the "Eliza ship" in 1832:

1. John Burke, aged 30 years, single and sentenced for life to Australia,
2. Patrick Cannane aged 20 years, single,
3. Patrick Casey aged 30 years married,
4. Thomas Cavenagh aged 29 years married with 3 children,
5. Joseph Connors aged 22 years single,
6. Patrick Doolan aged 23 years married with one child,
7. Patrick Finn aged 22 years,
8. John Gantly aged 31 years married with one child sentence to life,
9. Patrick Halloran aged 26 years married with 2 children,
10. Patrick Hanna aged 26 years married with 3 children,
11. Malachy Hardiman aged 21 years, single,
12. John Heagey aged 30 married,
13. Martin Heagey aged 21 years married,
14. Patrick Hynes aged 24 years a Blacksmith,
15. John Kelly aged 32 years single.
16. Michael Kelly aged 28 years single,
17. John Larkin aged 26 years single,
18. Laurence McDonagh aged 27 years married one child,
19. John Meskell aged 24 years single.
20. Edmond Mooney aged 36 years married with one child, a Sheppard,
21. Michael Moran aged 26 years single,
22. Patrick Moran aged 21 years single,
23. John Mulville ages 32 years married with 2 children,
24. Edmond Naughton aged 30 years widowed with 4 children,
25. John Sheedy aged 26 years single and
26. Patrick Walsh aged 21 years, single.

All of these were sentenced to life in Australia.

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It must have been very difficult for parents, wives and children to see their fathers / sons transported to Australia known they would probably never see them again.

Once the men arrived in Australia they were sent to work in various areas. In the coming weeks we will be posting up stories on these convicted men from Galway and explaining how their lives worked out in Australia through the assistance of their descendants.

Connections have been made to some of the 26 convicted men's descendants and we are in the process of trying to ascertain where in Galway specifically they came from, with the hope of reconnecting with their Irish cousins!

If you believe you could be related to any of these gentlemen please contact us.

Contact email: galwayancestors@gmail.com

Facebook page: The Whiteboys of Galway - that travelled on the Eliza Ship 1832 or

facebook page: Loughrea workhouse

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