The War of Independence in South Kilkenny in History and Memory.

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Abstract

Historical works on the War of Independence (1919-1921) tend to bypass the contributions of less active regions in terms of republican activity in the country. County Kilkenny would generally be considered as a quiet area during the war and therefore little study has been done on this subject. This thesis will explore Kilkenny, but more specifically the southerly village of Mooncoin, during the War of Independence.

To investigate why Kilkenny did not see more republican activity in comparison with its neighbouring Tipperary, some socio-economic and political reasons will be considered. The lead up to the war will be examined showing the way in which Kilkenny was affected.

The republican activity in the county will be briefly looked at, focusing particularly on an ambush that took place at Sinnott's Cross which is just three miles from Mooncoin. In addition, a sociological study on the men involved in this ambush will be provided. Commonalities of what made an I.R.A. volunteer will be looked at.

The final section of this thesis will offer an insight into the memory of two of the members involved in the above mentioned ambush through looking at recorded interviews. The commemorative events for the Easter Rising in 1916 and the subsequent War of Independence in 1966 will also be examined along with the preparations in place in Mooncoin for the 2016 commemorations

List of Appendices

Introduction

The War of Independence (1919–1921) is an event that has attracted a great amount of interest both in Ireland and indeed around the world. The achievements of the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) and the inextricably linked political party, Sinn Féin, are as Diarmaid Ferriter describes as 'revolutionary'.[1] The main accomplishment during this period was the waging of a military war of independence against the might of the British Empire which forced them to the negotiating table.[2] This campaign, which was triggered by the Easter 1916 Rising, was the first attempt of Irish nationalists to rid the country of British governance since the hugely unsuccessful Fenian Rising in the 1860s.[3] Many factors contributed to the build up to the War of Independence. Michael Hopkinson, author of the most contemporary, accurate and in depth study of the Irish War of Independence explains how the Easter Rising should be seen as 'the consequence of the revolutionary developments of the proceeding four years' with the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill, 1912 being just one example.[4]

Although it would be impossible not to mention the events happening nationally during this period, the purpose of this thesis is to provide an in depth study of the War of Independence by focusing on County Kilkenny, especially on the experiences of the small southerly village of Mooncoin. Kilkenny would have been considered a relatively uninvolved county in terms of the number of republican incidences during the war.[5] Chapter One will look at some possible reasons as to why this may have been the case. It is this author's intention to investigate exactly how unaffected the county was in comparison to its neighbouring county Tipperary. Another pressing question will be answered: who was responsible for the republican activity in the county? Was it carried out by Kilkenny I.R.A. members from neighbouring counties or was the Flying Column of the west of the county responsible for most of the activity in the county after its establishment in early 1921?

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[1] Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000,* (London, Profile Books: 2005) p. 188.
[2] Ibid. p. 188.
[3] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence,* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002) p. 198.
[4] Ibid. p. 4.
[5] Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin, 1981) p. 123.

On 18 June 1921 an ambush was carried out by the 9th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade. The erection of a monument in the parish in memory of all those involved in this ambush has provided Mooncoin as an area of interest for this project. The area is also of interest as it is positioned between the very active Carrick-on-Suir, South Tipperary and the less active Waterford City. (See appendix two). Were the I.R.A. members in Mooncoin influenced by their neighbours in Carrick-on-Suir who had a high number of republican related incidences in comparison to the rest of the country, or did the Mooncoin I.R.A. follow the example of the more moderate city of Waterford?

Accounts of personal experience of I.R.A. veterans during the War of Independence have had huge influence on popular perception. Biographies of prominent figures of the conflict, most notably Tom Barry's *Guerilla Days in Ireland* and Dan Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* have allowed the reader insights into the first hand experiences of this period.[6] The reader can all but smell the sulphur of the guns after an attack on the Black and Tans wafting from the page. Personal interviews of the members of the I.R.A. in Mooncoin are available which adds to the richness of detail in this thesis. The 9th Battalion was responsible for the above mentioned ambush against Crown forces in which one British soldier was killed. Although not a particularly active group with none of its members claiming the fame that Breen and Barry have achieved, the experiences of the less well-known contributors to the war should not and cannot be ignored.

Chapter Two will give a detailed account of the build up to the ambush in question. The events of this day and its aftermath will be recalled in great detail due to two interviews of members of the 9th Battalion that were recorded in the 1960s, some forty years after the ambush. The ambush was carried out at a relatively late point of the war. This chapter will also investigate whether there are any reasons that contributed to this.

Chapter Three will look at the members of the 9th Battalion through a sociological lens. The factors that were common in I.R.A. volunteers, as demonstrated most accurately by Hart, on a national scale will first be considered. In addition, the members of the 9th Battalion will be examined and commonalities

[6] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. xvii.

will be highlighted. Their age, occupation, religion, social status, marital status, and families will be gauged with the help of an informative table. (See appendix four).

To conclude this thesis, the final chapter intends to examine how the ambush was remembered by the two men whose experiences were recorded. Does their memory conflict with any official documentation of the ambush? Does it introduce any new evidence that was not detailed in official reports? Can their attitude toward the ambush, by looking back in retrospect, offer any clues about how they felt about its outcome?

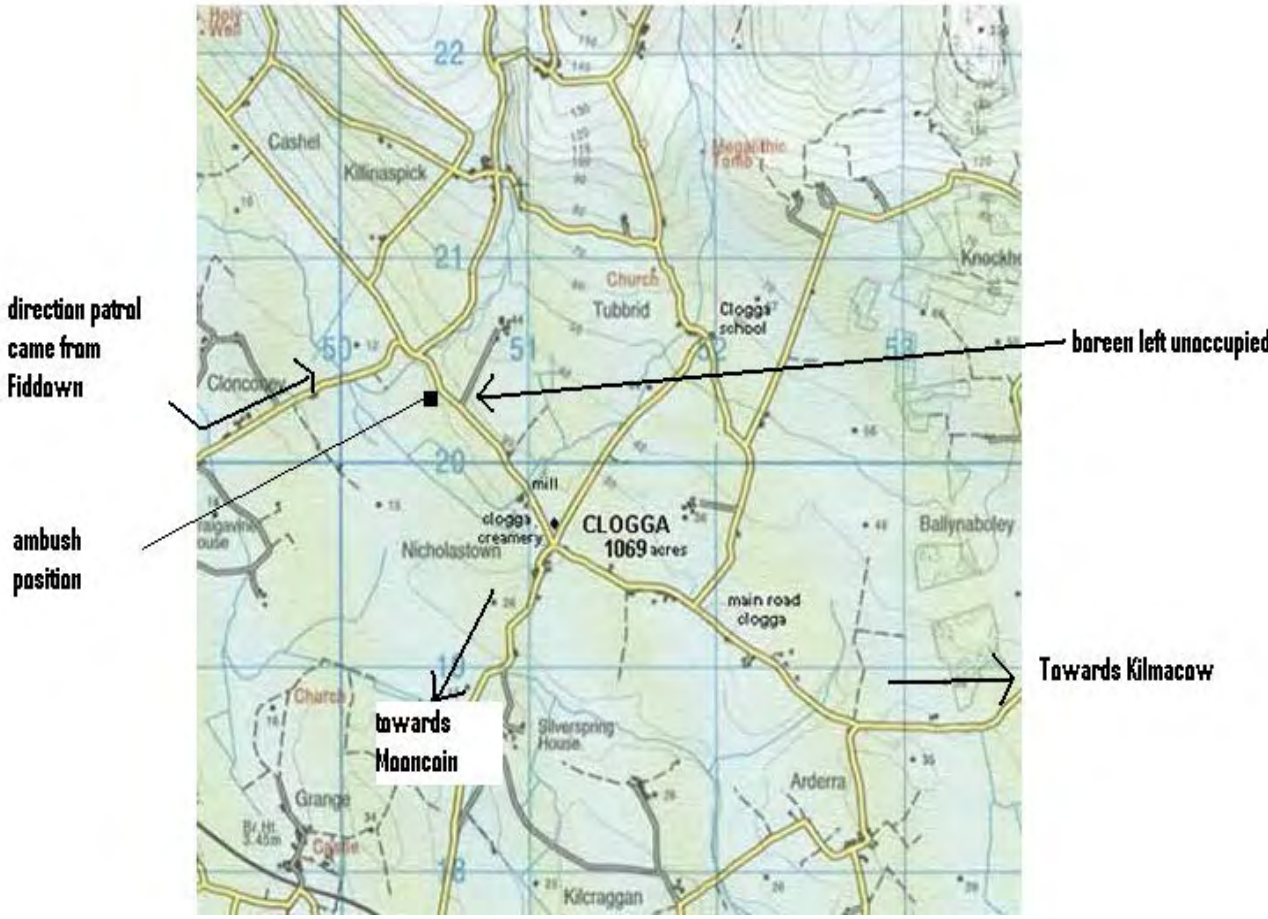
How the fallen and the veterans of the I.R.A. were remembered in the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966 offers an interesting debate. The government were shown use the event for alternative motives which will be detailed in Chapter Four. Fitzpatrick describes the various commemorative events in Ireland of the revolutionary period as 'a chronicle of embarrassment'.[7] This shall be examined here. Observations of the attitudes towards republican activity at the time will be made also.

The final part to this chapter will aim to look at what preparations are in place for the 2016 commemorations in Mooncoin with regards the erection of the monument at Sinnott's Cross. In addition, some suggestion of how 2016 commemorations may be received by the population of Ireland will be given. How has the attitude of the Irish population changed since the 1966 commemorations?

In brief, the purpose of this project is to give a detailed account of the War of Independence in South Kilkenny from its beginnings to its end. Almost one hundred years on since the break out of violence against an alien government, the memory of its events still prove to be a subject that enthrals so many, young and old alike

[7] David Fitzpatrick, 'Commemoration in the Irish Free State: A Chronicle of Embarrassment', Ch. 8.

Map of Ambush Site at Sinnott's Cross, Mooncoin.



Chapter One
Kilkenny and the War of Independence

'England must be given the choice of evacuating the country or holding it by foreign garrison, with the perpetual state of war in existence'.[8]

This chapter will analyse the involvement of Kilkenny in the War of Independence, 1919-1921. The focus of the chapter shall be on south Kilkenny with particular reference to the village of Mooncoin. The national and local military and political struggle will be looked at also.

There were many mistakes made on the part of the British government that led to the escalation of the War of Independence beginning with the execution of the leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916. Such errors saw big changes in the county such as the majority of the population shifting their support to Sinn Féin and the high rise in membership of nationalist organisations. The three stages of the war will be clearly outlined, identifying the stages that saw the most republican related activity in the county. By the time the war ended with the welcomed Truce in June 1921, the majority of the Irish population had been affected. Inevitably some areas of the country were more active in the struggle for independence than others. Some possible reasons as to why Kilkenny was less affected by the war in comparison with neighbouring Tipperary will be suggested in this chapter. Along with this, why the Mooncoin area was particularly quiet with regard I.R.A. activity will be highlighted. To get a better understanding of this area which is on the border of two other counties, the towns that are of much closer proximity such as Waterford City and Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary will

[8]Macardle Dorothy, The *Irish Republic* (Woodsfield Press: Dublin, 1968) p. 269. [taken from minutes of the first Dáil Éireann]

be discussed as opposed to Kilkenny City (see appendix two for location). According to Hopkinson, south Tipperary has been most strongly identified with the War of Independence.[9] This is in contrast with Waterford and in particular Waterford City which is described as being in the shade of its neighbouring counties of Cork and Tipperary.[10] Did the very active Carrick-on-Suir I.R.A Brigade have any influence on the 9th Battalion that over spilled across the border or was it the case that the very inactive republican movement in Waterford City was reflected in Mooncoin?

Towards a New Ireland – the build up to the war in Kilkenny

By 1916, there were many accumulating factors which led to the revolution. The prospect of ever maintaining Home Rule for the whole island of Ireland seemed remote.[11] The initial negative reaction towards those involved in the Rising had changed following the executions of its leaders. Sympathy for those killed swept across the country. A 'solemn Requiem Mass' was celebrated in parishes across the country like the one in Carrick-on Suir just days after the executions:

> The Rev. Father O'Shea's voice rang through the spacious church and his voice touched with a deeply felt pathos, awoke the chords of sympathy in the peoples' hearts.[12]

The rebels gained further respect and admiration from the youths of the countryside, towns and villages following many releases from prison in late 1916 and early 1917.[13] An example of this can be seen with the election of William Cosgrave as a Sinn Féin MP in North Kilkenny following a by-election in 1917.[14] Support for Mr. Cosgrave was not isolated to the north of the county, however. The effects of his success were felt in the south of the county also. This was seen

[9] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 115.
[10] Ibid. p. 122.
[11] Patrick C. Power, *History of Waterford: City and County* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1990) p. 230.
[12] *Munster Express*, 24 June 1916.
[13] Power, *History of Waterford*, p. 231.
[14] http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/William_T_Cosgrave

when a large procession of 8,000 people gathered following Cosgrave's election. The procession in which Cosgrave delivered a speech reported the attendance of Kilkenny men from 'every corner of the county'.[15]

A further blunder made by the British government was with the extension of conscription to Ireland on 14 April 1918 with the introduction of the Military Service Bill.[16] Since 1914 thousands of Irish soldiers had joined the British Army. It was estimated that from the Carrick district alone as many as a thousand men had joined.[17] In fact, two of the soldiers involved in the 9th Battalion attack at Sinnott's Cross were ex-British soldiers (see chapter three). Power explains that this did not indicate any love for the British Empire and that the majority were mercenaries who joined for adventure and desire for a steady income.[18] However, with conscription there was a backlash causing Irish men to join nationalist organisations such as Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers (which was to become the I.R.A), both of which became inextricably linked in the succeeding years. Anti-conscription meetings were held all over the country and pledges were signed soon after it was introduced. The people of Kilkenny signed the anti-conscription pledges, immediately after mass in some parishes, with 'quiet determination' after they were advised by their parish priests to adhere to the voice of their leaders.[19] In the Town Hall in Carrick-on-Suir on 17 April 1918, one such meeting was held pledging to resist conscription no matter what it meant:

> Speeches were delivered protesting about the conscription proposals, denying the moral right of England to conscript Irishmen and asserting Ireland's distinct nationhood.[20]

Augusteijn points out how the conscription crisis was significant as 'it changed the challenge to the authorities from open defiance of large groups of volunteers led by men who often invited arrest, to secret preparation for military conflict by a small group of dedicated volunteers'.[21] All around the country the numbers of

[15] *Munster Express*, 06 August 1917.
[16] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, p. 181.
[17] Patrick C.Power, *Carrick-On-Suir and its People* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1976) p. 144.
[18] Ibid. p. 144.
[19] *Freemans Journal*, 22 April 1918.
[20] *Munster Express*, 17 April 1918.
[21] Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Radicalisation of the Irish Republican Army: a comparative analysis, 1916-1921*, (Amsterdam, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1994) p. 85.

membership of such organisations soared. The Kilkenny Brigade which was established a year earlier in May 1917 saw a high level of new volunteers joining who would have been considered moderate supporters of the nationalist cause previous to this.[22]

In late 1918 Sinn Féin were to get the opportunity that they had been hoping for in the shape of a general election. A new age had come for the Sinn Féin Party. The widespread support of the generally younger voters for the party had grown even further following a successful campaign. Their objective was to win as many seats as possible 'with the avowed intention of never taking their seats in Westminster but founding an independent assembly in Dublin'.[23] In north Kilkenny Cosgrave was re-elected but in the south of the county a new MP James O'Mara was elected. The Irish Party's candidate in the southern constituency was Matthew Keating but labour did not have a candidate for the reason that it would have been 'in interest of James Connolly'.[24] Though the Bishop and therefore allegedly 'all the priests' were to pledge their support to Mr. Keating, this could still not secure victory.[25] There were many public meetings arranged for the Sinn Féin campaign in the bigger villages across south Kilkenny such as Callan and Thomastown. Fr. P.H. Delahunty, a Mooncoin native was president of the South Kilkenny Executive of Sinn Féin.[26] He was a curate in Callan parish and was instrumental in large numbers of the parish joining the local Irish Volunteer and Sinn Féin clubs.[27] The meetings that took place were much animated and enthusiastic than those of the Irish Parliamentary Party's and it was clear that Sinn Féin were winning the votes of the young people. The Sinn Féin victory was confirmed on 28 December 1918 with a 6,830 voting majority in south Kilkenny.[28]

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[22] Jim Maher, *The Flying Column: West Kilkenny and East Tipperary* (Dublin: Dublin Geography Publications, 1987) p. 2.
[23] Power, *Carrick-On-Suir and its People.* p. 231.
[24] Maher, *The Flying Column,* p. 5.
[25] Ibid. p. 3.
[26] Ibid. p. 3.
[27] Ibid. p. 3.
[28] Ibid. p. 3.

The War in Kilkenny

The War of Independence began on 21 January 1919 when two R.I.C policemen were shot dead in an ambush at Soloheadbeg, Co. Tipperary.[29] On the same day the newly elected Sinn Féin Party met at the first Dáil Éireann in the Mansion House in Dublin.[30] The war can be roughly divided into three stages. The first, in 1919, involved the re-organisation of the Irish Volunteers as a guerrilla army.[31] Maher describes how securing arms and explosives was the main concern of battalions around the country.[32] Fr. Delahunty knew Michael Collins well and the 7th Battalion which was located around the Callan area was supplied with arms from I.R.A headquarters in Dublin.[33] Other methods of securing arms included collecting rifles and shotguns from the inhabitants in their own area, as instructed from headquarters. It was through this method that the 9th Battalion in the Mooncoin area secured the majority of their guns.[34] There was little activity reported during this stage in the county but it was during this period that many young volunteers learned tactics of guerrilla warfare. According to Hopkinson the 'extremely limited and episodic nature of the hostilities during the rest of 1919 scarcely merits the term 'war'. There was nothing inevitable about the gradual escalation of the conflict which by the autumn of 1920 consisted of comparatively widespread guerrilla warfare'.[35]

It soon became clear that other methods were needed to secure a sufficient amount of weapons in order to carry out an 'intensive armed struggle against the British Forces'.[36]A decision was made to attack R.I.C Barracks throughout the country, and this stage from early spring to July 1920 is roughly the second stage of the war. The Kilkenny men, again of the 8th Battalion Callan Brigade captured the Hugginstown R.I.C Barracks on 8th March 1920.[37] The attack was successful with all members of the R.I.C surrendering. One constable was killed, reportedly after an explosive intended for his attackers blew up before he could throw it

[29]Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 25.
[30] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 184.
[31] http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Irish-Republican-Army#The_War_of_Independence
[32] Maher, *The Flying Column*, p. 12.
[33] Ibid. p.12.
[34] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[35] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 25.
[36] Maher, *The Flying Column*, p. 14.
[37] Ibid. p. 19.

through the window.[38] The attackers succeeded in acquiring six rifles, two revolvers, and a large quantity of ammunition and a box of Mills Bombs.[39] It was only the third attack of its kind in the country to that date.

Because of their vulnerability, the British Government began to close down many rural isolated barracks. Once vacated the I.R.A would burn them down to ensure that they could never be returned to by the R.I.C again.[40] During this period the Piltown and Fiddown Barracks were vacated due to their vulnerability.[41] A further sixteen barracks in the whole county were burned down by local I.R.A units during this period also.[42] As the Mooncoin Barracks had been vacant some time before the troubles of the war had begun, members of the 9th Battalion helped other local battalions when needed.[43] Several members were asked to help dig trenches to prevent reinforcements from coming from Waterford prior to an unsuccessful attack on the Mullinavat Barracks, the village north of Mooncoin.[44]

The most violent and serious stage of the war was roughly from August 1920 up the Truce in July 1921.[45] There were a number of contributing factors that resulted in the escalation of violence during this period. Firstly, the deployment of the much hated Black and Tans and Auxiliaries to the country caused further tension and increased 'tit-for-tat' reprisals through out the country.[46] Martial law, which allowed for the internment and execution of I.R.A soldiers without trial by jury was introduced through most of Munster in December 1920 and was further extended to Kilkenny in January 1921.[47] This action heightened a considerable amount of tension. The arrival of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries did reduce the number of recorded disturbances in the county initially. However, by May 1921 the amount of disturbances in the county had risen to its highest figure yet to over seventy outbreaks.[48]

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[38] Ibid. p.20.
[39] Ibid. p.20.
[40] Power, *Carrick-On-Suir and its People,* p. 146.
[41] Ibid. p. 146
[42] Maher, *The Flying Column,* p. 24.
[43] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[44] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[45] Power, *Carrick-On-Suir and its People,* p. 147.
[46] P. 234.
[47] P. 122.
[48] CI Monthly Reports, April-June 1921 (CO 904/102- 7).

Along with the introduction of martial law and the extra military deployed to the country, the establishment of several Active Service Units (ASU) or Flying Columns as they were more commonly known around the country greatly increased violence. The order for the formation of the columns first came in early October 1920 and although General Headquarters (GHQ) liked to give the impression that they would command the Flying Columns around the country, it was difficult for them to be anything but locally run.[49] The Flying Columns were necessary for full-time active service in the guerrilla campaign.

In January 1921, the 7th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade began to organise an ASU in the west of the county along the Tipperary border.[50] The majority of its members were from the Callan and the surrounding areas. Many had taken part in the Nine-Mile-House ambush on the Kilkenny-Tipperary border in the last month of 1920 and as a result were 'permanently on the run'.[51] In April 1921 Seán Hogan's active service unit of South Tipperary, amounting to over thirty members, assisted the Callan Flying Column but continued with little success in Kilkenny until the Truce. Apart from the west of the county along the Tipperary border, there was little other successful attacks in the south of the county apart from the Sinnott's Cross ambush.

Understanding Kilkenny County and Mooncoin's Contribution to the War of Independence.

Generally Kilkenny is considered as one of the less active counties in the war. Garvin supports this stating that the 'the most inactive was Wicklow, followed by Kilkenny and Kildare in Eastern Leinster'.[52] In comparison with its neighbouring county of Tipperary the reputations of the brigades and columns of the IRA in Kilkenny have suffered.[53] For example, the one hundred republican related reports of violence that occurred in Tipperary in September of 1920 can be compared to Kilkenny's sixty-nine in the same month. However, instead of suggesting why there was no further activity in the county during the revolution,

[49] The GHQ issued *The Irish Republican Army,* Strickland Papers, Imperial War Museum: General IRA Order, 4 October 1920, O'Malley Notebooks, P17b/127.
[50] Maher. *The Flying Column* , p. 79.
[51] Ibid. p. 79.
[52] Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics,* p. 123.
[53] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence,* p. 123.

some possible reasons as to why there could not have been more disturbances than there was will be given. The possible social, economic, and geographical explanations will support this view. The Mooncoin area will be focused on also to suggest why there were no further republican related disturbances by the 9th Battalion.

According to Morrison, a big event on 9 December 1920 helps explain why County Kilkenny had less activity than its neighbouring County Tipperary.[54] The Kilkenny Brigade suffered a major set back with the arrest of Ernie O'Malley in Inistoige.[55] O'Malley had been sent to Kilkenny to help organise an attack on the Auxiliary headquarters of the South East stationed at Woodstock House which was described as an 'impregnable fortress'.[56] When arrested in the safe house he was staying in, he was carrying a notebook that contained the name of the local brigade and battalion officers, many of whom were subsequently arrested. In his book, *Another Man's Wound,* O'Malley was very critical of Kilkenny. The chapter covering his arrest begins as so:

> County Kilkenny was slack. It was difficult to meet officers; dispatches took a long time to travel. The brigade council met in the city to elect a brigade staff. Poor material I thought. No direction from above and no drive.[57]

It appears that rather than helping Kilkenny, O'Malley did the complete opposite and was solely responsible for huge blow suffered to the county.

Economic factors played a major role in I.R.A. membership. It appears that agriculture played a substantial role in deterring possible I.R.A members. When describing the less active counties, Hopkinson categorises Kilkenny, Kildare, Kings County and Queens County as the 'richer farming areas'.[58] Farms were differentiated by the type of soil. For example, good fertile land would differ greatly in value to bog land. Appendix one shows the soil quality in county

[54] Eve Morrison, *The War of Independence* – taken from a lecture given at the Kilkenny Arts Festival, 4 August 2012.
[55] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence,* p. 123.
[56] Morrison, *The War of Independence,* , 4 August 2012.
[57] Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Dublin: Anvil Press, 2002) p. 305.
[58] Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin : Gill and Macmillan,1988) p. 10

Kilkenny with the majority of it being Soil Association A. This soil was predominantly well-drained grey-brown podzolic soil highly suitable for tillage crops and/or grassland production.[59] Walsh describes that this soil particularly 'amid the mediaeval farm villages of Pollrone, Doornane, Portnascully, Luffany, Aglish [Mooncoin townlands] and on to Grannagh near Waterford City was highly fertile'.[60] The extent of the worth of the land for farmers of the Mooncoin area can be further observed when taking the amount of land and its value into consideration. Of the 15, 757 statue acres in Mooncoin (the lowest of all the district electoral divisions in Kilkenny), the value of land and houses in the area amount to £17, 749.[61] The Listerlin district north of Mooncoin which covers the Mullinavat area was recorded as having almost double the amount of land at 29,737 statute acres with its worth being almost the same as Mooncoin's at £17,178.[62] Fitzpatrick describes how 'the entire Irish revolution was conducted in an atmosphere of agricultural euphoria' due to the inflation of all agricultural prices as a result of World War 1.[63] As wartime prices did not fall until 1921, the agricultural producers like those in Mooncoin stood to gain the most during the Irish revolution and boom years. The possible reason why there were not higher numbers joining the I.R.A in the county and more specifically Mooncoin could be attributed to the sacrifice that it would require. Of the 1,483 farmers and farmer's sons in the south Kilkenny district area (over half the entire occupations) the risks were perhaps too high when money could be made.[64] According to Walsh, the middling to strong farmers (over thirty pounds and less than fifty pounds valuation) were greater in pockets of the Iverk Barony which includes the Mooncoin area.[65] Knowing that there was a higher proportion of larger farmers in Mooncoin might help explain why there was not a larger number involving themselves in republican activity. This is supported by Hart, claiming that the IRA

[59] Walter Walsh, *Kilkenny: The Struggle for Land*, 1849-1882 (Kilkenny: Walsh Books, 2008) p. 48.
[60] Ibid. p. 50.
[61] Jordan, *The Census of Ireland 1821-1911*, 1911 Census ,Area and Houses and Population, County of Kilkenny, Table III.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921*, p. 184
[64] Jordan ,Area and Houses and Population, County of Kilkenny, Table III.
[65] Walsh, *Kilkenny: The Struggle for Land*, p. 53.

tended 'not to draw its members from the highest or lowest in society, but from the middling ranks in between'.[66]

Farm labourers made up almost one quarter of occupations in the south Kilkenny district.[67] They were virtually unrepresented in the revolution as a whole and 'were perhaps economically too dependent on lager farmers to join the I.R.A.[68] Another reason why they may have been unrepresented in the Mooncoin area in particular is that a large number of these farm labourers were also fishermen during the fishing season which lasted from May to September.[69] As the 1911 census was carried out in April a definite number of fishermen in the area cannot be established as their occupation is returned as labourers. It's very likely, however, that during the summer months of the war the fishermen were much too dependent on making as much money as possible in the short space of time during the summer fishing season.

Geographically the majority of the disturbances during the war were in the west of the county along the Tipperary-Kilkenny border around the Callan area due to its strong battalion in the area. This brigade had been working in conjunction with the South Tipperary Brigade since its establishment in 1817.[70] It was common that republican activity in more disrupted areas would overspill the borders of their less active neighbours. This can be seen in the police reports from county Waterford detailing activity on its border with Cork in October 1920: 'Waterford showed little improvement during the month though it was principally the western portion if the county adjoining Cork which was unsatisfactory'.[71] The overspill of the Tipperary border did seem to reach across the border to Piltown and Fiddown but not to Mooncoin, however. The Piltown Battalion were joined up with the Carrick-On-Suir 8th Brigade since its establishment in 1917.[72] The connection with Fiddown was especially important for the Carrick Brigade as both

[66] Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies*, p. 358.
[67] Census Special Publications 1911, Area and Houses and Population, County of Kilkenny, Table III.
[68] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 360.
[69] Power, *Carrick-On-Suir and its People*, p. 140.
[70] Maher, *The Flying Column*, p. 2.
[71] CI Monthly Reports, October- December 1920 (CO 904/102- 7).
[72] Power, *Carrick-On-Suir and its People*, p. 146.

the bridge connecting Waterford and Tipperary to Kilkenny and a busy railway station were ideal targets for the I.R.A's sabotaging tactics.

Mooncoin on the other hand seems to be less effected by the republican movement, much like Waterford City, which is just seven miles away. John Redmond, Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) sat as MP in Waterford City from 1891-1918.[73] This Redmondite stronghold was the only constituency in the south of Ireland where an IPP candidate was elected in the 1918 general election. During the election campaign Thomas Treacy of the 8th Battalion Callan brigade recalls several members of Sinn Féin clubs from across the country coming to urge support for Sinn Féin, and to try and prevent Sinn Féin voters of Waterford from being 'grossly intimidated and terrorised'.[74] Several clashes between the two parties were reported during voting day.[75] The Redmondite tradition appeared to have lasted during the war with little activity of any note reported. The high circulation of the Waterford *Munster Express,* which was moderate in tone, in the Mooncoin area would support claims that it was identified more with Waterford City than Carrick and certainly more so than Kilkenny City. Power further claims that the lack of activity was not altogether due to loyalty to the crown or to Redmondism but 'it owed much to the lack of appeal to workers and their immediate need for better social conditions as they felt patriotism did not provide bread for tomorrow'.[76]

There are other reasons why rural areas such as Mooncoin did not have more activity in the war. Everyday contact with propaganda, as material experienced in towns and cities would have been a contributing factor that helped the I.R.A. be more organised and of bigger volume in such places. Hart supports this claim that in towns:

> Exposure to ideas, propaganda, and organisations would have been more continuous and intense than in the country. Newspapers, political literature, public meetings, and club rooms were all more immediately

[73] http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/John_Redmond
[74] Bureau of Military History, Statement by Witness by Thomas Treacy, doc. no. 1,093, p. 13.
[75] Power, *History of Waterford,* p. 231.
[76] Ibid. p. 243.

available. Working in offices, shops, or workshops meant constant contact with fellow workers, customers, and neighbours.[77]

Rural areas such as Mooncoin, on the other hand, would have been less likely to come across such material on a daily basis. Apart from brief daily meetings at the creamery for example, farmers would have been comparatively isolated from such other contacts. This, however, did not mean a certain lack of republicanism or patriotism in the countryside. Town and city areas were more likely to be policed and garrisoned more and heavily reported on and as a result, 'urban rebels were more likely to show up in arrest and prison records and newspaper accounts'.[78] Along with having a high percentage of republican organisations in towns, the oppositional presence of these organisations would have been of a high percentage also whether it be the 'home rule party machine, ex-soldiers, unionists, or the police'.[79] As a result of such divergence in close proximity of each other caused arguments, street fighting, intimidation, arrests, raids, and surveillance which may have helped to 'radicalize urban republicans to a far greater extent than their country comrades'.[80] Because of the geographical position, rebels in rural areas were less likely to come across such tension in the countryside where they knew who their neighbours were.

The 9th Battalion I.R.A. in Mooncoin did not appear to have been isolated from the other battalions in the county and this is seen with reports of its men helping out other battalions with small jobs such as trench digging and watching guard.[81] However, there are some suggestions that members of other battalion's ideas and help were not welcomed. Ned Aylward Officer Commanding (O/C) of the 7th Battalion (Callan) Flying Column suggests a slight bit of unwillingness on the part of the 9th Battalion to follow orders from other I.R.A. men. Aylward describes how after the Garryricken House escape on 12 March 1921 and the Moonarch Wood ambush near Callan on the 13 of April 1921 himself and other men of the column travelled south to 'hang low' for a while.[82]

[77] Hart, 'The Social Structure of the I.R.A', p. 226.
[78] Ibid. p. 226.
[79] Ibid. p. 226
[80] Ibid. p. 226.
[81] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[82] Bureau of Military History, Statement by witness Edward J. Aylward, document no.908, p. 27

They travelled towards the Kilmacow area which is the neighbouring village to Mooncoin where a patrol between upper and lower Kilmacow travelled daily. He recalls how they got in touch with the 9th Battalion 'and explained to them that we wanted none of the booty we hoped to capture there, we just wanted to start something in the area and this seemed like a suitable opportunity'.[83] However, it is reported that the two senior officers of the 9th Battalion, Ted Moore of Kilmacow and Jack 'na coille' Walsh of Portnascully 'objected vehemently' to the plan. [84] Aylward adds that 'they told us to go home again: that they weren't ready in the area to start any fighting.'[85] It could be suggested that the 9th Battalion were clannish in their way of operating and would only carry out activities in their own time. Along with this it appeared that the 9th Battalion did not want any trouble in the area and were afraid of reprisals. After a meeting to organise an ambush in the area with the 9th Battalion, James Leathy recalls Aylward's words: 'we had better get away Jimmy, we are not wanted in this district. Pat Walsh is alright but the others don't want any trouble around here'.[86] This can be supported by the fact that the 9th Battalion was the last of all the battalions in the county to be established which suggests reluctance for any violent activity in the area.[87] The fact that the ambush was not carried out until 18 June 1921, less than one month before the Truce, also highlighted their relucance.

Conclusion

Knowing the background of the War of Independence in the country and more specifically in the county of Kilkenny is vital in understanding how the men of the I.R.A came to achieve a new Irish Free State. The build up to and the three stages of the war are detailed clearly with specific attention drawn to South Kilkenny. The county has been shown to have less activity as compared to Tipperary and possible reasons as to why this was have been given through looking at the economic, geographic and social aspects. Statistically Kilkenny has been regarded as one of the quieter counties during the war. This, however, should

[83] Ibid. p. 27.
[84] Maher, *The Flying Column*, p. 104.
[85] Bureau of Military History, Statement by witness Edward J. Aylward, document no.908, p. 27.
[86] Bureau of Military History, Statement by witness James Leathy, document no.1,335, p. 22.
[87] Maher, *The Flying Column*, p. 104.

not take away the fact that a large number of Kilkenny men risked their lives and their freedom by carrying out daring attacks, raids and ambushes to contribute to the fight for freedom in their country.

Chapter Two
The Ambush

'The only way of starting a war was to kill someone, and we wanted to start a war, so we intended to kill some of the police whom we looked upon as the foremost and most important branch of the enemy forces.' - Dan Breen on the Soloheadbeg Ambush[88]

The previous chapter looked at what was happening around the county of Kilkenny during the War of Independence. It explored reasons why the county as a whole and the Mooncoin area in particular, were generally quieter than its neighbouring county of Tipperary. Although Mooncoin was particularly quiet, one significant ambush took place at Sinnott's Cross just three miles from Mooncoin on 18 June 1921 (see appendix two for location). The opening quote from Dan Breen highlights the necessity his unit felt in starting the war. Two years later the 9th Battalion succeeded to play their part in the fight for freedom and continue the war on these 'enemy forces'.[89] This chapter will explain how and why the ambush was carried out at such a late stage of the war. Details of the ambush recalled by members of the 9th Battalion shall give first hand accounts of what happened on the day in question along with its aftermath.

[88] Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin: Anvil Press, 1981) p. 50.
[89] Ibid. p. 50.

Before the ambush

As already stated the ambush happened in mid-June 1921. Although this was during the most violent stage of the war, it must be considered as late for the first major ambush of this unit. Prior to this, the battalion as a whole did not carry out any noteworthy attacks. 'Big' Pat Walsh of Clogga was involved in the burning of Piltown courthouse in 1920 while other members of the battalion helped keep watch outside.[90] Other members were involved in small jobs such as burning bridges in Fiddown and digging trenches in Mullinavat.[91] Hart describes volunteers such as those in the 9th Battalion as 'reliable men' who could be called upon to perform occasional tasks.[92]

'Active men' then were regularly engaged in actual operations and were often members of flying columns.[93] It appears that generally the members of the 7th Battalion (Callan) Flying Column were not welcomed in the area when they suggested possible plans for ambushes and attacks with members of the 9th Battalion in May 1921. The Column came south to start something in the area by planning an attack on the Kilmacow R.I.C. barracks but they were met with a poor response. The possible reasons why the 9th Battalion were reluctant to take up arms namely for fear of reprisals and lack of preparation have already been discussed in Chapter One. However, Edward Halley who was a member of the Column stated 'the local companies were not prepared to co-operate'.[94] He added that the 9th Battalion had already been planning an attack on an R.I.C patrol and feared that any activity in this already quiet area would ruin what plans they had:

> They were then planning and preparing for an attack on an R.I.C patrol - a job which they subsequently successfully carried out- and which they were jealous to do themselves and they feared that any prior activity in the area would spoil their plans.[95]

[90] Narrative Interview with Martin Murphy.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Hart, 'The Social Structure of the I.R.A', p. 209.
[93] Ibid. p. 209.
[94] Bureau of Military History, Statement by witness Edward Halley, document no. 1642, p. 13.
[95] Ibid. p. 13.

Whatever the reasons for the local companies refusing the Column to carry out an attack on the barracks, the ambush at Sinnott's Cross was carried out the following month.

The Ambush

Perhaps the local I.R.A men were right to refuse the men of the Flying Column as a great deal of time was needed to prepare. They had little or no ammunition and only a few shotguns to take on the heavily armed Crown forces. To make matters worse, they would have had only the bare minimum of military training. As can be imagined, the first priority was to secure ammunition. Martin Murphy described how they made buckshot cartridges by mixing powder from rifle bullets with cut up nails and steel.[96] In order to hide the ammunition, Jack Larressy of Larressy's Shop in Clogga constructed a timber box within which the ammunition was placed and subsequently hidden in the bogs in Clogga.[97]

A further problem was to establish when the British troops would actually arrive, as the rebels did not want to wait for several hours in a ditch, before realising that there would be no one to ambush. There were two regular patrols in the area. The first came from Lower Kilmacow, passed through Upper Kilmacow and continued on to Clogga Creamery. Here, they used to meet with a similar patrol, which came from Fiddown, through Cloncunny and Sinnott's Cross. However, the British would frequently alter their routine, sometimes not coming at all. As Jack 'na Coille' recalled:

> The military and RIC were stationed in Fiddown and in Kilmacow. A patrol passed occasionally from Piltown to Clogga. That was their route. We knew the times they passed. Sometimes it would be at 6 or 7 a.m. but it was always before dinnertime or earlier.[98]

As it happened, the British did not come 'before dinnertime or earlier' and the men had to wait until approximately 3 o'clock that day.

[96] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Interview with Jack 'na Coille' Walsh

Regardless of what time the patrol passed it was essential for the local I.R.A men to 'draw out' the patrol to the area.[99] This was achieved by causing several disturbances in the area. The type of guerrilla warfare that had developed during the war made the countryside, which was unknown to many of British forces, but well known to local volunteers, very dangerous for police patrols to venture out.[100] Here, the rebels could attack their enemy and escape through the different fields and boreens that made up the area around Sinnott's Cross. Two disturbances were known to have taken place to attract the attention of the military forces. It is known that they stole a teapot from the house of a woman with pro-British sympathies in Ardera, and a clock from the Menels family of Clogga the night before on Friday 17 June, knowing full well that the theft would be reported to the British.[101] Also on the evening before the ambush, Jack Larressy was assisted by a young Mick Shea of Clogga in bringing the box of ammunition from the bogs to a safe place close to the ambush site.[102] At the age of 17, Shea was one of the youngest to have such a direct involvement in the ambush, although several of the scouts would also have been in their teens. The men involved must have begun to feel nervous come midnight on Friday as they were to be in their positions by 3 a.m.[103] Their early arrival at the ambush site would ensure that no one would see them travelling to Sinnott's Cross. They went, for the most part, through the fields and, when they eventually arrived, every man who had volunteered for the ambush was there. A final meeting was held when everybody had arrived to finalise their strategy. One concern that arose at this meeting was an unguarded boreen, which ran approximately 100 yards away from the ambush site. Jack 'na Coille' wanted to station with some men in order to broaden out the ambush area and to ensure that the British would have no-where to run once the shooting started:

> We put our scouts out. We neglected one position. It was a boreen going up from the road but they left this position unoccupied although I wanted

[99] Ibid.
[100] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 200.
[101] Interview with Jack 'na Coille' Walsh.
[102] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[103] Ibid.

> to occupy it when we arrived at the ambush site. The others were afraid that someone up this boreen could be seen by people passing the way.[104]

The boreen was left unoccupied for fear that the men would be spotted by the any of the families in the area of pro-British sympathy. It was to prove a costly decision. The men began their long wait for the British forces after the meeting had ended.

It was essential that every volunteer stayed dead silent while they lay waiting, as any sound from them could alert the passing patrol of their presence. One factor that was on the rebel's side was the weather. The country had been experiencing a heat wave during the month of June and South Tipperary was recorded as having temperatures as high as twenty-five degrees in the shade.[105] This proved a vital factor to the rebels in their long wait for the patrols. Jack 'na Coille' remembered that, as the day wore on, they began to suspect that the British were not coming.[106] The exact time the patrol passed is uncertain but it is estimated at 3 p.m.

Around this time the patrol numbering seven men travelled from Fiddown, up through Cloncunny and over the little stream that still runs through Sinnott's Cross.[107] As they rounded the bend, the IRA began to steady their weapons, and prepared to fire after being informed by their scouts of the coming patrol. Years later Jack 'na Coille' recalled the plan for the ambush:

> We would wait until the British cycled into the ambush bend; when the last soldiers was in sight, one of the rebels (more than likely Dick Brennan of Knockanure) was to fire the first shot, thus giving the signal to the rest of the men to shoot.[108]

Brennan was positioned in small boreen just past Sinnott's Cross (different from the boreen that Jack 'na Coille' wanted to occupy). As the British cycled past and through the ambush area, Brennan's gun jammed, possibly due to the

[104] Interview with Jack 'na Coille' Walsh.
[105] *Irish Independent*, Friday 17 June 1921.
[106] Interview with Jack 'na Coille' Walsh.
[107] *Munster Express*, 25 June 1921.
[108] Interview with Jack 'na Coille' Walsh.

ammunition getting damp while it was being stored. After a few moments had passed, and realising that there was something wrong, Pat 'the Fox' Walsh took the initiative to fire the first shot.[109] Immediately after the first signal was fired the rest of the rebels began firing. The exact number of rebels in this attack is unknown but it is estimated at about twenty men. It is thought that a lot of these men's guns jammed either due to the ammunition they were using or simply the untrustworthiness of their rifles. Without doubt the few seconds that were lost due to Brennan's gun jamming were vital to the survival of all but one Black and Tan. The patrol continued to cycle on, dodging the hail of bullets that was being fired at them. After passing the ambush site, they set up a defensive position in the boreen which Jack 'na Coille' had wanted staffed earlier.[110] Phil 'White John' (Phil Hennebery), an ex-Irish Guardsman and Ted Moore jumped over the ditch to the fatally wounded solider and cut the rifle strap from his shoulder and captured his rifle while the other British soldiers took their position in the boreen.[111] Both the men escaped unharmed. The same could not be said for the Black and Tan Solider, Albert Bradford, who was only 21 at the time, had served less than 10 months before being shot at Sinnott's Cross.[112] A second solider had been injured in his left arm although the I.R.A members were unaware of it at the time. [113] There is no mention of this wounded soldier in the county inspector reports however.

It soon became apparent to the rebels that their untrustworthy ammunition and rifles were no match for the shotguns and grenades the British soldiers and they began to withdraw. Their retreat had been planned well in advance: some of the men travelled south to Mooncoin; others (under the command of 'Big' Pat Walsh) escaped to Kilmacow, more again travelled up the Glen to Kilnaspic and the safety of its hills. The man travelling to towards Kilmacow had a narrow escape as Martin Murphy explained:

> All our lads got away in different directions. Some went in the direction of Mooncoin. I went in the Kilmacow direction under Pat Walsh. We

[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[112] CI Monthly Reports, April-June 1921 (CO 904/102- 7).
[113] Interview with Martian Murphy.

> had to cross the Kilmacow police patrol's track that was taking them to Clogga and we had only barely crossed when the police patrol swept along and we had to throw ourselves down.[114]

The men who travelled up the Glen to Kilnaspic suddenly found themselves in trouble also. A British soldier who had been straggling behind the patrol hid while the ambush was in full swing. When he saw the men making their escape up the glen along the stream towards Kilnaspic he fired down at them from the road:

> Dick Brennan and some of the lads moved back towards a little stream. They were moving along by the stream when the policemen who did not come into the ambush position at all came out of cover because he heard the firing stop. He saw Dick Brennan and the fellows with him and he fired down on top of them.[115]

The rebels were too far away however for his ammunition to reach and he soon abandoned his mission.

When they were sure to it was safe to leave the boreen after the I.R.A. retreated, the British soldiers took Bradford's body to Clogga Mills.[116] Later they commandeered a creamery lorry, which was travelling from Fiddown to the Creamery in Clogga, and brought the body to Fiddown Barracks.[117] It would seem that Bradford's funeral escort was ambushed in Carrick-on-Suir the following day, although not by the Mooncoin Battalion. This ambush resulted in the death of another soldier, Private Smith of the Devon Regiment.[118]

The Aftermath

After all the preparation for the ambush, the wait was finally over for the men of the 9th Battalion. Few of its members would have returned home after the

[114] Ibid.
[115] Interview with Jack 'na Coille' Walsh.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] *Munster Express*, 25 July 1921.

ambush as they and their families would have been known in the area as republicans and sympathetic to the nationalist cause. Denis O'Driscoll, captain of the 8th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade recalled men of the 9th Battalion escaping across the river Suir to Co. Waterford:

> Later that day, which was a Sunday, I got another dispatch, this time from Mooncoin, stating that there had been an ambush the previous night and that some of the men who had taken part in the ambush had crossed the River Suir on to the County Waterford side. This dispatch asked me to try and stop any British military that might be using the bridges in Carrick-on-Suir.[119]

It is likely that the men went to I.R.A safe houses across the river. It appeared that the Mooncoin Battalion was in close connection with the East Waterford Brigade when it came to safe houses. For example, The 'na Coille' Walshs of Portnascully Mills, Mooncoin, had kept Nicholas Whittle, Jim Fitzpatrick and Mickey Wyley of the East Waterford Brigade for six weeks in the previous spring. From this evidence it seems likely that strong connections and friendships were established which allowed the 9th Battalion members to do likewise in County Waterford.[120]

The British were furious at the death of their colleague. However, it seems that there were no serious reprisals against those living in Clogga and the surrounding areas. Police reports of the attack state that the area was well searched by the Crown forces determined to find out any information they could. [121] Narrative accounts from various locals living in Clogga at the time explain that Mr. Menel, who had been so badly treated by the IRA, managed to persuade the soldiers to refrain from burning Clogga down.[122] He promised them that none of the local Clogga men were involved in the war, and that any reprisals would only play into republican hands.[123] In 1962, following the death of Ned 'na Coille', the

[119] Bureau of Military History, Statement by witness Denis J. O Driscoll, document no. 1159, p. 8.
[120] Bureau of Military History, Statement by witness Nicholas Whittle, document no. 1,105, p. 99.
[121] CI Monthly Reports, April-June 1921 (CO 904/102- 7).
[122] These narrative accounts from various locals of Clogga, many of whom were related to the battalion members, were recorded by Hilary Óg Delahunty, secretary of the Sinnott's Cross Monument Committee between 2003 to 2004.
[123] Ibid.

Munster Express recalled Portnascully Mills (house of Ned and his brother Jack at the time) being 'burned to the ground as a reprisal during the troubled period'.[124] Although it is possible that this happened following the ambush, it is probable that it was due to some other republican activity either prior to the ambush or during the Civil War as it was not mentioned in Jack 'na Coille's' interview on the ambush(see appendix three).

Mr. John Kinsella of Barabehy and formerly of Cloncunny, who was just 11 at the time of ambush, recalled a story of Black and Tan soldiers coming to his house just half an hour after the ambush. He remembered a young man, John Connors, who was helping to paint a barn for Kinsella's father was knocked off the scaffolding and hit with a rifle by the soldiers.[125] Following this, Mr. Kinsella's brother, Mikey was hit in the mouth with a grenade which broke his lip and some teeth.[126] At the time there was a young woman visiting from England called Mai Walsh who saw what was going on outside she came out of the house. Kinsella remembered her words clearly: 'Oh you pig, you mustn't hit him, he is only 16…we are English and we will complain about you when we get back'.[127] To which the soldier replied: 'F**k you and England' and grabbed her by the pony tail, swung her around and then hit her on the back of the neck with the rifle.[128]

The ambush was a major success for the local I.R.A. The rebels escaped without any fatalities or injuries. The police report of the ambush released from Dublin Castle differs slightly from the narrative of the rebels, however. It reported as follows:

> On the 18th [of June] a cycling patrol from Fiddown Station was ambushed near Clogga by about 30 rebels. One constable was shot dead and one constable wounded. The rebels were, however, driven off with it is

[124] *Munster Express*, 18 May 1962.
[125] Interview with Mr. John Kinsella recorded by Hilary Óg Delahunty on 17th November 2003.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

believed casualties to them. The R.I.C captured from them five guns and 200 rounds of ammunition and lost one rifle carried by the deceased.[129]

The exact number of rebels could not have been known to the Crown forces as the hail of bullets fired at them was their only way of estimating. As the report had to be sent to their superiors in Dublin Castle the number of rebels may have been exaggerated as a way of explaining the loss of one constable. This can be supported by the fact that there were no rebel casualties but the report adds that the reason why the rebels retreated was believed to be because of casualties. The *Munster Express* reported that later in the evening after the ambush around eight or nine o'clock a number of shots were fired from the Fiddown direction.[130] Was wasting ammunition to make it appear that there was a bigger fight than there actually was an example of the usual tactics of British soldiers?

Conclusion

A detailed account of the events that led up to the small but successful ambush at Sinnott's Cross have been given in this chapter. First hand experiences of the 18 June 1921 and the following days have been told with great detail due to the clarity of memory from two of the battalion's member's. The arrival of several members of the Flying Column who were planning an attack in Kilmacow was unwelcome. Had this attack gone ahead, however, the plans for Sinnott's Cross would have had to be abandoned. The plan to draw out the patrol to the ambush site proved successful, although the time was much later than expected. The ambush itself was also successful with one unfortunate member of the Crown forces being killed and another seriously wounded. The story of these ordinary rural men of the 9th Battalion who risked their lives on that warm summer's afternoon has been recalled in as much detail as possible. Questions of who exactly these men were, what they worked at, and what their situations at home were, shall lead us on to the next chapter and will help to understand further the men of the 9th Battalion.

[129] CI Monthly Reports, April-June 1921 (CO 904/102- 7).
[130] *Munster Express*, 25 June 1921.

Chapter Three

A Social Profile of the 9th Battalion I.R.A.

'The fight for Irish freedom has passed into the hands of the young men of Ireland, and when the young men of Ireland hit back at their oppressors it not for an old man like to cry "Foul".'[131] – Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, 1919.

Social factors that made a typical I.R.A volunteer provide an interesting insight into the lives of these ordinary men. This chapter will focus particularly on the members of the 9th Battalion of the Mooncoin area. The opening quote from Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe highlights the fact that the War of Independence was in fact a young man's war. Along with the average age of the volunteers, their marital status, their social status, their occupation and their religion looked at in an effort to understand why so many militarily unskilled men took up arms to fight against trained Crown forces. The data from eighteen known members of the battalion involved in the ambush will determine whether these volunteers fitted the profile of a typical volunteer as typified by Peter Hart. Other aspects such as volunteer involvement in nationalist organisations and family connections to agrarian disturbances or Fenian allegiance will be examined also.

[131] M. J. MacManus, *Éamon de Valera* (Chicago: Ziff Davis Publishing, 1946) p. 85 [quote from Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, 1919].

Fitting the profile? – The commonalities of volunteers.

'Rowdies and persons of no standing in the locality'- this is a report from the county inspector of Kilkenny describing the men of the I.R.A in Kilkenny in 1918.[132] This view that most of the rebels were 'unruly and unskilled youths with little social status and too much time on their hands', would have been the general consensus among soldiers, policemen, and the I.R.A.'s other enemies during the War of Independence.[133] This section will profile the men that made up the majority of the I.R.A during this period. Just as Hart has focused on Cork, Fitzpatrick on Clare and Coleman on Longford, the men of the 9th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade will be examined to see if there is any truth behind the descriptions given by the I.R.A.'s enemies.

Three quarters of the I.R.A. rank and file volunteers were in their teens or twenties while only five per cent were over forty.[134] They tended to be unmarried and unsurprisingly Roman Catholic, given the seventy four per cent Catholic majority of the country and the fact that most Protestants were unionists.[135] With regard to occupation, the I.R.A. drew members from every walk of life and from every sector of the Irish economy.[136] However, men of certain non-rural professions such as carpenters, plasterers, bricklayers, painters, drapers' assistants, creamery workers, shop assistants, clerks, barbers, and teachers tended to contribute more rebels to the I.R.A.[137] Skilled tradesmen and artisans were also twice or three times as likely to be found in the IRA as in the general population.[138] This is seen in predominantly rural Kilkenny even, when two volunteers were killed and one seriously wounded in the Coolbawn ambush in the Castlecomer area.[139] Three of these men, although coming from rural areas were shop assistants in Kilkenny City and Thomatown.[140] Hart's evidence shows that

[132]CI Monthly reports, July 1918 (CO 904/102- 7).
[133] Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies- Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923*, (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1980) p. 141.
[134] Peter Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army' in *The Historical Journal* vol. 42, no.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p. 216.
[135] Census Special Publications 1911, Area and Houses and Population, Ireland.
[136] Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army', p. 210.
[137] Ibid. p. 210.
[138] Ibid. p. 210.
[139] *The Kilkenny People*, 25 June 1921.
[140] Ibid.

less than half the volunteers worked on farms, as sons or as employees, which is a significant deficit in a predominantly agricultural economy.[141] The claim that the I.R.A were unruly youths of no social standing therefore has no basis as the majority were young, educated men in white collar jobs.

Although farmers were not the majority of the overall population of I.R.A. rebels, they did make up the majority of members of the 9th Battalion. Appendix four shows the social profile of the men that were involved in the ambush. It may come as no surprise that fourteen of the eighteen known rebels were farmers given that Mooncoin is a predominantly rural area. Two were ex-British soldiers, one a miller and the other a pharmacist. Though a certain farm sizes were not important in joining the I.R.A., due to their sociability in clubs such as the G.A.A, the members tented to come from similar backgrounds. According to Hart, the volunteers tended to come not from the higher or lower classes of the farming scale but from the middling classes.[142] The average I.R.A family farm would have been substantially larger than average and the farmer tended to be significantly better off than many of his neighbours.[143] This is supported examining the table (appendix four) which shows that all but one of the volunteers lived in first or second class houses. The only volunteer who lived in a third class house was an ex-British soldier which suggests that this man would not have joined the volunteers had it not have been for his military experience. The average amount of outhouses on the farms was eight.[144] In addition, none of the volunteers came from the village of Mooncoin which comprised only small farms predominantly under ten acres.

The ages of those involved in the ambush range from twenty one to thirty six and their average age was twenty six. All but one of the participants was born in the 1890s and they were a product of new 'youth culture' in the country.[145] The oldest participant was Dick Delahunty. A possibility why Delahunty took part in

[141] Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army', p. 212.
[142] Ibid. p. 212.
[143] Ibid. p. 212.
[144] Census Records 1901 and 1911.
[145] Peter Hart, 'Youth culture and the Cork IRA', in David Fitzpatrick, ed., *Revolution? Ireland, 1917-1923* (Dublin, Trinity History Workshop; 1990) p.20.

this rebellion could have been because his brother, Fr. Delahunty who was curate in Callan, was a prominent supporter of the nationalist cause and was widely known throughout Kilkenny.[146] All of the men in the 9th Battalion were unmarried and lived at home. The majority were farmer's sons rather than farmers. Being young and single meant that they had less to risk. Property, money, and security, like marriage, lay in the future for these young volunteers.[147] After the war it was common for I.R.A. men to marry female relatives of fellow volunteers and this was seen in the 9th Battalion with a sister of Martin Murphy marrying Dick Delahunty.[148]

The I.R.A was a predominantly Catholic organisation. Various statements from members of the I.R.A. show that they were practicing Catholics. The county of Kilkenny had a 95.8% Catholic population in 1911.[149] The Crown forces were aware of the high level of religious devotion of volunteers and often searched parishioners after mass in the hope of finding wanted I.R.A. men or at least pistols on suspected I.R.A. members. The *Kilkenny People* reported such a search in Piltown in May 1921:

> On Sunday last Crown forces in 3 lorries arrived at Piltown and surrounded the church during Mass. All members of the congregation both male and female were searched as they left the building. A female searcher accompanied the party. No arrests were made.[150]

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[146] Fr, Delahunty was an openly active member of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. He was president of the South Kilkenny Executive of Sinn Féin and was involved in organising public meetings for Sinn Féin during the 1917 by-election and the 1918 general election. His was friend with Michael Collins and secured arms from him for the 7th Battalion during the War of Independence. Relatives of Fr. Delahunty recalled how after saying mass in Callan he would ask the young men to stay back and say extra prayers but would instead bring these men out to the fields with their hurleys to practice military tactics. *The Kilkenny People* reported in January 1921 that he was sent to prison for 2 years in 1921 after being found guilty on five counts of being in possession of documents that was 'likely to cause dissatisfaction to his majesty. Later that year he was involved in the biggest ever jail break in the country's history in Kilkenny. He later moved to America where he was a prison chaplain for many years. He died in Kansas in 1955.

[147] Hart, 'Youth culture and the Cork IRA', p.20.

[148] Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003) p. 149.

[149] Jordan, *The Census of Ireland 1821-1911*, 1911 Census, Religious Professions, Table XXIX, p. vii.

[150] *The Kilkenny People*, 9 May 1921.

As seen in the previous chapter, the men of the 9th Battalion were a close knit group, clannish even, and seldom let any outsiders in. Within the battalion there was three sets of brothers (Ned and Jack 'na Coille' Walsh, James and Pat Walsh and Dick and Mick Brennan). The men would have grown up together and would have attended either Clogga or Carrigeen National Schools. In addition, all of the battalion members were part of the strong G.A.A club in Mooncoin and so would have seen each other regularly. Chapter One also highlighted the number of ex-servicemen who fought in World War 1 becoming volunteers. Coleman describes the I.R.A. as having a 'strangely ambiguous attitude' to ex-British soldiers.[151] In fact, Tom Barry, one of the most renowned I.R.A. leaders first heard of the Easter Rising when serving with his regiment in Mesopotamia.[152] GHQ encouraged the recruitment of ex-servicemen as their military experience was very helpful in training the amateur volunteers.[153] Ted Moore, Battalion Quartermaster of the Sinnott's Cross ambush recalled that, if it hadn't been for Henebery's military experience during the ambush, all would have been lost for the rebels although it can not be said with any certainty what exactly he did to deserve this accolade.[154]

The G.A.A. and the Gaelic League- Did cultural nationalism have an influence on I.R.A. membership?

The link between cultural nationalism and republicanism has long been argued by many historians. Did the G.A.A. or the Gaelic League in Mooncoin have a profound influence on I.R.A. membership? Hart argues that the young men of the late second and early third decade of the twentieth century were the product of the first generation of cultural nationalism.[155] Theirs was the first generation to have Irish widely taught in schools. Irish was being taught in Gaelic League Clubs in the Kilmacow and Mooncoin areas by Seán Kavanagh who was the organiser of Sinn Féin in Kilkenny during the 1917 by-election.[156] However, there does not seem to be any strong evidence that being a member of the I.R.A. and learning the

[151] Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution,* p. 155.
[152] Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland* (Dublin: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1995) p. 1.
[153] Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution,* p. 155.
[154] Narrative account from relatives of Ted Moore recorded by Hilary Óg Delahunty.
[155]Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army', p. 226.
[156]Bureau of Military History, Statement by witness Seán Kavanagh, document no. 524, p. 2.

native language went hand in hand. In fact, not one of the members of the I.R.A. spoke Irish.[157] The language in 1911 had been declining in the county for many years despite organisations such as the Gaelic League's best efforts. In Carrick-on-Suir a number of annual feis's which promoted traditional song, dance and storytelling 'as Gaeilge' appear to have taken place in the years leading up to the war.[158] Many children from Mooncoin National School were involved every year also. Yet despite this evidence that there was no shortage of the promotion of Irish or Irishness, the amount of speakers did not seem to increase. Of the 74,962 people living in Kilkenny in 1911, just 3,266 spoke Irish or English and Irish which was just 4.4% of the county's population.[159] This was a decrease of 302 Irish speakers in the county since 1901.[160] It must be taken into account also that the native speaking population were dying off with the inevitable decline of the language that had been happening since the 1830s.[161] Whelan explains that 'although the Gaelic League did succeed in re-awakening some interest in the language as a living tongue, that interest focused on the location and ages of the last native speakers' rather than promoting it to new learners.[162]

The G.A.A. and republicanism share a similar story. The local club was then a substantial part of many of the volunteer's lives since it had been established thirty years previous. However, Hart dismisses the claim that nationalist organisations such as the G.A.A. had any influence in men joining the I.R.A.[163] As the table shows, every member of the 9th Battalion was also a member of the local G.A.A. club. This is hardly surprising given their club had been hugely successful since its establishment in 1886.[164] Often officers of local battalions tended to be successful athletes within the club.[165] This can be seen with Ned and Jack 'na Coille' Walsh, leaders in the ambush, who were very popular in the club and whose father was a nationally acknowledged weight

[157] 1911 Census Records.
[158] *Munster Express*, 2 August 1913.
[159] Jordan, *The Census of Ireland 1821-1911*, p. 681.
[160] Ibid. p. 561.
[161] Fr Colman Ó Huallacháin, *The Irish and Irish- A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Relationship Between a People and Their Language* (Baile Áth Cliath, 1994) p. 21.
[162] William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (ed.s), *Kilkenny: History and Society*, p. 479.
[163] Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army', p. 226.
[164] David Kinsella (ed.), *The Mooncoin Story*, p. 1.
[165] Terence Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare during the War of Independence' in *Kildare: History and Society*, Nolan, William and McGrath Thomas (ed.s) (Dublin: Geography Publications, 2006), p. 644.

thrower.[166] The club undoubtedly gave the members of the I.R.A. opportunities to meet and form and organise events which allowed them to go unnoticed by authorities. Instead of the G.A.A. contributing to the number of republicans in the country, the opposite applied. Because the volunteers were republicans they were more likely to play hurling or/and Gaelic football. Hopkinson explains how the I.R.A local units were formed due to 'a network of close colleagues with similar backgrounds and cultural influences, so often the Gaelic League…and the G.A.A.'[167]

Motivating factors in joining the I.R.A.

So if the Gaelic League and the G.A.A. were not motivating factors for joining the I.R.A., what factors did motivate these ordinary rural farming men to their I.R.A engagement? Coleman states that traditional family connections to political activism were substantial reasons for I.R.A. membership. The Fenian movement of two generations past was still fresh in the minds of many I.R.A members. Ted Moore, battalion quartermaster of the 9th Battalion, had strong family connections to Fenianism. His father, James Moore, was remembered in the *Munster Express* as a 'prominent figure in the Fenian movement.'[168] Following his death in 1919, Mr. Moore was accorded a military funeral.[169] Several other members of the battalion were also remembered as 'great Gaels' and from 'prominent I.R.A. families' in various obituaries, match reports etc. in local papers.[170]

According to Augusteijin, another factor that seemed to have motivated I.R.A. membership was the absence of a parent.[171] Half of the members of the 9th Battalion had either a father or a mother missing. It seems the absence of parental control would allow these young easily influenced men to join nationalist organisations more freely. More responsibility was on sons that were the oldest in the family also. If sons were to inherit farms it is more likely they had more to

[166] Kinsella (ed.), *The Mooncoin Story*, p. 8.
[167] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence,* p. 98.
[168] *Munster Express*, 12 August 1932.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Various accounts of *the Munster Express and The Kilkenny People* of members of the 9th Battalion.
[171] Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerilla Warfare,* p. 179.

lose and therefore less likely to take part nationalist organisations. The older members of the battalion also tended to be the oldest in their families.

Conclusion

An interesting social analysis of the members of this south Kilkenny battalion has been provided above. Common patterns such as common age, religion, marital status, etc. emerged which showed the battalion was similar to the majority of rural I.R.A. battalions. Although the G.A.A and the Gaelic League were not motivating factors in joining the I.R.A., the similar interests and common sympathies for nationalism that the members of these clubs had did motivate I.R.A membership. Factors that were noticeable in I.R.A membership included generational Fenian support in families. An example of which was seen with Ted Moore. The events of the ambush stayed with many of member's minds until their deaths. How the events are remembered is important to many in the local area the extent of which will be shown in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Memory and Commemoration

They shall be remembered for ever, They shall be alive for ever, They shall be speaking for ever, The people shall hear them for ever.[172] –W.B Yeats from 'Cathleen Ní Houlihan'

(Above is an image of the monument erected at Sinnott's Cross to commemorate those involved in the ambush).

The memories of those who lived through the Irish revolution are invaluable to historians studying this period. Their worth can be seen in the witness statements recorded by the Bureau of Military History of members (usually officers) of the I.R.A. The Bureau was an official history project founded by the Fianna Fáil government in January 1947 to collect first hand accounts and documents about Ireland's revolutionary period. It attempted to record an interview with a member of the 9th Battalion but failed. We do not know which member of the battalion this was but we are told that he 'fought off' the attempt to record his accounts perhaps not wanting to re-awaken his experiences of the war years.[173] Interviews that were taken, however, of Martin Murphy and Jack 'na

[172] Seán O'Casey, 'History into Drama' in *Commemorating Ireland, History, Politics, Culture,* Eberhard Bort (ed.) (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004) p. 231. Taken from W.B Yeat's *Cathleen Ní Houlihan.*
[173] Morrison, *The War of Independence,* 4 August 2012.

Coille' Walsh, sometime in the 1960s proved vital for this project. (See appendix three). This chapter will begin by looking at how the events of the ambush were remembered by these two men. It will examine if their memory was conflicting, romanticised or even misremembered.

In addition, the commemorative events of 1966 which celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising and the subsequent War of Independence will be looked at. The new wave of commemorations in 2006 will also be discussed. Furthermore, the sculpture that has been erected commemorating the men of the Sinnott's Cross Ambush will be considered along with investigating whether the 2006 commemorative events prompted the Sinnott's Cross Committee's establishment.

Memory – The Interviews of Martin Murphy and Jack 'na Coille' Walsh

It is interesting to examine records of a first hand rebel experience. Has their memory been distorted over the period of forty odd years since the war? Do they give accounts that conflict with any other records of the attack? Do they shed any fresh light on the events?

The interview with Martin Murphy, although quite short, provides material for consideration. In his interview he estimated that there were 12 to 13 men in the police patrol ambushed at Sinnott's Cross.[174] Yet, both the police reports and the newspapers claimed that there were just seven men in the same police patrol.[175] This conflicting evidence suggests that either the police reported a smaller number to lessen the embarrassment of the failed attack or Murphy's memory was an impression formed in the heat of battle. It is difficult to know which one of these reports is the most accurate. However, considering the police report was probably completed by someone who may not have even been at the ambush, it is likely that Murphy's figure may be more accurate. Furthermore, the *Munster Express* and *The Kilkenny People* published the reports of the attack that came from

[174] Interview with Martin Murphy.
[175] *Kilkenny People*, 25 July 1921 and CI Monthly Reports, April-June 1921 (CO 904/102- 7).

Dublin Castle which ensured that only the police's take on the attack was printed. This can be supported by the number of rebels in the attack. As seen in Chapter Two, the report estimated 30 rebels. If we are to believe the report the patrol of seven men would have been attacked by 30 rebels. This can be compared to Mr. Murphy's more likely account of a 12 or 13 man patrol being attacked by 19 or 20 rebels. This would make the battle more of an even fight for the police forces rather than being overwhelmingly outnumbered as the case was made out to be.

Jack 'na Coille' Walsh's interview did not bring any such evidence to light. However, the way in which he remembers the event is revealing. When looking back on the day, the reader can sense a hint of regret. He certainly did not regret taking part in the ambush but he did seem to regret the outcome. Walsh suggested the fact that the boreen that was left unoccupied was the difference between the ambush being a major victory rather than just a success. It seems that he was regretful of this, especially since he was the one who proposed to cover the boreen:

> We neglected one position. It was the boreen going up the road but they [the ambush leaders] left this position unoccupied although I wanted to occupy it when we arrived at the ambush site. The others were afraid that someone up this boreen could be seen by people passing the way.[176]

In hindsight, the ambush would have been more successful had it not have been for the ammunition also, according to Walsh. The cartridges the unit made themselves were unreliable and during the ambush many of them failed to work. Also the gun powder made by the rebels was stored in a bog, got damp and was subsequently ineffective in the ambush. This appears to be a regret of his: 'A lot of our cartridges were not effective. But for that more of the patrol would be killed.'[177]

[176] Interview with Jack 'na Coille' Walsh.
[177] Ibid.

1966 Commemoration- Were They Remembered?

After the War of Independence, many of the 9th Battalion members took the anti-Treaty side although few actually fought in the Civil War.[178] These narrative accounts come from various locals of Clogga, many of whom were related to the battalion members. Many were involved in Fianna Fáil after the revolutionary period. Ted Moore was head of the Mooncoin Fianna Fáil branch in the 1930s.[179] Eddie Doyle, Ned 'na Coille' and Ted Moore were interned during World War II due to their involvement in the I.R.A.[180] Others went back to working on their farms or in Tommy Fitzpatrick's case working in his pharmacy.

Others again emigrated, like the two Walsh brother's from Clogga. Pat 'the Fox' Walsh went to Leeds and James 'the Soldier' Walsh emigrated to America and lost all contact with his family and Ireland. By 1966, almost half of the members of the battalion had passed away including the battalion leader: Ned 'na Coille', the Battalion O/C; 'Big' Pat Walsh and the Battalion Quartermaster Ted Moore. Unfortunately, we have no accounts of how the surviving members of the old Mooncoin I.R.A. felt about the commemorations of 1916 and the subsequent War of Independence. In Dublin however, an 'event of heroic grandeur' was held for the 'heroes' of the revolution .[181]

Huge commemorations took place locally and nationally in 1966. Roisín Higgins explains that although the commemorations were to celebrate the lives of those who took part in 1916 and the War of independence. They were also a way of showing the world how modern Ireland was becoming:

> The jubilee thus represented an opportunity to celebrate the legitimacy of the state and to assert the good character of its

[178] Narrative accounts recorded by Hilary Óg Delahunty, secretary of the Sinnott's Cross Monument Committee between 2003 to 2004.
[179] *Munster Express,* 1 April 1932.
[180] Taken from these men's obituaries in the *Munster Express,* 12 January 1962 (Ted Moore), 14 May 1948 (Eddie Doyle), 18 May 1962 (Ned 'na Coille' Walsh). Eddie Doyle also captained the Kilkenny Hurling team to All-Ireland victory in 1933. See p. 12 *The Mooncoin Story*.
[181] Roisín Higgins, 'Projections and Reflections: Irishness and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising' in *Éire – Ireland*, vol. 42, no. 3 (Irish – American Cultural Institute, 2007) p. 34.

> citizens. The government saw in the commemoration the possibility of redrawing the image of Ireland.[182]

Projecting the way Ireland was moving forward into more contemporary times was an underlying aim of the commemorations. How Ireland was viewed by powerful foreign countries of the world was essential also. The report in the *New York Times* suggests that the Irish government was succeeding with its plan to portray the country as an economically developing country:

> Ireland seems to have managed to have overcome the handicap of having lost its industrial northern counties, and has begun to develop a balanced economy.[183]

As for national monuments for the commemoration year, the Garden of Remembrance was erected in the capital to remember those who fought in the War of Independence. The Garden symbolised the memory of the dead, the memory of victory and the memory of sacrifice.[184] It was also an ultimate vehicle for the State influenced nation-building master-plan as it addressed the tussle of forgetting and remembering.[185] As Dolan states, visual representations, such as the Garden of Remembrance, in the environment emphasised the intrinsic role of 'ritual and rhetoric' in commemorating.[186]

Outside of Dublin commemorative parades were held all over the country similar to one held in Waterford City on Easter Sunday 1966 in which old I.R.A. veterans were guests of honour.[187] Other commemorative events included speeches and gathering at graves of the fallen.[188] In Mooncoin, a mass was said in the memory of all those lost in the Rising.[189] The previous year, three south Kilkenny men, including a man from Kilmacow, were arrested for firing shot at a

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[182] Ibid. p.19.
[183] *New York Times*, 10 Apr. 1966.
[184] Denise Walsh , *Re-imagining the Rising: Commemoration, Oration and Nation Exploration of the Political Challenges and Possibilities Involved in Symbolising Irish History* (NUI Galway: MA Thesis, 2006) p. 8.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: history and memory1923-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 3.
[187] *Munster Express*, 15 April 1966.
[188] Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916: meaning, memory and the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising* (Cork: CUP, 2012) p. 16.
[189] *Munster Express*, 15 April 1966.

British torpedo boat while it was leaving Waterford port.[190] This incident and the other 'disproportionate number of minor incidents' that took place in county Kilkenny during the jubilee period did not seem to discourage the organisation of commemorative events.[191] Parades still went ahead in the county and in fact Richard Behal, the I.R.A. member from Kilmacow was something of a 'celebrity' during this period following his escape from Limerick Prison in February in 1966.[192]

National schools across the country were also encouraged to participate in the commemorations. The booklet *Oidhreacht* was commissioned by the commemoration committee with the intention that it be made available to all school children.[193] A copy of the Proclamation was sent to all schools with the recommendation that it be accompanied by a 'simple unveiling ceremony' performed by the principal teacher or 'possibly an I.R.A. veteran giving a short address to point to the significance of the occasion.'[194] Catherine Long, who was a national school student in Tobernabrone National School (just a few miles from the ambush site), recalls the emphasis that was around commemoration at the time:

> I remember it well. We had to learn off the national anthem by heart…and we knew all the signatories and their faces from the book [*Oidreacht*]. There was a big emphasis on the poetry and prose of Pearse as well.[195]

After 1966, the political climate in Ireland had become such that it was in the best interest of the nation to distance the origins of the 'glorious sacrifice' and 'struggle for Irish freedom'.[196] This was due to the growing tensions in the North which were beginning to show shortly after the commemorative year. Sectarian violence and the I.R.A. terrorist activity in the North in the name of a united

[190] *Munster Express*, 1 October 1965.
[191] Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p. 62.
[192] Ibid. p. 62.
[193] Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p. 48.
[194] *National department of Ireland, Department of the Taoiseach*, 97/6/160, Draft of information to be sent to schools.
[195] Conversation with Catherine Long, July 2012.
[196] Walsh, *Re-imaging the Rising*, p. 48.

Ireland had somewhat clouded the sanitised and romantic notions of 'fighting for Irish freedom'.[197]

Towards the 2016 Commemoration.

By the mid-1990s, the political and social developments in the North seemed to give cause for optimism with the paramilitary ceasefires of 1994 and 1997.[198] For the first time since 1966, Ireland had genuine reason to celebrate it national identity and reflect on what the nation had achieved since its birth nine decades previous. One opinion poll in the *Irish Independent* in 1991 returned that 65% of the respondents look upon the Rising with pride.[199] This can be compared with the same poll given in 2001, which saw an increase to 80% of the number of respondents claiming pride in Rising.[200] Ferriter explains that by the 2000s, the public began to take charge and ownership in confirming their national identity.[201] It must also be remembered that along with the developments in the North such as the Good Friday Agreement, Ireland was experiencing a high point in economic prosperity.[202] Higgins adds that:

> Not only was it possible to commemorate the Easter Rising without concerns over the impact this would have on militants, it was seen as essential that the state claimed back the legacy of the Rising peacetime republicans who were now electoral political rivals of the government party Fianna Fáil.[203]

With the 1966 and the 2006 landmark commemorations, the triumph of the Easter Rising was presented as resting in the economic success of the Irish

[197] Declan Kiberd, 'The Elephant of Revolutionary Forgetfulness' in *The Irish Writer and the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 102.
[198] Walsh, *Re-imaging the Rising,* p. 49.
[199] Taken from a lecture given by Diarmaid Ferriter, Royal Hospital Kilmainham, 23 June 2012.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Higgins, *Transforming 1916,* p.207
[203] Ibid. p. 208.

Republic. With the collapse of the economy 2008, the 'parameters of the debate' had to be redrawn.[204] How will the official message to the Irish State and indeed the commemorative events as a whole be received in 2016? It will certainly represent the opportunity to asses the progress made in Ireland over the one hundred years and to consider the 'benefits and abuses that have resulted from independence'.[205] Undoubtedly, the hundredth anniversary of the Easter Rising will be a test to gauge Irish citizenry's relationship with authority.

The Sinnott's Cross Monument

Locally, the commemorative committee has been set up with the intention of honouring and remembering all the people from the local area who contributed in some way to the fight for Irish freedom. To date, the committee have successfully raised a sufficient amount of money and have erected a sculpture in recognition of all those who took part and contributed to the ambush at Sinnott's Cross. The sculpture, a picture of which is shown at the beginning of this chapter, shows a figure of Ireland being held up by two safe, strong arms. The thumb is placed on south Kilkenny, acknowledging the 9th Battalions sacrifice on the very same place all those years ago. The sculpture, like any piece of art, is open for interpretation. The two hands holding the whole of Ireland up could represent the two states of Ireland that are together supporting the island. The hands could be interpreted as having religious annotations also but such assumptions should be left to the exponents. Although the date of the official unveiling of the sculpture has not yet been set, it has been envisaged that hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the struggle for independence would be a poignant and symbolic date.

Conclusion

The vital importance of recording first hand memories of those who lived through the revolutionary years has be highlighted here. The memories of Martin Murphy and Jack 'na Coille' provided useful insights, not only because they underline conflicting ideas with official documentation, they also allow the attitudes and opinions of those who experienced the events to shine through. As shown, the

[204] Ibid. p. 208
[205] Ibid. p. 209

1966 commemorations held around the country were as much about foreign policy and portraying Ireland as a modern country than remembering those who had died in the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence. A number of minor republican incidences that occurred around the commemoration period in County Kilkenny did not seem to discourage the organisation of events for the fiftieth anniversary. In fact, many of the local people sympathised with those responsible for the incidents[206] National schools also had a significant role in promoting and remembering the leaders and events of 1916. Developments with the Northern Peace Process and the economic boom allowed the public to celebrate the ninetieth anniversary with a new sense of national identity. However, with the downturn in economy and the decrease in confidence towards the government will be a key element of how the 2016 commemorations will be received. To conclude this chapter, the monument at Sinnott's Cross was looked at. The possible meanings of what the monument represents were discussed along with the significance the unveiling will have in 2016

[206] Conversation with Catherine Long July 2012.

Conclusion

The War of Independence in Mooncoin has been examined in detail in this thesis. Kilkenny County was first looked at with regard its involvement in the war. The factors that contributed to the war were discussed such as the Conscription Crisis, the sympathy towards the executed leaders of the Rising and the 1918 General Election. South Kilkenny's contribution to the war was seen in three stages. Some possible reasons why Kilkenny and more specifically Mooncoin was to a lesser extent affected by the war were discussed by highlighting the geographical, economic and social possibilities.

The Sinnott's Cross Ambush was the main incident in the South Kilkenny I.R.A. that was focused on in Chapter Two. The ambush was not a defining moment in the war. It was hardly reported even. It must be remembered though that there was no defining battle that led to the Truce in July 1921. In His conclusion, Hopkinson suggests the possible need to reassess the importance of sporadic violence[207]Although ambush did not make international headlines, this small battalion's contribution was nonetheless important.

The social study that was detailed in Chapter Three provided interesting insights into a typical rural I.R.A. volunteer. As shown, the majority of the of volunteers in the country typically did not come from rural areas but worked in towns in jobs such as shop assistants, teachers or pharmacists. Few social studies have focused on the minority of volunteers which adds to the importance of this study.

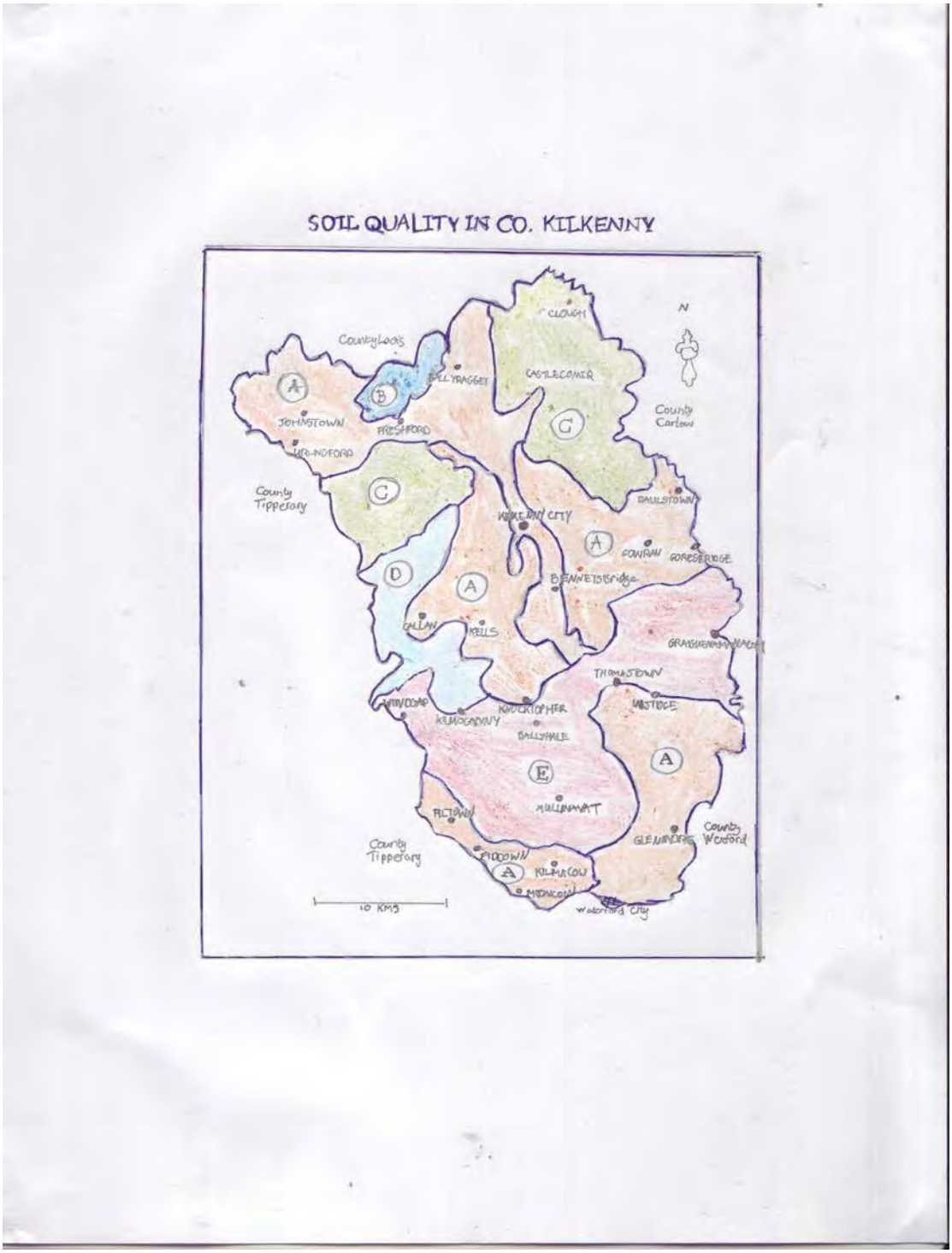
The final section discussed memory and commemoration. New evidence emerged from two interviews of members in the 9th Battalion. It showed how first hand evidence can sometimes contradict official reports. Insights into the attitudes of the interviewees were apparent also. Commemorations of the revolutionary period in 1966 showed how those involved were remembered while the preparations in place in Mooncoin show how they will be remembered in 2016.

[207] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence,* p.201.

The overall success of the War of Independence was in bringing the British government to the negotiating table and discussing with the possibility of self governance, something that had not been done since foreign rule came to the country some 800 years previous. Lloyd George's, the Prime Minister of Britain in 1921 most 'disastrous decision' was to establish partition before attempting a settlement with the south.[208] The 'short-term fix' had 'long-term consequences' which was seen with the Troubles in the North years later.[209]

[208] Ibid. p. 203.
[209] Ibid.

Appendix One –
Soil Quality in County Kilkenny Map



Soil Type Legend (to accompany soil quality in Co. Kilkenny map)

Soil Association A

These are predominately well-drained grey-brown podzolic soils with the wide use range- highly suitable for tillage crops and/or grassland production.

Soil Association B

Mostly shallow rocky soils with some wet gley soils at high elevations- suitable for rough grazing.

Soil Association C

These are predominantly wet soils (gleys) with impeded drainage at higher elevations on the Castlecomer Plateau and Tullaroan Hills- suitable for grassland production only.

Soil Association D

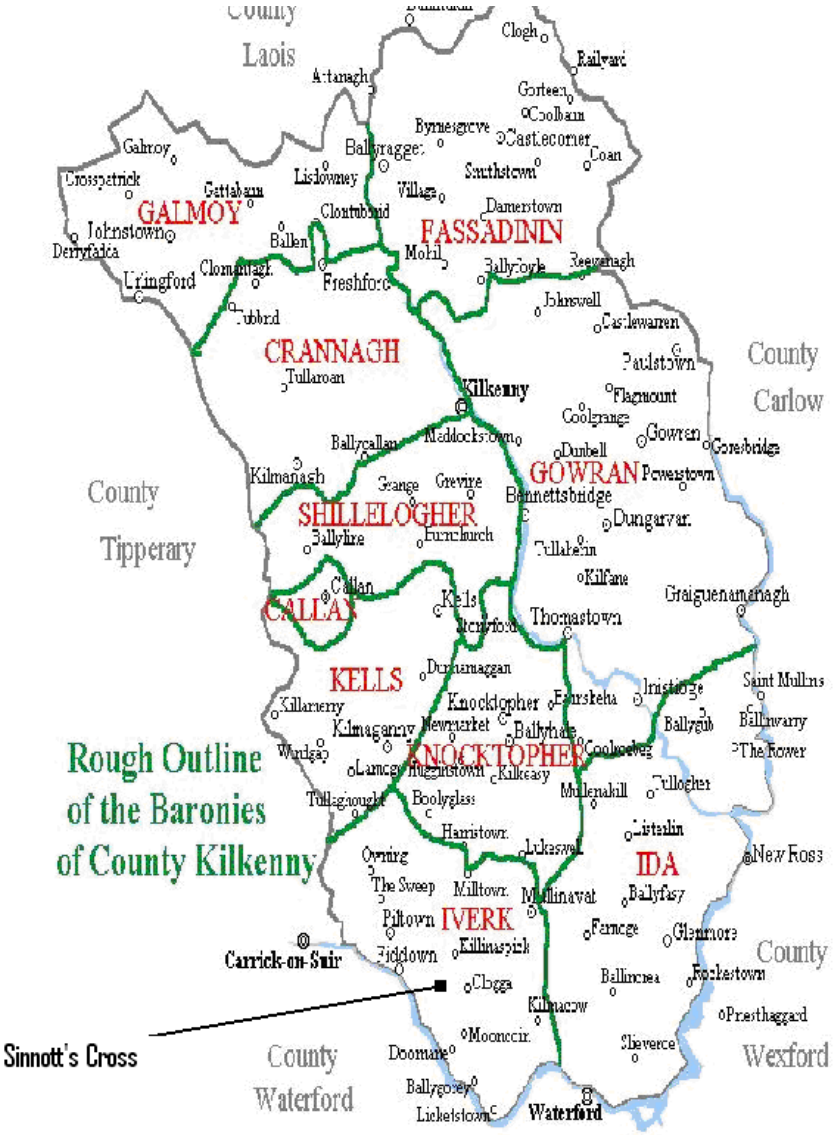
Predominantly wet soils (gleys) at low elevation- suitable for grassland production only.

Soil Association E

Mainly brown earth and wet soils (gleys) at higher elevation on the 'Walsh Hills'. Mainly suitable for grass production

Soil Type Legend details courtesy of Dr. Michael Conroy.

Appendix Two –
Map of County Kilkenny, Barony Divisions
(Sinnott's Cross Highlighted)



Appendix Four – Social Analysis Grid

NAME	WILLIE LAWLOR	TOMMY MORAHAN	TOMMY FITZPATRICK	PHIL WHITE	NEDDY WHITE	NED FORAN	TED MOORE
AGE	27	26	29	29	24	21	29
MARITAL STATUS	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE
RELIGION	ROMAN CATHOLIC	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C
AT HOME	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
OCCUPATION	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	PHARMACIST	EX BRITISH SOLDIER	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON
LITERATE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
CLASS OF HOUSE	2ND	2ND	1ST	3RD	2ND	2ND	2ND
G.A.A. MEMBER	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
PARENT ABSENT	NO	NO	FATHER	NO	NO	NO	NO
WHERE IN FAMILY	OLDEST SON	3RD YOUNGEST SON	YOUNGEST	OLDEST SON	2ND OLDEST SON	2ND OLDEST SON	OLDEST SON

YOUNGEST	3RD OLDEST SON	2ND OLDEST SON	OLDEST	2ND OLDEST	YOUNGEST	OLDEST	OLDEST	2ND OLDEST	OLDEST
MOTHER	MOTHER	MOTHER	NO	NO	NO	NO	MOTHER	FATHER	FATHER
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
1ST	2ND	2ND	2ND	2ND	2ND	2ND	2ND	1ST	1ST
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	EX BRITISH SOLDIER	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	FARMERS SON	MILLER
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C	R/C
SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE
23	23	25	26	25	24	24	31	27	28
MARTIN MURPHY	**PAT "THE FOX" WALSH**	**JAMES WALSH**	**MICK BRENNAN**	**DICK BRENNAN**	**EDDIE DOYLE**	**DICK CARROLL**	**"BIG" PAT WALSH**	**JACK "NA COILLE" WALSH**	**NED "NA COILLE" WALSH**

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