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CUMANN SEANDÁLAÍOCHTA IS STAIRE CHIARRAÍ

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Plate 1: Aerial view of St. Catherine's Hospital, Tralee, in the 1960s (Kerry County Museum).

The Early Years of Tralee Workhouse, 1840-45

By Bryan MacMahon

Overview

This article gives an account of the early years of Tralee Poor Law Union and its workhouse. The main focus is on the years 1840 to 1845, up to the partial failure of the potato crop in the autumn of 1845. The first part of the article concentrates on public controversies relating to the site chosen for the workhouse and to the erection of the building. The second part gives details of the circumstances of some individuals who applied for admission to the workhouse, as well as personnel changes in its administrative staff.

A difficult birth

The Irish Poor Law Act of 1838 divided the country into 130 Poor Law

Unions and five of these were located in Kerry: Tralee, Listowel, Killarney, Caherciveen and Kenmare. Tralee Union was formally established on 30 March 1840. It was one of the largest unions in the country, comprising an area of 548 square miles and a population of approximately 90,000.[1] People living in the western parts of Corca Dhuibhne were almost 40 miles away from the workhouse in Tralee. The Dingle peninsula was part of Tralee Union until 1848 when it became a separate union and Dingle workhouse opened in 1852.

The workhouse system came to be despised and feared in Ireland, but it was welcomed at first as a practical means of benefitting the poorest of the poor. This was recognised in the first responses in Tralee when a meeting was held in the courthouse in January 1840 to consider the implications of the Poor Law Act. The meeting was attended by 'a large number of country gentlemen and respectable farmers, together with some of the most influential inhabitants of Tralee.'[2] The chairman was the Provost, Rev. Arthur Blennerhassett Rowan, who stressed that the new Poor Law was 'a serious experiment', an attempt to address the problem of pauperism and mendicancy which was 'the most prominent evil' in the country. Rowan believed that the new law would ensure that the burden of supporting the poor would fall equally on all; he said that it would 'equalise the pressure' and force 'the selfish and the unwilling' to contribute their share to the alleviation of the problem.[3]

A Poor Law Commission in Dublin oversaw the implementation of the Act. Mr. Hawley, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner (APLC), attended the Tralee meeting and was warmly received. He too stressed that the objective of the new law was to ensure 'that there should be a general provision for the poor, and no one allowed to perish for want, and … to equalise the burden which pressed unfairly on the charitably disposed … and laying a fair proportion of it on the shoulders of absentees who never contributed a farthing'.[4] Hawley spelled out the procedures to be followed for electing a board of guardians and explained the complex rates system and voting procedures. He identified eighteen electoral divisions in Tralee Union and specified the numbers of guardians each would return, amounting to a total of thirty-four elected members. Ratepayers were eligible for membership of the board of guardians and only ratepayers could vote in elections for the board. Eleven ex-officio members would be appointed from among the magistrates of the county.

Hawley told the meeting that 'the Commissioners will erect and put in our hands ready-made workhouses'. He went on:

The poor, on application and showing a case of actual distress, will be admitted. The guardians are to judge what are, or are not, cases of real destitution. The paupers will be employed as in England in breaking stones, grinding flour, picking oakum, or in any better mode of employment which it will be discretionary with the guardians to prescribe. The diet of the poor in the workhouse will not be better than that which in ordinary cases was accessible to the poor outside.[5]

This last provision was a crucial one; it was a fundamental principle of the Poor Law that people in the workhouse could not be in better circumstances than the poorest person outside its walls.

There was a general welcome for what Hawley had to say. John O'Connell of Grena thanked him for 'the clearness, patience and intelligence with which he has explained the Poor Law' and said that he was certain that the longer they had communications with Hawley, 'the more would he merit their warmest approval'.[6] That tune changed very quickly however, and the businessmen of Tralee soon turned against Hawley, mainly on account of his role in the choice of a site for the new workhouse. Acrimony became the norm in dealings between the Tralee board of guardians and the Poor Law Commissioners in Dublin.

Tralee board of guardians had 45 members, 34 of whom were elected and eleven were *ex-officio*. On 1 May 1840, at a meeting in Tralee courthouse, the names of those elected as guardians were announced. The meeting was preceded by an angry exchange on procedures, with accusations of irregularities in the conduct of the election in Kilgobbin area. Fr. George O'Sullivan, parish priest of Castlegregory, and Fr. Healy, curate, were challenged by David Peter Thompson, agent of the estate of Lord Ventry, who accused them of interference in the election. Thompson said that he knew of twenty votes which had been illegally altered, while the priests countered by claiming that many eligible people had not been allowed to vote.[7]

In editorial comment in the same issue, the *Post* addressed the question of the workhouse site, complaining that a decision on the site had already been made, in direct contravention of a statement by the Commissioners that a site would not be agreed until *after* the guardians had been elected. The *Post* referred scornfully to an arrangement reached with the vendor of the site, Maurice Quill of Caherina House:

We do not blame – *not we* – the owner of ground who contrived in saddling the district with the enormous rent of twelve guineas the Irish acre, to secure himself a good annuity forever; no blame to him if he could get parties so *persuadable* and an advocate so *insinuating* as to allow of his obtaining such a boon. But what shall we say of parties responsible to the public who have so acted by the public, *falsifying their own declarations,* and lulling that public to sleep while they were accomplishing this back-stairs bargain.[8]

Plate 2: Caherina House, Tralee, today (Author).

Thomas O'Connell was appointed clerk of the Union at a salary of £40 a year and with a personal bond of £150 and two sureties of £75 each as recorded in the first entry in the Minute Book of Tralee board of guardians.[9] O'Connell wrote the minutes of the weekly meetings of the board, which are held in Kerry County Archives in the County Library, Tralee. These records are now an invaluable resource for researchers.

At the first formal meeting of the board of guardians in Tralee courthouse on Thursday 7 May 1840, Edward Mullins was elected chairman, John Hurly as vice-chairman and George D. Stokes as deputy vice-chairman.[10] John Lynch, a Tralee solicitor and treasurer of Tralee Savings Bank, took a prominent part in discussions on which bank should be chosen for the Union funds.

D. P. Thompson raised the question of the workhouse site and repeated the charge that the site had already been decided on, although the Commissioners had given an assurance that the decision would not be taken until guardians had been elected. Moreover, Thompson claimed that

a rent of thirteen guineas an acre had been agreed for the site, although an alternative site was available at half that cost. Thompson declared that it was 'a monstrous injustice thus unnecessarily to saddle the Union with a perpetual extra tax of at least £70 a year'. He went on:

> The Commissioners might as well have thrust their hands into his, Mr. Thompson's pocket, or that of the several persons who would be rated, and abstract so much money, as mulct them in this wholesale fashion.[11]

The board of guardians decided to send 'an expostulatory letter' to the Commissioners on the subject. This was the beginning of a long-running, bitter conflict between Tralee board of guardians and the Poor Law Commissioners. The issue was investigated, and a report published in 1844 summarised the main areas of dispute.

The Pennethorne Report of 1844

George Wilkinson, an English architect, was the designer of all the 130 Irish workhouses built following the Poor Law Act. Complaints relating to the quality of the workhouses of Ireland were so numerous that another English architect, James Pennethorne, was appointed inspector of workhouses in 1843. Tralee was one of fifty-eight workhouses which he inspected. Pennethorne's general conclusion was that the difficulties and complaints arose out of the fact that only one architect was involved in the design and construction of all the workhouses. Wilkinson responded: 'It is always easy to find fault and, after a thing has been done, to point out ways in which it might have been better done; but such after-wisdom is practically of little value.'[12]

James Pennethorne arrived in Tralee to begin his investigation in January 1844, by which time the workhouse was completed but not yet open.[13] His report, published in the *Post* on 15 June 1844, is the source of the following information. The main complaint of the Tralee board members was that the site of the workhouse was selected despite the protestations of the board, and that a better site could have been acquired at less cost. They added that the completed building was defective, with dampness coming through the walls and drains that were unsightly and useless.

Pennethorne's report outlined the background to the acquisition of the workhouse site. In September 1839, Jeffery Eagar was the first to offer a

site for a workhouse. Nothing came of this. In early 1840, Mr. Hawley, APLC, visited Tralee where he met Mr. William Denny and was shown a possible site for a workhouse. Denny was representing his brother Sir Edward Denny, the absentee landowner of Tralee. This site was in the Lohercannan area, but William Denny had no further meetings with Hawley. Maurice Quill then offered a site of about eight acres at a rent of £10 per Irish acre. This was the site where the workhouse was eventually built, and on which the controversy centred. Quill's letter of 31 January 1840 to Hawley stated:

> I have a lot of land immediately adjoining this town which presents a most eligible site for the projected workhouse in the Tralee Union. The ground consisting of prime meadow is situated on the Mail Road, within half a mile of the town, and possesses every possible advantage that may be considered desirable, having a constant supply of *good* water from a river bounding the premises, and being distant only a few hundred yards from the Barracks and Jail. The situation is perfectly level, *fronts* the Mail-coach road and the land, composed of *good* limestone easy to be quarried, comprises the number of acres you consider necessary, say from seven to eight.[14]

Hawley's recommendation to the Commissioners repeated the details supplied by Quill and he advised that 'having surveyed several sites near the town, none was found so adapted to the purpose as Mr. Quill's'.[15] The Commissioners consequently agreed to take 'eight plantation acres at £10 an acre or a rent of £80 per annum on lease of lives renewable forever'. Architectural approval was required before building work started and Pennethorne found that 'the Commissioners departed from their usual practice' when they decided on Quill's site without acquiring this.

Correspondence between Quill and Hawley, quoted by Pennethorne, appeared to show that that there was undue friendliness between the two men and the suspicion was that this might have influenced Hawley's decision on Quill's site. Legal matters were resolved during March 1840, with a final agreement that the site of eleven statute acres would be rented at £7 5s 6d per acre, or £80 per annum. Pennethorne's conclusion was damning:

> The site was thus chosen without public advertisement, without being surveyed and approved of by the architect, without further

communication with Mr. Denny or Mr. Jeffrey Eagar, without consultation with the guardians, for the Union was not then formed, and apparently without the knowledge of anyone.[16]

He found that the procedure 'certainly gives ground for the suspicions of the guardians as to the exercise of undue influence due to political connexions'.

Although a decision on the site had been taken by April 1840, the board of guardians continued to receive further offers of sites. Pennethorne found that seventeen alternative sites were offered, including one owned by Mrs. Elizabeth Quill, adjoining Maurice Quill's site, which was available at £5 per statute acre and, according to Pennethorne, 'appeared to me to be in every respect quite as eligible a site'.

W. H. T. Hawley defended himself against Pennethorne's findings in a reply written from York.[17] He said that, although he deemed it unnecessary to place advertisements in newspapers, handbills announcing the search for a site were posted around Tralee, according to his usual practice in other towns. He said that he had met Jeffrey Eagar and deemed his site unsuitable in several respects. It was 'on high uneven rough ground about half a mile from the town on the south' and would have been expensive to level; it was exposed to wind and rain from the Atlantic, had an inadequate water source and would involve legal complications. He had also met Mr. Denny and learned that there were legal complications regarding his site. Denny showed him another site in the town centre, but Hawley found that this was too small and confined, surrounded by buildings and with only a narrow street for access. Hawley denied any favouritism towards Quill and said that he simply found his site 'perfectly eligible in all particulars' and immediately available.

On first sight of the section of the Pennethorne report relating to Tralee workhouse, the *Post* responded indignantly saying that it revealed 'the enormous tissue of lying, duplicity and back-stairs work' that had gone on in acquiring the site. It mocked Maurice Quill with the headline: 'The new political martyr: St. Maurice of the poorhouse'.[18] At a meeting of the board of guardians there was unanimous support for a motion condemning the treatment of the board 'in reference to the clandestine and improvident bargain for this site, made not only behind their backs but also in despite of all remonstrances'.[19] However, by the time the report was published, there was nothing to be done, since the workhouse was already in operation. After protracted delays, Tralee workhouse, with a capacity for 1,000, had opened in February 1844.

Masons' and tradesmen's dispute, 1840-1

When tenders were invited for the building of the workhouse, three submissions were received: Henry Stokes of Tralee (the County Surveyor) tendered for £11,000 and James English of Tralee tendered for £9,000. William Hill of Cork tendered for £8,557 and this was accepted. The contract was signed on 30 July 1840 with costs detailed as follows: building, £8,557 0s 0d; building extras, £645 8s 8d; fixtures and fittings, £646 5s 4d.

   While the workhouse was being built, a dispute arose involving the contractor, William Hill, who was challenged about employing stonemasons from Cork rather than from Tralee. Hill wrote that out of 128 tradesmen and labourers employed, only six were 'strangers' and this was because of 'the great apathy and apparent unwillingness exhibited on the part of the masons of your town, on the commencement of the work, to avail themselves of the employment afforded'.[20] The dispute rumbled on, with the stonemasons of Tralee growing more indignant at Hill. In December 1840, twenty-seven of them signed a letter to the *Kerry Examiner* complaining that they had been laid off, while twelve Cork masons had been retained. Mr. Hill, they claimed, 'inclines with a natural leaning to Cork men - he keeps them in employment and sends 27 Kerrymen away, and Tralee men too, to look for work where they may'.[21] In response, William Hill wrote that 'owing to the unreasonable and unjust combination of the Tralee masons, I was obliged, in my own defence, to introduce strangers.'[22] It seems that the Tralee masons were more organised and more assertive in their demands than their Cork counterparts.

   Carpenters, stone-cutters and slaters also made similar complaints. At a meeting in early 1841, chaired by carpenter Timothy Foley, several individuals recounted their experience of being denied work by Hill. The contractor was said to have asked one carpenter if he was from Tralee and on hearing that he was not, Hill reportedly said that he liked the man the better for that, and 'that he would give employment to any man before a Tralee man'.[23] Stonecutters of Tralee stated that they could do as much in five days as 'strange stonecutters' could do in six, but Mr. Hill was not employing them. The meeting concluded with an appeal by the tradesmen to the gentry and magistrates of Tralee to intervene with Mr. Hill on their behalf.[24] In a response to this meeting, twelve tradesmen from Tralee wrote to the *Post* refuting the charges against Hill and saying they were employed by him.[25]

The dispute turned to violence when there was 'a very unpleasant affray' between Tralee masons and Cork masons.[26] Six men, who were seen as the ringleaders of this violent incident, received prison sentences ranging from one month to two months, with hard labour. These were described as mitigated sentences, as a result of the persuasive appeal of their solicitor, John Lynch.[27]

Amid growing alarm, a public meeting was organised in Tralee, and it included many of the business men and members of the board of guardians. William Denny, chairman, announced that he had made overtures to Mr. Hill and that he had secured his agreement to employ more men from Tralee. John Lynch, secretary, gave details of the agreement reached: twelve Cork masons would be retained, and thirty-six Tralee masons would be employed; two Cork carpenters and two Cork stone-cutters would be retained and two carpenters and two stone cutters from Tralee would also be employed; one Cork slater would be retained and one more from Tralee would be employed. Mr. Hurly, chairman of the board, declared that 'all animosity was at an end' and Denny and Lynch were roundly praised.[28] The *Post* declared that 'the gentlemen of Tralee have done their duty by their suffering fellow townsmen'.[29] This agreement later broke down however, with charges that Hill was not adhering to its terms.[30] Unrest had arisen among labourers, who were getting ten pence a day, when they refused to work unless they received a shilling (twelve pence) a day.[31]

In the light of these disputes, it is interesting to note that Pennethorne's report of 1844 was critical of the quality of the work done on the workhouse building:

> I have classed it below an average, on account of the inferiority of the stone work, which is honeycombed, and (as there is every reason to believe) of the mortar having been made with sea sand. The damp penetrates very considerably, although the Union has been charged with £118 15s 4d for outside cementing and more must yet be done. The clay floors are very bad; the ends of girders and joists begin to rot; and the cast iron gratings for ventilation have been taken out and thrown away as useless although charged at £20 2s 6d in the extra bill.[32]

Completion of the Workhouse building

In February 1842, with the completion of the building in sight, a board meeting chaired by John Hurly was held at which workhouse officers

were appointed, although no salaries would be paid until the workhouse actually opened. Mrs Arabella Newton was elected as matron; the other candidates were Mrs. Mary Reidy, Mrs. Ellen O'Flaherty and Mrs. Ellen Sealy. Arabella Newton's husband Charles was elected master; the other candidates were William Brereton, John Sealy, John O'Flaherty and Denis Neligan.[33] It seems that it suited the board to appoint a married couple as master and matron.

Plate 3A and 3B: Excerpts from Tralee Union minute books referring to the diet of the inmates.

Three doctors were interested in the position of medical officer: William Alton, Richard Chute and William Lawlor. Dr. Chute withdrew when he learned that daily attendance at the workhouse would be required and that he could not appoint a deputy. Dr Alton was elected with twenty-five votes, as against eleven votes for Dr Lawlor. Mrs. Mary Anne Huggard was elected schoolmistress and John Hurly (not the chairman of the board) schoolmaster. Cornelius Leyne became porter.[34] In June 1842, the *Post* announced:

> The Tralee Union poorhouse is now completed and the trades and other workmen have been discharged, and it is but justice to Mr. Hill, the contractor, to acknowledge that all his engagements with those employed on the work (as far as we can learn) have been honourably and faithfully discharged.[35]

Dr Phelan, APLC, attended a board meeting in August 1842.[36] He had visited the workhouse and when he told the board that he would report to the Commissioners that it was 'fit for the reception of paupers', John Hurly responded: 'What will feed them? As yet there is no money collected or even collectors sufficient appointed.' Mr. Supple told Phelan that it was wrong to make such a report as the board was 'unprepared' for the opening. Phelan responded that 'the Commissioners 'would lose no time in putting the house at the disposal of the board' and that they were very anxious to co-operate with the guardians and would expect the like return'.[37] John Hurly complained yet again about the Commissioners' purchase of the workhouse site but he stated that 'Mr. Hill had given every satisfaction'. [38]

The *Post* recorded yet another controversy in 1845, while acknowledging that the public was 'heartily sick' of hearing about the scandal of the workhouse site. The architect George Wilkinson attended a board meeting about defining the boundary of the site. The guardians had decided to buy some land adjoining the site from a Jerome Quill (presumably a relative of Maurice Quill) in order to build a surrounding wall. Then Maurice Quill remarked one day to John Lynch: 'What a pretty set of guardians you are to be taking land that has already been demised to you by me!' It seems that the land required for the wall did not need to be paid for again. Wilkinson had been sent by the Commissioners to clear up the issue. The *Post* commented: 'By the by, what a burlesque?' An infuriated John Lynch said that it was only for the sake of the poor that

the guardians continued to co-operate with the implementation of the Poor Law, which was 'so shamefully administered by the Commissioners'.[39]

The opening of the Workhouse, February 1844

Although the workhouse building was again declared fit for the reception of paupers in September 1842, the opening was deferred as some rate collectors had yet to be appointed.[40] Incredibly, it was not until February 1844 that the first applicants were admitted, due to prolonged disputes and preparations by the board. The guardians continued to resent the decisions of the Commissioners, still re-iterating that 'the Union has been saddled with this improvident bargain, with an enormous rent, most unnecessarily.'[41] Other disputes related to collection of rates, grants available from government, and financial provision to meet the needs of the people to be admitted. These detailed financial affairs took up a great deal of time at board meetings for years, but they are too complex to discuss here. In January 1844, a letter from the Commissioners pressed the guardians to open the workhouse, noting that fifteen months had passed since it was declared fit for the reception of the destitute poor.[42] John Lynch was firmly of the opinion that the workhouse should be opened and spoke in his customary direct manner:

> He thought the board were in a position to afford relief to the destitute poor; they, as guardians, should do so or resign. They were chosen to carry the Act into effect and at the eleventh hour they should apply themselves to some means to do so. He for one was for opening the house.[43]

Tralee workhouse finally opened its doors on 1 February 1844. In a sardonic reference to the long delay, under the heading 'Important Events in British and Irish History', the *Kerry Examiner* carried this brief report: 'The Imperial parliament was opened yesterday by the Queen, and so was the Tralee Union workhouse on the same day by the Tralee Union board of guardians.'[44]

Mr. Burke, APLC, attended a board meeting to advise the guardians on procedures to be followed. There were only twelve guardians in attendance, with John Hurly as chairman. The others were: Francis Chute, Charles G. Fairfield, David Peter Thompson, John Lynch, John Hilliard, George Hilliard of Tralee, Edward Rae, Henry McCan [sic], James Moriarty, Patrick O'Sullivan and George Hilliard of Castlegregory.[45]

Practical arrangements were made and dietary provision was fixed. Men were to receive seven ounces of oatmeal and a half-pint of milk at breakfast, and four pounds of potatoes and a pint of milk for dinner; women were to receive the same breakfast with three and a half pounds of potatoes and a pint of milk for dinner. The diet of children varied according to age. The diet of the staff was also prescribed and the daily ration of the master and matron was: three-quarters of a pound of bread, three-quarters of a pound of meat, three and a half pounds of potatoes and one pint of new milk each. The schoolmaster, schoolmistress and porter each received three pounds of meat each week and three-quarters of a pound of bread, three and a half pounds of potatoes and one pint of milk each per day.[46]

Plate 4A and 4B: Advertisements by Tralee Union in local newspapers seeking tenders for provisions and advertising posts; *Kerry Examiner*, 11 October1844 and *Kerry Evening Post*, 16 July 1845.

In reply to one question, Burke stated that 'outrageous lunatics were not admissible to the workhouse, but harmless idiots were'. Another question was about whether an inquest should be held after each death; Burke said that the medical officer was obliged to report the cause of each death but that an inquest might be required only in a case of sudden death.[47]

The first admissions, the first rejections
There were 26 applicants for admission on this first day, and twenty of these were accepted. Residents of the workhouse were usually referred to as 'paupers' or 'inmates'. The first applicant was Ellen Stack, a middle-aged woman. The board decided that 'she was not a fit object' (meaning that she did not meet the criteria for admission) and she was rejected. The report went on: 'The second applicant, and the first pauper admitted into the Tralee workhouse, was Maurice McDonnell, an old and infirm resident of this town.'[48]

The others who were accepted were six old men and two young men, one of whom was totally blind and the other 'an imbecile'; four old women, one of whom was sick, and seven orphan children, four boys and three girls. Those who were accepted were medically examined, provided with the workhouse uniform and assigned to their separate quarters. Those who were rejected were:

> two old men who appeared to be able to work; one old woman who was in the same predicament; one growing girl, daughter to the sick woman admitted, who wished to attend on her mother; and two children, one of whom was deserted to the care of a widowed maternal aunt, with a family of her own, by its unnatural drunken father, whose wife was dead.[49]

The board decided to ask the aunt to attend their next meeting to give more information and to take steps to compel the father to take responsibility for his children.

While the *Examiner* did not give as much individual detail on the first admissions, it made a more telling observation on the proceedings: 'We scarcely recollect to have ever heard such heart-rending tales as those repeated on this day. The scene was indeed one calculated to unman the most stoic observer.'[50]

Board of Guardian Minute Books held in Kerry County Archives give

further information on discussions, conflicts and decisions of the board, as well as everyday life inside the workhouse. The following information is extracted from the minutes and also from newspaper reports.

Plate 5A and 5B: Modern Kerry County Council Offices, Tralee (Aerial view: John D. Pierse).

Supplies were required immediately and tenders were invited in January for items such as: milk, straw, turf, oatmeal, potatoes, candles, soap, salt, starch, medicines, tin sconces (candle-holders), coffins and 'a meal bin capable of containing one ton of oatmeal'.[51] Ventilation was considered very important in workhouse buildings, and a free flow of air was believed to prevent disease. The interiors were very cold as a result. By the end of February, following complaints from inmates about the cold, sliding shutters were provided to close the ventilation openings, and fifty flannel waistcoats were ordered for everyone. The breakfast ration for men was raised from seven ounces to eight, but the women's ration was not changed.

At the end of February there were 85 inmates, and four of these were Protestants. On 28 May 1844 there were 124 Catholics and fourteen Protestants. Rev. Dr. John McEnnery, parish priest of Tralee was appointed chaplain, at a salary of £40 a year. Rev. Anthony Denny, rector of Tralee, was Protestant chaplain. The obvious disparity between the duties involved for each man led to a discussion on whether they should have different salaries. The Commissioners advised that Rev. Denny should get £20 a year, but the guardians wished to give the two chaplains the same salary regardless of the duties involved.[52]

Further admissions in 1844
In July 1844, guardian Henry McCan stated that the board was acutely aware of 'the sinking state of their funds' and would 'strain every point against admissions'.[53] Nevertheless, out of twenty-one applicants in mid-July, only three were turned away: a young woman who was considered able to work and a married couple who had a house and a potato garden. It is rare to come across individual profiles of the inmates and their circumstances, but through 1844 and 1845, before the workhouses were overwhelmed with applications, there are some detailed reports on applicants.

Information on individual admissions did not appear on the minutes of the board nor did it appear in all the weekly reports of board proceedings published in newspapers. While reporters attended all the weekly board meetings, details of those admitted were published only occasionally and are usually found in the *Post*. The information below is all that is available on paupers' circumstances; it indicates that most of those who resorted to the workhouse were old people in need of care, deserted wives and

deserted children, beggars, orphans and individuals with specific needs. It is also clear that some people saw the workhouse as a short-term support and often left the workhouse in hopes of surviving outside, only to be obliged to re-apply later. The following details of individuals admitted in mid-July 1844 were published in the *Post* of 17 July:

- 'A sickly old soldier named Burke' who had previously been refused admission 'on the grounds that it was not right to turn the workhouse into a hospital'. After he convinced the board that his sickness had made him destitute, he was admitted.
- 'A broken-down herdsman reduced to mendicancy'. He was from Kenmare and when asked why he did not return there, he said that he had been better off at one time and would rather beg anywhere than at home - he was ashamed of his state.
- A woman with two children who had already been in the workhouse but had left 'without cause' a few weeks earlier. She had applied for re-admission two weeks previously and was refused, but now the board considered her 'sufficiently punished' and agreed to admit her and the children. Her husband had deserted her and had been seen in Tipperary; one guardian objected to her admission, because he believed that 'women such as this had a knowledge of their husbands' who were earning money elsewhere. Another woman with a child whose husband had gone to Cork to look for work was admitted, albeit with one guardian warning that this decision 'would be an inducement to husbands to leave their wives to be supported by the Union'.
- Three children and their mother who had lived in Walworth in England, where her husband continued to work in a factory but was not sending enough money to support her. She had returned to Tralee a year earlier but had only received £2 from her husband in that time. She had never been a beggar and if she had money, she would re-join him immediately, she said. The board decided to write to her husband telling him that if he did not send money for her, he would be prosecuted.
- Others admitted on this occasion included 'an old helpless woman'; 'an unfortunate young woman and her illegitimate child' who had previously been in the workhouse; a servant girl who could not get a place while she was ill of fever and who had to pawn her clothes in order to support herself; an injured young man from Abbeydorney, who would be sent to Listowel workhouse as soon as it opened.[54]

Plate 6: Original floorboards from Tralee workhouse.

Plate 7: Sleeping platforms in roof space of County Buildings, Tralee (Michael Connolly).

In August 1844, two old men who had left the house sometime previously were re-admitted and six orphaned children, aged from three to thirteen, were admitted pending the opening of Listowel workhouse. A couple with a child, all suffering from chronic ophthalmia, were admitted only after the medical officer confirmed that their condition was not infectious.[55]

Among those admitted in September 1844 were 'an old disabled woman' and 'an old broken-down servant … a very decent poor man'. The wife of a soldier of the 82nd depot was accepted; her husband had married without the consent of his officers and she was not allowed to live in the barracks. The board decided that an appeal on her behalf would be made to the captain of his company. 'A middle-aged woman who appeared decently attired' was refused admission; she lived with her daughter but wished to enter because she believed that when she was ill, she would be better looked after in the workhouse.[56]

In early October, among the eight admitted was 'a little boy without parents or friends, who was suffering from an ulcerous affection [sic] and who only attended just as the board was separating'.[57]

Later the same month, further admissions were recorded including a middle-aged spinster, a mendicant; a young orphan; an old woman; her son, aged fifty years, his wife and three young children, all mendicants; an aged mendicant; a young woman sorely afflicted with scurvy; an old man who had been in the house before, and got a good character reference from the officers of the house; a young tradesman who was unable to work because of lameness; a widow and two children, mendicants; a third child of this woman aged about twelve years ran away from her mother when she heard of her coming to the poorhouse.[58]

Admissions in 1845

In February 1845, admissions included: a woman with four children whose husband was too sick to support them; three orphan children; three old men who had previously been in the house, one of whom had been with the rebels at Vinegar Hill in 1798; a young man with an incurable disease of the legs; three old women and a young woman who had epilepsy; a widow with three children; 'a bastard child' whose mother had left the country and whose father denied paternity. Two more 'bastard children', whose aunt requested admission for them, were rejected on the grounds that there was 'a family compact to get rid of support for the children'.[59] 'A foundling of about five years old, Mary Roche, applied for admission', reported the *Chronicle*. This led to a discussion on foundlings' eligibility, the issue being whether they could be described as destitute,

since the law provided for their maintenance by overseers. Mary Roche was admitted.[60]

In March, a woman with two children withdrew her application for admission when told that her husband, who worked in England, would be prosecuted for desertion. An old man who had falsely claimed his wife was dead, when in fact she had gone to England, was admitted out of pity. By this time, Listowel workhouse had opened (on 13 February1845) and a discussion took place about transferring inmates from Listowel Union area there. There were fifteen who were deemed able to walk to Listowel and it was proposed that they should be transferred; a final decision was deferred for two weeks.[61]

At this meeting Dr Alton presented a report on the admission criteria for people who were ill. He believed that many sick applicants should properly be treated in a medical institution first, and then, if destitute, should apply to the workhouse. He gave the example of a woman who was in the workhouse, an epileptic who had received severe burns by falling into a fire, and who had a large ulcer on her foot and had lost all her toes. Alton told the board that she was 'a fit subject for hospital relief, but not in a workhouse situated as this in the first instance'. He gave other examples, presumably from his experience as medical officer: a woman who had an abscess on her breast and a prostitute with venereal disease should have their conditions treated elsewhere first and then, if destitute, apply to the workhouse. He reminded the board that the workhouse infirmary should not become a general hospital as there was only one nurse and little medical equipment. Alton ended with an economic argument, referring to the extra expense of providing very sick patients with 'supporting and nutritious aliment, including wine, porter &c. &c.' His advice had the desired effect, with the chairman, John Hurly, promising that 'they would be much more circumspect in their admissions in the future'.[62]

In early April, the applicants accepted included a wretched cripple, a young man unable to work because of an illness, three young women, a widow with five young children; a father with two children, one only a week old, whose wife and two daughters had just been admitted to the County Fever Hospital. Rejected on this day were 'a lad from Dingle', a girl with an illegitimate child who was directed to the newly opened Killarney workhouse; an old woman whose account of her circumstances was not believed.[63]

In mid-April, those admitted included an orphan girl; the infant child

of a man already in the house; an elderly couple; a middle-aged sawyer and his apprentice and another young man who were unable to work through ill-health; two old men; 'two intelligent looking children', boys whose father was in jail for debt; a child in the last stages of disease. A young woman and a mother with four children were rejected because their stories were regarded as suspect.[64]

Parish wardens had now been appointed by the board and these officials were meant to validate the applicants' *bona fides* and issue tickets of admission to them. This was intended 'to prevent the board from being imposed upon by fabricated stories of applicants'.[65]

Also in April, the *Post* was concerned at the claim by one of the Killarney guardians that 'the Tralee workhouse was the most ill-managed house in the kingdom' and relieved when the Killarney board and the Poor Law Commissioners disavowed this claim. With regard to admissions, the *Post* gave a general overview only, stating that the majority of those admitted were mendicants, disabled tradesmen, widows, deserted wives and children. Clearly as a result of Dr Alton's advice, an applicant with 'some disease of the hand' was directed to the County Infirmary instead.[66]

Plate 8: Original workhouse building - still in use as part of the Kerry County Council complex today.

In July, guardians decided to depart from the accepted practice and admit two children, even though their mother was not applying for admission.[67] In a discussion about whether children should be admitted without their parents, Joseph Burke, APLC, advised the guardians that the practice would be 'an inducement to parties to desert their children' and that 'the house could become what the law has lately extinguished – a foundling hospital'.[68]

In mid-July, those admitted included: a sailor who had been in England since 1813; a woman and four children whose husband had left Tralee; she was known to some of the guardians who recommended her admission; a married woman whose husband refused to support her; a woman from Cashel with four children, whose husband had deserted her and left for America; she had earlier been seen drunk in Tralee, and while some guardians argued that she should not be admitted, others argued successfully that she should, in the interests of the children's welfare.[69]

Later in July admissions included: an old man provisionally admitted by the master, who was then advised by the guardians to be more careful about whom he admitted; a paralytic weaver from Dingle; an old man who had been in the house several times already and left, who was admitted after receiving a lecture on his 'erratic propensities'; a middle aged man who owned a small-holding but could not work; a young farm labourer who was destitute because of ill-health; two old women who had formerly been in the house; two children whose father had deserted them. A woman applied with her 'illegitimate child' and the two children of her sister, who was ill with fever; all four were admitted after a discussion. A widow and her five young children were admitted; she, her husband and the children had been in the house before and had left, but the husband had died of fever after three weeks outside. A boy who stated that he could not get service applied for admission; on further examination it became clear that the attraction of the workhouse for him was the education provided, but he was told that as he was over fifteen, the school was not available to him. Mr. Lynch said that prisons provided education to inmates of all ages, and he argued that the workhouse should do likewise.[70]

Eight destitute young children named Keliher [sic] from Castleisland division were admitted in October 1845. Their mother had died in childbirth and their father had gone to America some years before. The *Chronicle* commented: 'It was a distressing case and the guardians manifested much sympathy for the poor children'.[71] A month later two

destitute boys named Foley from Clahane were admitted; their parents had gone to America 'some time back' and nothing had been heard from them. A woman named McCarthy whose husband, a tailor, had deserted her, was also admitted, as well as 'a good-looking young woman' with a baby whose father did not keep his promise to marry her. At this time, the numbers in the house were 311.[72]

Changes of Workhouse personnel
A series of conflicts which arose between the master, Charles Newton and the medical officer, Dr. Alton, culminated in the resignations of the master and his wife, the matron, who was very ill. In September 1844, Newton wrote to the board: 'In consequence of the state of health of Mrs. Newton and from the opposition I have had at all times met with from the hospital people, I have, previous to this, made up my mind to leave this place.'[73] However, the minutes make it clear that the board rejected any imputations against the management of the hospital. The guardians were dissatisfied with the master on other grounds, stating that his conduct in striking some sixteen female children was 'most improper' and he had 'not properly discharged his duty' of informing the board of the absence for days of the assistant matron.[74]

At the meeting to elect a new master, Joseph Burke, APLC, advised the guardians that the duties of the master and matron were 'most difficult and onerous, [and] that nine out of ten [applicants] may not be found efficient'. Burke said that two requirements for the office were that 'applicants should write a fair legible hand and be good accountants'. Accordingly, the applicants were asked to provide a sample of their handwriting and were asked a few questions on arithmetic.[75]

Plate 9: Front façade of St Catherine's Hospital, 1985 (Michael Connolly).

In a first round of voting for master, James Fitzgerald of the Spa and William Brereton of Tralee emerged as the top two candidates. In the second round, Fitzgerald was elected as master with 20 votes as against Brereton's 14 votes. Mrs. A. Poyntz of Tralee was elected as matron with 21 votes, as against 13 for Mrs. S. Smyth of Dingle.[76] James Fitzgerald resigned as master after only two weeks, finding the responsibilities too onerous.[77] He was succeeded by William Brereton, who had come second to Charles Newton in the very first vote for a master of the workhouse.

A year later, in the autumn of 1845, William Brereton was considering resigning and actually submitted his resignation. The board members were very disappointed and, after a discussion which was highly complimentary to Brereton, he was persuaded to withdraw his resignation 'for the present'. There were 340 in the house that week.[78] A letter from inmates expressed their gratitude that the board persuaded Brereton to withdraw his resignation. The letter ran:

> When we contrast our present situation in this house with the past, we cannot but feel grateful to this most respectable and intelligent board for endeavouring to continue among us so just and kindly disposed a master, who spares no labour on his part to render our situation here as agreeable and comfortable as the proper discipline of this establishment admits of.[79]

The letter was signed by William Huggard, Maurice Halloran and Batt Callaghan who described themselves as 'wardsmen' writing 'on behalf of ourselves and fellow paupers'.[80] This seems to indicate a certain formality in workhouse arrangements with these three men acting as spokesmen for the inmates, but John Lynch was unimpressed by this letter, describing it as 'a contrivance on the part of someone.' He did not blame Brereton himself, who, according to Lynch 'stood in so high a position as not to need a puny effort of this kind'.[81]

William Brereton's integrity, efficiency and popularity with the paupers was appreciated and an increase in his salary was discussed in October. One guardian pointed out how important it was to retain a master 'of high moral character' as 'it would be very easy for him to commit the most extensive frauds undetected'.[82] The board clearly felt that Brereton was a man of the utmost honesty, but some guardians were against a salary increase at that time, as financial pressures were anticipated for the Union and for its ratepayers as a result of the failure of the potato crop. One

guardian stated that 'famine stared them in the face'. In the end, Brereton's salary was raised from £50 to £60, rather than to £70 as originally proposed and he continued as master.[83]

However, in June 1846, William Brereton did finally resign, to take up a position in charge of Tralee Infirmary. He agreed to stay on until a new appointment was made and this process took several months. Charles Newton applied again for the position of master and, incredibly, won fourteen votes as against four for his main rival, William Meehan, the master of Listowel workhouse. In proposing Newton, Thomas P. Trant said that when he was previously in the position, Newton was under severe strain from 'the jealousy of other officers' and because his wife was dying. He was 'a persecuted man' and 'more sinned against than sinning', according to other members of the board.[84] It was pointed out that the Commissioners were likely to refuse to ratify his appointment, in the light of his record, and that is indeed what happened. The position was re-advertised, with Newton going forward yet again and receiving more support from guardians, one of whom said that when Newton had been master, 'there was no waste of the public property, nor any charges of immorality of any kind brought against him; his only fault had been that he was inclined to be irritable and that he lacked self-control.'[85]

Thomas P. Trant in particular was determined to defy the Commissioners and re-elect Newton. He availed of the opportunity to vent his anger at 'the arbitrariness of the Commissioners' and referred back to the controversy over the workhouse site:

> This Union was shamefully robbed…. and that workhouse was a monument of that robbery. Who committed that robbery? Was it the guardians that took this site? No. Who did it then? The Commissioners can answer. Whosoever sconce the cap fits let them wear it. This might be his last vote as guardian and it should be one of opposition to the tyranny of the Commissioners.[86]

Eventually, the saga ended with Maurice O'Connor of Tralee becoming master in September 1846, just as the catastrophe of the total failure of the potato crop was wreaking havoc in the county.[87]

Conclusion
The on-going mistrust and tension within the Tralee board of guardians and between the board and the Poor Law Commissioners continued to

have an impact on the board's management of the affairs of the Union throughout the Famine years. In January 1845, the Commissioners refused to sanction a loan of £500 to the Union; this meant that if the guardians settled all their bills, the accounts would be overdrawn by £60.[88] Tralee Union was not by any means unique in having huge financial problems, delays, inefficiencies and disputes. In many Unions around the country, including Listowel, boards of guardians were dissolved and the Unions were managed by appointees of the Commissioners.

The difficulties faced by Tralee board of guardians in the years before the Great Famine were nothing to the overwhelming responsibilities which fell to it from 1846 on. The numbers in the workhouse are a clear indication of how all changed - changed utterly – in a short time. At the end of 1844, there were 228 in the workhouse.[89] Towards the end of 1845, there were 361 people in the workhouse.[90] By late November 1846, there were 1,207 in the workhouse, far in excess of its official capacity of 1,000.[91] By 1851, there were at least eleven more auxiliary workhouses in operation in the Union, most of them in Tralee town, with a total of 7,197 human beings crammed inside their walls, with few individual names or identities apparent in any records.[92] During the Famine years, newspapers and minutes of meetings no longer recorded individual names or circumstances of people admitted to the workhouse, and so those recorded here for the years 1844 and 1845 are particularly significant. The names of those who died in Tralee workhouse between 1844 and 1847 are recorded in the minute books, and these will be published in a future article in this journal.

After the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the workhouse was closed and the residents were transferred to the County Home in Killarney. The building re-opened as St. Catherine's Hospital, which was superseded by Tralee General Hospital in 1984. Today the re-modelled workhouse building is the headquarters of Kerry County Council. Above the main staircase, some of the original wooden beams have been left exposed, and the workhouse graveyard still remains at the rear of the building, although it is not accessible to the public.

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About the Author

Bryan MacMahon is a retired teacher and a native of Ballyheigue. He has published several articles in this journal, in *The Kerry Magazine* and in *History Ireland*. His book *The Great Famine in Tralee and North Kerry* was published by Mercier Press in 2017.

References

[1] Further information on the Irish Poor Law Act and on Tralee Union can be found in John O'Connor, *The Workhouses of Ireland; the fate of Ireland's poor* (Dublin, 1995); John F. Doyle, 'The Tralee Workhouse and the Poor Laws, 1832-1850', *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society,* Series 2, Vol. 9, (2009), pp 55-76; Lily Tangney, 'When Living was a Nightmare: St. Catherine's from Workhouse to a Hospital', *The Kerryman,* 27 April 1984, p. 17. The website www.workhouses.org.uk has an informative section on Irish workhouses.

[2] *Kerry Evening Post* [Hereafter '*KEP'*], 29 January 1840.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] *KEP*, 2 May 1840

[8] *KEP,* 2 May 1840 (Italics in original source).

[9] Minute Book of Tralee board of guardians, 7 May 1840, BG 154/A/1, Kerry County Archives, Tralee [Hereafter 'Minutes'].

[10] *KEP*, 9 May 1840.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Quoted in O'Connor, *Workhouses,* p.91. See *Dictionary of Irish Architects* (https://www.dia.ie/architects/view/4918/) for more on George Wilkinson and his resentment at the overall findings of the Pennethorne Report. For more information on the work of James Pennethorne, who was knighted in 1870 in recognition of his public service as an architect in England, see Wikipedia.

[13] *KEP*, 10 January 1840 carried a report on all of the grievances presented to him by the board.

[14] This letter was published in *KEP*, 9 June 1841. Reports cited various sums as the cost of the site, but the general complaint was that £10 per acre was paid, when a nearby site was available at £5 per acre. According to John O'Connor, the workhouse site was 10 statute acres. (*Workhouses*, Appendix 13, p. 263.). Other sources give different sizes for the site, perhaps because of the difference

between Irish acres and statute acres.

[15] *KEP*, 15 June 1844.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] *KEP*, 12 June 1844. The *Post* had sight of the full report before publishing it on 15 June.

[19] *KEP*, 15 June 1844.

[20] *KEP,* 26 August 1840.

[21] The *Kerry Examiner* [Hereafter *KEx*], 8 December 1840.

[22] *KEx*, 18 December 1840

[23] *KEP*, 13 February 1841.

[24] Ibid.

[25] *KEP,* 17 February 1841.

[26] *KEP*, 20 March 1841.

[27] *KEP,* 24 March 1841

[28] Ibid.

[29] *KEP,* 27 March 1841.

[30] *KEP,* 11 August 1841

[31] *KEP*, 28 April 1841.

[32] *KEP*, 15 June 1844.

[33] *KEP,* 16 February 1842. The Newtons were from Newcastlewest, according to Lily Tangney, 'When Living was a Nightmare'.

[34] Ibid.

[35] *KEP,* 11 June 1842

[36] *KEP,* 20 August 1842.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] *KEP,* 16 July 1845.

[40] Minutes, 1 September 1842.

[41] Minutes, 21 December 1843.

[42] *KEP,* 3 January 1844.

[43] Ibid.

[44] *KEx*, 2 February 1844.

[45] *KEP,* 3 February 1844.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] *KEx*, 2 February 1844.

[51] Minutes, 23 January 1844.

[52] *KEP,* 22 May 1844.

[53] *KEP,* 17 July 1844

[54] Details above are from *KEP,* 17 July 1844.

[55] *KEP,* 28 August 1844.
[56] *KEP,* 25 September 1844.
[57] *KEP,* 2 October 1844.
[58] *KEP,* 16 October 1844.
[59] *KEP,* 19 February 1845.
[60] *Tralee Chronicle* [Hereafter *TC*] 22 February 1845.
[61] *KEP,* 5 March 1845.
[62] Ibid.
[63] *KEP,* 2 April 1845.
[64] *KEP,* 16 April 1845.
[65] Ibid.
[66] *KEP,* 23 April 1845.
[67] *KEP,* 2 July 1845.
[68] *TC,* 26 July 1845.
[69] *KEP,* 16 July 1845.
[70] *KEP,* 23 July 1845.
[71] *TC,* 25 October 1845.
[72] *TC,* 8 November 1845.
[73] *KEP,* 12 September 1844.
[74] Minutes, 10 September 1844. Listowel Union also had personnel conflicts among workhouse staff in 1845. Because of 'unseemly quarrels between the officials of Listowel workhouse' all its officials except the porter were called on to resign. (*KEP*, 3 May 1845.)
[75] *KEx*, 27 September 1844.
[76] *KEP,* 25 September 1844. See *KEx,* 27 September also.
[77] *KEP,* 9 October 1844.
[78] *KEP*, 6 September 1845.
[79] *KEP*, 13 September 1845.
[80] *KEP,* 13 September 1845.
[81] *TC,* 13 September 1845.
[82] *KEP,* 29 October 1845.
[83] Ibid.
[84] *KEP*, 15 July 1846.
[85] *KEP,* 5 August 1846.
[86] Ibid.
[87] *KEx,* 11 September 1846.
[88] *KEP*, 1 January 1845.
[89] Ibid.
[90] *KEP*, 17 December 1845
[91] *TC*, 28 November 1846.
[92] Minutes, 24 May 1851. See also: Bryan MacMahon, *The Great Famine in Tralee and North Kerry* (2017) for further information on Tralee workhouses during the years of the Great Famine.

Transience and Permanency – Four thousand years of settlement on the Dingle Peninsula: Archaeological Excavations near Lispole and Camp in advance of the N86 Road Scheme (2015–6)

By Bruce Sutton

Overview

Corca Dhuibhne is renowned for the richness of its archaeological remains, which range in date from the Mesolithic to the medieval period. Excavations in advance of improvement of the N86 Tralee to *An Daingean* road provided opportunities for archaeological investigation.

Test excavations along the route of the N86 in 2015 led to the discovery of nine previously unknown archaeological sites. These sites were excavated in 2016 in advance of road construction. The excavations uncovered evidence of human activity spanning four millennia, encompassing the Bronze Age (2500–800 BC), the early medieval period (AD 400–1100), the medieval period (AD 1100–1600) and the post-medieval period (AD 1600–1800). Human activity ranged from the everyday to the semi-industrial; from the temporary to the permanent. Study of the archaeological, artefactual and environmental remains revealed unique and important insights into the relationship between early settlement activity and the changing landscape of the Dingle Peninsula.

Introduction

Archaeological investigations were undertaken in the civil parish of An Mhin Aird (Minard), in the barony of *Corca Dhuibhne* (Corkaguiny), Co. Kerry, in advance of the construction of the second phase of the N86 Tralee to *An Daingean* road improvement scheme. The project was sub-divided into two sections (Fig. 1). The western section of the scheme was located to the east of the village of *Lios Póil* (Lispole), in the townlands of *Baile na Saor Íochtarach* (Ballynasare Lower), *Baile na Saor Beag* (Ballynasare Beg), *An Bhánóg Theas* (Banoge South) and *Garraí na dTor* (Garrynadur). The eastern section was located west of the village of Camp, in the townlands of Ballinknockane (*Baile an Chnocáin*) and Ballygarret (*Baile Ghearóid*). The archaeological services were

undertaken by Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd (IAC) on behalf of Kerry County Council. Funding was provided by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). Archaeological excavations were directed by Shane Delaney (2015) and Bruce Sutton (2016) for IAC under ministerial direction (A070). The archaeological services were carried out under the auspices of the *Code of Practice for Archaeology* agreed between the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and TII and were overseen by TII Archaeologist Paul O'Keeffe.

SITE NAME Excavation Reg. No.	SUMMARY DESCRIPTION	PERIOD	GRID REFERENCE (ITM)
An Bhánóg Theas 1 E004664	Occupation surface and 18th-century road.	Medieval and post-medieval	454075 601360
An Bhánóg Theas 2 E004665	Charcoal-production kiln.	Medieval	454365 601445
An Bhánóg Theas 3 E004748	Burnt mounds	Early to Late Bronze Age	454525 601460
An Bhánóg Theas 4 E004749	Burnt mound	Early and Middle Bronze Age	454585 601432
Baile na Saor Beag 1 E004666	Burnt mound	Early Bronze Age	454828 601291
Baile na Saor Beag 2 E004667	Pits.	Medieval	454828 601254
Baile na Saor Beag 3 E004668	Enclosure	Prehistoric and early medieval	454917 601212
Ballinknockane 1 E004669	Charcoal-production kiln.	Medieval	469173 609257
Ballygarret 1 E004747	Charcoal-production kiln.	Medieval	468980 609207

Table 1: List of excavated sites (IAC)

Test excavations in 2015 led to the identification of nine previously unidentified archaeological sites within the lands acquired for construction of the road. As these could not be preserved *in situ* it was agreed with the

National Monuments Services of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (NMS) that these sites would be excavated and preserved by record in advance of the commencement of road construction (Table 1). Excavation has revealed that the sites excavated represent the remains of prehistoric settlement, three burnt mounds (also known as *fulachtaí fia*), an early medieval rath (ringfort or circular ditched enclosure), medieval occupation and transient activity, as well as three charcoal-production kilns. In addition, part of a disused eighteenth-century road was investigated.
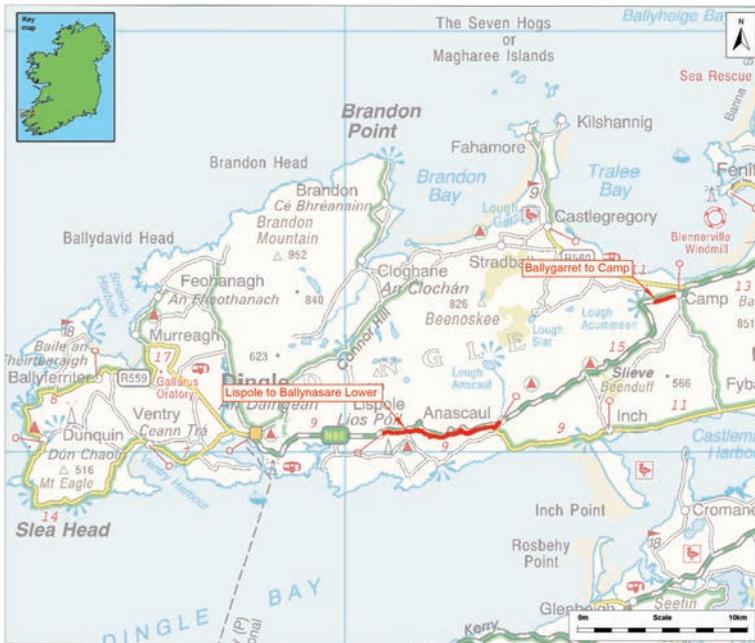
Figure 1: Scheme Location (IAC based on OS map, Scale 1:450,000, OSI Date: 2000)

The Bronze Age

Baile na Saor Beag 1[1]

The burnt mound excavated at *Baile na Saor Beag 1* was located in a pasture field and consisted of an oval pit (or trough) with associated spreads of burnt mound material up to 0.3m deep. The surviving burnt

mound measured 7.8m north–south by 3.57m east–west but additional patches of mound material in hollows indicated it may have originally covered a wider area, of 11m east–west.

Plate 1: Aerial images of excavation sites Baile na Saor Beag 1–3, showing the former line of the N86 road, undulating farmland and the Dingle mountains to the north (Aircam).

The archaeological remains were severely truncated by later activity, such as field boundary ditches, land drains, furrows and land reclamation. The trough was oval in plan, had steep sides and a flat base, but no evidence for a lining was evident. Simple unlined pits represent the majority (55%) of trough type features identified within burnt mounds (Hawkes 2018, 70). Laboratory analysis of the abundant charcoal from within such archaeological monuments can reveal the species of tree used as fuel during the multiple firing events and activities at the site. The charcoal-rich primary fill of this trough contained ash, alder, cherry, oak and willow charcoal. A sample of alder returned an Early Bronze Age radiocarbon date of 2134–1938 BC.

An Bhánóg Theas 3 and 4
Burnt mounds were discovered in two marshy fields on the western side of the stream which forms the boundary between the townlands of *An Bhánóg Theas* and *Baile na Saor Beag*. The *fulachtaí fia* were sealed beneath peaty soils which had accumulated after they had been abandoned.

An Bhánóg Theas 3 [2]

A horseshoe-shaped burnt mound was excavated at *An Bhánóg Theas 3*; the mound was associated with two troughs and two postholes. A second burnt spread was found at the northern edge of the excavated area and extended beyond the limits of excavation. While the crescent or horseshoe shape is considered typical for burnt mounds, few survive intact into the modern era, and most have been affected by natural erosion processes or by agricultural practices. The mound at *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 was sealed beneath alluvial layers and peat, which protected it from later disturbance. The excavated portion of the burnt mound measured 9.4m east–west by 6.4m north–south and survived to a depth of 0.85m. The two shallow troughs were nestled within the U-shaped space that the burnt mound defined.

The most northerly trough, radiocarbon dated to the Early Bronze Age, was circular in plan and the base was lined with three flat, overlapping stones. This was partly truncated by a second, sub-rectangular trough which was radiocarbon dated to the Middle Bronze Age. Two postholes adjacent to its south-eastern corner may represent the location of a former spit or rack.

At least three phases of use are apparent from the radiocarbon dating of charcoal from across the site, from the Early to Late Bronze Age (2140–1780 BC, 1406–1133 BC, 1286–1058 BC and 1008–844 BC). Once the site had been abandoned, four distinctive layers of peat and clay developed naturally over the site.

Common to excavated Bronze Age burnt mounds elsewhere in Ireland, oak, alder and willow were the dominant wood taxa identified in the charcoal recovered during excavation. Holly charcoal was recovered from the two troughs, both of which also had a notable presence of hazel and blackthorn, which may suggest some contemporary use. A very mixed charcoal assemblage was recovered from one of the postholes, most likely reflecting burnt mound material that infilled this feature once the post had been removed or rotted. The dominance of oak within this feature could, however, indicate that originally it held an oak post.

Apart from wood charcoal, plant remains are extremely rare from Irish burnt mound sites but a low number of charred vetch, buttercup and yarrow seeds, and the remains of tubers and grasses were recovered from this site. It is likely that these wild taxa, found in hedgerows and marginal woodland, were brought to the site with gathered ground flora and vegetation.

Plate 2: Aerial image of excavation site *An Bhánóg Theas* 4, showing the excavation area, immediate wet surrounding environment and outlying better quality farmland (Aircam).

An Bhánóg Theas 4 [3]

An oval-shaped burnt mound was excavated at *An Bhánóg Theas* 4 which represented at least two clear phases of use, separated by a compact layer of re-deposited natural subsoil mixed with heat-shattered stone. Excavation revealed a timber-lined trough under the southwestern portion of the mound, with evidence for three phases of construction and use (Fig. 2). Six stakeholes, in a roughly linear arrangement, were uncovered to the northeast of the trough. Examples of similar stakehole arrangements close to troughs include those at Sonnagh 10, Co. Mayo (Gillespie and Kerrigan 2010, 94-96), Ballinaspig More 7, Co. Cork (Hanley and Hurley 2013, 113) and Gortaphicka 2, on the M18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme, Co. Clare (Delaney *et al.* 2012, 90). They are commonly interpreted as the remains of a screen/windbreak or drying rack associated with the use of the trough.

The first phase of the trough is represented by the digging of the oval cut and the initial use of the feature. Phase 2 comprised of the construction of the roundwood timber-lining over a deliberately laid layer of moss. Vertical timbers within the trough comprised of hazel or holly, with all remaining timbers being hazel. An Early Bronze Age date of 1878–1631

BC was retrieved from a hazel base timber. After an indeterminate period of use the trough was shortened from 1.9m to 1.5m (Phase 3) by the removal of roundwood timbers from the northeast end and the insertion of split timber planks of willow and alder. Re-use of roundwood hazel from the Phase 2 trough also occurred. A corner stake of hazel, from this third phase of use, was dated to the Middle Bronze Age (1502–1412 BC). Some of the trough timbers had worked ends with well-preserved facets or tool marks that were morphologically consistent with the use of metal tools such as a Middle Bronze Age flanged axe. The preservation of roundwood-lined troughs like this are relatively rare, although examples have been recorded at other sites such as Lough More, Co. Mayo (McDermott 1995, 187) and Sonnagh I, Co. Mayo (Gillespie and Kerrigan 2010, 61-7). A recent study that examined 1,481 trough features recorded only 3% as being lined with roundwoods (Hawkes 2018, 73). The trough at Sonnagh I also had a layer of moss underlying the timber lining. Hawkes (*ibid.*) suggests that a layer of moss in the base of a trough may have acted as a filter. On this basis, when the trough at *An Bhánóg Theas* 4 was in use, it would have naturally filled with water, filtering through the moss before rising to fill the timber-lined trough.

While not common, evidence for the re-lining and shortening of troughs has been uncovered at other *burnt mounds*. Examples include Curraheen 5, Co. Cork, where a trough was shortened by the insertion of a partition timber across its width (Hanley and Hurley 2013, 138), and at Cahiracon, Co. Clare, where a large plank-lined trough was shortened by the deposition of unburnt stone at one end (Dennehy and Sutton 2003). Such an act may indicate the reuse of the site over extended periods of time (Hawkes 2018, 141).

Charcoal recovered from layers deposited in the Phase 1 trough included oak, ash, hazel, willow, pomaceous woods (apple, pear etc.), alder and yew. A deposit of burnt mound material created when the Phase 2 trough was shortened contained mainly willow charcoal, with smaller quantities of hazel, pomaceous woods and ash. The charcoal-rich fill of the Phase 3 trough similarly contained mainly willow and alder, with smaller quantities of birch, hazel and pomaceous woods. This suggests that wood for fuel was gathered randomly, irrespective of wood species. Such mixed charcoal assemblages are typical of Irish burnt mounds. The upper layer of the burnt mound, however, contained mainly oak charcoal, with smaller quantities of alder and willow suggesting that at this stage, oak may have been preferentially selected, or been more available in the local woodland.

In total, 42 pieces of timber from the trough lining were examined, consisting of three split timbers and 39 roundwoods. Toolmarks were noted on several of the timbers and the flat facets, combined with the widths recorded, are consistent with the use of a flanged axe. Such axes were introduced during the Middle Bronze Age and were of various sizes and lengths, but generally had a slightly rounded blade[4].
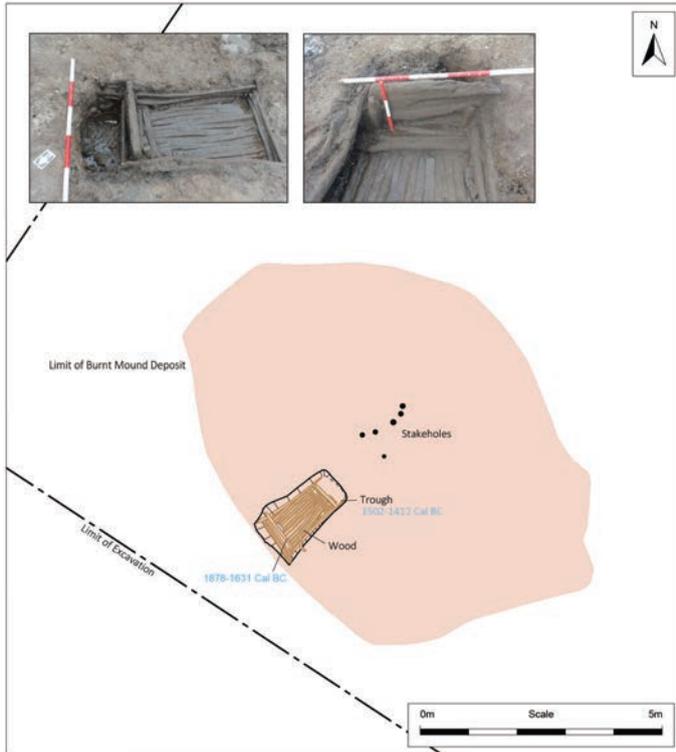

Figure 2: Map showing excavations at An Bhánóg Theas 4, showing the timber-lined trough (IAC).

The three burnt mounds excavated as part of this project were located within 500m of each other and all date to the Bronze Age. Three burnt mounds have been recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland within a 0.5km radius[5]. Studies have shown that burnt mounds are often located in clusters within 0.5km of one another (Grogan 2005, 43). The cluster of burnt mounds discussed above is located either side of a stream that runs north–south within marginal grassland (*Baile na Saor Beag* 1)

and wet peatland (*An Bhánóg Theas* 3 and *An Bhánóg Theas* 4). During excavation the trough features at *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 and 4 filled slowly with water and excavation at *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 required extensive water management to allow excavation to be undertaken. It is generally agreed that there was a downturn in climate in the Bronze Age and all three burnt mound sites would have been in areas with a high-water table, allowing the troughs to fill naturally with water.

Burnt mound sites have previously been excavated on the Dingle Peninsula. For example, excavation in the townland of Ballynane in 2011, in advance of the N86 Annascaul to Gortbreagoge Road Improvement Scheme, resulted in the identification of two burnt mound sites in Ballynane which were radiocarbon dated to the Middle–Late Bronze Age (O'Hara *et al.* 2012, 72–4). At Ballynane 1, a well-preserved trough, a second possible trough/large pit, and a disturbed burnt mound were identified; Ballynane 2 was a disturbed spread of heat-shattered stone in a charcoal-rich clay matrix (*ibid.*, 72-4).

The general lack of artefacts, food waste and industrial waste recovered from burnt mound sites suggests that only the required amount of time was spent at such sites, with the products of their use transported elsewhere. While their presence in the landscape cannot be considered direct evidence of settlement, their location can be an indicator of nearby settlement sites with correlation being noted between burnt mound sites and nearby burial and settlement sites in Co. Limerick (Cooney and Grogan 1994, 102-3) and Co. Clare (Grogan 2005, 41).

The size of the excavated burnt mounds at *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 and 4 and *Baile na Saor Beag* 1 implies that they were consistently used for prolonged periods of time, rather than being transitory or seasonal. The two sites at *An Bhánóg Theas* showed indications of re-use with an intermittent abandonment period. At *An Bhánóg Theas* 4 the trough was re-lined and the burnt mound itself showed signs of natural silting in-between deposits. Dating evidence from *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 indicated the use of the initial stone-lined trough in the Early Bronze Age, and the second un-lined trough in the Middle–Late Bronze Age, which seems to suggest prolonged use with an extended period of abandonment between phases. The mounds themselves must have served as good indicators to subsequent generations that these locations were ideal for the heating of water in earth-cut pits, or troughs; undoubtedly it made practical sense for later inhabitants of the area to use the same locations if possible.

Baile na Saor Beag 1, with its Early Bronze Age date and simple unlined trough, may represent the earliest activity in this cluster of burnt

mound sites, with later activity moving south and west into wetter ground. Overall, the three excavated burnt mounds have a date range of 2134– 844 BC, spanning most of the Bronze Age (2500–800 BC). This serves as a good indicator that the region was inhabited throughout this period, with people farming the surrounding land and living in settlements likely located on drier areas nearby.

Environmental Evidence - Bronze Age[6]
The analyses of environmental remains recovered during the excavations (*e.g.* waterlogged wood, charcoal, carbonised plant remains and pollen) allow us to infer what the surrounding environment would have been like when the sites were in use. Charcoal is a good indicator of the surrounding woodland as people would generally have collected firewood close to their immediate location.

The earliest evidence relating to the local environment on the scheme dates to the Early Bronze Age, when the burnt mound at *Baile na Saor Beag* 1 was in use. The charcoal assemblage recovered from this site was dominated by willow and alder, with lesser amounts of birch, ash and oak. This suggests that there were two types of local woodland in the Early Bronze Age; a wet oak-ash woodland (with other tree/shrub compositions) possibly to the north and east of the site, and a riparian woodland, likely located along river margins and small streams to the west or south. The low curvature of the tree rings from the charcoal fragments revealed that mature trees were being used as firewood rather than younger roundwoods. This suggests that trees were deliberately felled for firewood, (possibly as a consequence of field clearance for farmland) rather than fallen branches being collected from the woodland floor.

During the Middle to Late Bronze Age the charcoal evidence from *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 and 4 had a higher occurrence of oak, followed by willow and alder, indicating a period of woodland regeneration which has been noted from charcoal assemblages from other Late Bronze Age sites (O'Donnell 2007). Alder charcoal from *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 suggests younger roundwoods, such as branches, were being used as firewood, as well as the mature trees which were still predominantly used. The charcoal fragments were free of insect channels which suggests that wood was used soon after felling and not stockpiled.

The waterlogged hazel from the trough lining had an age profile of between six and thirty years, averaging fifteen years, which is indicative

of wood selection from an area of older coppice woodlands rather than a deliberately managed area of coppice on a cyclical rotation (Morgan 1975). The hazel rods would have been selected on the basis of size as the majority of the hazel brushwood/roundwood were of a similar size for construction of the box-like trough[7].
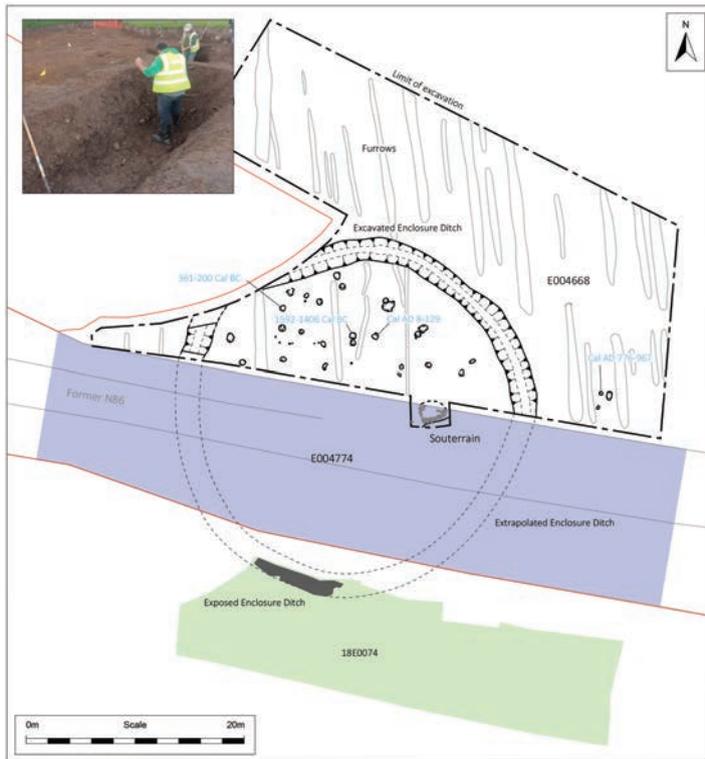
Figure 3: Plan of the probable early medieval enclosure and associated souterrain, with prehistoric pits and postholes at *Baile na Saor Beag 3* (after Sutton 2019c; Dunne 2018; Walsh et al. 2019). (IAC).

Early Medieval Rath And Souterrain (*Baile na Saor Beag* 3)[8]

Part of the northern half of a curvilinear ditch, with a projected diameter of 30m, was excavated at *Baile na Saor Beag* 3, revealing 33 pits and stakeholes across the interior, and three external pits (Fig. 3). A series of furrows, representing two phases of post-abandonment cultivation were also uncovered. The earliest, spade-dug, furrows respected the enclosure ditch suggesting it was still a visible feature in the landscape at that time.

The later plough furrows cut the ditch and continued across the enclosure interior. The enclosure ditch was also cut by a north-south field boundary ditch that was also identified at *Baile na Saor Beag* 2.

Approximately 30–40% of the enclosure was exposed, excavated and recorded while the remainder of the enclosure extended under the former N86 road to the south. The projected diameter of 30m was confirmed by Dunne (2018) when investigations uncovered the southern extent of the ditch in the field on the south side of the road (Fig. 3). A souterrain was also found within the area enclosed by the ditch during excavation of a drainage ditch in the roadside verge, immediately south of the excavated area. The souterrain was defined by an oval arrangement of flat stones with a chamber measuring 2m (north-south) by 2.6m (east-west) (Walsh *et al.* 2019). The souterrain passage is thought to extend in a south-westerly direction from the chamber beneath the former N86. The presence of a souterrain within a circular ditched enclosure is consistent with an early medieval date for this site.

The soil layers that filled the enclosure ditch were mainly devoid of artefacts, but did contain large amounts of broken stone. A single fragment of burnt animal bone, probably from a sheep or goat, and a small piece of undiagnostic flint debitage were recovered. This limited assemblage demonstrates that the backfilled material within the ditch derived from destruction of the former bank, which would have stood along its inner edge. An upper charcoal-rich backfill deposit along the northern side of the ditch was dominated by hazel, with lesser amounts of alder and pomaceous fruitwoods and small amounts of ash, oak and elm. This combination of species suggested that this layer post-dates the occupation of the enclosure, however, and likely represents the dumped remains of burnt wattle/structural debris, or the remnants of firewood, discarded on to the infilled ditch.

Approximately 250m^2 of the internal area was exposed and excavated which equates to 35% of the estimated enclosed area. Most of the internal pits and stakeholes also contained sterile fills but charcoal was recovered from some. This included a centrally located pit dominated by hazel charcoal, which returned a Middle Bronze Age date, and contained lesser amounts of pomaceous fruitwoods, willow, ash and elm. Two further pits, however, were radiocarbon dated to the Middle and Late Iron Age suggesting that the internal pits represent multiple phases of re-use of this location prior to the construction of the enclosure. No artefacts were recovered from these internal pits and their position did not appear to indicate a structure.

Approximately 6m east of the enclosure ditch were three further pits, two of which contained very low quantities of charred hazelnut shell which provided an early medieval date of AD 776–967. A charcoal assemblage dominated by small brushwood hazel, with lesser amounts of pomaceous fruitwoods and blackthorn, was recovered from one of these pits. The hazelnut shells may represent waste foodstuffs or accidental inclusions collected with hazel wood for fuel. It is likely, given the presence of an internal souterrain, that the ditched enclosure at *Baile na Saor Beag* 3 is an early medieval ringfort, and pits uncovered to the east are contemporary with its occupation, and post-date the pits uncovered in the interior which may represent earlier prehistoric activity at this location.
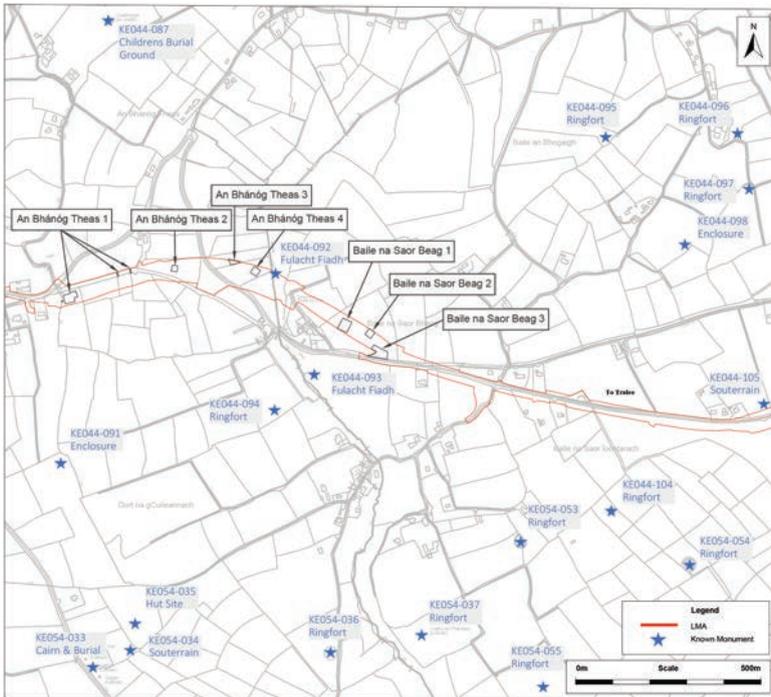
Figure 4: Map showing excavations at *An Bhánóg Theas* and *Baile na Saor Beag*, and adjacent known archaeological sites on the Record of Monuments and Places (IAC/NMS).

The Dingle Peninsula has a high number of surviving early medieval settlements, many with associated hut sites and souterrains, several of

which are located within 1.5km of the site (Cuppage 1986) (Fig. 4). Located just 300m to the southwest, in the townland of *Gort na gCuileannach* (Gortnagullanagh), is the site of a severely disturbed ringfort, some 23m in internal diameter which contains a D-shaped clochán or drystone structure (KE044-094). Approximately 1.6km to the west in the townland of *Garraí na dTor* (Garrynadur), is the site of a stone ringfort (KE044-135), with another recorded just 300m to the northwest in the townland of *An Gráig* (KE044-088).

Approximately 1.8km northwest of *Baile na Saor Beag* 3, in the townland of *An Gabhlán Thoir* (Gowlane East), is a ringfort measuring 31m in diameter, with internal hut sites (KE044-086) and a souterrain of drystone construction located *c.* 200m to the southwest (KE044-141).

Within 1.1–1.4km north and northwest of *Baile na Saor Beag* 3, in the townland of *An Bhánóg Theas*, are four known ringforts, one example is c. 25m in diameter, defined by a stony bank with an east-facing entrance (KE044-045). A second ringfort, *c.* 100m to the northeast had an internal diameter of 22m, with a centrally located hut site measuring 9m in diameter (KE044-046). Located 250m to the east is a third, potentially bivallate (enclosed by two banks), ringfort with an internal diameter of 30.5m and with some evidence for a souterrain and hut site (KE044-047). The fourth ringfort is the largest, measuring up to 66m by 43m internally, located *c.* 400m southeast (KE044-048). In the townland of *Mám an Gharráin* (Maumagarrane), 1.4km to the northeast of *Baile na Saor Beag* 3, is an almost destroyed ringfort (KE044-049), while in the townland of *Baile an Bhogaigh* (Ballinvogig) are a further three ringforts, (KE044-095), (KE044-096) and (KE044-097), located between 0.8km and 1.1km away, also northeast of *Baile na Saor Beag* 3.

A concentration of seven ringforts are located in the townlands of *Log na gCapall* (Lugnagappul) and *Baile na Saor Íochtarach* (Ballynasare Lower) at a distance of 0.6–1km southeast of *Baile na Saor Beag* 3, including two bivallate examples (KE054-037, -053, -054 and -055, KE044-104 and -105). Where it is possible to record dimensions, these sites have internal diameters of between 16.5m and 33.5m. Two of these ringforts have associated hut sites while one, in the townland of *Log na gCapall* (KE054-035), is associated with a potentially collapsed souterrain located 100m to the south-southwest (KE054-034).

Rath sites (also known as ringforts), of earth or stone, are common in the Irish landscape, and all those discussed above are located within 2km of the enclosure excavated at *Baile na Saor Beag* 3. While none have been

excavated it is likely that several would be contemporary with the occupation of *Baile na Saor Beag* 3, possibly forming a loose knit community that farmed this area of the Dingle Peninsula in the early medieval period.

Environmental Evidence - The Iron Age / Early Medieval[9]
A pollen monolith sample extracted from the peaty sediments that overlay the burnt mound at *An Bhánóg Theas* 4 provides a wealth of information on the environment, and the changes to vegetation, in the vicinity of the monolith site over a 1,500 year period, from *c*. 350 BC to AD 1150. The analysis of pollen from this monolith indicates a changing landscape over the 1,500 years examined, with fluctuations in woodland cover observed. The level of peat accumulation in the monolith was relatively low, which suggests that the peat formed as a result of the development of anaerobic saturated conditions in the soils on the plateau where *An Bhánóg Theas* 3 and 4 were located. This is likely to have been caused by a rising water table or repeated flooding over a period of time.

The pollen record reveals periods of significantly lower woodland cover associated with higher human activity in the centuries preceding AD 1 as well as between AD 150–450, post AD 800 and post AD 1050. Spores known to grow on herbivore dung were also identified, which may suggest husbandry was an important part of local farming during the Iron Age, while a peak in hazel pollen coinciding with high levels of micro-charcoal may indicate coppicing practices. Reductions in the pollen of woodland species correspond with heightened levels of pollen of plants associated with human activity such as ribwort plantain, dock and grasses. These are indicators of trampled and disturbed land, as well as meadowlands (Behre 1981), which suggests that human interference resulted in lower woodland cover during the Early and Late Iron Age, early medieval period and beginning of the medieval period. This can be interpreted as evidence for pastoral farming as low levels of cereal-type pollen were recorded. Typically, the Late Iron Age is a period when human impact on the landscape was at a low level and has been termed the 'Late Iron Age Lull' (Mitchell and Ryan 2001) but, while broadly contemporary, woodland regeneration appears to have occurred slightly earlier in this landscape (AD 1–150).

No dramatic alterations to the landscape were identified in the early medieval period, between the 6th and the beginning of the 9th centuries, and the pollen suggests that the local woodland recovered, which indicates

a lower level of human occupation across the area. From AD 800 onwards, a significant reduction in woodland occurred alongside an increase in grasses, which corresponds with radiocarbon dates from the enclosure site at *Baile na Saor Beag* 3. A noticeable increase in micro-charcoal was identified after AD 900 which suggests the clearance and burning of woodlands, while herbs associated with human activity increased significantly from AD 1050.

   Pollen analysis can often be complemented by charcoal analysis. Recovered charcoal from *Baile na Saor Beag* 3 was dominated by hazel, possibly as young strands that may have been coppiced, indicating a degree of woodland management. Other wood species identified by charcoal analysis, such as blackthorn and pomaceous fruitwoods, are clear indicators of woodland clearance that has been identified in the pollen data. The diversity of wood taxa recorded at the site suggests that a mixed woodland was exploited, although whether this was driven by availability or strategic collection is unclear. The pollen and charcoal data provide an insight into the environment surrounding the site of *Baile na Saor Beag* 3 which is particularly relevant during the Iron Age and early medieval period when activity is known to have occurred at this site.

Medieval Charcoal Production Kilns
Three charcoal-production kilns were excavated along the scheme; one in the western section and two in the east (Fig. 5).

An Bhánóg Theas 2[10]
A charcoal-production kiln excavated at *An Bhánóg Theas* 2 survived as a shallow, sub-rectangular pit (1.72m x 0.8m x 0.11m deep) that contained a single charcoal-rich fill. The sides and base of the pit had oxidised as a result of *in situ* burning. Charcoal analysis identified oak as the dominant wood taxa but a single fragment of alder was also retrieved which returned a mid-eleventh to mid-thirteenth century AD date (AD 1043–1253).

Ballinknockane 1[11]
A charcoal-production kiln excavated at Ballinknockane 1 survived as a shallow, oval pit (2.1m x 1.3m x 0.12m deep) containing a charcoal-rich deposit, overlain by a deposit of silty material that had accumulated after the kiln was abandoned. Oak was the only wood taxa identified during analysis and a charcoal fragment was dated to the mid-thirteenth to late fourteenth century AD (AD 1258–1379).

Ballygarret 1[12]

A charcoal-production kiln excavated at Ballygarret 1 survived as a shallow, oval pit (2.1m x 1.4m x 0.15m deep) which contained a charcoal-rich deposit beneath material that had naturally accumulated once the kiln was abandoned. Similar to *An Bhánóg Theas* 2, *in-situ* burning had led the sides and base of the pit to become oxidised. Oak was the only wood taxa identified from within the kiln and a fragment returned a late twelfth to late thirteenth century AD date (AD 1189–1276).
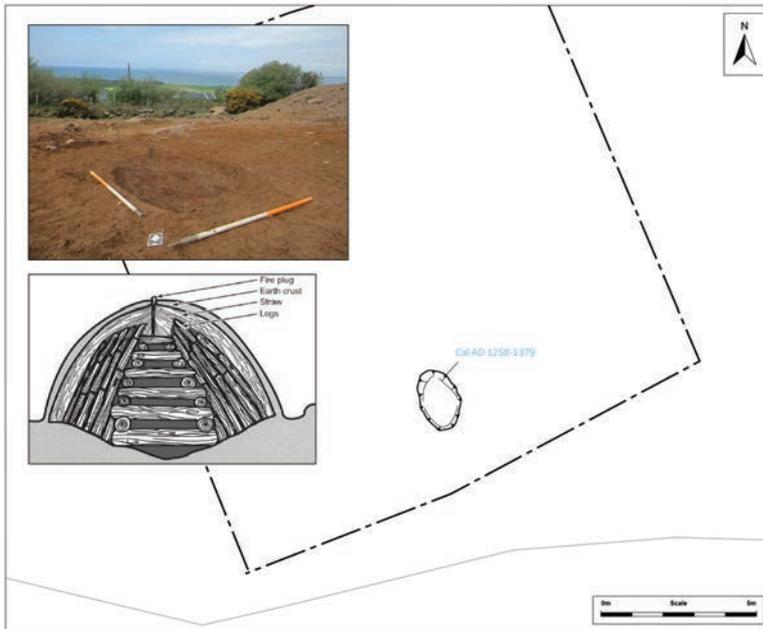
Figure 5: Medieval charcoal-production kiln at Ballygarret 1 with inset photo (top) of the kiln post excavation (scale 1m) and schematic reconstruction (middle) of the basic internal components of a typical kiln in cross-section. (IAC/Illustration: J. Millar from Eogan & Shee Twohig 2011, 156. Illus. 133]).

Earth-cut pit kilns to produce charcoal are constructed by first digging a small pit in the ground. Wood (usually oak) is then piled in the pit with kindling and covered with vegetation and earth. The kindling is lit but the organic covering reduces the amount of oxygen and prevents the complete combustion of the wood (Kenny 2010). The kiln must be tended to for several days until the wood has reduced to charcoal through this controlled burning process. This process consumes huge quantities of

wood and the production of one ton of charcoal requires approximately six tons of wood (O'Donnell 2009). This results in charcoal-production kilns being typically located close to the required wood source. The charcoal these kilns produced would generally be utilized for industrial activities, such as the smelting or smithing of iron (Kelley 2002, 11).

The charcoal-production kilns uncovered during the current excavations may be associated with medieval ironworking in this rural area. Charcoal production was a necessary part of the smelting and working of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, glass, and other materials as wood alone could not achieve the high stable temperatures necessary for such craftwork. Charcoal itself may also have been a commodity that could be bought and sold for use elsewhere.

The wood taxa identified at *An Bhánóg Theas* 2, Ballygarret 1 and Ballinknockane 1 suggests that the local woodland comprised enough oak to facilitate local charcoal production. Annual growth rings of 2mm were identified on charcoal fragments from Ballygarret 1 and *An Bhánóg Theas* 2 which suggests that either climatic conditions were favourable for good growth, or that the oaks were growing in an open landscape which could tentatively suggest woodland management during this period.

Medieval Transient Occupation

An Bhánóg Theas 1[13]
Occupation activity dating to the medieval period was uncovered in Area 1 at the site of *An Bhánóg Theas* 1 (Fig. 6). Evidence consisted of several pits, postholes, stakeholes, a hearth and slot trench, all sealed under a layer of charcoal-rich clay. Shallow linear features appeared to form boundaries to the east and west, defining an area measuring 4m wide. Two curvilinear slot trenches to the south and southeast also appeared to be associated with this activity, and it is possible a third curvilinear feature to the far west was also related. Two fragments of indeterminate burnt bone, from a pit to the north of the hearth, were the only finds associated with this site but a rich assemblage of charred plant remains and charcoal was retrieved. The charred plant remains were dominated by oat, followed by barley and wheat, with a small amount of rye and charred hazelnut shell fragments. The charcoal assemblage represented a diverse mix of wood species, dominated by oak, but also including occurrences of willow, hazel, elm, cherry and pomaceous woods. Ash, holly and yew made up <1% of the overall charcoal identified. Radiocarbon dates from charred

seeds and charcoal from the hearth, a posthole, the charcoal-rich spread and a curvilinear slot trench all infer that Area 1 represents medieval occupation during the mid-fifteenth to mid-seventeenth century.

Three field boundary ditches were also uncovered; one extending north-south while the other two extended east and westwards from this ditch. A seventeenth to nineteenth century clay pipe was retrieved from the north-south boundary but a specific date could not be assigned to these boundary ditches. They did, however, pre-date a number of linear agricultural features.

These represented two distinct phases of agricultural activity; an earlier phase of eight hand-dug east–west oriented furrows, and a later phase of sixteen north–south oriented plough furrows.

Excavation in Area 2 (Fig. 6) concentrated on the townland boundary between *An Bhánóg Theas* and *Garraí na dTor* and uncovered an earlier linear ditch sealed beneath the upstanding earthen bank boundary. A deposit of charcoal contained nine indeterminate cereal grains and elm and willow charcoal. A radiocarbon date obtained from elm charcoal suggests a post-seventeenth century date for construction of the bank.
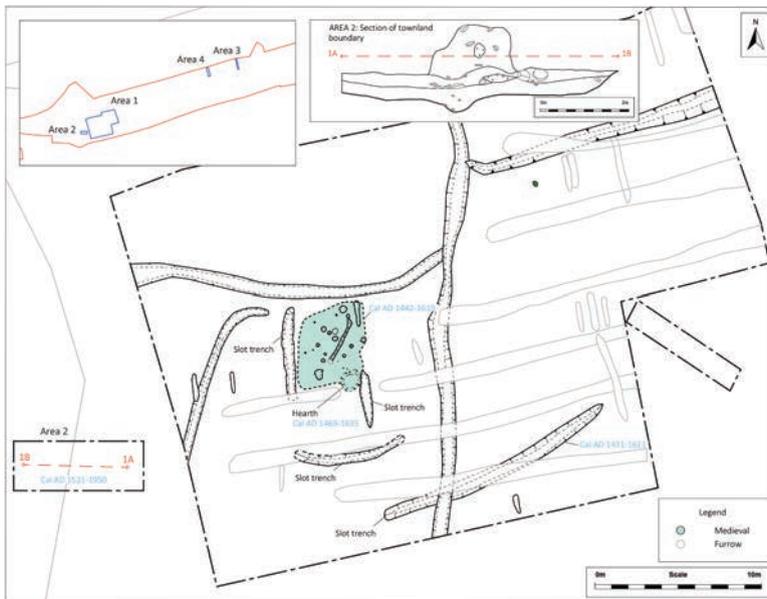
Figure 6: Excavation plan of medieval features at *An Bhánóg Theas 1*, with insets showing the excavated Areas 1–4, and a cross-section through the Townland Boundary in Area 2 (IAC).

Excavation in Areas 3 and 4 (Fig. 6) investigated a section of a previous route of the Tralee to Dingle road; this road is depicted on a map of the route from 1777 (Taylor and Skinner 1778, 108). This is an example of a road built by Grand Jury, the eighteenth-century forerunner of the county council. From the early seventeenth century onwards, Irish grand Juries were empowered to levy direct taxes for the repair and construction of roads, causeways, toghers and bridges (Rynne 1998, 74). Following the 1739 act of the Irish parliament Grand Juries were empowered to build roads 'in straight lines from market town to market town', in an attempt to stop land-owners proposing roads to suit their own needs. These roads were colloquially known as gun-barrel roads because of the straightness of their alignments (*ibid.*, 75; O'Keeffe 2003, 93). However, the drawback of building a road on a straight line is that it took no account of the topography. The 18th-century road was superseded by a 19th-century realignment that included a tight hairpin bend, recently removed as part of the current scheme, which now runs back along the line of the 18th-century road in this location. The section of road in *An Bhánóg Theas* was constructed in a deep cut into the bedrock to reduce the gradient with vertical sides and a flat base. Very little evidence, however, for the 18th-century road surface remained at the time of excavation, although it was still in use as a farm lane/access. In Area 4 a dry-stone wall had been built at the top of the cut, on both the northern and southern sides of the road. One sherd of late nineteenth or twentieth century pottery was recovered from the modern fill of the road cut. Despite the fact that the road was constructed in a cut the gradient was obviously too steep for traffic and by the time the Ordnance Survey first mapped this area in 1841 (published 1846) this section of road had been replaced by the N86 which climbed the hill by way of the hairpin bend to the west.

Baile na Saor Beag 2[14]

At *Baile na Saor Beag* 2 occupation activity was represented by eleven pits (one of which was stone-lined), one posthole, an area of oxidized natural clay, and a small spread of possibly dumped, charcoal-flecked material. Three radiocarbon dates on charred cereal grains from three pits spanned the eleventh to thirteenth century AD.

Charcoal analysed from nine of the pits represented a diverse mix of species, dominated by oak and alder. Some of the pits also contained charred plant remains, dominated by barley grains but also including culm nodes (cereal chaff probably from barley), hawthorn fruit seeds, hazelnut shell and charred apple core.

Two pits also contained the remains of charred organic fragments that may represent evidence for processed food debris, such as a type of bread or gruel. Various quantities of highly fragmented burnt bone were recovered from ten of the eleven pits, but the calcined and extremely fragmentary nature of the material rendered the bone fragments unidentifiable, although they were likely animal rather than human in origin. The recovery of charred cultivated crops and wild plant remains, and potential food debris, suggests that the bone from these pits may be the remnants of food waste.

The combined evidence suggest that *Baile na Saor Beag* 2 represents ephemeral medieval occupation, with probable remnants of food waste and a temporary encampment ancillary to an unknown larger settlement or industrial site. Many dispersed rural settlements survive across the Dingle peninsula and it is possible that an unknown medieval settlement remains undiscovered on higher ground to the north.

Part of a north–south boundary ditch was also excavated at *Baile na Saor Beag* 2 and is most likely a continuation of the boundary ditch uncovered at *Baile na Saor Beag* 3 to the southeast. Comparable field boundary ditches were also excavated at the nearby site of *An Bhánóg Theas* 1, one of which contained a fragment of a decorated clay pipe that was dated to between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries AD. As at *Baile na Saor Beag* 2, these ditches were similarly truncated by a series of cultivation furrows. Although difficult to date without associated artefacts, those at *An Bhánóg Theas* 1 appeared to post-date the medieval occupation of the site and at *Baile na Saor Beag* 2 at least two of the pits were truncated by the furrows. Although the pits themselves were not directly dated, they are assumed to be contemporary with the radiocarbon dated pits that relate to the medieval activity.

Environmental Evidence - Medieval Period & Beyond[15]

From AD 1050 onwards there was more intensive woodland clearance and the *An Bhánóg Theas 4* pollen record indicates a more open and farmed landscape. During this later period there was little or no evidence for oak in the pollen record. This hiatus implies that the oak burnt at An *Bhánóg Theas 2* was gathered from further away.

The general reduction in tree pollen corresponds well with the archaeological remains uncovered along the N86 which indicate that small populations likely inhabited the area, similar to today. Archaeological excavation of the enclosure site shows that it may not have been a focus for large-scale domestic activity.

Charcoal and plant macrofossil analysis from *Baile na Saor Beag* 2 and *An Bhánóg Theas* 1 give further evidence for cultivation and the clearance of woodland in the medieval/early post-medieval periods. Barley dominated the seed assemblage from *Baile na Saor Beag* 2 while oat dominated the grain assemblage from the later site of *An Bhánóg Theas* 1, which is common for the later medieval period. The charcoal assemblage suggests a semi-natural, oak dominated woodland at both sites. The low diversity of charcoal taxa suggests that oak was preferentially selectively, rather than collected opportunistically, and could be the result of woodland management.

Conclusion

Corca Dhuibhne is often distinguished in the public mind for the richness of its archaeological heritage (Cuppage 1986; MacDonogh 1993). This is further reflected in the results of this relatively small-scale road scheme. The discovery and excavation of nine previously-unknown sites along the length of the current road scheme provided an opportunity to further enhance our understanding of the region's rich settlement and agricultural history, with particular focus on environmental impacts and exploitation, from the Early Bronze Age to the medieval period. Prehistoric evidence includes the ubiquitous (yet enigmatic) burnt mound activity.

Early medieval farm settlement is represented by the equally-ubiquitous *rath* or ringfort, this well-known monument of the Irish landscape. The medieval period shows a more transient settlement pattern, with isolated occupation and individual charcoal kilns spread out across the landscape. The post-medieval period revealed early roadways fossilised in the field boundaries and hedgerows.

The combined analysis of environmental and archaeological evidence demonstrates that these local communities utilized and altered the surrounding environment to suit their needs; collecting firewood from local woodland, clearing trees to facilitate farming, grazing cattle, cultivating crops and potentially managing the nearby woodland. Multiple, distinct phases of burnt mound use, the variety of dates from the *Baile na Saor Beag* 3 enclosure, and varying levels of woodland inferred from the pollen record, indicates that people kept returning to this area after periods of abandonment.

The overall results from the archaeological excavations show that, for over 4000 years, the Dingle Peninsula has been occupied by a relatively

low-density population of pastoral and arable farmers; a tradition that persists to the present day. This fits nicely into the wider narrative for the Dingle Peninsula, which is noted for an extraordinary concentration of archaeological sites, including a wealth of Bronze Age monuments and a dense concentration of early medieval secular and ecclesiastical sites (MacDonogh 1993, 9; Cuppage 1986, 5-6), while the medieval evidence for transient settlement and small-scale charcoal production reflect a less formal settlement pattern.

While the land in the environs of this road scheme may not, in modern terms, be considered ideal farmland, the archaeological and environmental evidence suggests that this view was not always shared by its past inhabitants, who may have had a very different perspective of the available resources and opportunities.

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Bruce Sutton graduated from Leicester University in 1998 and has worked as a professional archaeologist in Ireland for the last 22 years. He has directed numerous excavations over his career, working on both small scale sites and large scale infrastructure projects across the country.

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[11] See Sutton 2019f (Registration No. E4669).
[12] See Sutton 2019g (Registration No. E4747).
[13] See Sutton 2019h (Registration No. E4664).
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[15] See Lyons 2019e – 2019i; O Carroll 2019b

Kerry's Jewish Population

By Brian Ó Conchubhair

Introduction

Jewish people have lived in Dublin as early as the time of Strongbow and King Henry III's expulsion of Jews from Britain in the 1200s. It was their expulsion from Portugal in the 1490s that, arguably, brought the first significant wave of Jewish migrants to Munster.[1] By 1745, Dublin was home to some forty Jewish families, approximately 200 people in total. The number increased slowly, reaching 393 in 1861[2], 285 in 1871; 453 in 1881.[3] While the initial immigrants stemmed from England or Germany, the Russian pogroms in Eastern Europe, and Lithuania in particular, account for this dramatic increase. By 1901, they numbered some 3,771 with the vast majority (approx. 2,200) in Dublin. By 1904, the number was approximately 4,800. It peaked at approximately 5,500 in the late 1940s, despite Ireland's record for accepting Jewish refugees during the Second World War. Subsequent emigration to larger Jewish communities in England and Israel led to a decline.[4] Current estimates have 2,557 Jewish residents in the Republic.[5] By the start of the 20th century, Tralee, a rapidly growing Kerry town, boasted a small Jewish community. Today, some hundred years later, no trace exists of what was once referred to as Tralee's Jewish community, whether in terms of buildings or material objects, or less tangibly, in music or stories. Without a legacy of sacred objects, buildings and cemeteries, this vanished heritage is difficult to access.

Jewish Community in Kerry, 1891 and 1901 Censuses

While the Jewish experience in Dublin[6], Belfast, Cork, Limerick[7] and Waterford[8] is well documented, the story outside major urban centres remains largely untold. References to Jewish people in Kerry are scarce, but Kenmare River and Bay feature prominently in Richard Orphen's *The London-master, or, The Jew detected* a self-published pamphlet 'being a true account of wrecking and looting of the ship *Laurel* of London by sailors in *Kenmare Bay* in the year 1694'. Regarded as one of the earliest anti-Semitic tracts published in Ireland, it purports to be 'a true discovery by what tricks and devices the ship *Laurel*, of London was cast away in the river of Kenmare in Ireland'. The 1891 census records 13 Jewish residents in Kerry on the night 5 April and this number declined to six in

the 1901 census, recorded on 31 March.[9] Yet that number seems inflated by tourists and travelling business-men. Of the six, Amelia Fitzgerald was the sole woman. Born in London as Amelia Catherine Bischoffsheim, she was the elder daughter of Henri Louis Bischoffsheim, of Bute House, South Audley Street, Mayfair. On 4 October 1882, she married Maurice Fitzgerald, Baronet Knight of Kerry and lived with him at Glanleam House, Valentia. She died on 12 November 1947.[10] The remaining five were males in their twenties: Henry Freeman (22 yrs.); Butie Jay (23 yrs.); Herbert Driuff (recte Druiff)[11] (27 yrs.); Jack Druiff[12] (22 yrs.). The census describes all four as manufacturers of linen and residents in a hotel (the Great Southern) in Killarney, managed by 34 years old German-born Otto Humbert.[13] With the exception of Freeman, who was born in Russia, the others were born in London. It appears, therefore, that rather than living in Killarney, they were hotel residents on the night of the census.

The sole Tralee representative is Philip Baker of 35 Castle Street Upper, a 22-year-old draper, born in Riga/Russia. Described as head of family, he occupied three rooms above a gun shop owned by John Edwards. A member of the Century Debating Club at Upper Castle Street, Baker also taught chess to members[14] and acted as a referee at chess games.[15] Departing Tralee for Dublin, he won the Irish Chess Championship in 1924, 1927, 1928, and 1929 as well as the Leinster title in 1922 and 1926. With the Sackville Chess Club,[16] Baker won the Armstrong Cup in 1926 and 1929. He died in Rathmines, Dublin, in 1932. *The American Chess Bulletin* refers to the Easter Rising disturbing the club and its games, but that P. Baker had won both the Reddy Cup and the club championship in 1916.[17] Thus, of the six Jews listed in the digitized version of the census in Kerry, only two were permanent residents: Amelia Bischoffsheim and Philip Baker, neither of whom appear in Kerry in the 1911 census.

Jewish Community in Kerry, 1911 Census
The events in the Russian-world acted as a catalyst for large-scale Jewish emigration towards Western Europe and a large influx into Ireland. The 1911 census, recorded on 2 April, reflects an increase and reports the following numbers for Munster: Cork 401; Limerick 123; Waterford 62; Kerry 26; Tipperary 5[18]; Clare 0.[19] The newly arrived immigrants clearly favoured urban centres or counties with an urban centre rather than rural counties, and Kerry is no different in this regard. In 1911, we find twenty-six Jews listed in Kerry, mainly clustered in Tralee and Killarney with isolated instances in Kenmare and Castlegregory. Among such isolated

instances are Solomon Marcus (18 yrs.) and Maurice Marcus (16 yrs.), both of whom were South Dublin-born merchants boarding with Robert Cousins, a blacksmith in Henry Street, Kenmare.[20] Another was Naphtal Schoukstel, (26 yrs.) who boarded with Michael O'Connor, a shopkeeper at No. 22 William's Street, Kenmare and George Gay (23 yrs.), a German-born commercial traveler, who lodged with Bridget Coakley in Castlegregory.

Plate 1 & 2: Census Forms A, 1911 census for the Gremson and Green families

The Gremsons, a family of seven, resided at No. 7 Market Place Tralee. Bernard (Barnitt) and Fanny,[21] were born in Russia in 1879 and had five children: two of the children, Annie and Alexander, list Russia as their birth place, while the others, Horace, Hyman and Bella, were children of the Kingdom. A nephew Max, listed as a draper and also born in Russia, lived with them.[22] The census records the family as: Bernard Gremson, (32 yrs.); Fanny Gremson (neé Orion)[23] (32 yrs.); Annie Gremson (8 yrs.)[24]; Alexander Gremson (7 yrs.)[25]; Horace Gremson (5 yrs.); Hyman Gremson[26] (3 yrs.); Bella Gremson (1 yr.); Max Gremson (22 yrs.) and Bernard Lovat (22 yrs.). Also lodging with the family was Bernard Loat, a Russian-born draper.

Plate 3: British Naturalization listing which includes members of the Gremson Family

The children attended the Church of Ireland Parochial School, located where the Old Market Bar section of the Ashe Hotel stands today, rather than either of the Catholic Schools, possibly as it catered for boys and girls and thus did not require fragmenting the family. At the annual distribution of prizes at Tralee Parochial School in 1911, where the Rev. Canon Foley presided, Anna Gremson and Alexander Gremson featured among the 1st Prizes. Included among the 2nd Prizes were Harris[27] (sic) Gremson, Hyman Gremson, and Leo Leventhal/Leventhall.[28] They became naturalized British citizens in 1915, taking the oath of allegiance on the 25 February during the second year of the war[29] and the day the Ottoman Empire assigned all ethnic Armenians in the armed forces to labour battalions lest they collaborate with Russia.

The Kerry News announced in 1910 that B. Gremson, Draper and House Furnisher, was relocating from 16 Upper Castle Street, Tralee to more commodious and central premises at Church Street.[30] By 1911, in addition to the large assortment of goods in stock at the lowest prices and on the easy payment system, he offered photo enlargement. Later in 1911, the business address changed from 'Church Street' to 'Church Street House'. For reasons unknown in 1914, Gremson abandoned drapery to become an iron and metal merchant based in Rock Street. This change was perhaps a response to, or an anticipation of, the greater need for metal as a result of the war. In addition to the Rock Street premises, the firm also operated from 11 South Terrace, Cork. In July 1915, the *Kerry Weekly* reporter ran an advert stating:

'Gremson gives Gold for old Iron: Up to the end of this month B. Gremson & CO., 123 Lower Rock street, Tralee, must buy 200 tons of scrap iron to meet the big orders placed with them. No need to try Klondyke for gold. Search your back yards. Pick up all the scrap iron you find, and have it converted at once into gold. Gremson's will do that for you. Call and say what you have, and you will get your price. Old Rags, old Brass, old Pewter, old Zinc, old Lead, Tailors' Clipping, Curled Hair, Horse Hair, etc."

Gremson appears to have assumed responsibilities for a business previously managed by S. Weinronk at the same address. Weinronk's advertised in local papers as follows:

'Waste Not, Want Not. To Dealers, Housekeepers, and all concerned. Now open a new marine store at Lower Rock St. Tralee, Highest price given for Iron, Brass, Copper. Zinc, Lead, Tailors' Clippings, Rags, Old Cycle Tyres, Tubes, etc, etc. Enquire our prices before selling elsewhere. Note address: S. Weinronk, Lower Rock St. Tralee.'[31]

Weinronk does not appear in the 1901 or 1911 census for Kerry but may possibly be Simon Weinronk, a member of the Russian-born, Jewish family who lived at 36 Henry Street, Limerick in 1905.[32] The Weinronks originated in Kowna, South Russia and arrived in Ireland in 1893. The 1904 anti-Semitism in Limerick may have precipitated Simon's move to Tralee.[33] His brother Bernard Weinronk emigrated to South Africa in 1911. The *Zionist Record of South Africa* announces the engagement of Simon

Weinronk, of Port Elizabeth to Ms. Ethel Thal, of Cradock in 1925.[34]

Gremson's adverts cease in October 1920. This change may be connected with the deteriorating law and order in the county in late summer and early autumn of 1920 that would culminate in the Siege of Tralee in November 1920.[35] Having experience and survived the Tsarist pogroms, Gremson, a British citizen since 1915, would have been sensitive to rising political tensions. For whatever reason the 1920s seem to be a vanishing point for Tralee's Jews. In 1923 national newspapers reported two separate incidents of Jewish men being shot in Stamer Street, Portobello, and also in St. Stephen's Green.[36]

The 1911 Census also records another Jewish family residing at No. 1 Market Place, Tralee. The head of the family was Dora Leventhal, (30 yrs.) born in Russia and her two daughters Fanny (8 yrs.) and Lee A. (4 yrs.). There was also a male lodger Jacob Bloom, a draper aged 48. Fanny departed Cobh on 4 August 1922 on board the *Carmania* and arrived in New York on 12 August 1922. Described as a 'Millner', she lists her mother at 22 Castle Street, Tralee as her contact and Chicago as her final destination.[37] 16-year-old Lea Levanthal departed Queenstown and landed at Boston on 25 October 1923, also headed for Chicago, listing M. Leventhall 26 South William St., Dublin as a relative. Dora Leventhal landed in New York on 30 June 1923 and listed her brother-in-law Maurice Leventhal, 92 Donore Tce, Dublin, as her contact. Her final destination was also Chicago. A Harry Leventhal was born in Tralee on 29 December 1904 to a woman whose maiden name was Cobler.

Killarney's most notable Jewish resident was Jack Green who resided at New Street (Lower), with his wife Clara (24 yrs.) and his younger brother Emanuel (21 yrs.). All three were Dublin-born and both men were described as 'Mechanical Dentists'. They shared their house, No. 64 New Street, with two female servants: Bridget MacMahon and Mollie Harrington. *The Kerryman* reports on preparations for commemorating the heroes of '98 and among those who volunteered cars for the occasion were J. Green, dentist, Killarney. Julius Morris Green, born in 1912 in Killarney, son of Jack and Clara Green, studied at the Dental School of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh and practiced in Glasgow before joining the Territorial Army in 1939. Captured in 1941, he spent the remainder of the war as a P.O.W. in various camps including: Blechhammer, Lamsdorf, Sandbostel, Westertimke, Heyderbreck and Colditz. As a dentist, he travelled from camp to camp treating fellow P.O.W.s and availed of such opportunities to communicate with the British

Directorate of Military Intelligence Section 9 (MI9) via letters to his family.[38] He retold his war experiences in a memoir, *From Colditz in Code* (1971, re-issued in 1989) before dying in 1990.
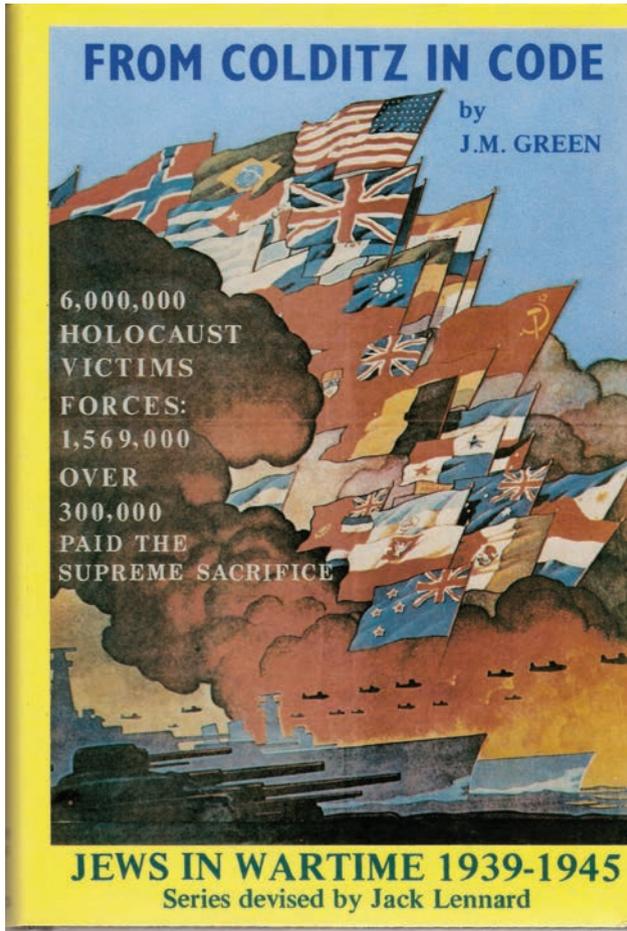

Plate 4: Book cover of 'From Colditz in Code' by J.M. Green

Also resident in Killarney in 1911 was Boris Lovitch, a Russian-born Jewish Dentist, who boarded with Thomas M. Daly at New Street (Upper). Three other Jewish men in Killarney on the census night appear

to have been guests. The Polish-born Isaac J. Ginsberg (30 yrs.) was a boarder with the Carter family at Henn Street, Killarney. He is distinguished by stating on the census that he spoke Hebrew, German, English and at least one other language. His profession is that of Commission Agent. 41-year-old Shirley Goldhill, a London-born General Merchant, stayed at Timothy Egan's International Hotel at Kenmare Place, Killarney, and M.S. Newman R. Montague, (39 yrs.) a 'Jewish Synagogan' and commercial traveler from London, also boarded in a hotel at Kenmare Place. The hotel at Kenmare Place proved quite diverse that night and guests also included 10 Roman Catholics, 1 Church of England, 2 Church of Ireland, and a Church of Scotland Established. The two remaining individuals may both be described as non-resident. Maurice Twomey, a 71-year-old 'peddler, born in Lan Gollen (recte: Llangollen), Wales who boarded with Eugene O'Keeffe at Henn Street; and Maurice Sayers, New Street (Lower) (22 yrs.) born in Cork and listed as a 'money lender'.

Between 1901 and 1911

While the 1901 and 1911 censuses are instructive, they are not without limitations: they only tell of one day in 1901 and 1911 and offer no information about day-to-day experiences before, during or after those specific dates. Absent from this snapshot are those who arrived and departed Kerry in the intervening years.

Among those are the '19-year-old Russian Jew, recently arrived in Dublin from Tralee, named Smolowich at Warren Street. In Ireland, less than two years, he had come to Dublin from Tralee to earn his keep as a hawker'.[39] More revealing, perhaps, is the 1909 court case that refers to Tralee's Jewish community and the good relations despite the 'few loafers'. Three Tralee men stood accused of assaulting Napthal Schourstell[40] of Boherbee who declined to prosecute. Nevertheless, J.M. Murphy[41] LLB appeared for the police on behalf of Tralee's Jewish community. A man named Sullivan, released from jail that morning, had twice assaulted Schourstell that day, first outside Levanthall's (recte: Leventhal) premises in Boherbee on the pretext of buying a dog, and again, after Levanthall had informed the police. During the trial, Murphy stated: 'relations existing between the Jewish community and the population of Tralee were very friendly but they were a few loafers who thought they could do what they liked to those people'.[42] A 1911 letter from a 'Common Reader' to the *Kerry News* reported that: 'In one of the

principal streets of Tralee a few days since, I heard much shouting from well-grown lads 'Jew-man! Jew-man!' without a murmur of protest. A gentleman of the Jewish persuasion was walking quietly by'.[43]

The Irish Free State onwards

The early years of the Free State marked the lowest number of Jewish residents in Kerry. The Census reports for 1926 record the number of Jewish inhabitants as 3 and the same number appears in 1936 while it drops to 1 in 1946. By 1961, the number is 4 and while it increases to 11 in 1971, it drops again to 5 in 1981. An increase occurs in 1991 with 17 people reporting as Jewish and that figure increases to 55 in 2002. The 2006 census sees a slight decline to 47, with a further decline in 2011 to 31, but an increase in the most recent census, 2016, to 58, the highest number on record to date.[44]

Census Year	Kerry	Clare	Limerick	Cork	Tipperary	Waterford
1891	13	1	93	271	11	19
1901	6 (8)	0	171	447	20	42
1911[45]	26	1	122	446	7	62
1926	3	7	33	362	7	27
1936	3	0	38	226	2	28
1946	1	0	13	252	6	23
1961	4	4	3	120	9	6
1971	11	6	10	75	2	4
1981	5	8	5	62	4	10
1991	17	12	15	57	1	9
2002	55	45	26	116	10	16
2006	47	48	32	152	16	22
2011	31	52	24	127	16	26
2016	58	61	52	172	15	23

Table 1: Jewish population census figures for Munster, 1891 to 2016.
(Source: Central Statistics Office Profile 8 - E8053) [46]

Among the handful of Jewish refugees fleeing World War II, one of note came to Kerry. Arriving in Ireland in 1939, 17-year old, Anselm Horwitz[47] lived with the Irish Quakers in Waterford before receiving permission to start a factory in Tralee in 1942.[48] The Vienna-born emigrant later recalled arriving in Tralee:

'Talk about a culture shock. The main street was full of two-wheeled carts and passenger traps drawn by a horse or donkey, trucks, cars, bicycles and people of all shapes and sizes over the road. There was a lot of joking and laughing. I did not understand a word.'[49]

Plate 5: 35 Castle Street Upper, Tralee (present day Hennessys pub). Philip Baker, Draper, occupied three rooms with his family here per the 1901 census (above a gun shop owned by John Edwards).

It appears he married Noreen Foley, a sister of Patrick Foley ("P.F.") the GAA Correspondent and Chairman of the *Kerryman*.[50] With an address at Clounalour, Oakpark, Tralee, Horwitz established McCowling's Moulding Ltd, a business located at Edward Street.[51] While initially successful, a dispute with a Cork firm, managed by a Civil War veteran with close ties to Fianna Fáil, brought an end to the venture. He subsequently immigrated to Canada.

Conclusion

The Jewish community in Kerry appears to have been centered in Tralee and Killarney and consisted of three families supplemented by a group of young single men. Unlike Limerick, Cork or Waterford, it appears that they never established a synagogue, *Mikveh* or graveyard in the county.

Lacking enough men to form a regular *minyan*, they presumably travelled to Limerick or Cork – where a synagogue existed at No. 10 South Terrace from 1896 until 2016 - for religious services. Nonetheless, a Jewish community existed, and continues to exist, in Kerry throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. How is such history to be told? How should the abandoned narrative and forgotten memory be preserved, and by whom? Where are these people buried and what of their descendants? How is this neglected aspect of Kerry's history to be preserved and celebrated?

Plate 6: Market Street, Tralee (Present Day). The Gremson family resided at No.7 Market Street per the 1911 census. The Leventhal family lived nearby in No.1 Market Place.

Plate 7: Part of the present day Ashe Hotel on Church Street, Tralee, which was the former site of the Church of Ireland Parochial School, Tralee.

Plate 8: 16 Castle Street Upper, Tralee (Present Day; Middle building, red frontage). B. Gremson, Draper and House Furnisher, relocated his business from here in 1910 to more commodious and central premises at Church Street.

About the Author

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Plate 9: 123 Lower Rock Street, Tralee (Present Day; Unit to Let). Site of B. Gremson & Co's iron and metal merchant business in 1914, previously managed by S. Weinronk at the same address.

References

[1] See Irish-Jewish History at http://www.jewishireland.org/irish-jewish-history/history/

[2] For the role played by Jewish people in the Irish Famine, see Yvette Alt Miller, 'Jews and the Irish Potato Famine', AISH, 14 March, 2018. http://www.aish.com/jw/s/Jews-and-the-Irish-Potato-Famine.html ?mobile=yes#.W07qcby6cK0.facebook

[3] 'The Census of Ireland', *Irish Times*, 20 June 1881, 4.

[4] Patsy McGarry, 'Fall-off in number of Jews', *Irish Times*, 8 February 2016. See also 'The Fighting Irish Jews', Danna Harman, *Haaretz*, 6 March 2016.

[5] Graham Clifford, 'Jews in Ireland', *Sunday Independent*, 30 April 2017. *The Irish Times* reported that the State's Jewish population rose by 28.9 per cent, or

573, since 2011, according to the 2016 census. Most of the 1,439 (56 per cent) of the 2,557 reside in Dublin. See Patsy McGarry 'Ireland's Jewish population rises by almost 30%',13 October 2017.

[6] Cormac Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland in the Age of Joyce: A Socioeconomic History* (Princeton University Press); Ray Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland: A social history of Jews in Modern Ireland* (Gill & MacMillan, Ltd., 2003); *Jews in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Refugees, Antisemitism and the Holocaust* (Cork University Press, 1998)

[7] Dermot Keogh and Andrew McCarthy, *Limerick Boycott 1904: Anti-Semitism in Ireland* (Mercier Press, 2005)

[8] https://thedustbinofhistory.wordpress.com/2014/02/12/jewish-waterford-1893-1940/

[9] Slight discrepancies in the total exist between the hardcopy and the digital copy. This paper relies on the digital version.

[10] *British Peerage* (2003), Vol. 1, 1437.

[11] The 1901 Census lists Herbert Llanarth Druiff, born 25 July 1873 at 39 Burton Cres., St Pancras, London. He is registered in the 1901 English census as living at 147 Fordwych Rd., Hampstead.

[12] Jack Druiff, born c.1880, Pancras, London, died 17 January 1963.

[13] Born in Frankfurt-in-Maine, Germany, he had been manager at London North Western Hotel. After the Great Southern Hotel, he managed the Queen's Hotel, Cobh. In 1915 he emigrated to America. See 'Queenstown Alien', *Irish Examiner,* 1 June 1915, 7.

[14] *The Liberator*, 7 June 1924, 4.

[15] *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 23 November 1901, 7.

[16] Located at Dame Street, Dublin. It subsequently relocated to La Scale, Mid Abbey Street. See Johanna Lowry O'Reilly, 'Chess Clubs, Victorian gentlemen, World War I, 1916 and the Free State',
https://www.icu.ie/system/downloads/000/000/268/Chess_Clubs__Victorian_gentlemen__World_War _I__1916_and_the_Free_State_.pdf?1456256773

[17] *American Chess Bulletin*, Vol. 13-15, (1916), 157.

[18] A slight discrepancy, in terms of overall numbers exists between the hardcopy and the digitized version. Of the total number in Tipperary in 1901, three were the Freedman family: Lowis (25 yrs) and his wife Ada (22 yrs) and their new born child Fanny. They resided on Queen's Street/Mitchell Street, Nenagh and Lowis described himself as a 'delph merchant'. Whilst Lowis was illiterate, Ada could read and write. Both were Russian born but had married in the last year and their daughter was Tipperary born. Benjeman Yudelovitz, a 36 year-old, Russian-born, 'General Dealer' lodged with the Kennedy family, also 'General Dealers,' at Limerick Street, Roscrea. The fifth, and final person, was Rudolph Burack, a 51-year old, Polish-born, 'General Dealer' who lodged with pub owner Margaret Kennedy in O'Connell Street, Clonmel. The pub was the premises of Michael Hally & Margaret Kennedy, located at No. 46 O'Connell Street. Burack, it appears, was born in Kovno, Paurra, Poland in 1859 and died 28 August 1947.

[19] Ann Rabinowitz, 'New Search Capabilities for 1911 Irish Census', http://jewishgen.blogspot.com/2010/02/new-search-capabilities-for-1911 irish.html. Note these figures differ from those provided by the CSO and contained in a chart later in this article. 1911: Kerry (26) Clare (1) Limerick (122) Cork (446) Tipperary (7) Waterford (62)

[20] *Slater's National Commercial Directory of Ireland* (1846) lists Robert Cousins as one of three blacksmiths located at Pound Lane, Kenmare. On 2 April 1911, both men were resident with their family at Blackrock, Cork.

[21] A Fanny Gremson is recorded as arriving in Halifax on 28 November 1927 abroad the Pennland.

[22] Max Gremson appears to have moved to Palmers Green, London, England.

[23] "An elderly lady named Mrs. Gremson (a Jewess), 7 Bockboro' Road, Cork, collapsed when travelling on a bus to Gurrnnebraher yesterday. She was convoyed in the bus to the North Infirmary but was dead on admission". *Irish Examiner*, 9 March 1942, 2.

[24] Halifax, Canada

[25] Arrived in Quebec, Canada on 1 July 1927, aboard the Minnedosa from Liverpool. He married Sarah Savern, on 20 Jan 1933 and resided at 33 Appleton Ave., Toronto,

[26] *Evening Herald* (23 September 1926, 1) refers to a "Hyman Gremson, alias Verminsky, a Russian Jew". Hymen Gremson arrived in New York on 1 Febuary 1927 abroad the Baltic.

[27] A Harry Gremson arrived in Halifax on 1 April 1928 abroad the Megantic from Southampton. A Harry Gremson also passed the second-year medical exams at UCC in 1933. (*Irish Press*, 5 April 1933, 9).

[28] *The Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 4 February 1911.

[29] https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/29119/page/3365/data.pdf

[30] *The Kerry News*, 26 August 1910, 2.

[31] *Kerry News*, 7 June 1907.

[32] *The Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 10 (Greenberg & Company, 1905), 114.

[33] See Dermot Keogh, Diarmuid Whelan, *Gerald Goldberg: A Tribute* (Mercier Press Ltd, 2008), 54.

[34] The *Zionist Record of South Africa*, 2 January 1925, 1.

[35] See John Dorney, 'The Siege of Tralee', http://www.theirishstory.com/2012/11/06/the-siege-of-tralee-november-1-9-1920/#.WVfywITyufk

[36] Andrew Bushe, "Killing spree led to fear of pogrom on Dublin Jews," *Irish Independent*, 24 June 2007. Stamer Street is named for the former Lord Mayor of Dublin, Sir William Stamer (1765–1838).

[37] In 1935 a Fanny Leventhal applied to the District Court Dublin for a Moneylender's Licence to conduct business at 89 Donore Terrace, South Circular Road, Dolphin's Barn. See *Irish Press*, 13 July 1935, 6.

[38] Shân Ross, "Scottish dentist spy fooled Colditz Nazi censors," *The Scotsman,*

30 May 2014. http://www.scotsman.com/heritage/people-places/scottish-dentist-spy-fooled-colditz-nazi-censors-1-3427462. He also had a sister Kathleen, apparently born in Killarney.

[39] Ray Rivlin, *Jewish Ireland: A Social History* (The History Press, 2011). See also *Kerry Evening Post,* 11 November 1905, 4.

[40] This may be the same "Naphtal Schoukstel" recorded in Kenmare in the 1911 census.

[41] James Molyneaux Murphy's office was located at Nelson/Ashe St. Married to Catherine Marshall, they resided at Number 3, Day Place. Soon after World War 1, his sons joined the army. James, a Lieutenant, was injured in combat. In 1920, unidentified men kidnapped him the Cloonalour Golf Links, tied him to a gate (believed to be at the bridge on the *bothairín* leading from the main Oakpark Road to Collins-Sandes House) at the north side of Oakpark, where they tarred and feathered him. The assault was alleged to be linked to his application for a cadetship with the R.I.C. In his statement to the Bureau of Military History, Tadhg Kennedy (BMH.WS1413.pdf) p.77, recalled "On emerging out of the gate I walked right into an Auxiliary who held me up and searched me for a gun and then I produced a Military permit in an assumed name which I got from a friendly officer from Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee. Just as the Auxiliary was examining. the permit who came along but Jimmy Murphy, a Captain in the Auxiliaries, son of Mr. James Molyneaux Murphy, Solicitor, Tralee. He looked at the permit and saw the name and shook hands with me and called me by the name in the permit. I knew then that I was safe though when I saw him coming my knees began to wobble with fright. His father committed some offence for which his name was to be struck off the Register of Solicitors. To save their father both of his sons Jimmy and Harry joined the British Army during the war and Jimmy joined the Auxiliaries. Before he joined the Auxiliaries his appointment was captured by us in the post and he was tarred and feathered by the local I.R.A.". For James Murphy's less than distinguished military career, including the Trim Outrage, see https://www.theauxiliaries.com/men-alphabetical/men-m/murphy-jtj/jtj-murphy.html

[42] *Killarney Echo and South Kerry Chronicle*, 31 July 1909, 7.

[43] *Kerry News*, 28 April 1911, 4.

[44] E8053: Average Percentage Change in the Population 1891 to 2016. My thanks to Dara Ní Fhinn, An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh, Bóthar na Sceiche Airde, Corcaigh, for assistance with this information. While the hardcopy of the census records a figure of 8 Jews, (7 men and 1 woman), the digital version lists 6; five men and 1 woman. This paper is based on the digital version.

[45] The digitized version of the 1911 census reports the following numbers for Munster: Cork, 401; Limerick 123; Waterford 62; Kerry 26; Tipperary 5; Clare 0.

[46] Ann Rabinowitz, "New Search Capabilities for 1911 Irish Census," http://jewishgen.blogspot.com/2010/02/new-search-capabilities-for-1911-irish.html

[47] The son of Hugo Theodor Horwitz, a writer of technology histories in Berlin and Vienna, and Marianne Ehrmann. Despite their Catholic religious affiliation, the family was regarded as Jewish by the Nuremberg laws and were persecuted by the regime after 1938. His parents were deported to the Minsk Ghetto in 1941 and murdered in 1942. See https://www.technischesmuseum.at/objekt/hugo-theodor-horwitz

[48] Mary Christine Patterson "Lake View", Gurtnaleha, Tralee was also naturalized on 29 April 1939.

[49] Ibid., 182.

[50] *The Kerryman*, 12 November 1966, 8.

[51] See Gisela Holfter, Horst Dickel, *An Irish Sanctuary: German-speaking Refugees in Ireland 1933–1945,* 226-7. "The Minister for Justice has granted certificates of naturalisation under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1935. to Hitschmann Fritz. Camckbeg House. Carrick-on-Suir, and Horwitz Anselm, Clounalour, Oakpark, Tralee", *Irish Examiner*, 13 February 1946, 3. *The Irish Times* (24 March 2014, 15) refers to the Hans Horwitz plastic factory in Oakpark.

Plate 10: No.3 Day Place, Tralee. Previous family home of James Molyneaux Murphy. Subsequently family home of Jack (Seán) McCarthy, trainer\manager of Kerry Football All Ireland 4-in-a-row team 1929-1932.

Early medieval Irish cemeteries in Kerry

By Lorcan Harney

Exploring their location and layout within ecclesiastical sites in light of newly emerging archaeological evidence.
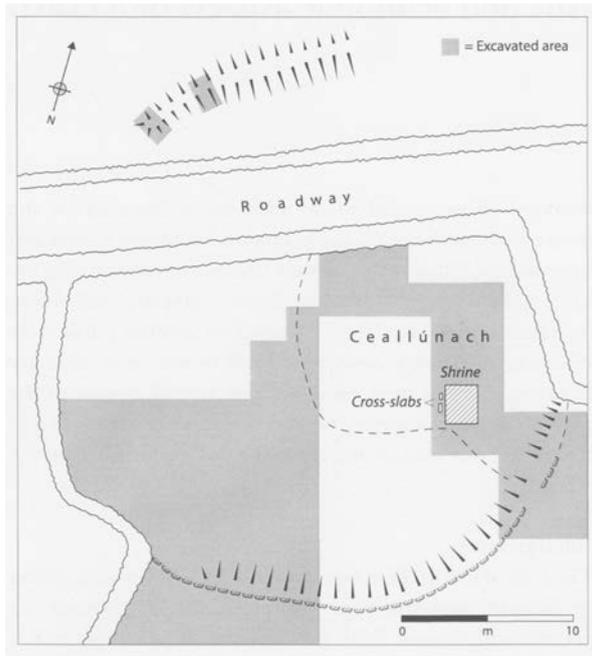
Plate 1: Plan of the early Christian ecclesiastical enclosure at Caherlehillan, Co. Kerry showing the excavated areas. The excavated church, cemetery and shrine were located on the eastern side (ceallúnach) and the domestic, agricultural and craft areas in the southwest quadrant (After Sheehan 2014, 248).

Introduction

The church building, and cemetery, were the two crucial elements of Irish ecclesiastical sites from their very inception in the fifth century. Indeed, the evidence from very early churches like Caherlehillan, Co. Kerry confirms that Irish church sites originated as settlements supporting small clerical communities with cemeteries developing around these as the

founding communities died over time (Ó Carragáin 2010a, 70). These ecclesiastical cemeteries were only one of a variety of burial contexts—including ancestral burial grounds, unenclosed cemeteries and cemetery settlements—where the early medieval Irish buried their dead. However, these non-ecclesiastical familial cemeteries gradually declined after the later-seventh and eighth century as the church legislated in relation to acceptable Christian burial practices and also promoted the Cult of the Relics of founding saints so as to make consecrated church cemeteries more attractive to the laity for burial and pilgrimage (Ó Carragáin 2003, 134, 147;O'Brien 2009, 149-50;O'Brien and Bhreathnach 2013, 46-47). This effort to strengthen the influence of these church sites then had the effect of discharging the family of its previous hegemony over the care of the dead and increasingly allowing an outside authority, 'the church', to take control over the rituals of death in society (Bhreathnach 2013, 145). With a focus on church sites from County Kerry, this paper will examine the organisation of these burial-grounds within church sites and explore how their specific location and layout within these sites were particularly influenced by the emergence of an array of ritual monuments, including churches, reliquary-shrines and round-towers during this period.
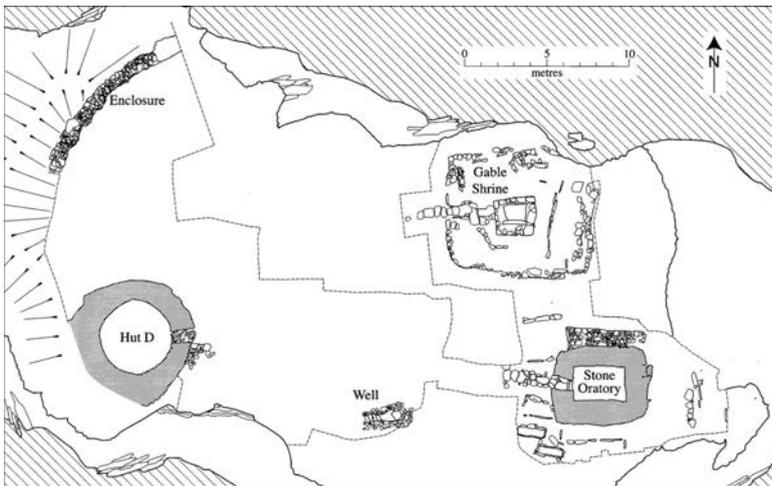
Plate 2: Plan of the Period 2 (eighth-to-ninth century) monastic settlement at Illaunloughan, Co. Kerry (After Marshall and Walsh 2005, 38).

The Influence of Reliquary-Shrines on Burial Location

The early Irish sources use an array of terms (*relic*; *róm* or *rúam*; and *martir* or *martrae*) to describe Christian graves and cemeteries. Significantly, all these terms were borrowings from Latin and were all associated with relics (Bhreathnach 2010, 26-27), confirming the sanctified nature of these burial-grounds and their associations with a founding saint. The term *relig* was derived from the Latin *reliqiuae* ('remains of saint'), implying an intimate link between the Cult of Relics and the formation of consecrated cemeteries (Doherty 1984, 94; Ó Carragáin 2003, 147;2010a, 83). The terms *róm* or *rúam*—a borrowing from the name of the city of Rome itself—was also utilised to describe a Christian cemetery, often of some importance, and it is possible that this can be linked to the practice attested in Irish hagiography of the saint bringing back soil from the holy cities of Christendom like Rome to spread in his cemetery and sanctify this space for Christian burial. These cemeteries, intimately linked with the remains of the founding saint, were invariably located in the centre of the site beside the principle church or often tomb-shrine. On larger sites, the cemetery and church might be located in the innermost enclosure reflecting the imposition of a plan where the most sacred area was delimited by enclosures of decreasing importance (Doherty 1985, 55-56; Swift 1998, 109). In the case of smaller sites, the cemetery was beside the oratory and shrine sometimes on the eastern side with the domestic quarters generally to the west (Herity 1995, 30, 59). This pattern is indicated at Reask, Co. Kerry (Fanning 1981, 71), Dunmisk, Co. Tyrone (Hurl 2002, 60) and Ballykilmore, Co. Westmeath where a north/south centreline separated a burial-dominated eastern half from a western half with much fewer burials (Channing 2012, 92-93).

The grave of the founding saint was a far from ubiquitous feature within cemeteries on these early medieval church sites, but where it was present, it is likely that it often provided the main focal point for burial. On Irish church sites where the founding saint's graves were present, tomb-shrines and shrine-chapels were sometimes built over the reputed grave of this saint during the Cult of Relics in the eighth and ninth centuries. However, as the graves of these saints often display much variation in their location to the principle liturgical church building, it can then be difficult to develop a consistent picture (or location) of where the early Christian cemetery core was originally located on these sites. As tomb-shrines and 'shrine-chapels' were often built over the reputed grave of the founding saint, it is, however, possible that these structures were aligned with this

grave (and other earlier graves) dug at an early date in the formalisation of the site before the development of the Cult of Relics.

Excavations, for example, at Clonmacnoise revealed that Temple Ciaráin was aligned differently (northeast–southwest) to the east–west orientated tenth century cathedral, its potential eighth/ninth century wooden predecessor and the high crosses erected around these, and instead was aligned with the earliest excavated burials and perhaps the earliest (pre-700) church on the site (King 1997, 130;Ó Carragáin 2010a, 44, 68). This evidence suggests that while the cathedral and associated high crosses may have been realigned east–west during the eighth century, the orientation of the sixth century grave of Ciarán was preserved through the alignment of his shrine-chapel. Similarly, it has been observed that *Teach Molaise* within the church site ('cashel') on Inishmurray, Co. Sligo and the earliest burials at the satellite cemetery and *leacht* at Relickoran on the same island were orientated northeast–southwest, while the congregational church, *Temple Molaise*, at the cashel was orientated with the later east–west burials at Relickoran (O'Sullivan and Ó Carragáin 2008, 293-97;Ó Carragáin 2010a, 68). The shift in this alignment occurred prior to an interment radiocarbon-dated (2 sigma) to AD 711–982, implying that the earliest burials aligned with the saint's grave predated this period and that his shrine-chapel, *Teach Molaise* may have been built around the eighth/ninth century.

It then appears that the grave of the founding saint influenced the alignment and location of many of the earliest burials within the cemetery. Even though burials in later early medieval times were often aligned upon church buildings of this later period, the evidence from Inishmurray and Clonmacnoise indicates that the ancient orientation of the founding saint grave was often preserved through the alignment of shrine-chapels constructed probably between the later-eighth and tenth century. These shrine-chapels, built on the site of the reputed grave of the saint, undoubtedly continued to be a focal point of burial in the later early medieval period; indeed, this might be implied at *Teach Molaise* within the cashel on Inishmurray (O'Sullivan and Ó Carragáin 2008) and St. Kevin's House, Glendalough (Harney 2006, 29-34)—a possible candidate for the unknown burial place of St. Kevin—where later early medieval grave-slabs are still evident clustered around these buildings.

While the grave of the founding saint attracted burial around it from a very early date in the formation of these cemetery spaces, it is apparent that it was only with the development of the Cult of Relics, particularly

from about the year AD 700—which sometimes involved the translation and enshrinement of the remains of founding saints within purpose-built tomb-shrines—that many cemeteries were redeveloped to cater for an increased demand for pilgrimage, veneration and burial at these sites. The tomb-shrine—the primary archaeological manifestation of the Cult of Relics—may have become the principle magnetic focal point of burial in this period at sites where these monuments were built. Indeed, the phase 2 burials (eighth to ninth century) on an early Christian church site on Illaunloughan Island, Co. Kerry shifted from around the oratory area (Phase 1) on the eastern side of the site to the eastern quadrant of the gable-shrine kerbed mound further north, where an area defined by upright kerbstones appears to have been planned as a cemetery space (Marshall and Walsh 2005, 66, 82-83). Similarly, the earliest seventh/eighth century burials at Church Island, Co. Kerry were focused around the sod and stone oratory on the western side of the site, with a small number also present on the summit of the terraced gable-shrine in the centre of the island; however, most later burials were interred on the monumental terraced gable-shrine, particularly after this structure was enlarged between the ninth and eleventh centuries, though some burial activity also continued around the tenth/eleventh century stone oratory (Hayden 2013, 73, 114-17, 130). One might also speculate that the appearance of these large, elaborate reliquary shrines on small coastal sites like these Kerry churches may suggest that small (often monastic) churches actively competed with each other for burial, pilgrimage and veneration and that the investment in such monumental reliquary architecture may have been part of a concerted effort to ensure that these cemeteries—now focused primarily around the reliquary-shrine— remained important centres of veneration for their local surrounding communities.

The Church Building and the Development of the Cemetery Space
Only a small minority of church sites, however, boasted purpose-built reliquary-shrines in their cemeteries, and it was therefore only at these select few sites where two different monuments—the saint's church and the saint's grave—competed or vied with each other for early medieval burial. Given that reliquary-shrines were not a feature of most ecclesiastical sites, such as proprietary churches, we should imagine that the church building provided the primary and perhaps sole focal point for early medieval burial at these sites. Even at small sites where a reliquary-

shrine was present, it appears that the church could provide an important focal point for burial activity, as attested above at Church Island, and Illaunloughan.
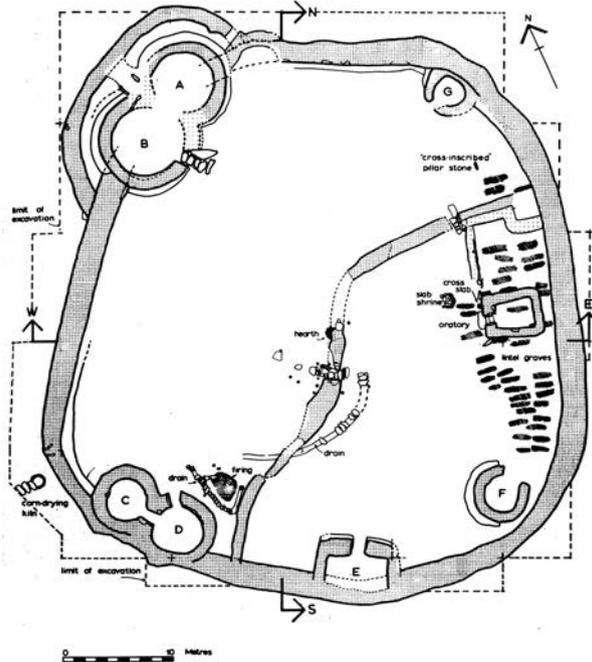
Plate 3: Plan of the early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure at Reask, Co. Kerry showing the location of the church, cemetery and beehive cells (After Fanning 1981, 71).

This close relationship between churches and early medieval burials is confirmed by the frequent alignment of the latter upon the former buildings. At some sites, we can infer the former presence of a non-extant early medieval church based on the orientation of excavated early burials which do not align with the axis of surviving (later) churches on the site. At Kiltiernan, Co. Galway, a series of early burials were orientated in a similar southwest to northeast direction as the cemetery enclosure wall and perhaps an earlier non-extant church, as the surviving twelfth century church was positioned on a different alignment to both the burials and cemetery enclosure wall (Waddell and Clyne 1995, 157, 161-62). Excavations at Toureen Peakaun, Co. Tipperary revealed eight early medieval burials within the Romanesque church aligned on its timber-

built predecessors (Ó Carragáin pers. Comment; 2007:1738) while at Ardfert, Co. Kerry the earliest burials were orientated on a different alignment to the eleventh century *damliac* and thirteenth century cathedral, implying that these burials were associated with an earlier unexcavated (timber?) church (Moore 2007, 91-92). Excavations at other sites such as Church Island, Co. Kerry (O'Kelly 1958), Gallen, Co. Offaly (Howells 1941, 109-10), Drumkay, Co. Wicklow (O'Donovan 2014, 209) and St. Canice's Cathedral, Co. Kilkenny (Ó Drisceoil 2013, 38-39) have also revealed early medieval burials on a slightly different orientation to the axis of the extant Viking Age/medieval church, thereby implying the former presence of a nearby (earlier) church building.

Plate 4: Reask, Co. Kerry. Church and cemetery area of the site.

If the church site remained in operation throughout the early medieval period and beyond, it was unusual for these ecclesiastical cemeteries to remain restricted to a specific area of the site. Indeed, excavations have found that the location of these cemeteries could be frequently influenced by the construction and orientation of new churches and shrines during this period. Indeed, a shift in the location of the cemetery might be implied at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Trim where the earliest burials dating to

around the fifth/sixth century were present in an area under the western boundary wall, while another set of burials, dating to the eighth to eleventh century were uncovered to the east of the medieval chancel (Seaver 2011, 44;2014, 243). The clear expansion of an early Christian cemetery is also evident at Reask where the phase 1 lintel burials were focused around the stone oratory and very tentative slab-shrine, as well as the area north of these structures as far as a cross-inscribed pillar-stone possibly defining the cemetery's most northern extent, while the phase 2 burials were located to the south of the stone oratory and appear to have post-dated this church building (Fanning 1981, 79-84).
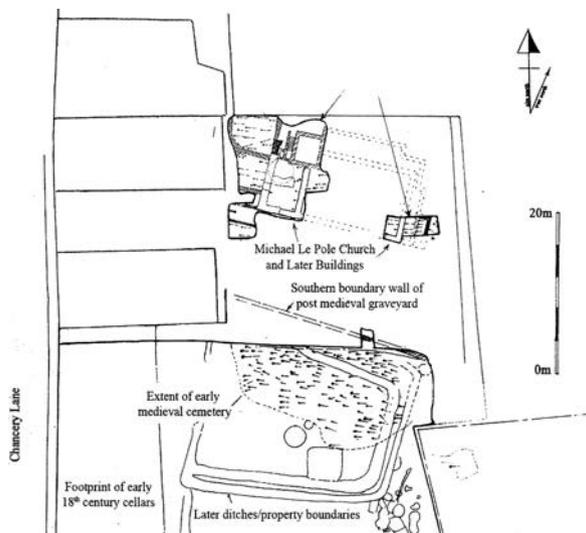
Plate 5: Plan of the excavated church and cemetery of St. Michael le Pole at Golden Lane/Chancery Lane, Dublin City showing the remains of the early medieval burial-ground to the south and the church building to the north (After O'Donovan 2008, 43).

There is evidence, however, to suggest that the early medieval cemetery core was often located on the 'sunny [southern] side' of the principle church. Indeed, the poem *Cell Chorbbáin* informs us that 'the space on the south side of the great church' became the cemetery at *Cell Náis* (Naas) (Fry 1999, 165), while Bede's early-eighth century *Life of Cuthbert* also describes how Cuthbert exhorted his community to 'bury me in this dwelling [Farne Island] near my oratory towards the south, on the eastern

side of the holy cross which I have erected there' (Colgrave 1969, 273). A preference for early medieval cemeteries on the south side of the principle church is evident at various sites including the church of St. Michael le Pole, Dublin City (O'Donovan 2008, 43), Gallen (Howells 1941, 107), Moyne, Co. Mayo (Manning 1987, 46) and St. Peter's, Waterford City (Hurley and McCutcheon 1997, 193). At Solar, Co. Antrim, the earliest burials were closest to the church though this cemetery expanded out to the south and east in later early medieval times (Hurl 2010, 117). Similarly, the early 'reliquary shrine' at Ballyhanna, Co. Donegal was along the south wall of the medieval church though most burials were east of this building in the medieval period (Murphy, et al. 2014, 128, 131-32).

Within many Frankish and Anglo-Saxon church sites it was practice to translate the bodies of saints and reinter their enshrined remains within church buildings, thereby prompting innovations in the architecture of these buildings to accommodate a desire amongst high-status figures for burial around these indoor shrines (Deliyannis 1995; Blair 2005, 229). Early medieval Irish churches certainly contained some secondary relics, but the rigid separation of liturgical space inside the congregational church and reliquary space outside in the cemetery (the practice of enshrining the saint's remains within freestanding tomb-shrines) importantly reduced the demand for burial inside these buildings and the need to meddle with its hallowed rectangular plan (Harbison 1991, 148;MacDonald 2003, 134;Ó Carragáin 2010a, 147, 154-55).

Furthermore, the very limited evidence for early medieval burial inside the relatively small Irish churches of this period might imply that Cogitosus' later-seventh century description of the burial of Brigit and Conleth on either side of the church altar at Kildare (Connolly and Picard 1987, 25) was a reference to a burial tradition that was extremely rare in Ireland in this period. Indeed, where burials are encountered within excavated early medieval churches, dated examples are frequently late or post-medieval (Ó Carragáin 2010a, 154), or are often located beneath the church foundations—implying a pre-existing early medieval cemetery— as revealed at Lorrha, Co. Tipperary (Bolger and Moloney 2013, 125). We should note that there is some limited potential evidence for early medieval internal church burial at Derry, Co. Down (Waterman 1967, 55-56, 67-68), Dunmisk, Co. Tyrone (Ivens 1989, 17-64), St. John's Point, Co. Down (Brannon 1980, 61), St. Vogue's, Carnsore Point, Co. Wexford (O'Kelly 1975, 35-36) and Raholp, Co. Down (Bigger 1916, 124-28), but

taking these tentative examples into consideration, the cumulative evidence would, however, suggest that indoor church burial was eschewed by early Irish communities given an ideological desire to rigidly distinguish between burial and reliquary space in the cemetery and liturgical activity within the church building.

It is possible, however, that indoor burial or burial around the external eastern end of the church, in close proximity to the altar, became more popular towards the end of the early medieval period, due both to the increasing importance attached to the Liturgy of the Mass and perhaps because of an increasing desire amongst the Irish clerical and secular elite to emulate their peers abroad who were being buried inside the church and sometimes close to the altar place itself. Indeed, it is in this period during the eleventh and twelfth centuries that we find our first references to the indoor burial of important figures such as those of the Ua Briain kings at Armagh and Killaloe (Fry 1999, 169; Ó Carragáin 2010a, 155). In addition, this form of high-status burial may have also been employed at Christ Church, Dublin City—a church site receptive to ideas from Canterbury in this period—where Bishop Dúnán may have been laid to rest at the right side of the main altar (d. 1074) while the first Irish under-king of Dublin, Murchad of Uí Chennselaig (d. 1070) was possibly buried along its left side (Clarke 2004, 143). Definite archaeological evidence for such early medieval high-status indoor burial is much less obvious, though it is tentatively implied at Raholp, Co. Down (Bigger 1916, 124-28), where stone-lined burials were recorded at the east end of the church beside and beneath the altar. It is possible that some of these stone-lined burials are earlier in date, however, particularly as another excavated stone-lined cist was partly overlain by—and therefore predated—the foundations of the eleventh/twelfth century church (Neill 1989:020).

Despite the trailblazing moves by the Ua Briain kings, it appears that burial inside churches was still rare in eleventh and twelfth century Ireland, even for royal figures. Instead, a lingering prohibition on indoor church burial may have dissuaded burial inside the church but encouraged the proliferation of high-status burials around the external, eastern end of some churches near the altar. This pattern is indicated at the Anglo-Saxon sites of Raunds and Wharram Percy (Blair 2005, 470-71); Nendrum, Co. Down (McErlean 2007, 340); the church of St. Michael le Pole (Gowen 2001, 34-37); Reefert in Glendalough, where most of the visible tenth/eleventh century recumbent graves-slabs marking stone-lined burials are clustered around the eastern end of the church; High Island,

Co. Galway where the headstones of pre-existing lintel burials were incorporated into the external façade of the eastern wall of the eleventh century church (Marshall and Rourke 2000, 105-06;Scally 2014, 235-37); and Dunmisk, where large elaborate graves—either lined or capped by stones—were recorded to the east of and also directly inside the eastern end of the putative timber church (Ivens 1989, 33, 59). Such evidence for high-status burial at the eastern end of these churches may represent attempts in this later period to reconcile continuing misgivings about indoor burial with the contemporary continental practise of remodelling churches to encompass saintly relics and indoor burial close to the main altar (Marshall and Rourke 2000, 105-06, 120). By the later-twelfth and thirteenth century, however, residual opposition to the burial of secular and clerical individuals inside churches had subsided (Hurley and McCutcheon 1997, 192; Manning 1998, 79; Fry 1999, 169). This is illustrated at Ardfert where the cathedral was used for worship and burial from the thirteenth century onwards (Moore 2007, 87) and on High Island where a late-twelfth/early-thirteenth century grave was placed inside the church, though whether the church was functioning at this point is less obvious (Scally 2015, 310).

Plate 6: Reask, Co. Kerry. The oratory is on the right hand side and slab shrine situated in the centre of the picture to the left of the oratory doorway and cross slab.

Round Towers and the Location of Ecclesiastical Cemeteries

While the south-eastern end of the church may have then been a coveted burial spot due to its close proximity to the altar—the most sacred element of a church—it should be noted that early medieval burial activity may have also expanded into the areas to the southwest of the principle church. Indeed, it might even be speculated that the early medieval cemetery core at the main Glendalough complex was perhaps to the southwest of the principle church, where we find the enigmatic 'Priest's house', the vast bulk of the early crosses and cross-slabs, and the *in-situ* stone-cist burials. This cemetery may have been later defined by a quadrangular drystone enclosure (whose east wall extended up to the southwest quoin of the cathedral), while St. Kevin's cross and another smaller cross of similar form may have marked its eastern and western enclosure boundaries (Harney 2011, 129-30). Where they occur, tenth to twelfth century round towers are mostly found to the northwest of the principle church, like Glendalough (Hamlin and Hughes 1977, 69; Edwards 1990, 112-13, 127), and it is possible that this was because the space to the southwest of the principle church on some of these sites was sometimes reserved for burial during the early medieval period. This is not a hard and fast rule as round towers are occasionally found to the southwest of the principle church; in these situations, we might alternatively imagine that the cemetery core was focused upon the south side of the main church or the founder's tomb elsewhere.

   The construction of these freestanding towers a small distance away from the church site also allowed clerical planners to innovate with the space between both these structures. The fact that the round tower doorway invariably faces the western doorway of the principle Viking Age church suggests a symbiotic relationship between both and might also imply that the space between the church and round tower may have functioned as an open courtyard (the '*platea*'), or place of religious activity, between the tenth and twelfth century. The function of this area to the west of the principle church as a space of public assembly (Edwards 1990, 112-13) probably has early Christian antecedents, particularly as the western church door (where people would have congregated) is also a fundamental architectural feature of early Christian Irish churches. Crosses (e.g. West Cross, Clonmacnoise) may have been erected in this area to mark this place of assembly or perhaps religious worship. However, Picard (2011, 55, 63) has cited various references from the early *Lives*, which imply that the *platea* (assembly space) was generally located

immediately outside the inner *sanctum* of these sites. Indeed, the eighth century *Collectio canonum Hibernensis* also describes the second most holy space (*sanctior*) of an ecclesiastical site as a space 'into the courts [plateas] of which we let enter crowds of country people not much given to villainy' (Bitel 1990, 76; Picard 2011, 60). The *platea* can be broadly used as a synonym of *atrium*, the large space surrounding the sacred core (*tabernaculum*) of ecclesiastical sites where communal activities might take place (Swift 1998, 110-11;Picard 2011, 54-56), and also for the Irish term *faitche* (Bitel 1990, 76;Picard 2011, 63)—a level expanse of grass or 'green' in front of or surrounding the enclosed space of a typical farmyard or ecclesiastical site (Kelly 2000, 369-70;Picard 2011, 61-62).

Although the *platea*, *atrium* or *faitche* may have then been located outside the inner *sanctum* of larger church sites, it is likely that the space to the west of the principle church was always utilised as a place of assembly—particularly in relation to religious worship—during the early medieval period. We might then envisage the early medieval cemetery core on the southern side of the principle church expanding into the areas to the southeast and southwest of this building over time. As the area to the southwest of the main church may have often been intensely used for early medieval burial, spaces to the west and northwest of the church were perhaps originally more conceived as places of congregation/worship. The construction of round towers, frequently to the northwest of the church, may have architecturally monumentalised this organisation of ritual space within the inner *sanctum* between the tenth and twelfth century. However, we should note that it may have gradually become more expedient to use spaces to the west and northwest of the church for burial in these later centuries, particularly as many of these ecclesiastical sites with round towers developed into large community cemeteries servicing the surrounding lay populations in this later period.

Conclusion

Archaeological evidence is then shedding some light about the original location and organisational development of early medieval ecclesiastical cemeteries. Such excavations have significantly demonstrated that the vast majority of early Christian church sites such as Church Island, Reask, Illaunloughan, Ballykilmore and Clonmacnoise were primarily settlements from the outset rather than cemeteries, with only small areas initially set aside for the burial of the founding community. In a similar situation to the seventh and eighth century evidence from the above

church sites, the excavations at Caherlehillan revealed an incredibly early (later-fifth and sixth century) church and cemetery on the eastern side of the enclosure, with contemporary dwellings, ironworking and cereal-storage features in the southwest quadrant (Sheehan 2014, 248, 253-54). These cemeteries gradually developed as successive generations died and as the local laity increasingly turned towards church sites for burial, but even still Irish church planners were always careful to maintain a clear distinction between liturgical space within the church, sepulchral space within the adjoining cemetery (focused around the saint's grave, if present) and outer areas for settlement, crafts and agriculture.

Two monuments—the saint's church and the saint's grave—provided the primary burial foci within ecclesiastical cemeteries where the saint's remains were reported to have been laid. The saint's grave probably represented the most sacred point within the church site; however, as these often do not survive and as they frequently display much variation in their location to the surviving stone church, if any (tenth century A.D. or later), it can be difficult to identify an overall consistent picture of where the cemetery core originated on church sites during the sixth and seventh century. On some sites, tomb-shrines were often developed over the saint's graves during the Cult of Relics (after A.D. 700) as part of a concerted effort by clerical planners to encourage burial and pilgrimage to the site. Although these tomb-shrines—e.g. 'corner-post' shrines, 'gable-shaped' shrines and 'shrine-chapels'—exhibit much diversity and growing architectural complexity in size, form and chronology, they all share the common principle of enshrining the saint's remains in modest structures within the ecclesiastical cemetery away from the main liturgical church building and reputedly directly over and upon the same orientation as the original grave of the fifth-to-seventh century founding saint.

Where tomb-shrines were built on the site of the founding saint's grave, it is likely that burials shifted between these monuments (frequently erected after the eighth century) and the principle church building. Indeed, excavations have demonstrated a gradual shift from burial primarily focused around the oratory to burial around the tomb-shrine at the early Christian church sites on Illaunloughan and Church Island, Co. Kerry. The earliest burials at the hermitage on Illaunloughan were to the east and south of the seventh/eighth century sod-built oratory, though once the gable-shrine was built during the second early Christian phase (eighth-to-ninth century), burials now increasingly gravitated towards the eastern quadrant of this latter monument to the north, where an area defined by

Plate 7: Reask, Co. Kerry. Cross-inscribed pillar stone.

upright stones was reserved for burial (Marshall and Walsh 2005, 28, 82-83). A similar situation was also revealed at Church Island, where the earliest seventh/eighth century burials were primarily focused around the sod and stone oratory on the western side of the ecclesiastical site, while most later burials were interred on the monumental terraced gable-shrine, particularly after this structure was enlarged between the ninth and eleventh century (Hayden 2013, 73, 114-17, 130).

The available archaeological and hagiographical (Colgrave 1969, 273) evidence also suggests that the southern (sunny) side of the principle church was generally favoured as a space for burial on many ecclesiastical sites, including those with or lacking tomb-shrines, and that as this space was filled, burials may have expanded around the south-western, south-eastern and eastern ends of the church in later early medieval times. The construction of round towers to the northwest of the principle church building may have partly formalised this arrangement, providing a space for congregation to the west and northwest of the church on certain occasions. Furthermore, it is possible that the northern, 'darker', side of the principle church might have been sometimes reserved for the burial of certain social outcasts, with ordinary communities often eschewing this area for burial during the early and particularly later-medieval periods (Hamlin and Foley 1983, 43; de Paor 1997, 95; Moore 2007, 90-91). The occasional presence of tomb-shrines, however, in this area (e.g. *Temple Ciarán* at Clonmacnoise) may alternatively have meant that such restrictions or taboos could be acquiesced by the power and security of burial near the founding saint.

The vast majority of early medieval church sites, including small pastoral churches and lordly proprietary establishments, could not however claim the grave of a founding saint. Here the church building would have provided the main focal point for early medieval burial, as for example revealed at Reask, Co. Kerry (a possible proprietary church?), particularly as the early burials were clustered to the north and south of the church and as no definitive evidence for a tomb-shrine was discovered within the excavated site. Over the early medieval centuries, pastoral care was gradually expanded to the entire lay populace on a more consistent basis. As part of this development, it also appears that burial was concentrated (to some extent) within fewer, but larger community church cemeteries in the later early medieval period (Ó Carragáin 2010b, 222-3), prompting these cemetery spaces to substantially increase in size, usage and complexity. Indeed, excavations within a number of church

sites such as Ardfert, Co. Kerry (Moore 2007, 85–95) have revealed that these cemeteries, whilst often initially carefully organised into regular rows of inhumations like that revealed at the relatively short-lived proprietary establishment at Reask (Fanning 1981, 79-84), often organically developed into much messier arrangements (e.g. containing dense palimpsests of intercutting burials) as they were used to service the burial needs of a growing lay population over many centuries.

This evidence finally reemphasises to us how the location of cemetery spaces was not just dictated then by symbolic considerations or the siting of ritual monuments (e.g. tomb-shrines, round towers & church buildings), but also by other pressing practical factors that included the natural topography of the ecclesiastical site, the intensity, extent and duration of burial activity and the limitations on available burial space. Whilst many church planners may have preferred to design and develop their cemeteries in a certain way (perhaps in emulation of the layout of other church sites), this may not have always been practical on their sites from their very inception given the local topographical constraints. Furthermore, whilst cemeteries may have been initially carefully laid out or spatially set apart from other zones of liturgical or secular activities in early Christian times, demographic and topographical constraints may have dictated that burial expand into previously unused/prohibited spaces to the east, northeast and north of the principle church building in the later centuries of the early medieval period. Whilst local environmental considerations then had a huge influence on how early medieval Irish ecclesiastical sites were organised, the emerging archaeological evidence also confirms that many clerical planners, such as those dwelling, for example, within the hermitage on Illaunloughan Island, the possible 'proprietary church' at Reask and the larger community church sites like Ardfert and Clonmacnoise, followed certain prescribed ways and practices in how cemetery spaces should be laid out, where they should be located, and how they should relate to other ritual monuments such as reliquary-shrines, church buildings and round towers.

Acknowledgments

About the Author

Lorcan Harney is a primary school teacher with a background in early medieval Irish Archaeology. He has completed a PhD in UCD on the subject of the early medieval Irish Church, and is a co-author of 'Early Medieval Ireland, AD 400-1100: The evidence from the archaeological excavations' (2014)'.

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'Between a rock and a hard place' - The Limerick Jail Escape, March 1923

By Martin Moore

Overview

This article recounts the dramatic story of how a group of IRA prisoners escaped from Limerick prison in March 1923 during the Irish Civil War. It discusses the historical context that led up to their imprisonment and outlines how this ingenious escape was planned and executed by Kerryman Michael McElligott (at a time when some of the Republican leadership within the jail were then advocating a cessation of hostilities by their comrades). Referencing a previously unpublished first-hand account, the author gives a new insight into this unusual incident in the Irish revolutionary years, which has been overlooked mainly because of rigorous censorship in place at the time. The author also includes some additional notes on three senior IRA leaders from Listowel in the article appendices.

Background

The Irish War of Independence ended in a truce in July 1921 and was formally concluded with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in London on 6th December 1921. The Treaty however caused frictions between members of the IRA and a Civil War ensued in Ireland for just short of a year from June 1922. Initially the Anti-Treaty forces prevailed in Kerry and consolidated their early victories by sending their activists further afield to fight. Men from Kerry were then fighting in Limerick, Tipperary and as far away as County Donegal. But, by August the tide had turned against the Republicans and by Autumn many of them had been arrested. Republican activists from Clare, Kerry and Limerick found themselves detained in the jail of Limerick. The government policy of executing prisoners added to the tension. Included in this number were two Listowel men Michael 'Pikie' McElligott (see Appendix 1) and Paddy Landers (see Appendix 2), both of whom would play a key role in the Limerick jail escape.

This then was the situation when Liam Deasy, a member of the Republican Executive, or senior command, was captured towards the end of January 1923.[1] Deasy, signed an appeal to his comrades to lay down

their arms as he saw the futility of further resistance. A Government amnesty followed that offered a reprieve for Republican soldiers who handed in their weapons and undertook to take no further active part in the Civil War. This created a dilemma for many Republicans whose hearts were not in the fight with their former friends. Conversely, though their cause seemed without hope, surrendering now could also be perceived to be letting down their comrades who had died fighting for the freedom of a thirty-two county Irish Republic.

Plate1: Patriotic thoughts from Comdt. Patrick Landers, Limerick Jail, February 1923.
(Source: Autograph book of escapee Jim Finucane).

Plate 2: Defiant sentiments from the instigator - Michael (Pikie) McElligott, Limerick Jail, 1923.
(Source: Autograph book of escapee Jim Finucane)

The 'Troubled Times' from 1916 to 1923, in Ireland, are amongst the most documented of any revolutionary period. The availability of source material allows historians to retell and analyse the actions of the leaders in the key events of those times. The appeal by Deasy to his comrades has been subjected to much scrutiny. His position was subsequently supported by a similar appeal from the prisoners then detained in Limerick jail, which was published in the national newspapers under the name of the Republican leadership of the prison, which included Paddy Landers. But while Landers signed this request, to effectively put an end to the conflict, he was at the same time co-ordinating a highly ambitious escape plan which could result in the mass liberation of Republicans from within the jail. At a time when Republican prisoners were being executed, the prisoners, including Landers were in no doubt as to their potential fate should this anticipated prison break fail. However, equally it was envisaged that a successful break-out would provide an enormous boost to their beleaguered colleagues.

Plate 3: Captain Patrick Enright, Listowel, who escaped from Limerick Jail in March 1923. Pictured with Nora O'Sullivan and his sister, Margaret, later Mrs. Jack Whelan. (Author's collection).

'Prison Escapes' and the Daring Plan

The story of this daring escape from Limerick prison presents many problems for the researcher. Firstly, as it occurred in March 1923 during the Irish Civil War, it was not reported in the contemporary newspapers. This was due to rigorous censorship then in place to ensure that any accounts of events that could be deemed prejudicial to the government were suppressed. Thankfully the *Belfast Newsletter,* being outside the control of the State Censor*,* reported, in a two-line account news of the break-out:

> 'News reached Dublin on Saturday of the escape of thirty prisoners from Limerick Jail. They gained an exit by means of a tunnel worked by them to an obscure position outside the jail. Two of the fugitives were re-arrested'.[2]

While this summary is important, as it confirms the date of the escape, it is unsatisfactory as no further details are provided as to how this escape was planned and executed.

This deficiency was somewhat addressed with the publication in December 1945 of a book entitled '*Prison Escapes'* and supplementary details on the operation were finally disclosed.[3] The escape plan was formulated by Michael (Pikie) McElligott of Listowel, a former captain of the volunteer company in the town, and in essence it involved digging a tunnel from the jail to the grounds of the nearby asylum. McElligott had identified two potential flaws in the jail security which he hoped would be the critical factors to ensure a successful escape. Firstly in the prison wash-room there was a unique drying apparatus that was built into the jail wall. By accessing the narrow recesses of this apparatus, men could be hidden from view and commence the tunnel. As the dryer was built into the wall it meant that a relatively short tunnel should suffice. The location of the clothes dryer also meant that the entrance to the tunnel was unlikely to be discovered. Furthermore, by its' very nature, the prisoners could control the heating and ensure that maximum heat was applied during any searches. Secondly McElligott had rather ingeniously recognised that the serious overcrowding of Limerick Jail allowed the prisoners to move about the prison with relative impunity and that this could be used to their advantage.

'Prison Escapes' tells us that the digging was carried out for ten weeks. This was difficult and dangerous work for the intrepid band of tunnellers

particularly due to the deficiency of their tools and the cramped and difficult conditions in which the work was undertaken. Unfortunately, while the account in *Prison Escapes* details how this tunnelling work was carried out, not a single escapee is identified - so much for the documentation of the revolutionary period!
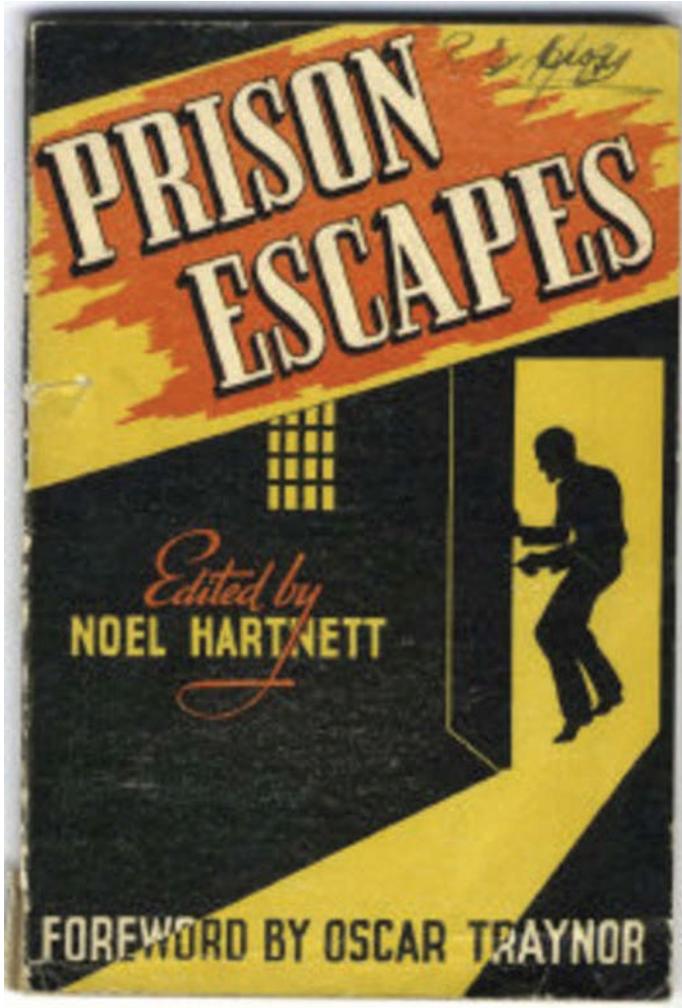
Plate 4: Cover of 'Prison Escapes' edited by Noel Hartnett.

Jim Shanahan's Account

Jim Shanahan of Dromin, Listowel was a member of the Bedford Company of the Listowel Battalion. He was then one of the approximately six hundred Republican prisoners crammed into Limerick Jail, having been arrested in January 1923 at his home at Cooltoosane in an early morning raid. He left a very detailed account of his time in the prison in the spring of 1923 and it is from this account that supplementary, but critical, details of this escape can be ascertained.[4]

Shanahan was not long incarcerated when he was made aware of the existence of the tunnel by his neighbour, Jim Twomey. He recollected how Pikie McElligott devised the plan and that he was a man who had a propensity for absconding from custody. McElligott was among a number of volunteers who served in Donegal and was captured earlier in the Civil War. There he escaped from the hospital in the Finner Camp and, traversing the country, successfully made his way back to north Kerry.[5] Soon Shanahan was working in relays on the tunnel with Ned Quirke, a fellow volunteer from the Bedford Company, Listowel. The weapons used to construct the tunnel he remembered were 'a big spoon, one bread-knife [and] a four-pronged fork having one of the prongs broken off'.[6]

The prison guards were diligent in their attempts to ensure there were no escapes from Limerick jail. Roll-calls were conducted regularly and on one occasion the authorities became concerned at the possibility of the existence of a tunnel when they could not locate a prisoner named Tim Finucane of Duagh. The prison was searched on numerous occasions with the entire ground floor area being subjected to sound checking.[7] They even resorted to driving trucks around yard in the hope that their weight would collapse any tunnel.[8] But the fact that the tunnel commenced in the very wall of the jail meant that the tunnellers were unlikely to be troubled by this development.

Shanahan gives the eventual length of the tunnel as about forty-nine feet.[9] The conditions within were dark and restrictive with just enough space for an escapee to pass along in a most uncomfortable manner. Insufficient air within meant that candles could only be used for a short time and a further problem was that large stones were encountered meaning that the tunnel had to change direction to cope with these obstacles.

After ten weeks of digging, and by the prisoners' best judgement, they had now progressed well beyond the outer jail wall and it was decided to

surface. Unfortunately for them, their calculations were somewhat askew, and it was found to be ten feet short and the egress was between the jail and the nearby asylum. A vote was taken from among those who had worked on the passage as to whether to continue with the digging or to break out in this less advantageous position. The decision was that they would try their luck without further digging. The escape was timed to take place in the week of March 13, 1923, as the great Munster Fair then being held in Limerick. This would provide a certain amount of cover and it was anticipated that the escapees could mingle with the associated increased activity, people and animals in the city. Twenty-four men from those incarcerated were selected to participate in the initial break-out.

But a further problem presented itself in that the authorities discovered that the lock to the cook house had been cut to facilitate the escape. A new lock was installed which meant that the would-be escapees could not gain access to the wash-room at night time.[10] The only way around this was that the twenty-four would have to be in the tunnel at the time this gate was locked. Fortunately, the fact that the prison was so overcrowded meant that the absence of these men was not noticed, and all got away on the first night. McElligott's planning had paid off. While the authorities had no inkling of the escape at this stage, the prisoners noticed that the escapees were missing from their numbers. The following night forty-eight men somehow packed themselves into the restricted space behind the cook-house dryer.[11]

Two different accounts exist of how the escape was discovered: according to Shanahan it was only with the recapture of some of the escapees that the plan was rumbled. *Prison Escapes*, however has a different version recounting that a rather large individual escapee dislodged the props at the egress and in doing so made the authorities aware of the escape.

The Escapees
Thanks to the writings of Jim Shanahan we can now identify the escapees. He names Pikie McElligott, Con Hickey, Jack Mullally and Jim Finucane of north Kerry as being among those who escaped on the first night.[12] Pike, Con & Jimmy were recaptured within a short period.[13] The Kerrymen that escaped on the second night were also recaptured. These were Paddy Enright[14], Danny Browne, Jack Lynch and Darkie Sullivan.[15] Jack Mullally of Listowel was to be the sole Kerryman to safely make his way back to his home town.[16] Following their recapture, Finucane and

McElligott managed to escape again. Incredibly, following on from his recapture, McElligott managed somehow to escape for a second time that day. But again, luck deserted him and, while he had put some distance between himself and the prison this time, he was recaptured in a coal-boat at Askeaton![17]

The names of other escapees have been gleaned from contemporary newspapers. While the escape itself was subjected to censorship, details of the recapture of prisoners was not. Geoff Mortell of Bruff,[18] Patrick Anglin,[19] and John McCarthy[20] were all reported as being recaptured in the subsequent weeks. This McCarthy seems to be the same person as Con McCarthy who along with Jim Cashman of Kiskeam were two of the Cork escapees.[21]

Plate 5: Anglo-Irish Treaty signatory page.

With the passing of the principals the full and engrossing story of the Limerick Jail escape has been all but forgotten. Certainly, the involvement of Patrick Enright and Michael McElligott, both listed on the Republican Plot in Listowel cemetery, has now faded from memory. Of the prison authorities, very little has been recorded. We do know that the prisoners then had a grievance against a warder named Woodland and it seems that a card was sent to him, by one escapee, with the following lines:

'We fought to free Ireland,
We went in over-land
We came out under-land
And to hell with Woodland'[22]

At least two other Kerryman escaped from Limerick jail about this time. The get-away of the well-known Tim '*Aero*' Lyons, of Garrynagore, Lixnaw, was reported in the *Irish Examiner*.[23] He simply presented himself as a prisoner named Houlihan who was due for release and secured his freedom by this effortless but effective strategy.[24] Lyons, an enterprising activist, boarded a train in Limerick and thereby managed to reach Kerry in some comfort![25] Seamus O'Connor, recalls him coming through Knocknagoshel about November 1922.[26] Unfortunately Lyons, who was renowned among his comrades for his daring and audacity, was killed in rather tragic circumstances at Clashmealcon caves, on the Atlantic coast in April, 1923. Terry Reidy of Lixnaw, also absconded from Limerick jail, but the details of his adventures now are unknown.[27] He was recaptured and was subsequently detained in Tralee jail.

Conclusion
The story of how prisoners plan any escape holds widespread and enduring fascination. The ingenuity of the detainee, and how he identifies the weak links of his captors and overcomes the seemingly impossible odds to gain his liberation are the subject of much discussion and analysis. Neither stone nor iron is sufficient to deter such individuals from their desire for freedom. But somehow, perhaps because the escape happened during the Civil War, this has not proven to be the case in this intrepid escape. By this short account the memory of such dedicated men is recalled and recorded, and in particular the story of the instigator of this escape, Michael McElligott. Sadly, he died prematurely, in Killarney in September 1927. The burdens of those 'Troubled Times' years rested

heavily on this noble youth and with his early death his comrades felt that his last resting place should be along with the fallen Volunteers of Listowel in the town's Republican Plot.

Plate 6: Michael (Pikie) McElligott, tenth from left, as part of the party that took over the staff barracks, Boherbee, Tralee in early 1922. (Authors Collection).

Appendix 1
Notes on the 'two' Michael McElligotts from Listowel

The Republican Plot in St. Michael's cemetery, Listowel, contains an inscribed memorial with the names of the local men who gave their lives in the cause of Irish freedom in the nineteen twenties. The name Michael McElligott appears twice on this roll of honour. This is not a duplication error and a clue that these are two distinct men can be gathered from the fact that a different year of death is given for each man. One refers to Michael 'Pikie' McElligott referred to in the article above and the other to a contemporary Michael 'Bob' McElligott.

In 1920, Michael 'Bob' McElligott was the senior officer of the Irish Republican Army in Listowel. His rank was Commandant and, as such, he had overall charge of the thirteen companies that comprised the local battalion. These companies covered the area north of the river Feale but his jurisdiction extended to Behins, Duagh and Finuge on the southern side also. Bob was quite an enterprising young man with his own motor

car, and he offered hackney services to locals and to any visitors staying at the Listowel Arms Hotel.

Plate 8: Michael (Bob) McElligott, Listowel. (Source: Authors Collection).

In the same year, the town company, was under the command of Captain Michael (Pikie) McElligott, of Charles Street. The Crown Forces were aware that a Michael McElligott was the leader of their military opponents and when Pikie McElligott was arrested in late 1920 they assumed that they had struck a significant blow against their opponents. Pikie's arrest allowed 'Bob' to continue his role and he was unsuspected of any involvement in illegal paramilitary activity. This, of course, facilitated his important organisational work, which at that time was focussed on the local District Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary, Tobias O'Sullivan. O'Sullivan had been transferred to the Listowel district following promotion after he successfully led the defence of Kilmallock barracks. That attack was one of the most ambitious attacks by the IRA on the Crown Forces and is recounted in great detail in Dan Breen's book

My Fight for Irish Freedom.

In January 1921, District Inspector O'Sullivan, was shot dead in Church Street, Listowel. 'Bob' had planned this assassination as O'Sullivan was identified as a diligent police officer who was to the forefront in attempts to suppress the Volunteers. One month later Bob's important role was uncovered. While returning from a Brigade meeting, he was called upon to halt by a party of military. He was shot dead at Derrymore, Tralee as he tried to elude the soldiers.

From then until July 1921, North Kerry witnessed an incessant reign of terror as both sides strived to gain the upper hand militarily. Two soldiers were shot dead in Ballylongford in February, while the Volunteers lost five activists at Kilmorna, Gortagleanna and Coilbee in April and May 1921. The blood-letting ended when, a Truce was called in July and this led to the signing of the Treaty between Ireland and Great Britain that December. 'Pikie' was then released from detention and returned to Listowel to resume his activities with the IRA as the Civil War commenced.

Appendix 2
Notes on Patrick Landers, Commandant Listowel Battalion (IRA)
Patrick (Paddy) Landers was from Ballybunion and plied his trade as a blacksmith in nearby Listowel. An early leader in the Volunteer movement in Listowel, he mobilised along with the town company in the fateful year of 1916 to strike a blow for Irish freedom. On the lead up to the 1916 Rising, the Listowel Volunteers awaited instructions that would include the oversight of arms distribution eastwards to units in Limerick and northwards to counties Clare and Galway. This weaponry, to be landed from the cargo ship 'The Aud', was expected at the port of Fenit and, once safely offloaded, the plan was that a significant proportion of it would be conveyed by railway through Listowel. However, in well-known circumstances, the munitions never reached the volunteers and the anticipated nationwide uprising planned was confined in the main to Dublin city.

Following the surrender of the leadership in Dublin, the Republican activists in the city were interned. This was followed by a nationwide sweep to detain the more diligent Volunteer activists which included Paddy. In tandem with this swoop the police were instructed to disarm the volunteers and Landers, as leader of the Volunteers, ordered the destruction of their armaments and their surrender to the constabulary.[28]

However, Landers was engaged in an act of deception as he had arranged for two rifles to be concealed and these were sent to Ballybunion for future use.[29]

Landers was not long detained in 1916 and soon was again immersed in all aspects of political and subversive activity in Listowel, including the drilling of the volunteers and the collection of all weaponry held in private ownership. This coincided with a groundswell of public opinion in favour of the Volunteers as the First World War ended. The fact that this conflict was fought for the freedom of small nations was not lost on the activists, and the time had now come that Ireland should throw off the shackles of English control. In the General Election of 1918, which coincided with the ending of the Great War, Sinn Fein gained an overall majority. Their objective was a fully free and independent Irish Republic. The ranks of the Volunteers, in Listowel, and throughout Kerry, were augmented with the associated patriotic upsurge.

This was the immediate background to the Irish War of Independence which witnessed almost nation-wide conflict in the years 1920 and 1921. In these years Paddy Landers was imprisoned on a number of occasions, including his first term in Limerick jail in 1920.[30] Landers was again arrested and detained in Kilkenny jail until after the cessation of hostilities in July 1921.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty led to Civil War and, as hostilities escalated, Landers took over as the Battalion Commandant in Listowel in 1922 co-ordinating and organising resistance in North Kerry. However by August, the tide had turned against the Republicans and they found themselves outflanked when a strong Free State party landed at Fenit in early August 1922. This well-planned manoeuvre was consolidated by a subsequent landing at Tarbert which seriously threatened Landers' forces. The situation for the Republicans was further thrown into disarray when Landers was arrested in the autumn of 1922 and imprisoned again.

Now, with many of his comrades, he found himself, once again, in custody in the jail of Limerick. Landers soon found himself playing a dangerous and duplicitous game. However as a long-standing leader of the Irish Republican Army IRA in North Kerry, he had significant experience of dealing with fluid and complicated predicaments. His command role continued in the prison and had many facets, from liaising with the authorities, motivating his fellow inmates and ensuring in as much as was practical that the prisoners' actions were supportive of their, by now, hard-pressed comrades' military campaign. The campaign of the

Republican forces, fighting superior numbers was then at a low ebb as the Government forces consolidated their hold over the country. Due to the incessant arrests of Republicans it appeared inevitable that the Free State forces would prevail, and the ending of the abhorrent civil war seemed imminent. As outlined above, he was a signatory to an appeal from the prison to end hostilities, but at the same time he supported the highly ambitious escape plan which resulted in the mass liberation of Republicans from within the Jail.

About the Author

Martin Moore is an accountant based in Tralee, County Kerry. He holds an M.A. in Local History from the University of Limerick. In 2016 he published 'The Call to Arms', which examined the involvement of Thomas McEllistrim and the Ballymacelligott district in the events that took place between the years 1916 to 1923.

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[4] *P.O.W. 6510*, unpublished account by James A Shanahan, copy in possession of author.

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[6] Ibid, p. 36.

[7] Ibid, pp 44-45.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid, p. 51.

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[12] Ibid, p. 52.

[13] Ibid, p. 55.

[14] His premature death is reported in the *Kerry News* of 27 July, 1925.

[15] P.O.W. 6510, p. 59.

[16] Ibid, p.61. Jack Mullally was recaptured at Trieneragh, Duagh on 24 April, 1923.

[17] Ibid, p. 55.

[18] *Irish Independent*, 26/5/1923 which reported his recapture.

[19] *Irish Independent*, 31/5/1923 which reported his recapture

[20] *Irish Independent*, 29/5/1923 which reported his recapture

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Greg Daly, *Irish Catholic* Journalist and Author
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Kerry's Early start to the War of Independence
Tim Pat Coogan

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KERRY WRITERS MUSEUM, LISTOWEL

April 30   *Aghadoe and the Innisfallen Croziers*
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ST. BRENDAN'S CHURCH, TRÁ LÍ

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Sneem Village, its Monuments and Churches
Leader: Batty Burns, Oide Scoile

June 23
FIELD OUTING:
Dún Chaoin, its Historic Churches and Cemeteries
Leader: Tadhg Ó Coileáin, Member

July 21
FIELD OUTING
Castleisland Town and Castle, Con Houlihan Tour
Leader: Thomas Martin

August 5
FIELD OUTING
Rathmore Village
Leader: Seán S. Ó Súilleabháin, Oide Scoile

August 18
FIELD OUTING
Kiskeam v The Empire, Tour of Kiskeam
Leader: Fr J.J. O'Riordan, CSSR

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FIELD OUTING
Historic Tarbert
Leaders: Patrick Lynch and Dr Declan Downey

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