

THE IMPACT OF THE IRISH REVOLUTION ON A GARRISON COUNTY: KILDARE, 1912-23

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abbreviations

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
ASU	Active Service Unit
ATIRA	Anti-Treaty IRA
BMH	Bureau of Military History
Cd.	Command Paper (British parliamentary papers)
CI	County Inspector, RIC
CO	Colonial Office, TNA
CSORP	Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
<i>FJ</i>	<i>Freeman's Journal</i>
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
<i>Hansard</i>	House of Commons debates
HO	Home Office
IAPL	Irish Anti-Partition League
IFS	Irish Free State
IG	Inspector General
IGC	Irish Grants Committee
<i>IHS</i>	<i>Irish Historical Studies</i>
<i>II</i>	<i>Irish Independent</i>
IMA	Irish Military Archives
INAA	Irish National Aid Association
INAAVDF	Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependants' Fund
IO	Intelligence Officer
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
IRA	Irish Republican Army

IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
<i>IT</i>	<i>Irish Times</i>
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
IUA	Irish Unionist Alliance
IVDF	Irish Volunteer Dependents' Fund
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
<i>JKAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society</i>
KCC	Kildare County Council
KCoA	Kildare County Archives
<i>KO</i>	<i>Kildare Observer</i>
<i>LL</i>	<i>Leinster Leader</i>
MS	Manuscript
MP	Member of Parliament
MSPC	Military Service Pensions Collection
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
<i>NLT</i>	<i>Nationalist and Leinster Times</i>
OC	Officer Commanding
RDF	Royal Dublin Fusiliers
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
SF	Sinn Féin
TNA	The National Archives, London
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
UDC	Urban District Council
UIL	United Ireland League
WO	War Office, TNA
WS	Witness statement to Bureau of Military History

Abstract

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Thesis title: **The impact of the Irish revolution on a garrison county:
Kildare, 1912-23**

This thesis examines the impact of the Irish Revolution on County Kildare from 1912 to 1923. A noted garrison county, the concentration of British military personnel in Kildare was the highest in Ireland, and the Curragh was the most extensive military camp in the country. The military presence continued after the British withdrawal when military barracks passed to the National army. The economy in Kildare was heavily dependent on the military connection. A central theme of this dissertation is an analysis of the impact of Kildare's garrison status on the county's experience of the Irish Revolution.

Based on rigorous research of British and Irish archives, which has unearthed hitherto little used material, this dissertation charts the fortunes of home rule in Kildare during which the county was at the centre of the Curragh incident in 1914 when the loyalty of the army to the government was called into question. It explains the slow development of the Irish Volunteers in the county and the position of the unionist community vis-à-vis home rule. Attention is drawn to the key role played by British army units from Kildare in suppressing the 1916 Rising, as well as the post-Rising development of Sinn Féin and concomitant decline of the Irish Parliamentary Party. This study challenges the depiction of Kildare as a 'quiet county' during the War of Independence by highlighting the pivotal role it played in the intelligence war and the county's strategic communications importance for both Crown forces and republicans. During the civil war period Kildare was to the forefront of national events with the evacuation of the British army which had a major negative impact on the local economy.

Politically, the Irish Revolution in Kildare did not see an ultimate triumph for republicanism in any form. While the emergence of Labour was notable, after 1923 Kildare returned to its Redmondite roots, though under a pro-Treaty label.

Introduction

On 16 May 1922 the British army stationed in Kildare packed their bags and evacuated the remaining barracks in the county, including the Curragh camp, the second largest military base in the United Kingdom. It took the final party of evacuating military personnel and more than 100 vehicles one hour to pass through Naas in what one newspaper described as ‘a bloodless victory’ – the surrender to the IRA of England’s greatest stronghold in Ireland.¹ Eight years earlier, when British army officers in the Curragh effectively mutinied rather than obey government orders to assist in the implementation of home rule in Ulster, the idea of an evacuation would have been deemed a fantasy. Kildare’s long status as a garrison county differentiates it from all other Irish counties. The Irish Revolution between 1912 and 1923 had a substantial impact on Kildare which was central to some of the most significant episodes of this tumultuous decade: the Curragh incident in 1914, the British army’s response to the 1916 Rising, the intelligence war during the War of Independence, and the Irish Civil War when Kildare’s military barracks were occupied by National army personnel and its prisons held the highest proportion of republican prisoners in Ireland. Kildare was also unusual in swiftly returning to its peaceful and largely law-abiding Redmondite roots after 1923, though under a pro-Treaty label.

As discussed in chapter 1, from the 1850s onward Kildare became noted as a garrison county with substantial military barracks at Naas, Newbridge and Kildare town. In addition, the Curragh camp was the largest British military establishment in Ireland. The concentration of the British army in Kildare gives rise to several questions which underpin this dissertation. How significant was the spending power of the army for the local economy and patterns of employment? How popular was the army and did this affect the initial development of the Irish Volunteers or the local unionist position during the third home rule crisis? While the Curragh incident and its implications for the Liberal government have received significant attention, the local impact has not.² What role did troops stationed in Kildare play during the 1916 Rising? Did the size of the garrison inhibit the development and activities of the IRA in Kildare during the War of Independence? Should Kildare be regarded as a ‘quiet county’ during the Irish Revolution? What impact did the evacuation of the British army from Kildare have at a local level? What role did the extensive infrastructure of military barracks play during the Irish Civil War?

The Irish Revolution which led to partition, the Civil War, and to a significant form of self-government for the greater part of the country, was arguably the most

¹ *Derry Journal*, 17 May 1922.

² See Ian W.F. Beckett, *The army and the Curragh Incident, 1914* (London, 1986); A.P. Ryan *Mutiny at the Curragh* (London, 1956).

important event in modern Irish history. The period has occasioned a growing and specialized historiography. The earliest studies were written by protagonists and depicted the independence struggle as a straightforward clash between the Irish people and British imperialism. Examples of this genre include P.S. O'Hegarty's *The victory of Sinn Féin* and Piaras Béaslaí's *Michael Collins and the making of a new Ireland* which present an unrepentant pro-Treaty viewpoint, largely influenced by an admiration for Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins.³ By contrast, Dorothy Macardle's, *The Irish Republic* was notable for its anti-Treaty and pro-Éamon de Valera perspective.⁴ These publications are essential reading for any study of the period and provide valuable insights into contemporary arguments concerning the revolution and its disappointments. The fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising in 1966 gave rise to a further wave of what might be deemed traditional nationalist accounts with some exceptions, most notably F.X. Martin's bracing assessment of the 1916 Rising.⁵

The earliest account by a Kildare participant dates from 1926 when Patrick Colgan, the most senior IRA officer during the revolution in Kildare, published 'The Maynooth Volunteers in 1916', in *An tÓglach*. This gave a detailed account of the local Kildare participation in Easter Week.⁶ More than thirty years passed before two articles on different aspects of the War of Independence in Kildare were published in the *Capuchin Annual*. The first of these appeared in 1969 when Seán Kavanagh, one of the principal figures in intelligence gathering for the IRA in Kildare, published his recollections entitled: 'The Irish Volunteers intelligence Organisation'. The following year, Michael Smyth provided a detailed account of IRA involvement in Kildare during the period.⁷ Accounts from some of the surviving individuals connected with the British army's evacuation from the Curragh camp are included in Desmond Swan's 'The Curragh of Kildare' in *An Cosantóir*, published in 1972, the fiftieth anniversary of the event.⁸

Throughout the 1970s the study of the Irish Revolution was transformed by the work of Charles Townshend, David Fitzpatrick, Michael Laffan and Michael Hopkinson. Central to any exposition of the War of Independence must be constant reference to Townshend's seminal work, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-21*,

³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The victory of Sinn Féin: how it won it and how it used it* (Dublin, 1924); Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the making of a new Ireland* (2 vols., Dublin, 1926).

⁴ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish republic: a documented chronicle of the Anglo-Irish conflict and the partitioning of Ireland with a detailed account of the period, 1916-1923* (London, 1937).

⁵ F. X. Martin, '1916 - Myth, Fact, and Mystery' *Studia Hibernica* 7 (1967) 7-126 & 'The 1916 rising - a 'coup d'état' or a "bloody protest"', *Studia Hibernica* 8 (1968), 106-37.

⁶ *An tÓglach*, 8 May 1926.

⁷ Seán Kavanagh, 'The Irish Volunteers intelligence Organisation', *Capuchin Annual* (1969); Michael Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions - 1920', *Capuchin Annual* (1970).

⁸ Desmond Swan, 'The Curragh of Kildare', *An Cosantóir: the Irish Defence Journal*, 32:5 (May 1972).

which focuses on the militant IRA side of the conflict and the British response.⁹ The work examined the conflict in a new manner and was sceptical, realistic and unflinching. The same qualities, along with a forensic approach to primary source research, informed Fitzpatrick's monumental *Politics and Irish life* which focused on Clare in the period 1913 to 1921 and set a benchmark for all later studies.¹⁰ Laffan focused his research on the Sinn Féin party and his *Resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* provides an invaluable background to the development of SF policy and the national political context over the period. His exceptional and thorough account of the expansion of the political movement in 1917 and the subsequent role of SF throughout the remaining years of the revolution remains unrivalled.¹¹ The classic study of the Irish Civil War remains Hopkinson's *Green against green*. It is notable for its coverage of events in the localities and is invaluable in providing a systematic guide to the politics and military operations of the period.¹² However, its concentration on these two aspects is to the detriment of any serious consideration of the war's social or economic aspects.

The centenary anniversaries of the revolutionary decade have yielded a rich crop of new research-based publications. Ronan Fanning's, *Fatal path* concentrates on the politics and intrigues of the British government at the highest level as it sought a solution to Irish demands between 1910 and 1922. Roy Foster's, *Vivid Faces* analyzes the background and mentalities of those who made the revolution, providing a cultural and intellectual aspect to the generation involved. Another work that can be read in parallel is Diarmaid Ferriter's *A nation and not a rabble: the Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* which as well as describing how the revolution was framed by those writing about the subject, assesses how the conflict came to be remembered and its legacy contested.¹³ One of the most ambitious recent works is *The Atlas of the Irish Revolution* which provides one thousand pages of enlightened essays, chapters and case studies by over 100 scholars. Every theme connected with the revolution, including activity in the regions such as Kildare, is covered with accompanying maps, tables, statistics, photographs and documents. In addition, numerous specialist articles and book chapters have also appeared with Fearghal McGarry's, 'Revolution, 1916-1923' in the *Cambridge History of Ireland*, one of the

⁹ Charles Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: the development of political and military policies* (Oxford, 1975).

¹⁰ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Dublin, 1977).

¹¹ Michael Laffan, 'The unification of Sinn Féin', *Irish Historical Studies*, 17 (1971), 353-79 and his *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹² Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: the Irish civil war* (Dublin, 1988).

¹³ Ronan Fanning, *Fatal path: British government and the Irish Revolution, 1910-1922* (London, 2013); Roy Foster, *Vivid faces: the revolutionary generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London, 2014); Diarmaid Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble: the Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (London, 2015).

most noteworthy.¹⁴ There has also been a strong revival of interest in biography with new studies of W. T. Cosgrave, Michael Collins, Éamon de Valera and Patrick Pearse, among many others.¹⁵

Interest in the local aspect of the Irish Revolution has also gathered momentum. Understandably, historians have tended to focus their attention on Dublin and the Munster counties, the most active centres in terms of militancy. By contrast, more peaceful counties have attracted much less attention. In an analysis by Peter Hart, Kildare emerged as one of five counties outside Ulster which recorded the lowest level of violence between the years 1917 and 1923.¹⁶ But, of course, violence is just one measure and not always an accurate one. The county system as a unit of analysis is of importance to the study of the revolution generally. Every county was an administrative division with its own elected local councils and boards, as well as a separate judicial system with the local RIC directed by a County Inspector. Where possible, a comparative analysis with studies of other counties has been sought in an effort to establish whether events in Kildare were unique, or reflective of wider national patterns. In this respect, this dissertation benefitted from the work of Marie Coleman on County Longford, Peter Hart on Cork and from the Irish Revolution series of county studies published by Four Courts Press.¹⁷ Michael Farry's study of Sligo is the county which most closely resembles Kildare until the Civil War period when Kildare's experience differs markedly as a majority of the IRA leadership remained pro-Treaty, unlike Sligo.¹⁸

In terms of Kildare, Con Costello has written on the British army's experience in the Curragh during the Irish Revolution.¹⁹ Aspects of the role of the 5th division of the British army which controlled most of central and western Ireland, including Kildare, during the War of Independence, has been addressed by William Sheehan's, *Hearts and mines*.²⁰ Terence Dooley provided the first academic study of militancy

¹⁴ Fearghal McGarry, 'Revolution, 1916-1923' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *Cambridge history of Ireland*, vol. iv (Cambridge, 2018), pp 258-95.

¹⁵ Anne Dolan & William Murphy, *Michael Collins: the man and the revolution* (Cork, 2018); David McCullagh, *De Valera, volume 1: rise, 1882-1932* (Dublin, 2017) & *volume 2: rule, 1932-1975* (Dublin, 2018); Michael Laffan, *Judging W.T. Cosgrave* (Dublin, 2014); Joost Augusteijn, *Patrick Pearse: the making of a revolutionary* (Basingstoke, 2010).

¹⁶ Peter Hart, *The IRA at war, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), p. 36.

¹⁷ Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2006); Peter Hart, *The IRA and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998). Pat McCarthy, *Waterford: the Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2015) and John O'Callaghan, *Limerick: the Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2018) were useful for comparative purposes.

¹⁸ Michael Farry, *Sligo: the Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2012).

¹⁹ Con Costello, *A most delightful station: the British army on the Curragh of Kildare, Ireland, 1855-1922* (Cork, 1999).

²⁰ William Sheehan's, *Hearts and mines: the British 5th Division in Ireland, 1920-1922* (Cork, 2009).

by the Kildare IRA during the War of Independence.²¹ Based largely on police reports, it was an excellent beginning, but lacked detail from other British archival sources. In the present decade, James Durney has produced three books on aspects of the revolution in Kildare: *The War of Independence in Kildare*; *The civil war in Kildare* and *Foremost and ready: Kildare and the 1916 Rising*.²² While the publications include a considerable volume of newly released statements to the Bureau of Military History, the work is mainly narrative in nature with considerable replication across the volumes. Also, in the present decade, the *Kildare Archaeological Journal* has published an increasing number of academic articles relating to Kildare and the First World War and the Irish Revolution.

This dissertation has availed of the rich seams of primary sources available for the study of the Irish Revolution in archival repositories in Ireland and Britain. The abundance of material, some of it only recently available to historians, has allowed the various accounts and activities to be examined from every perspective. A broad range of local newspapers has been meticulously consulted and has yielded rich local detail not found in surviving manuscripts. In the University College Dublin Archives the papers of Richard Mulcahy, Ernie O'Malley and Moss Twomey were particularly relevant to the Kildare story. One of the highlights was the interview given by Paddy Mullaney, one of the most successful militants in Kildare during the Revolution, to O'Malley. In the National Library, the papers of Maurice Moore, J.J. O'Connell and John Redmond were consulted. The Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers in the National Archives of Ireland provided valuable material up to the 1920 period. This archive also houses an extensive collection of Irish governmental departmental files relating to the Treaty period and the Civil War.

The Military Archives in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin has a number of collections which have transformed our understanding of the Irish Revolution, namely the Bureau of Military History (BMH) and the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC). In addition, a significant number of captured anti-Treaty IRA documents and a large quantity of National army operation reports pertinent to Kildare during the Civil War were examined. They threw light on the circumstances which led to the execution of a number of anti-Treaty activists. The Civil War Prisoners Collection, which records individuals interned during the Civil War, was also examined. Research carried out in regional archives also yielded rewarding results. To take two examples: in the Dundalk county library the Dundalk prison register from August 1922 revealed that 43 per cent of the inmates had Kildare addresses; and the

²¹ Terence Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare during the War of Independence', in William Nolan & Thomas McGrath (eds), *Kildare history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2006).

²² James Durney, *The Civil War in Kildare* (Cork, 2011); James Durney, *War of Independence in Kildare* (Cork, 2013); James Durney, *Foremost and ready: Kildare and the 1916 Rising* (Naas, 2015).

Irish Railway Records Society Archive had surviving copies of the trains schedule that conveyed troops to Dublin on Easter Monday 1916.

In the National Archives in London a wide range of papers has been consulted. The Colonial Office collection includes the RIC, County Inspector monthly confidential reports for Kildare and other relevant counties. These provide invaluable details of the period. The Colonial Office series also contains the records of the Compensations (Ireland) Commission which gave an account of claims for compensation between 1919 and 1922. Likewise, the Irish Grants files relating to Kildare provide rich detail of the intimidation carried out mainly by the IRA against local unionists. War Office materials relating to the army, and particularly the evacuation were also accessed. The various returns for the British army which listed its numerical strength in various locations were closely scrutinized. Prisoner lists from military prisons in the Curragh, which gave the names and addresses of Kildare prisoners, helped reveal the identities of local activists at a rank and file level. Other categories including Home Office and British Cabinet minutes were also consulted. The personal papers of Bonar Law in the Parliamentary Archive in London and H.H. Asquith in the Bodleian Library in Oxford also provided some telling insights into politics at the highest level.

From the perspective of the British army, the papers of General Sir Hugh Jeudwine in the Imperial War Museum in London give a valuable first-hand account of the British military view of the local political opposition in Kildare, IRA militancy, the role of the government and the inaction of the cabinet. Personal accounts such as the little-used diaries of Colonel Bertram Portal and Captain Henry de Courcy-Wheeler relating to the British army and Easter Week have been utilized. Privately held collections have also been useful, particularly the papers of Ted O'Kelly. In addition, relatives of a number of individuals, either participants or those associated with the conflict, have been interviewed and their accounts, many of which have been recorded for the first time, have been used to supplement the official records.

This dissertation is set out in nine chapters, each charting a significant timespan between 1912 and 1923. Chapter one is introductory in nature describing Kildare's demography, topography, socio-economic and denominational profile, as well as an analysis of the political and cultural landscape. The second chapter focuses on the 1913 to 1914 period and the upheaval resulting from the home rule crisis. The effects of two events – the Curragh Incident of March 1914 and the expansion of the Volunteer movement in Kildare during the summer and autumn of 1914 and their long-term consequences are fully explored. Chapter three examines the impact of the First World War on the county and explores the transition from initial public support for the war effort to a growing opposition and how this affected enlistment. The traumatic events of Easter Week and the Kildare connection, both at Volunteer and British army level, are the subject of chapter four. A detailed analysis of the extent and reasons for a changing political mood in the aftermath of the Rising is fully

explored. Chapter five surveys the fluctuating political landscape during 1917 and 1918 with an emerging realignment of opinion. The part played by Kildare in the conscription crisis and Sinn Féin's victory in the 1918 election is analyzed in-depth. Chapter six focuses on the War of Independence and the extent to which the counter state co-existed in Kildare even though it was the most militarized county in Ireland. In addition, the efforts of the local IRA are contextualized and assessed. Chapter seven addresses the circumstances that prevailed in Kildare from the truce in July 1921 to the outbreak of Civil War in June 1922 and includes a detailed analysis of the growing strength of the local IRA during the period, the bitter split over the Treaty and the evacuation of the British army from Kildare. Chapter eight focuses on the Civil War in Kildare, now a county free of the restraints of a British army presence. The increased militancy in this period is investigated, against a backdrop of the county's continued garrison status due the National army occupation of former British military stations. The final chapter examines circumstances in 1923 and attempts to chart the political adjustment in the post-Civil War period with the return to public life of politicians from the old order.

This dissertation charts the experience of a law abiding, largely conservative county over the course of the Irish Revolution. Many complexities were manifest – an abiding concern for the economic benefits associated with a large military presence (be it British or Irish), radicalism versus conservatism, civil disturbance, a moderate militancy, eventually leading to turmoil and a divided society. Politically, the Irish Revolution in Kildare did not see an ultimate triumph for republicanism in any form. While the emergence of Labour was notable, after 1923 Kildare returned to its Redmondite roots, though under a pro-Treaty guise.

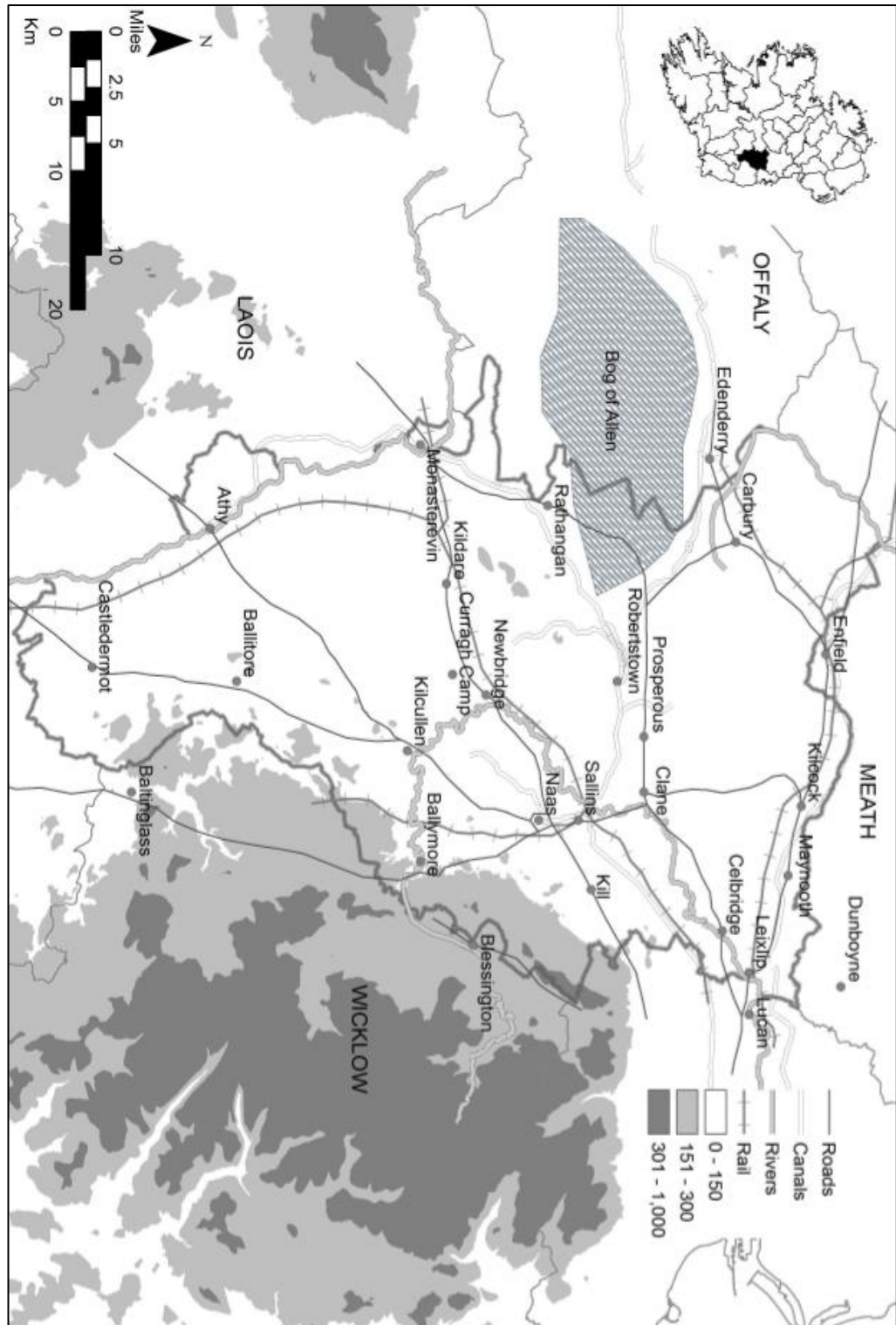
1: Kildare in 1912

In January 1912, the RIC county inspector (CI) for Kildare described the county as 'peaceable and free from crime, [with] no agrarian trouble, no boycotting or intimidition'.²³ Subsequent reports continued to convey the county's political tranquillity and relative prosperity. A key theme of this study is how Kildare's status as a garrison county helps explain its law-abiding nature during the early years of the revolution. The substantial resident population of military personnel significantly aided the local economy which was based mainly on agriculture. The first twelve years of the century witnessed important political and socio-economic change. The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 effectively ended landlord control of local government by producing democratically elected representatives from among the ordinary people. Great strides had been made to resolve the land question under the land acts of 1903 and 1909, and to alleviate poverty with the introduction of the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908. There was also in this period a greater cultural awareness of being Irish which had an important impact on nationalism. But the dominant political issue facing Kildare and all other Irish counties in 1912 was the third home rule bill introduced in April. The crisis generated by this tested the noted tranquillity of the county between 1912 and 1914.

Kildare is roughly triangular in shape with its apex to the south. An inland county, it is the fourth smallest county in Leinster with an area of 654 square miles occupying a mere 2.1 per cent of the area of Ireland. As shown in map 1, Kildare borders Wicklow to the east, and Dublin and Meath to the north, Carlow to the south and Offaly and Laois to the west. Regarded as the flattest land in Ireland, it is only in the extreme east, where the county boundary meets the Dublin-Wicklow mountain range, that the terrain reaches 305 metres above sea-level. There are a number of important physical features in the county. In the centre lies the open pasture of the Curragh. Comprising 4,870 acres, it is the largest unenclosed area of fertile land in the country.²⁴ The Bog of Allen occupies a sizeable area towards the west and north-west. The main river is the Liffey which meanders through the county in a semi-circular course from the Wicklow mountains in the east to the Dublin county boundary at Leixlip. The south of the county is drained predominantly by the River Barrow, while an area of west Kildare is drained by the River Boyne.

²³ CI Kildare, Jan. 1912 (The National Archives (hereafter TNA), CO 904/86).

²⁴ Con Costello, 'John O'Donovan's Curragh' in William Nolan & Thomas McGrath (eds), *Kildare: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2006), p. 538.



Map 1: Places mentioned in the text

Historically, all communications from Dublin to the south and the west passed through County Kildare. In the early twentieth century, the principal road to the west, corresponding with the present M4, entered the county at Leixlip and exited at Clonard in the north-west. The main road leading to the south, today the M7, proceeded from Dublin at Rathcoole, through County Kildare as far as Monasterevin. The route to Waterford (now the M9) branched off this road at Naas and passed through the south of the county as far as Castledermot. Not only was the county well-served with its road network, the Grand Canal and the Royal Canal, the two most significant canals in the country, passed through the county. In all, over seventy miles of canals extended throughout Kildare, an extent greater than any other county. As map 1 indicates, Kildare was also particularly well-served with railways. The Midland Great Western Railway, connecting Dublin with Galway and Sligo, extended through the county almost parallel to the Royal Canal. The Great Southern & Western Railway, linking Dublin with Cork, Limerick and Waterford, also passed through the county. With its extensive communications network, it is unsurprising that all land traffic, both passenger and commercial, from Dublin to much of the west and south of the country, travelled through County Kildare.

Demographically, the 1911 census indicated that the county was unusual in many respects. With a population of 66,627, it ranked eleventh in Ireland. However, a significant percentage of that population was born in Britain: 7,668 individuals or 11.5 per cent of the population. This was due to the sizeable presence of the British army in the county. Even in Dublin, the centre of British administration in Ireland, only 5.53 per cent of the population were British-born.²⁵

There were four significant garrison towns in County Kildare in 1912: the Curragh camp, Naas, Newbridge and Kildare town. The Curragh, with an estimated population of 7,000, was the largest urban area in the county.²⁶ The camp was substantial with accommodation for 4,488 army personnel or 72 per cent of the entire military population in the county.²⁷ With a population of 3,842, Naas was the county town and the principal market town in the county.²⁸ The local barracks was the main recruiting centre for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Newbridge, with a population of 3,400, had a cavalry barracks on one side of Main Street and shops and dwellings on the other. Almost the entire workforce of the town was employed either directly or indirectly by the army.²⁹ At nearby Kildare town, where a substantial Artillery Barracks was sited, the population was 2,639. The railway station in the town

²⁵ Census of Ireland 1911, Leinster province, Kildare; Dublin City, p. 32.

²⁶ Census of Ireland 1911, Leinster province, Kildare, District Electoral Division (DED) Ballysax East, Newbridge District, p. 36; Kilcullen District, p. 29. The census show the DED of Ballysax which includes the Curragh Camp had a population of 7,439. See also Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 343.

²⁷ Census of Ireland 1911, Kildare, p. 74.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid*.; *Irish Times* (hereafter *IT*), 24 Dec. 1921.

was the transport hub for the military in both the Curragh Camp and other local military barracks.³⁰

Of the non-garrison urban centres, Athy was the principal town in south Kildare with a population of 3,535. It was an important market town situated in a noted tillage area with several industries which included a number of mills and brickworks. Flour was produced at Ardreich Mill; M.J. Minch and Son, one of the largest producers of malt in the country, also operated from the town.³¹ In north Kildare, Maynooth, with a population of 886, was the largest town. Its two biggest employers were St Patrick's College, and the duke of Leinster's estate at Carton. There was also a medium-sized mill in the town.³² Nearby, Celbridge, with a population of 842, had all the trappings of a deserted industrial town.³³ Across the centre of the county, Monasterevin (population 732), and Rathangan (population 547), were market towns. Industries such as Cassidy's Distillery in Monasterevin and Hank's Mill in Rathangan, provided additional employment.³⁴ Kilcullen's proximity to the Curragh meant that it gained significant trade from the British army. Other market towns of note included Kilcock, Castledermot and Ballymore Eustace. Clane was an important village in north Kildare in which residents benefited in terms of employment and trade from the proximity of Clongowes Wood College, the Jesuit secondary boarding school. Leixlip, with a population of 585, was the closest County Kildare settlement to the capital. As a result, many of its residents worked in west Dublin.

At almost eighteen per cent, the Protestant population in Kildare in 1911 was sizeable.³⁵ By comparison, Dublin city had a Protestant population of seventeen per cent, while Wicklow, with twenty per cent, had the highest Protestant population outside Ulster.³⁶ Unsurprisingly, within Kildare the highest concentration of Protestants was recorded in the Curragh camp (62 per cent).³⁷

In 1846, the Church of Ireland diocese of Kildare was united with the archdiocese of Dublin and Glendalough. From that point onwards, the archbishop of Dublin had direct ecclesiastical authority over the entire county of Kildare. In 1912, there was a total of twelve Church of Ireland parishes in the county served by twelve

³⁰ Census of Ireland 1911, Kildare, p. 2; Mark McLoughlin, *Kildare Barracks* (Dublin, 2014), pp 1-142.

³¹ Census of Ireland 1911, Kildare, p. 2; Frank Taaffe, 'Eye on the past', *Kildare Nationalist*, 9 June 1995; 8 Aug. 1996.

³² *Thom's Directory 1913*, p. 1197; Mary Cullen, *Maynooth: a short historical guide* (Maynooth, 1979).

³³ *Thom's Directory 1913*, p. 1197; Tony Doohan, *History of Celbridge* (Celbridge, 2011), pp 137-9.

³⁴ *Thom's Directory 1913*, p. 1197; Con Costello, *Looking back: aspects of history, County Kildare* (Naas, 1988), pp 101, 121; Seamus Kelly, *A ramble in Rathangan* (Leixlip, 2005).

³⁵ Census of Ireland 1911, Kildare, pp vii, 74-5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Dublin City, p. viii; *Thom's Directory 1913*, p. 1289.

³⁷ Census of Ireland 1911, Kildare, p. 74.

rectors and two curates.³⁸ Joseph Peacocke, a native of Abbeyleix, County Laois, served as archbishop from his consecration in 1897 until his retirement on the grounds of ill-health in 1915. He showed a willingness to work with his Catholic counterpart, Archbishop William Walsh and in 1908, the two combined to act as mediators to resolve the carters' strike in Dublin. Although noted for his holiness, humility and pastoral care, as discussed below the home rule crisis in 1912 compelled Peacocke to engage in political matters.³⁹

County Kildare was divided between two Roman Catholic dioceses. The archdiocese of Dublin occupied much of the east and south of the county. The remaining area (about sixty per cent) belonged to the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin.⁴⁰ In 1912, twenty-one Catholic parishes in County Kildare were served by twenty-one parish priests and thirty-one curates. This did not include clergy in Catholic colleges such as Maynooth, Clongowes Wood and Newbridge or the Curragh Camp which was served by a chaplain and his assistant.⁴¹ In 1912, William J. Walsh was the Catholic archbishop of Dublin. A former president of Maynooth College, he was a declared nationalist.⁴² Patrick Foley, a native of Carlow and a former president of Carlow College, was bishop of Kildare and Leighlin from 1896 until 1926. He was particularly interested in educational matters and served for a time as a Commissioner for National Education.⁴³ A supporter of the IPP, Foley was on occasion consulted about parliamentary nominations within his diocese. For instance, in 1904 he approved the offer of north Kildare to Tom Kettle, who, in the event, declined and the nomination went to John O'Connor who was elected.⁴⁴

In 1912, County Kildare was served by a force of 176 members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in twenty-seven barracks.⁴⁵ The county inspector (CI) was based in Naas, and for administrative purposes the county was divided into three districts: Naas, Kildare and Athy – with a District Inspector in charge of each.⁴⁶ The number of barracks and policemen was smaller than in other counties with a similar population. In Sligo, for instance, there were 34 barracks and 216 policemen, a ratio

³⁸ *Irish Church Directory 1912-13*, pp 112-4.

³⁹ Georgina Clinton and Bridget Hourican, 'Peacocke, Joseph Ferguson' in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009) (hereafter *DIB*).

⁴⁰ Michael Comerford, *Collections relating to the dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin* (3 vols, Dublin, 1883), i, pp 71-3.

⁴¹ *Irish Catholic Directory 1913*, pp 182-4, 209-10. The breakdown of the figures for Catholic clergymen in County Kildare includes twelve parish priests and eighteen curates in the section of the county in the diocese of Kildare and nine parish priests and thirteen curates in the remaining county which is part of the archdiocese of Dublin.

⁴² Thomas Morrissey, 'Walsh, William Joseph', *DIB*.

⁴³ Bernard J. Canning, *Bishops of Ireland, 1870-1987* (Ballyshannon, 1987), pp 209-10.

⁴⁴ James McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the third home rule crisis* (Dublin, 2013), p. 54.

⁴⁵ *Thom's Directory 1913*, p. 1197; *Constabulary Gazette (RIC)*, 14 Feb. 1912.

⁴⁶ *Thom's Directory 1913*, p. 1200; Jim Herlihy, *Royal Irish Constabulary officers: a biographical dictionary and genealogical guide, 1816-1922* (Dublin, 2005), p. 355.

of 365 persons to one policeman.⁴⁷ In Kildare, the ratio was 378 persons to one policeman. Dundalk-born Kerry Supple was appointed CI in 1910 and remained in post until his retirement in 1921.⁴⁸ Supple was popular with his men in part at least because he was generous with leave.⁴⁹ His policing role in Kildare was not onerous as he presided over one of the most peaceful counties in the country.

In 1912, Kildare had a strong sense of county identity, although, in areas close to surrounding counties it was somewhat weaker. This was evident in districts of the north-east and south-east of the county where the population to some extent shared a similar identity with County Dublin and Wicklow respectively. However, this did not have an impact in subsequent events.

Agriculture was the county's dominant economic activity and was responsible for the direct employment of 11,656 or 17.5 per cent of the active population in 1911.⁵⁰ This was similar to Wicklow, but lower than the adjoining counties of Meath, Offaly, and Laois where agricultural employment engaged twenty-five per cent of the population.⁵¹ The most important livestock category in economic terms was cattle, followed by sheep and horses. Regarded as one of the leading equine counties in Ireland, there were 14,200 horses in Kildare.⁵² Although many neighbouring counties had a larger number of horses, the quality of the stock in Kildare was higher, with 2,300 animals used primarily for recreation purposes. Only County Cork, with 3,300 animals, recorded more horses of this type.⁵³ The area of land under crops was 105,600 acres. Not surprisingly, hay at 59,000 acres was the most common crop, followed by corn crops at 27,700 acres.⁵⁴ This agricultural land was divided among 9,810 holdings in 1912. Just over 35 per cent of this number were very small farms of between 1 and 15 acres; 20 per cent were between 15 and 50 acres. By Kildare standards, a holding of between 50 and 100 acres was regarded as the farm of a strong farmer. This category accounted for ten per cent of all holdings, while holdings of 100 to 200 acres accounted for 7.2 per cent. The proportion of very extensive farms of over 100 acres was larger in Kildare than in the neighbouring counties of Meath (5 per cent) and Offaly (4 per cent).⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Farry, *Sligo*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Kerry Supple (1862-1921) was CI for King's County in late 1909, see Herlihy, *Royal Irish Constabulary officers*, p. 295; *Kildare Observer* (hereafter *KO*), 20 Aug. 1921.

⁴⁹ *Constabulary Gazette* (RIC), 20 Jan. 1912.

⁵⁰ Census of Ireland 1911, Kildare, p. vi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49; Meath, p. 55; King's County, p. 44; Queen's County, p. 45; Wicklow, p. 47.

⁵² *Report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland on agricultural statistics of Ireland for the year ended 31 March 1913*, Cd. 6987, pp 57, 154-5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

The fact that approximately two-thirds of the farmers in Kildare had purchased their holdings by 1912 suggests the successful implementation of both the Wyndham Land Act of 1903 and the Birrell Land Act of 1909. The Wyndham Land Act ushered in a social revolution which saw substantial numbers of tenants obtain freehold status and, in due course they became a numerous, prosperous and powerful landowning class. In 1912, 65.5 per cent of occupiers were freeholders, while 34.5 per cent remained as tenants. Kildare was 12 per cent above the Leinster average of 53.55 per cent of freeholders.⁵⁶ The Wyndham Act provided generous terms for landlords to sell their estates and for tenants to purchase. This benefited richer tenants in the wealthier eastern parts of Ireland such as County Kildare.⁵⁷ One of the earliest and largest estates to be sold under the Wyndham Act was the Leinster estate, the home of the duke of Leinster – Ireland’s leading peer and head of the FitzGerald family. The estate comprised approximately 45,000 acres and was mainly situated around Carton in Maynooth in the north of the county and Athy in south Kildare.⁵⁸ The sale in 1903 was not without considerable controversy. Many tenants in the Castledermot area of south Kildare complained firstly that the terms favoured the landlord over the tenant, and, secondly, that they were set by north Kildare men, who were generally graziers with convenient access to the Dublin market.⁵⁹ The protests fell on deaf ears. The sale set a precedent for the price of land under the act which was imitated not only in Kildare but nationally.⁶⁰ Many leading landowners in Kildare followed the example of the Leinster estate and negotiated terms with their tenants under the Wyndham Act. By 1906, many of the great estates in County Kildare were reduced to the core demesne land surrounding their residences.

In 1912 Kildare was a prosperous county. The quality of the housing stock in the county was comparatively good. There were 12,697 inhabited houses, occupied by an average of 4.7 persons per household. The statistics reveal that 46.4 per cent of the population lived in larger dwellings of three and four rooms.⁶¹ At 13,023, the number of individual families was only marginally higher than the total number of dwellings. Fortunately, the numbers in overcrowded conditions were relatively small: 4.6 per cent of families occupied one room and 25 per cent occupied two rooms. Nor were the numbers receiving poor relief excessive, with 1,648 (one in every 40)

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp 46, 56. The highest proportion of freeholders was in Longford (83 per cent) and the lowest was in Carlow (38 per cent).

⁵⁷ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1973), pp 18-19; Terence Dooley, *The decline and fall of the dukes of Leinster, 1872-1948* (Dublin, 2014), pp 122-9.

⁵⁸ Patrick, J. Cosgrave, ‘The sale of the Leinster estate under the Wyndham Land Act, 1903’, *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society* (hereafter JKAS), 20:1 (2008-09), 9.

⁵⁹ *Nationalist and Leinster Times* (hereafter NLT), 17 Oct. 1913; Paul Bew, *Conflict and conciliation in Ireland, 1890-1910: Parnellites and radical agrarians* (Oxford, 1987), pp 134-5.

⁶⁰ *Freeman’s Journal* (hereafter FJ), 25 Nov. 1903; 27 Nov. 1903; Cosgrave, ‘The sale of the Leinster estate’, 19 -20.

⁶¹ Census of Ireland 1911, Kildare, p. vi.

receiving assistance under the poor law system. Significantly, there was a high literacy rate of 93.8 per cent in Kildare, with figures showing illiteracy having been reduced by 4.7 per cent over a twenty-year period since 1891.

In 1912 there were 25,887 army personnel of all ranks in Ireland of which more than one-fifth (5,993 including 230 commissioned officers) were stationed in County Kildare. The vast majority of 4,472 were stationed in the Curragh Camp, the largest military camp in Ireland. The remainder were stationed at Newbridge (810), Kildare town (566), and Naas (145). As the most militarized county in the country, army numbers in Kildare exceeded the Dublin figure of 5,346 by more than 650.⁶²

With such large numbers of military personnel, it is hardly surprising that the British army was the largest employer. This meant that a substantial percentage of the population in central Kildare was directly dependent on the British army for their livelihood. Virtually every class and several occupations benefited – graziers, dairy farmers, market gardeners, carters, drivers, and labourers. Provision for army horses alone (which numbered 2,124 in 1912) had significant economic ramifications in terms of stabling, handling and forage.⁶³ At full capacity, 2,830 army horses could be stabled.⁶⁴ Sales of horses held in the camp each summer were a particularly lucrative event for merchants, huntsmen, hotel owners, jarveys, and dealers. In 1911, for example, 150 horses were offered for sale, of which approximately 100 were sold without reserve.⁶⁵

The economic impact of the British army was significant. Newbridge prospered on its military contracts. Few townspeople were directly employed in the barracks. Only carters who delivered supplies, farmers who removed manure, or washerwomen who worked in the laundry were regularly admitted within its confines. However, on occasions other work such as cleaning chimneys, lighting lamps or washing the bed linen was carried out by local people.⁶⁶ Newbridge was also the retail hub for the military. The variety of businesses reflected the wide-ranging requirements of the garrison with several high-class grocers, confectioners, drapers, laundries, pawn-brokers and a forage contractor located in the vicinity. Another means of measuring the impact of the army on local trade is to examine the number of pages of advertisements in *Porter's Directory*. Newbridge accounted for seventeen

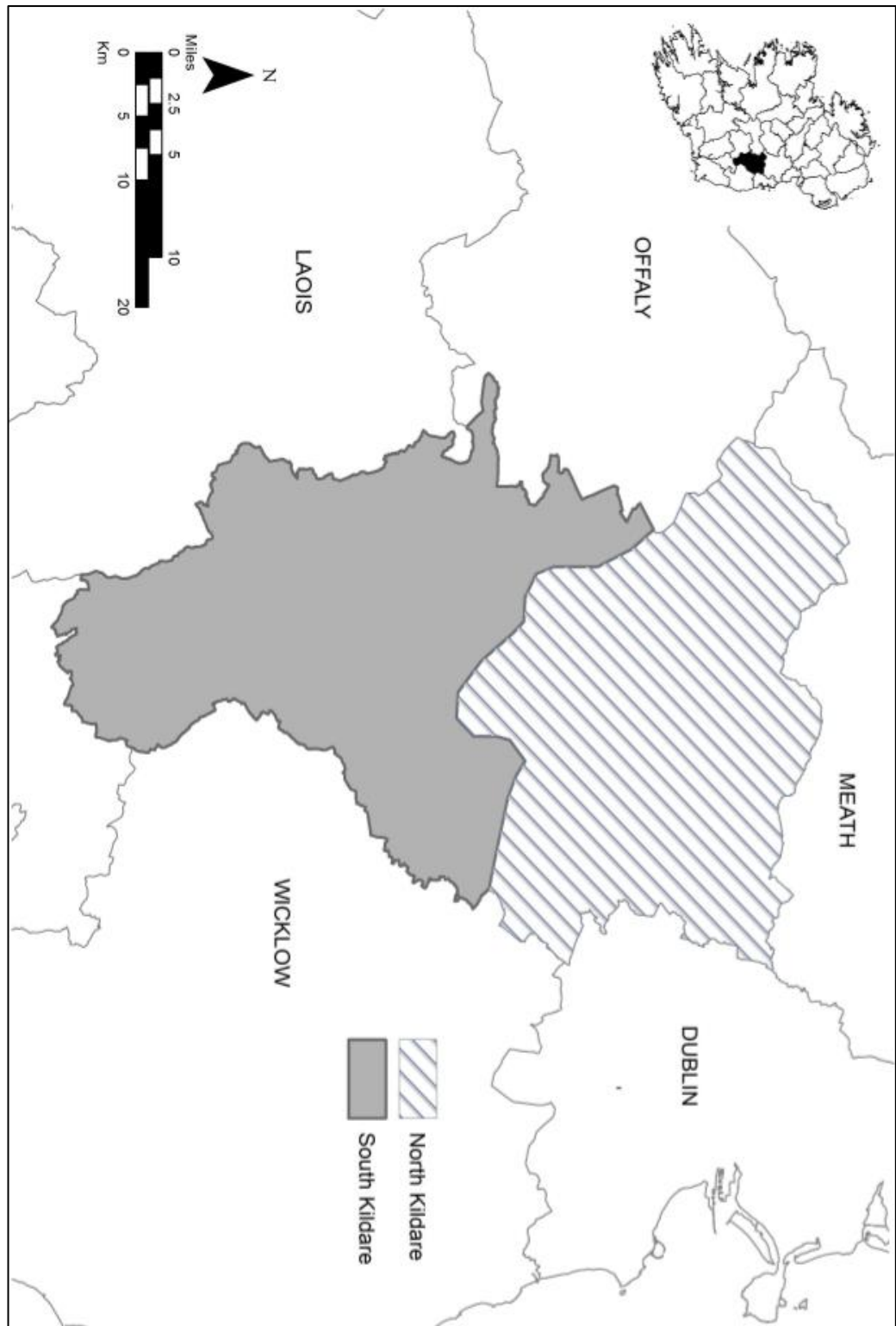
⁶² 'General monthly return of the regimental strength of the British army, January 1912', pp 91-6 (TNA, WO 73/94).

⁶³ Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁴ Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 254.

⁶⁵ *IT*, 7 June 1911.

⁶⁶ Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 260.



Map 2: Parliamentary constituencies in 1910 and 1918

pages, Kildare town nine, and Kilcullen six. This compares to fifteen pages for Naas, the county town.⁶⁷

Shops within the Curragh Camp itself also provided significant employment. Branches of Eason newsagents, Todd Burns' drapers and McCabes' fishmongers, as well as those of Llewellyn coal merchants, Richard O'Mahony, builder, and H.W. Church cycle agent were all located within the barracks. There was also a photographer, jeweller and motor engineer, and the Army and Navy Co-operative Stores. The military presence explains the prevalence of the large number of hotels in the Curragh area. These included the Prince of Wales and the Crown Hotels in Newbridge; the Railway and the Leinster Arms Hotels in Kildare town; the King's Arms in Kilcullen; Stand House Hotel at the Curragh race course; and John Mallick's Hotel in Athgarvan on the perimeter of the Curragh Camp.⁶⁸ The spending (and drinking) power of the army was reflected by the fact that there were more than fifty public houses within a three-mile radius of the Curragh camp. Surviving trade ledgers in the Guinness archives reveal an extensive porter trade with the garrison towns in Kildare.⁶⁹ Towns not adjacent to the military camps were indirectly dependent on the army for business. Beef production, for instance, which was the most important agricultural activity in the country, was heavily dependent on buyers purchasing for the army and other British markets.⁷⁰ Kildare was economically more reliant on the War Office than any other Irish county.

As indicated in map 2, the county was divided into two single seat parliamentary constituencies, Kildare North (with 4,740 electors) and Kildare South (4,955 electors).⁷¹ In 1912, the sitting MP for South Kildare was Denis Kilbride who occupied the seat from 1903 until 1918. He had a colourful career as an agrarian campaigner during the Land War and was later jailed for his part in the Plan of Campaign.⁷² In North Kildare, John O'Connor, a barrister, was MP from 1905 until 1918. He too, had an interesting career. A Fenian and arms importer during his youth, O'Connor was jailed at least five times.⁷³ In March 1905, John Redmond became aware of divorce proceedings in London involving O'Connor and his estranged wife. Fearing a damaging divorce scandal comparable to the Parnell episode, the IPP leader urged O'Connor to settle the case by a deed of separation or else his resignation

⁶⁷ Frank Porter, *Porter's post office guide and directory for the counties of Carlow and Kildare, 1910* (Dublin, 1910).

⁶⁸ Con Costello, *Kildare: saints, soldiers and horses* (Naas, 1991), p. 142.

⁶⁹ Trade analysis ledgers, 1900-1920 (Guinness Archive, Dublin, GOB/ PK04/0002; GOB/ PK04/0003).

⁷⁰ Liam Clare, 'The rise and demise of the Dublin cattle market, 1863-1973' in Denis Cronin, Jim Gilligan & Karina Holton (eds), *Irish fairs and markets: studies in local history* (Dublin, 2001), p. 193.

⁷¹ *Thom's Directory 1914*, p. 1197.

⁷² Adam Pole, 'Kilbride, Denis', *DIB*.

⁷³ Georgina Clinton and Owen McGee, 'O'Connor, John', *DIB*.

would be demanded.⁷⁴ O'Connor took Redmond's advice and no details of the affair came to light. Indeed his last will and testament in 1928 made no reference to his marital status.⁷⁵ In 1908, he survived allegations of corruption following acceptance of judicial office in England and Wales.⁷⁶

The Local Government Act of 1898 transferred the administrative powers and duties of the grand juries to democratically elected local councils. In Kildare, the measure established Kildare County Council, two urban district councils (UDCs) at Naas and Athy, and a town commission at Newbridge. Five rural district councils (RDCs) – Athy No. 1, Baltinglass No. 3, Celbridge No. 1, Edenderry No. 2, and Naas No. 1 were also established.⁷⁷ Kildare County Council, which was the upper tier of the new system, was responsible for road maintenance, water supply, sanitation, housing courthouses, coroners, agricultural and technical instruction committees, asylum committee and raising funds for the subsidiary RDCs.⁷⁸ The UDCs came into operation in 1900 with responsibility for housing, water and sewage, markets and fairs, lanes and lighting within the town bounds. Newbridge Town Commission had few functions, although its role in housing was significant. The various poor law unions which had been established in 1838 and administered by a Board of Guardians, were not affected and continued to oversee welfare assistance, orphans' and children's welfare and workhouses which, by the turn of the century, were increasingly functioning as hospitals. As map 3 indicates, the functional responsibilities of local government traversed county boundaries and in this way, for example, Celbridge RDC embraced part of County Dublin and also part of County Meath.

The Local Government Act removed the property qualifications that had existed for elections to the poor law unions throughout the nineteenth century. Boards of Guardians also became more democratic with RDC and UDC members eligible to serve as members. However, the county council and UDC vote was not a perfect franchise. Women could not vote unless they were heads of households and were over thirty years of age. County council elections were held every three years and decided by simple majorities in single-seat constituencies. The majority of those elected were nationalist which resulted in a substantial loss of power for unionists. Nationalist councillors were strong supporters of the IPP and were mainly returned

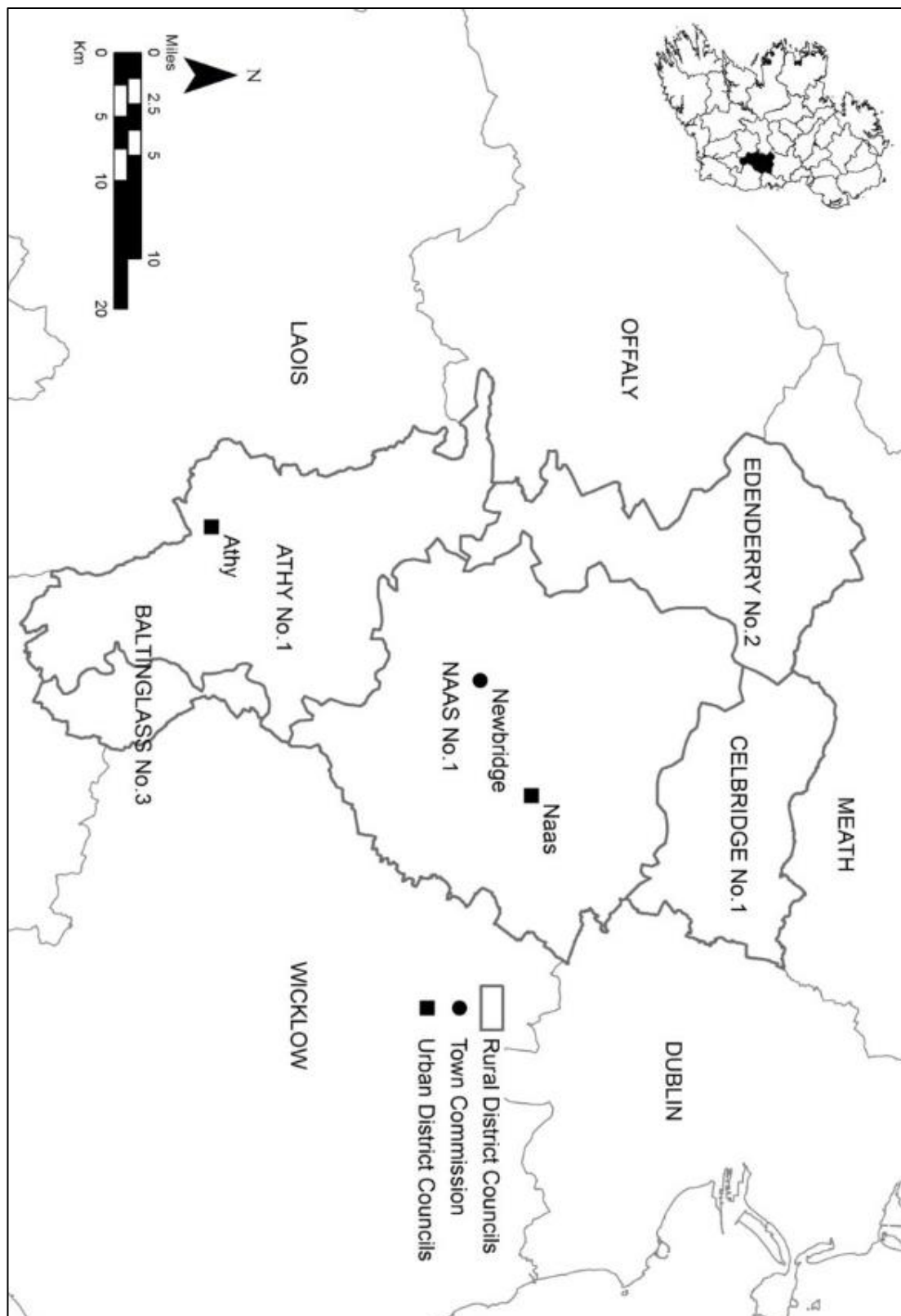
⁷⁴ Barry O'Brien to John Redmond, 3 Mar. 1905 (NLI, John Redmond papers, MS 15,214/3).

⁷⁵ *The Times*, 29 Oct. 1928, indicated that O'Connor was unmarried; *KO*, 12 Jan. 1929.

⁷⁶ *Irish People*, 13 June 1908, 21 Nov. 1908; *KO*, 5 Sept. 1908; McConnel, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, pp 71-2.

⁷⁷ Liam Kenny, *Kildare County Council: 1899-1999: first election and first meeting* (Naas, 2001).

⁷⁸ John J. Clancy, *A handbook of local government in Ireland* (Dublin, 1899), pp 12-40; Brian Donnelly, 'Local government in Kildare, 1920-70' in Nolan & McGrath (eds), *Kildare*, pp 673-4.



Map 3: Local government divisions

unopposed. However, when elections were held, they could be vigorously contested even by opposing candidates claiming allegiance to the IPP.⁷⁹

During its first two decades, Kildare County Council was dominated by prominent nationalists such as Stephen Brown, a Naas solicitor, and Matthew Minch, a prosperous maltster from Athy and MP from 1892 to 1903.⁸⁰ In 1912 Minch was chairman of the county council, with George Wolfe, a Protestant and member of the landed gentry, as vice-chairman.⁸¹ At the first election in 1899, three of the twenty-one county councillors returned were unionist; the remainder were allied to the IPP. The success of the unionists was not due to the fact that their electoral area had a unionist majority, but to their widespread appeal to the electorate irrespective of political stance. The successful unionist councillors were popular landowners and employers. Generally, three unionists were returned until the death of Ambrose More O'Ferrall in 1911.⁸² In 1912, the unionist councillors were Lord Frederick FitzGerald, uncle of the duke of Leinster, and W. G. Dease, a land agent.⁸³ Of the twenty-eight members of the county council, five members were *ex-officio* and two were co-opted.

Despite Kildare's proximity to Dublin there were no organized trade unions, or 'combinations' to use CI Supple's term, in 1912 although, as will be seen in the next chapter this changed in 1913.⁸⁴ Labour had no representation on the county council or UDCs. This was not unusual and pertained in the rural counties adjacent to Kildare.⁸⁵

The largest political organization in the county in 1912 was the United Irish League (UIL), the local arm of the IPP. It was formed in 1898 by the nationalist MP, William O'Brien, for the purpose of reallocating ranch land. The position of the UIL in Kildare was weaker than counties such as Longford where it remained actively involved in agrarian activity between 1906 and 1911.⁸⁶ In March 1912, only eight branches were recorded in Kildare with a combined membership of 411 – the second lowest in the entire country. County Dublin had the same number of branches but a smaller membership of 344. A reduction in UIL strength was prevalent in many

⁷⁹ See Thomas Nelson, 'Kildare County Council and perceptions of the past' in Terence Dooley (ed.), *Ireland's polemical past: views of Irish history in honour of R.V. Comerford* (Dublin, 2010), pp 176-91.

⁸⁰ Donnelly, 'Local government in Kildare', p. 673.

⁸¹ Laurence William White, 'Wolfe, George', *DIB*. George Wolfe (1860 – 1941) was a member of an old Anglo-Irish gentry family who supported home rule. From 1899 to 1920, he served as a nationalist councillor on Kildare County Council and between 1923 and 1931 served as a TD for the county.

⁸² Thomas P. Nelson, *Through peace and war: Kildare County Council in the years of revolution, 1899-1926* (Maynooth, 2015), pp 46-8.

⁸³ *KO*, 17 June 1911; *Thom's Directory 1913*, p. 1200.

⁸⁴ *CI Kildare*, Jan 1912 (TNA, CO 904/86).

⁸⁵ Donnelly, 'Local government in Kildare', p. 662.

⁸⁶ Coleman, *County Longford*, pp 13-15.

counties in the immediate pre-war years because with little serious land agitation or elections to fight there was little for branches to do.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the organization in midland counties was far from insignificant. The weakness of the UIL in Kildare was the product of the Wyndham Land Act, which had gone a long way towards settling the land issue, and the absence of serious agrarian agitation.

Home rule was the dominant political issue in Ireland and in Kildare in 1912. The power of the veto of the House of Lords was long seen as a barrier against home rule. At a UIL meeting in Naas in December 1910, John O'Connor MP claimed that home rule would follow the abolition of the House of Lords veto.⁸⁸ The budgetary crisis of 1909 led the Liberal government, backed by the IPP, to implement the Parliament Act (1911) which effectively removed the right of the House of Lords to veto money bills completely, and replaced a right of veto over other public bills with a maximum delay of two years.⁸⁹ This transformed the prospects for home rule. The price of the IPP's support was the introduction of a home rule bill in the House of Commons in April 1912. The reaction in Kildare was predictable. Nationalists gave unquestioning support to the IPP while unionists vigorously opposed the bill. In June 1912, Kildare County Council approved the measure 'so dear to the heart of every Irish nationalist' as 'an honest attempt to settle the longstanding quarrel between this country and Great Britain'.⁹⁰ By contrast, two months later, the unionists of Kildare declared their 'unabated attachment to the legislated union between Great Britain and Ireland' and stressed their 'fixed determination ... to resist home rule in whatever shape it may be presented'.⁹¹ Unionist opposition in Ulster culminated in the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant on 28 September 1912. At least two women living in the Curragh signed the declaration, the female version of the Covenant.⁹²

Although home rule was the burning political issue, CI Supple's reports curiously claimed there was little interest in County Kildare.⁹³ Local newspapers, however, gave a different picture, and reported lively home rule debates at county council and UDC level, and at UIL meetings.⁹⁴ Bizarrely, Supple also failed to mention the attendance of practically the entire elected membership of Kildare County Council and several chairmen of UDCs at a massive home rule demonstration in

⁸⁷ Michael Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party: provincial Ireland, 1910-1916* (Oxford, 2005), pp 44-8.

⁸⁸ *KO*, 10 Dec. 1910.

⁸⁹ Alan O'Day, *Irish home rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester, 1998), pp 247-50; Alvin Jackson, *Home rule: an Irish history, 1800-2000* (London, 2003), pp 107-9.

⁹⁰ Minutes, 3 June 1912 (Kildare County Archives (hereafter KCoA), County Council meetings).

⁹¹ *KO*, 31 Aug. 1912.

⁹² These were Helen and Marie Gordon <http://apps.proni.gov.uk/ulstercovenant/SearchResults.aspx> (accessed 16 Dec. 2015).

⁹³ For example, CI Kildare, Feb. 1912 (TNA, CO 904/86).

⁹⁴ *KO*, 6 Jan. 1912; *Leinster Leader* (hereafter *LL*), 22 June 1912.

Dublin on 31 March 1912.⁹⁵ At a local level support was demonstrated by subscription to a home rule fund. In one parish in Kildare, 150 named individuals contributed an impressive £77 4s. 6d.⁹⁶ Supple's personal anti-home rule stance explains the selectivity of his monthly reports. Similarly, the CI omitted to report on the largest meeting of advanced nationalists in the county in 1912 at Bodenstown in June. It was attended by Countess Markievicz, John MacBride, Cathal Brugha and Thomas Clarke who presided, with the key-note speech delivered by Bulmer Hobson.⁹⁷

Supple monitored the extension into Kildare in 1912 of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). Between March and October six branches had been formed in the county.⁹⁸ The AOH in Ireland, which was closely aligned with the IPP, qualified for administering the benefits under the National Insurance Act of 1911 act and, as a result of their participation, the movement spread throughout Ireland.⁹⁹ Although the Hibernians were overtly sectarian nationally, in Kildare they were controlled by the UIL which maintained good relations with Protestants and were not normally involved in sectarian activity. The largely unionist *Kildare Observer* was not impressed by the new movement and maintained that it merely linked bigotry with insurance.¹⁰⁰ Although concerns about civil and religious liberties were not as prevalent in the south as in Ulster, there was, notwithstanding the AOH, genuine concern among unionists in Kildare. This may have been heightened by the substantial number of Catholic clergy who openly supported local branches of the UIL and the IPP in Kildare. Two of the eleven nomination papers proposing the outgoing MP John O'Connor for re-election in December 1910 were signed by parish priests.¹⁰¹ Although not actively engaged in politics, Bishop Foley supported the nationalist cause and, in February 1912, contributed five guineas to the home rule fund.¹⁰² John O'Connor vigorously refuted accusations that home rule would be Rome rule and he also denied claims that home rule did not enjoy widespread support.¹⁰³

Although numerically small, unionists in Kildare were determined to organize resistance to home rule lest it led to a complete severance of the links with England,

⁹⁵ *KO*, 6 Apr. 1912.

⁹⁶ *LL*, 22 June 1912.

⁹⁷ *LL*, 29 June 1912; C.J. Woods, *Bodenstown revisited* (Dublin, 2018), p. 77.

⁹⁸ CI Kildare, Mar. 1912 (TNA, CO 904/86); Oct. 1912 (TNA, CO 904/88).

⁹⁹ A. C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and nationalist Ireland in the era of Joseph Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford, 2008), pp 96, 131-3.

¹⁰⁰ *KO*, 6 Apr. 1912.

¹⁰¹ *KO*, 10 Dec. 1910.

¹⁰² *LL*, 27 Apr. 1912.

¹⁰³ *KO*, 6 Jan. 1912; on fears of Rome rule, see Daithí Ó Corráin, 'Resigned to take the bill with its defects: the Catholic Church and the third home rule crisis 1912-14' in Gabriel Doherty (ed.), *The home rule crisis 1912-14* (Cork, 2014), pp 189-97.

papal domination or force the mass migration of the Anglo-Irish.¹⁰⁴ Home rule deepened the pre-existing political division between the landowning class, which was firmly unionist, and the overwhelmingly nationalist majority. Political sensitivities were exposed in 1908 when a reception for the duke of Leinster on his coming of age was abandoned by the people of Maynooth when it became known that he had donated £300 to the Unionist Association of Ireland.¹⁰⁵ Opposition to home rule in Kildare was led by Lord Mayo of Palmerstown House, Kill, a prominent unionist in the House of Lords and a future Irish Free State senator whose unionist activities made him unpopular in the county.¹⁰⁶

In early 1912 two branches of the Women's Unionist Association (WUA) were established in Kildare, one in each parliamentary constituency. The South Kildare branch, presided over by Lady Alice Borrowes, met in Barretstown Castle close to Ballymore-Eustace on 2 February 1912, where speeches opposing home rule were given by a number of unionists including, Lord Mayo.¹⁰⁷ Lady Mayo was president of the North Kildare branch which held its first (drawing-room) meeting later in February in Killadoon House, close to Celbridge. A letter from Lady Londonderry, the wife of a former lord lieutenant, and president of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council, was read which urged loyalist women all over Ireland to oppose home rule.¹⁰⁸ The meeting generated controversy when Rev. Lionel Fletcher, rector of Straffan, engaged in a personal attack on the pope. This rankled with local nationalists. Two weeks later, a UIL meeting in Staplestown passed a resolution criticising Fletcher's remarks and accusing him of 'stirring up religious animosity in the country.'¹⁰⁹ The impressive Kildare turnout at the home rule rally in Dublin at the end of March might also have been a riposte.

This may have influenced other Church of Ireland clergymen in Kildare to maintain a discrete silence on the home rule issue with no public statements appearing in local newspapers. The Church of Ireland bishops were less circumspect, however. At a special Church of Ireland synod in Dublin on 16 April 1912, Archbishop Peacocke condemned home rule. He maintained that 'there are occasions when the church ought not shrink from making a pronouncement of a political character when it concerns the welfare of the whole community from which she is part'.¹¹⁰ He

¹⁰⁴ KO, 2 Mar. 1912.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 4 Apr. 1908.

¹⁰⁶ Patrick Maume, 'Bourke, Dermot Robert Wyndham', *DIB*; Con Costello, *A class apart: the gentry families of County Kildare* (Dublin, 2004), pp 74-6.

¹⁰⁷ KO, 10 Feb. 1912.

¹⁰⁸ KO, 2 Mar. 1912; Rachel E. Finley-Bowman, 'An ideal unionist: the political career of Marchioness Londonderry, 1911-1919', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4 (2003), 18; Diane Urquhart, *The ladies of Londonderry: women and political patronage, 1800-1959* (London, 2007), pp 102-105.

¹⁰⁹ KO, 16 Mar. 1912.

¹¹⁰ 'The voice of the Church of Ireland on Home Rule: Resolutions of the General Synod, special meeting 16th Apr. 1912' (Dublin, 1912), p. 18, online,

adopted a cautious approach towards more militant anti-home rule opposition and, in September 1912, was wary of associating the Church of Ireland with the signing of the Ulster covenant in case the AOH and UIL might raise hostilities against the church outside Ulster.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, within days, he devised a special form of prayer against home rule which was read at Sunday services in all parishes of the Southern Province of the Church of Ireland.¹¹² The following year, during the Dublin Diocesan Synod, he went further and spoke with unusual passion calling the home rule bill a menace to religion and civil liberties.¹¹³

By autumn 1912 practically all of the landed gentry in Kildare actively supported organized opposition to home rule. This was illustrated by the attendance at an anti-home rule meeting organized by Lord Mayo at his residence on 24 August 1912. The local press reported the presence of the Connollys of Castletown, the Bartons of Straffan, the Aylmers of Kerdiffstown, the Clements from Killadoon, the Wogan Brownes from Keredern and Baron de Robeck of Gowran Grange. According to Mayo, the purpose of the meeting was to protest against the home rule bill and to show solidarity with unionists in other counties.¹¹⁴

Home rule overshadowed all other political campaigns of the era, including the suffrage question. In April 1913 the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) held a public meeting in Naas town hall which was attended by 250 people, one third of whom were women. It was addressed by founder members Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Marguerite Palmer who were among the Dublin suffragettes imprisoned the previous year. Sheehy-Skeffington asserted that women were discriminated against in the way that Catholics had been under the penal laws, and she pointed out that the same arguments were used against Catholic emancipation as were now being used against the emancipation of women. The *Kildare Observer* suggested that the speakers impressed many with their intellect and moderate language.¹¹⁵ Overall, the meeting was a success. It highlighted the campaign for women's political rights and countered the negative publicity directed at the movement by the press. It should also be mentioned that the Ulster Women's Unionist Council supported female suffrage.

As a garrison county it was not surprising that advanced nationalism made little headway in Kildare. The memory of Theobald Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward FitzGerald, who had Kildare connections, was a source of inspiration to advanced

digital.slv.vic.gov.au/dtl_publish/pdf/marc/11/2703855.html, [accessed 11 Feb. 2015]; Andrew Scholes, *The Church of Ireland and the third home rule bill* (Dublin, 2010), pp 32-3.

¹¹¹ R.B. McDowell, *The Church of Ireland, 1869-1969* (London, 1975), p. 104.

¹¹² *IT*, 7 Oct. 1912; Scholes, *Church of Ireland*, p. 44.

¹¹³ *IT*, 2, 22 Oct 1913; Clinton and Hourican, 'Peacocke, Joseph Ferguson', *DIB*.

¹¹⁴ *KO*, 31 Aug. 1912.

¹¹⁵ *KO*, 19 Apr. 1913; Margaret Ward, *Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington: a life* (Dublin, 1997).

nationalists in Kildare in the early twentieth century.¹¹⁶ According to Christopher Woods, Tone's grave at Bodenstown, had become a place of pilgrimage for nationalists of every viewpoint and eventually commemoration of Irish independence.¹¹⁷ In June 1913 Patrick Pearse described the site as the holiest place in Ireland.¹¹⁸ John Devoy, leader of Clan na Gael in the USA, was born at Kill and was another source of inspiration. Maynooth man, Patrick Colgan, recalled his surprise when reading the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) newspaper *Irish Freedom* in 1911 to discover that Devoy was a Kildare man. That year, Colgan was part of a group which opposed the visit of King George V to Maynooth College; he subsequently took part in the 1916 Rising and War of Independence.¹¹⁹

Advanced nationalist activity increased in north Kildare in 1912 when Seán O'Connor, a Gaelic League organizer in County Kildare, began to develop the IRB.¹²⁰ Michael O'Kelly, who also arrived in Kildare in 1912 as editor of the *Leinster Leader* newspaper, was another member of the IRB. O'Kelly had previously met O'Connor in nationalist circles in Limerick. His surprise at O'Connor's efforts to promote the IRB was captured in his claim that 'he might as well attempt such organising work in Yorkshire or any other English county'.¹²¹ Kildare was not a happy hunting ground for Sinn Féin (SF) in the early years of its existence, and the organization, despite not having a republican agenda, made no impact in the county. The first branch did not emerge until early 1917.¹²²

Interest in cultural nationalism was evident in Kildare from the beginning of the twentieth century. Although Fr Eugene O'Growney, professor of Irish at Maynooth, was involved in the formation of the Gaelic League, it made slow progress in the county. It was not until 1902 that the Irish language was first used in the *Leinster Leader*. The first branches of the League were formed in Naas, Maynooth and Newbridge in 1901, and by 1913, eighteen branches had been established. In all but three branches the local parish priest or curate served as president.¹²³ The League generated a greater sense of Irish identity. A significant factor for its popularity was the cross-gender appeal and social dimension of the movement. In the winter, language and dancing classes were usually held twice weekly with festivals in the summer promoting Irish dancing, singing and recitations organised.¹²⁴

¹¹⁶ Dooley, *Dukes of Leinster*, pp 119, 197.

¹¹⁷ Woods, *Bodenstown*, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹¹⁹ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 4).

¹²⁰ Thomas Harris (BMH WS 320, pp 1-2); on the IRB, see Matthew Kelly, *The Fenian ideal and Irish nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp 171-204.

¹²¹ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, pp 2-3).

¹²² *LL*, 21 Apr. 1917.

¹²³ Domhnall Mac Carthaigh, 'A glance at the Irish language in Co. Kildare', *Leinster Leader*, centenary issue 1980.

¹²⁴ *LL*, 11 Oct. 1913; 12 Jan. 1918.

Two controversies involving the League had Kildare links. In 1906, Domhnall Ua Buachalla, to the fore in establishing the Maynooth branch, became embroiled in legal proceedings in the High Court over the use of Irish on his cart. The case was defended by Patrick Pearse, but the conviction was upheld.¹²⁵ A close friendship subsequently developed between Pearse and Ua Buachalla.¹²⁶ Traders such as Ua Buachalla suffered commercially for their stance on the Irish language. Some of his customers objected to Irish signage and billheads. The objectors were mainly retired army residents, and many of the strong unionist community in the Maynooth area withdrew their custom from his business.¹²⁷ Another to gain notoriety was Rev. Michael O’Hickey, professor of Irish at Maynooth College from 1896 and 1909.¹²⁸ He served as vice-president of the Gaelic League from 1899 to 1903, but is best remembered for his involvement in the agitation in 1908-9 to make Irish compulsory in the National University of Ireland matriculation examination. During the controversy, he publicly attacked Cardinal Logue and other members of the hierarchy, and was dismissed by Daniel Mannix, president of Maynooth College in 1909. O’Hickey appealed his dismissal to the Vatican, but was unsuccessful.¹²⁹

Kildare embraced the revival of Gaelic games following the establishment of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884. Kildare enjoyed a golden age on the field during the first decade of the twentieth century, reaching the All-Ireland football final of 1903 (played in 1905). The connection between the GAA and nationalism received a massive boost in 1907 when Kildare won its first All-Ireland (the 1905 event which was played in 1907). The victory was celebrated in every town and village in the county. However, sport and politics were never too far apart. Jack Fitzgerald, one of the players from the All-Ireland winning team got into difficulties with the authorities when he asserted that ‘GAA members ... would possibly do more for Ireland than kick a football or shake a hurley should the opportunity offer’.¹³⁰ By 1913 he was serving as president of Kildare County Board.¹³¹ Mike Cronin has observed that early in the first decade of the twentieth-century the GAA had fulfilled

¹²⁵ Seán Ó Conaill, ‘The Irish language and the Irish legal system - 1922 to present’ (PhD Cardiff University, 2013), p. 34; *KO*, 17 Feb. 1906; Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: the triumph of failure* (London, 1979), pp 79-81; Augusteijn, *Patrick Pearse*, pp 65-6.

¹²⁶ Adhamhnán Ó Súilleabháin, *Domhnall Ua Buachalla: rebellious nationalist, reclusive governor* (Dublin, 2015), pp 29-35.

¹²⁷ John Drennan, *Cannon balls and croziers* (Maynooth, 1994), p. 103.

¹²⁸ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 2); Patrick Maume, O’Hickey, ‘Michael (Ó Hiceadha Micheál)’, *DIB*.

¹²⁹ Kevin Collins, *Catholic churchmen and the Celtic revival in Ireland, 1848-1916* (Dublin, 2002), pp 52-5; Sean O’Casey, *Drums under the windows, the third volume of O’Casey’s memoirs* (New York, 1950).

¹³⁰ Eoghan Corry, *Kildare GAA: a centenary of history* (Clane, 1984), pp 74-7, 88-90, 95-111.

¹³¹ *LL*, 9 Aug. 1913. Fitzgerald was arrested in 1916 and 1920. He was a prominent Sinn Féin organizer in 1917 and a county councillor from 1920, see *LL*, 11 Feb. 1950.

its mission to revive the native games of Ireland and to awaken national spirit.¹³² This also applied to Kildare, where the movement created an awareness of native Irish games and a sense of Irishness among a substantial portion of the population. It adopted the same method of branch organization as the Irish National League, and linked local parochialism to a new nationalism in the county. A greater section of the public from all social backgrounds, and particularly the youth, became involved.

The local press played a key role in shaping public opinion in Kildare. The largely unionist *Kildare Observer* was established in 1879, and the nationalist *Leinster Leader* in 1880. In 1912, Seumas O’Kelly was succeeded as editor of the *Leinster Leader* by his brother, Michael O’Kelly, who was a more militant nationalist.¹³³ Although the *Kildare Observer* was a unionist newspaper, nationalist opinion was extensively covered. Editorials were usually of establishment tone. With two other local nationalist newspapers in circulation in the county – the *Meath Chronicle* in the north and the *Carlow Nationalist* in the south – Kildare readers had an ample choice of local newspapers.

In many respects, Kildare in 1912 was an unusual county and was not representative of the country at large. It was one of the best known and travelled counties as communications from Dublin to the west and south passed through Kildare. From the perspective of the RIC, it was a model county with a largely law-abiding population. The agricultural community prospered due to the military presence which in effect constituted a large consumer population strategically located in the centre of the county. The towns in this area, particularly in the Curragh region, were also different to most towns in other counties due to the trade and employment generated by the army. The predominant political opinion in the county was moderate nationalism. However, by 1912 more advanced nationalist impulses were beginning to surface, assisted by the influence of cultural nationalism. Clearly, among nationalists there was a high level of support for the third home rule bill. The measure began to polarize politics in the county from early 1912, with the dominant IPP and their supporters on one side, and the local unionist community, which was predominantly but not completely Protestant, on the other side. Kildare’s garrison status and the general approval of and support for the British military presence made the county something of an outlier often deemed less nationalist than other counties in the south of Ireland.

¹³² Mike Cronin, William Murphy, Paul Rouse (eds), *The Gaelic Athletic Association, 1884-2009* (Dublin, 2009), p. 64.

¹³³ Michael O’Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, pp 48-56); Liam Kenny, ‘Leader editor termed a gentle giant’.

2: Redmondism and Home Rule, 1913-14

The home rule crisis of 1912-14 was one of the most intense and polarizing political conflicts in Ireland in modern times. Although 1913 saw continued low key support for home rule by Kildare nationalists and largely refined opposition by local unionists, the following year was characterized by a succession of dramatic developments as Ireland moved, seemingly closer, towards civil war. Kildare was central to one of the most serious episodes when, in March 1914, the Curragh incident brought the loyalty of the army into question. This had significant consequences in Kildare, the most garrisoned county in the country. Until the outbreak of the First World War in August, the summer of 1914 was one of the most politicized periods in the history of the county due to the development of paramilitary politics. This was belatedly embraced by nationalists of all ages and genders in Kildare. Home rule, it should be noted, was not the only issue of note in this period. Kildare was not immune from the industrial unrest in Dublin in 1913 which spilled over into north-east Kildare.

By the summer of 1913, political tensions in Ireland had risen considerably due to strident unionist opposition to home rule and to the prominence of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). The AOH in Kildare began to take a leading role in defending home rule.¹ On 8 June, a well-attended general meeting in support of home rule was held in Newbridge, chaired by Monsignor Thomas Tynan, the local parish priest. The meeting criticized the opposition to home rule exhibited by the two principal Protestant churches on the island. The keynote speaker, Professor Thomas Kettle, was critical of the Presbyterian general assembly for imposing a ban on any members who supported home rule. He also described as blasphemous a prayer against home rule introduced by the Church of Ireland.²

While meetings of the AOH in the county were well supported, the UIL was not as fortunate, with Denis Kilbride, the local MP, expressing his disappointment at the apathy of Kildare people towards nationalist matters, and at the small number of UIL branches in the county. He dismissed the UVF as a 'mock-volunteer force'.³ Such a remark was typical. At this time, nationalist politicians regarded the UVF not as a military threat but as part of a political and propaganda campaign, 'a bluff' to undermine British support for home rule. For this reason nationalists remained confident that Ulster's political challenge could be defeated.⁴ By the end of 1913,

¹ CI Kildare, Oct. 1913 (TNA, CO 904/56).

² KO, 14 June 1913.

³ LL, 27 Sept. 1913; McConnel, *IPP*, pp 271-3; Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, pp 167, 177-8.

⁴ Alan O'Day, 'The Ulster crisis; a conundrum' in D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *The Ulster crisis, 1885-1921* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 19.

however, unionist opposition had weakened the resolve of the Liberals and made the exclusion of some part of Ulster a serious prospect. Only then was the extent of the crisis properly appreciated by nationalist Ireland; it transformed local politics. The realization that active support for home rule needed to be encouraged saw fundraising by the UIL in Naas and the AOH in Newbridge.⁵

On 6 March 1914, at the second reading of the third home rule bill, Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith proposed the concept of 'county option' which would allow the temporary exclusion for six years of Ulster counties that rejected home rule.⁶ To the disquiet of supporters, the IPP eventually agreed to the temporary exclusion clause as the price of peace. Crucially, the 'county option,' which provided for a local plebiscite in each county, was rejected by the unionists.⁷ Many Nationalist MPs were unhappy with the government's concessions, but they refrained from making any public comments on the measure and it was not debated in any local councils.⁸ In late March, a Dublin Corporation resolution protesting against the division of Ireland was sent by Alderman Thomas Kelly of Sinn Féin to a meeting of Naas No. 1 UDC. Although Éamon Ó Modhráin proposed its adoption, no one would second it as that would be tantamount to criticism of Redmond. In addition, SF was most unpopular among the IPP in Kildare and one councillor suggested that the resolution should be burned!⁹

Although Redmond's acceptance of the concessions was not a cause for concern among politicians in Kildare, the *Leinster Leader*, under the influence of its editor, Michael O'Kelly, highlighted the negative aspects of the concession. Partition was mentioned, and comparisons were made with the medieval Pale boundary.¹⁰ While O'Kelly was a lone voice among nationalists in Kildare in publicly criticizing Redmond's policy at this time, the concessions caused no great concern among the readership of the *Leinster Leader*. The unionist *Kildare Observer* described the exclusion proposals as 'a national mutilation' and blamed religious indifference for the prevailing political situation.¹¹ This was the first indication in Kildare that southern unionists were unhappy with the mooted partition. It had become clear that for Carson, Ulster exclusion was no longer a tactical measure to defeat home rule but a solution in its own right.¹²

⁵ *KO*, 23 Oct. 1913.

⁶ O'Day, *Irish home rule*, pp 256-9; Jackson, *Home rule*, pp 114-5, 127.

⁷ *Irish Independent* (hereafter *II*), 4 Mar. 1914; McConnel, *IPP*, pp 280-4.

⁸ McConnel, *IPP*, pp 285-6.

⁹ *LL*, 4 Apr. 1914.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 Apr. 1914.

¹¹ *KO*, 14 Mar. 1914.

¹² Jackson, *Home rule*, pp 122-4; McDowell, *Crisis and decline: the fate of southern unionist* (Dublin, 1997), pp 50-2; Scholes, *Church of Ireland*, pp 82-3.

In the aftermath of the IPP concession on the home rule amendment, the run-up to the local elections in May 1914 produced a lacklustre election campaign with very few electoral divisions contested. Celbridge was an exception. William G. Dease, an outgoing unionist member of the county council, was defeated by James O'Connor, a nationalist.¹³

While the vast majority of seats on the various county boards were unopposed, the elections returned a high number of Protestants in the county who supported home rule. As a result, there was an unusually high number of Protestants serving in positions of importance on the various county committees. The vice-chairmen of Kildare County Council, Athy No. 1 Council, Celbridge No. 1 Council and Celbridge Board of Guardians were all Protestant. The *Kildare Observer* proclaimed that this was proof of religious tolerance in the county.¹⁴ During the first parliamentary circuit of the home rule bill, a number of Protestants were appointed to positions by several councils and boards of guardians in nationalist counties. It led to accusations of contriving to demonstrate religious tolerance. So-called tolerance proving was less applicable in Kildare as many Protestant councillors were elected prior to the home rule crisis.¹⁵

While local elections were taking place at home, in late May 1914 the third reading of the home rule bill was passed in the House of Commons. This was celebrated with torch-light processions and bonfires in all the leading Kildare towns. At a meeting of Kildare County Council on 25 May, a motion welcoming the development, proposed by George Wolfe, was adopted unanimously despite the presence of unionist councillors, Lord Frederick FitzGerald and William G. Dease.¹⁶

As the home rule bill continued its passage through parliament, the rift between nationalists and unionists widened and suspicions increased.¹⁷ In July, Lord Mayo, leader of the Kildare unionists, suggested that a clause be inserted in the home rule bill which would exclude the home rule parliament from having powers relating to compensation for criminal injuries or malicious injuries. Mayo was motivated by fears that unionists and the landlord class might be vulnerable to acts of malicious damage to their property in a post-home rule Ireland in which compensation would be denied.¹⁸ Unionists in the south also voiced their fears of a loss of status and cultural identity. According to Mayo, 'home rule would mean the degradation of their country in status by cutting her off from the stream of Imperial life'.¹⁹

¹³ *LL*, 6 June 1914; *KO*, 6 June 1914. O'Connor was not related to John O'Connor, the local MP.

¹⁴ *KO*, 13 June 1914.

¹⁵ Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 435.

¹⁶ *LL*, 30 May 1914.

¹⁷ McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, p. 51.

¹⁸ *KO*, 11 July 1914; *Hansard (Lords)*, 9 July 1914, vol. 16, cols 1049-52.

¹⁹ *The Times*, 15 July 1913.

Throughout the 1912 to 1914 period, the home rule crisis had a divisive effect on politics in Kildare and led to an increasing polarization between nationalists and unionists. However, in the midst of the crisis, a conflict emerged in Dublin between employer and employee, which was also felt to some extent in the county.

The emergence of labour troubles in Dublin in August 1913 drew attention away from the all-consuming home rule bill for a period of five months. Little progress had been made in Kildare on improving the conditions of labourers. As a consequence, the lock-out in Dublin spilled over into north-eastern Kildare close to Dublin. The expansion of an organized labour movement in the capital inevitably influenced workers in that area of Kildare, and would ultimately contribute to the growing militancy in the county.

The first sign of labour difficulties in Kildare was recorded by CI Supple when he discovered that meetings of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) were held in August 1913.²⁰ In fact, membership of the union had already spread to north-east Kildare. This marked the emergence of the labour movement in the county. On the first day of the strike in Dublin, William Shackleton, one of the proprietors of the Anna Liffey flour mills in Lucan, demanded that his employees choose either their jobs or the ITGWU. The men refused to resign their union membership, and by evening, the mill was closed and picketed.²¹ Some of the workforce were from Leixlip in Kildare, less than two miles away.²²

Eventually, strike-breakers, mainly from Dublin, were taken on and this resulted in the strikers becoming more militant, organizing demonstrations in which local music bands participated. On 16 October, a demonstration turned nasty with some windows of the mill broken and a policeman injured.²³ The following evening, demonstrators were baton-charged by police when they refused to turn back as they crossed the Liffey Bridge in Lucan. About two dozen men were injured, one seriously.²⁴ The heavy-handed action by the police and the successful use of strike-breakers began to take a toll on the strikers, and the strike ended in late October when the majority of the men applied for reinstatement to their jobs and agreed to the terms imposed by management.²⁵

Leixlip suffered on the double due to a strike at Wookey's flock-mill, the village's largest employer with forty-eight employees. On 1 September, following an ultimatum by the owner, Frederick W. Wookey, to his employees to remove Union

²⁰ CI Kildare, Aug. 1913 (TNA, CO 904/ 55).

²¹ Pdraig Yeates, *Lockout: Dublin 1913* (Dublin, 2000), p. 27.

²² John Colgan, *Leixlip County Kildare* (Leixlip, 2005), pp 112-13.

²³ CI Dublin, Sept. 1913 (TNA, CO 904/ 56); R. M. Fox, *The history of the Irish Citizen Army* (Dublin, 1944), p. 52.

²⁴ CI Dublin, Sept. 1913 (TNA, CO 904/ 56); *LL*, 25 Oct., 8 Nov. 1913; Colgan, *Leixlip*, p. 113.

²⁵ Shackletons' mills, Lucan (NAI, CSORP, 1913/21041, 1913/19650); *IT*, 27 Oct. 1913.

badges or get off his premises, thirty-six men walked out. The strike escalated when Wookey told twelve women employees, who had remained and were not in any union, that he had no work for them until they could persuade the men to abandon their membership of the union.²⁶ As a result, some of the produce from Wookey's was blacklisted on the docks by men working in Dublin port who refused to handle the weekly consignment of mattresses.²⁷ Unlike the management at Shackletons' Mill, Wookey did not take on strike-breakers. A week after the strike began, several of the strikers, who were not members of the ITGWU, returned, together with the women employees.²⁸ From November to January, the strike continued and the RIC in both Leixlip and Celbridge escorted the employees to and from work. The strike ended in early February 1914, when eighteen of the strikers returned to work on Wookey's terms having resigned from the ITGWU.²⁹

As the strike progressed, a greater level of labour militancy was evident in the Leixlip-Lucan district. Some of those who had been dispersed by heavy-handed police methods joined the newly-formed Irish Citizen Army. This body of trained trade union volunteers from the ITGWU in Dublin was formed to protect demonstrating strikers against the police.³⁰ One month after the Lucan Bridge 'riot', Leixlip and Lucan strikers marched to a Citizen Army meeting in Croydon Park, Fairview in Dublin. Led by Leixlip man, James O'Neill, they were followed to Fairview by the RIC from Lucan, a distance of eleven miles. On the homeward journey the police sergeant approached O'Neill at O'Connell Bridge and offered to pay the strikers' tram fare home. The constabulary, who were heavily-built, middle-aged men, were exhausted and unable to continue on foot. The offer was accepted and the strikers and RIC returned to Lucan together.³¹ This was something of a moral victory for the strikers. Though not a major act of militancy, it was important in marking the emergence of a Citizen Army corps in Leixlip.

As a result of the labour disputes in Wookey's and Shackletons' Mills, their produce was 'blacklisted'. In early September, staff at Dawson's general traders in Maynooth refused to handle a load of meal-stuffs from Shackletons. The following week, two employees of Domhnall Ua Buachalla, who refused to handle a wagon load of flour from Shackletons, were paid off and not replaced.³² Ua Buachalla and the Shackletons were acquainted in nationalist circles. In his youth William Shackleton

²⁶ Strike at Wookey's, Leixlip (NAI, CSORP, 1913/16355, 1913/16668); Colgan, *Leixlip*, p. 112.

²⁷ Yeates, *Lockout*, p. 123.

²⁸ *IT*, 12 Nov. 1913.

²⁹ CI Kildare, Nov., Dec. 1913 (TNA, CO 904/91); CI Kildare, Jan. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/92); *KO*, 6 Dec. 1913; *IT*, 9 Feb. 1914.

³⁰ Ann Matthews, *The Irish Citizen Army* (Cork, 2014), pp 22-6; Yeates, *Lockout*, p. 437.

³¹ Fox, *Citizen Army*, pp 52-3; Colgan, *Leixlip*, p. 113.

³² *KO*, 13 and 20 Sept. 1913; <http://www.lucannewsletter.ie/history/lockout.html> (accessed 2 Apr. 2015). The Shackleton papers consulted by the author are not available at present.

had been a member of SF, and his brother, George, contributed to the Maynooth Gaelic League fund during the period of the lock-out.³³ Ua Buachalla himself was anti-Larkin, and his stance on the issue caused a rift between himself and Patrick Colgan, another prominent nationalist in Maynooth, who supported the strikers.³⁴

The impact of the lockout was also felt in Naas causing difficulties for the Carpet Factory, which employed eighty.³⁵ In mid-October, an order from Philadelphia for drawing-room carpets was delayed at the North Wall depot. Instead of being transported directly to America, the merchandise had to be shipped to Britain and then onwards to the US.³⁶ Ultimately, the lockout strike caused serious financial difficulties for the firm and jeopardized its plans to expand.³⁷

The strikers found an unlikely champion in Mary Lawless, a member of the Kildare aristocracy and daughter of Valentine F. Lawless, 5th Baron Cloncurry, who resided at Lyons House, near Ardcrough. Lawless first came to public attention as an active member of the Irish Reform League (IRL) a non-militant suffragette organization.³⁸ She was particularly concerned about undernourished children as a result of the strike. On one occasion she obtained a cow from her father's estate to supply milk for the children of strikers and drove the animal along the Grand Canal towpath to Liberty Hall.³⁹

Lawless also supported the 'Kiddies' Scheme' by which children of strikers would be sent on a temporary basis to families of British trade unionists.⁴⁰ The scheme was vigorously opposed by the Catholic Church and also by the AOH, which claimed that Catholic children would be subject to Protestant influences when in Britain. In an effort to prevent the implementation of the scheme, the AOH formed vigilante committees, supported by the Catholic Church, that were active at ports and railway stations. The children were not only prevented from moving to temporary foster homes in England, but also to country areas in Ireland.⁴¹ In late October, Lawless arranged for two sons of a striker to be fostered temporarily by an agricultural labourer employed by her father at Lyons Estate. However, it resulted in an ugly incident at Kingsbridge station when the children were prevented from

³³ Information from Ua Buachalla's papers in the possession of Adhamhnán Ó Súilleabháin, Dublin; *LL*, 22 Nov. 1913. On Shackleton and Sinn Féin, see Richard P. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and non-violent Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1974), pp 141, 173-5.

³⁴ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 6).

³⁵ *KO*, 18 Apr. 1914.

³⁶ *LL*, 25 Oct. 1913.

³⁷ *KO*, 9 Dec. 1913.

³⁸ *Irish Citizen*, 6 Dec. 1913; *IT*, 3 May 1913; Yeates, *Lockout*, p. 286.

³⁹ Tony Doohan, *History of Celbridge* (Celbridge, 2011), p. 84.

⁴⁰ Karen Hunt, 'Women, solidarity and the 1913 Dublin Lockout: Dora Montefiore and the save the kiddies scheme' in Francis Devine (ed.), *A capital in conflict: Dublin City and the 1913 lockout* (Dublin, 2013), pp 107-28.

⁴¹ Conor Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland: popular militancy, 1917 to 1923* (London, 1996), p. 18.

travelling to Hazelhatch by the AOH and prompted the *Manchester Guardian* to describe the events as 'Mob Law in Dublin'.⁴² During the incident, one of the boys was abducted from his father, Mary Lawless was jostled and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, an observer at the station, was assaulted as he protested to a policeman.⁴³ A number of individuals involved were later questioned, including two priests, but a subsequent court case collapsed.⁴⁴

The strike also affected services to Celbridge Union in late November when supplies of coal could not be delivered in the usual way. Alternative arrangements, however, resulted in an increase of two shillings per ton.⁴⁵ Although the military was not used to any great extent to quell demonstrations, troops escorted essential supplies such as coal to military barracks, hospitals, prisons and government offices in Dublin. For example, in early October a military escort was provided to guard a delivery of coal from 'Wallace Brothers' depot at Ringsend to Kingsbridge Station from where the coal was delivered by train to the Curragh camp.⁴⁶

Overall, the lock-out and strike had a significant impact on north-east Kildare. The worst effects were the inconvenience and disruption caused, particularly to transportation. The IPP, whose members were mostly middle-class and drew their support from the farming community, were hostile to the strike. Even those who felt sympathy for the plight of the striking workers feared that the strike would distract attention from what they regarded as the more serious struggle with Carson's Ulster unionists. By February 1914 the strike had virtually ended, but within four weeks a much more significant incident, which would have widespread consequences, was about to unfold in Kildare.

Prior to 1914 there had been no serious incident involving the British army during peace time in Kildare. But in spring 1914 the eyes of the world were focused on an incident at the Curragh camp that came about as a result of a combination of personal politics and lack of military discipline. In March 1914 Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Paget was general officer commanding-in-chief and was based at army headquarters at Parkgate Street in Dublin.⁴⁷ The Irish Command consisted of two infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades (see Appendix 1 for list of officers). A line extending from Sligo to Wexford divided the country in two, with one infantry

⁴² *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Oct. 1913.

⁴³ *IT*, 28 Oct. 1913; Leah Levenson, *With wooden sword: a portrait of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, militant and pacifist* (Dublin, 1983), p. 147.

⁴⁴ Solicitors' accounts concerning costs incurred on behalf of ITGWU, 25 Oct. 1913; (NLI, ITGWU, MS 27,054 (ii)); Mary Lawless to Sheehy-Skeffington, 4 Oct. 1913, (NLI, Sheehy Skeffington papers, MS 33,611 (7)); *IT*, 28 Oct. 1913; *Evening Telegraph*, 5 Nov. 1913.

⁴⁵ *LL*, 29 Nov. 1913; *KO*, 6 Dec. 1913.

⁴⁶ *IT*, 4 Oct. 1913.

⁴⁷ *Monthly army list for March 1914* (London, 1914), p. 28. On Paget see Lawrence William White, 'Paget, Sir Arthur Henry Fitzroy', *DIB*.

division and one cavalry brigade located north and south of this line. The 5th Division was located north of the line and the 6th Division to the south. From 1913 Major-General Sir Charles Fergusson, based in the Curragh, commanded the 5th Division. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade was commanded by Brigadier-General Hubert Gough who was based in the Curragh. It was not part of the 5th Division and came under the direct jurisdiction of Paget.⁴⁸ Although the brigade was largely stationed in the Curragh, one regiment, the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, was quartered in Marlborough Barracks in Dublin.⁴⁹ Gough was born in London to Irish parents and was raised in County Waterford. He came from a decorated military family and was a veteran of the Boer War.⁵⁰

In March 1914 only 2,773 members of the British army, or 11.5 per cent of the total of 24,032 in Ireland, were stationed in the nine counties of Ulster. This was less than half of the 5,806 stationed in Kildare.⁵¹ The biggest threat to the authority of the government came from Ulster where an estimated 84,000 UVF threatened to establish a provisional government should home rule be implemented.⁵² For this reason, the government considered redeploying troops to Ulster. However, army officers, mainly of unionist and conservative background, were known to be concerned with the political circumstances.⁵³

Any redeployment of the army in Ireland would have to involve movement of the military from Kildare (see Appendix 2) and in particular from the Curragh camp where 4,067 men were stationed. The 14th Infantry Brigade in the Curragh comprised the 1st Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in Beresford Barracks, 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment in Gough Barracks, and 2nd Battalion Manchester Regiment in Keane Barracks.⁵⁴ Troops in Newbridge included the 3rd Brigade Royal Horse Artillery and the 27th Brigade Royal Field Artillery, while the 7th Brigade was stationed in Kildare town. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade, commanded by General Gough, was also in the Curragh camp. Two of the regiments, the 4th Hussars, a large portion of which was southern Irish, were stationed in Stewart Barracks, and the 16th Lancers

⁴⁸ *Monthly army list for March 1914*, p. 29; Beckett, *The Curragh incident*, p. 439; John Wheeler-Bennett (revised Roger T. Stearn), 'Fergusson, Sir Charles', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) (hereafter *ODNB*).

⁴⁹ <http://www.curragh.info/articles/mutiny.htm>, (accessed 10 Oct. 2014); Beckett, *Curragh incident*, p. 439. Marlborough Barracks is now known as McKee Barracks.

⁵⁰ Ryan, *Mutiny*, p. 129; on Gough, see Simon J. Potter, 'Gough, Sir Hubert', *DIB*.

⁵¹ 'General monthly return the regimental strength of the British army for March 1914', pp 90-7 (TNA, WO 73/96).

⁵² RIC Inspector General (IG) report, Mar. 1914, (TNA CO 904/57).

⁵³ A. T. O. Stewart, *The Ulster crisis: resistance to home rule, 1912-1914* (London, 1967), p. 78; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 286; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, pp 439-40.

in Ponsonby Barracks.⁵⁵ Also attached to the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, were D and E Batteries, Royal Horse Artillery, which were stationed in Newbridge.

During the early months of 1914, rumours were rife that the UVF were planning to import arms, or that the government was about to curtail the force.⁵⁶ On 11 March, the cabinet received disturbing police reports of possible UVF raids on arms depots in Ulster. The movement had, by this time, already acquired 17,000 weapons.⁵⁷ Equally alarming was the growth of the Irish Volunteers in the early months of 1914, particularly in Ulster, and by late March it numbered 14,000, spread over twenty-five counties.⁵⁸ Irish civil war seemed a distinct possibility.

A cabinet sub-committee, established on 11 March, summoned Paget to London for consultations regarding planned movements of army personnel to Ulster on 18 and 19 March.⁵⁹ Given the high-ranking personnel involved in talks lasting two days, there can be little doubt that larger military operations were discussed. Having raised the possibility that some of his officers might be unwilling to participate in action against Ulster, Paget was given an option (later known as the 'ultimatum') to exempt officers domiciled in Ulster. They were allowed temporarily 'to disappear'. Any other officer unwilling to serve would be dismissed from the service.⁶⁰ Orders from Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, to move warships to northern Irish waters to coincide with the troop movements greatly added to the suspicion that something bigger than redeployment was planned.⁶¹ One of the Royal Navy officers who received the order was Kildare born Admiral Sir John de Robeck, who commanded four flotillas of destroyers.⁶²

Paget's meeting with senior generals on his return to Ireland exacerbated the situation. He implied that active operations were to commence against Ulster, and rashly suggested that 'the whole place would be in a blaze tomorrow'.⁶³ The effect

⁵⁵ Seven barracks made up the Curragh camp prior to independence namely: Army Service Corps Barracks (now Clarke Barracks); Beresford Barracks (now Ceannt Barracks); Engineer Barracks (now MacDermott Barracks); Gough Barracks (now MacDonagh Barracks); Keane Barracks (now Pearse Barracks); Ponsonby Barracks (now Plunkett Barracks) and Stewart Barracks (now Connolly Barracks). The 5th Lancers in Marlborough Barracks, Dublin completed the 3rd Cavalry Brigade.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Muenger, *The British military dilemma in Ireland* (Dublin, 1991), p. 177.

⁵⁷ Cabinet papers relating to the military situation in Ulster, 18 Mar. 1914 (TNA, CAB 41/35/8); Richard Holmes, *The little field-marshal: Sir John French* (London, 2004), p. 174.

⁵⁸ IG report, Mar. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/57).

⁵⁹ Correspondence relating to recent events in the Irish Command (TNA, WO 35/60), pp 2-4; Holmes, *French*, pp 173-4; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, p. 8

⁶⁰ James Fergusson, *The Curragh Incident* (London, 1964), pp 47, 69; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, pp 9, 61-2.

⁶¹ Correspondence relating to recent events in the Irish Command (TNA, WO 35/60), pp 12-15; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, pp 10-11 Fergusson, *Curragh incident*, pp 53-5.

⁶² Papers of Admiral Sir John de Robeck, correspondence, n.d. (Churchill College, Cambridge, DRBK 3/7).

⁶³ Fergusson, *Curragh incident*, p. 67.

of this sudden outburst was to increase the anxieties of officers, particularly Gough. The generals were also informed of the 'ultimatum,' the concession obtained from the War Office relating to officers who lived in Ulster.⁶⁴ Paget was most unprofessional in dealing with this sensitive issue and was tactless, especially in dealing with Gough who came from an Anglo-Irish background and who was sympathetic to the Ulster unionist cause.⁶⁵

The first sign of significant dissent surfaced when an incensed Gough, following his meeting with Paget, addressed the officers under his command at nearby Marlborough Barracks, Dublin and offered them the 'ultimatum'. Seventeen of the twenty officers present decided that dismissal would be preferable to active service in Ulster.⁶⁶ Later that day, Gough put the 'ultimatum' to the officers of his brigade in the Curragh and a total of sixty-one officers resigned.⁶⁷ The Curragh camp was now at the centre stage of a crisis usually referred to as the Curragh incident, but is sometimes referred to as a mutiny or a proto-mutiny. Although the dissenting officers had indicated that they would disobey orders, technically they had not actually disobeyed because no orders had been issued. Nevertheless, it was a serious rebellion of officers who objected to carrying out their duties as soldiers. Two senior officers attempted to contain the crisis. First, Fergusson followed Gough to the Curragh and undertook an extensive round of visits to his troops in order to nullify the impact of the resignations among the cavalrymen.⁶⁸ He brought officers under his command around to his point of view, whereas those under Gough followed the example of their immediate commander. Paget also addressed officers in the Curragh on 21 March, but this intensified the dissension.⁶⁹

On obtaining details of the revolt, John Seely, secretary of state for war, summoned Gough and four of his officers to the War Office. While in London, Gough was counselled and briefed on unfolding developments by his brother, General John Gough, chief of staff to General Douglas Haig, commander-in-chief at Aldershot, and Major-General Henry Wilson, director of military operations at the War Office since

⁶⁴ Correspondence relating to recent events in the Irish Command (TNA, WO 35/60), pp 15-16; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, pp 12, 132-5, 162; Fergusson, *Curragh incident*, pp 72-3.

⁶⁵ Hubert Gough, *Soldering on: being the memoirs of General Sir Hubert Gough* (London, 1954), p. 101.

⁶⁶ D.S. Daniell, *4th Hussars: the story of a British cavalry regiment* (Aldershot, 1959), p. 239.

⁶⁷ Correspondence relating to recent events in the Irish Command (TNA, WO 35/60), p. 7; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, pp 79-80; Fergusson, *Curragh incident*, pp 86-7.

⁶⁸ Beckett, *Curragh incident*, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Lord Derby to Bonar Law, 22 March 1914 (Parliamentary Archives, Bonar Law papers, BL 32/1/43); Gough, *Soldering on*, p. 104.

1910 who was strongly unionist.⁷⁰ Wilson gave considerable support to Gough with the two endeavouring to obtain concessions from the government.⁷¹

Following two days of meetings at the War Office, Gough, who steadfastly refused to withdraw his resignation unless he obtained assurances in writing, was eventually granted his demands.⁷² Two paragraphs, not sanctioned by Asquith, were also inserted by Seely, indicating that the government had 'no intention whatever of taking advantage of this right to crush political opposition to the policy or principles of the home rule bill'.⁷³ He also received a written guarantee from Sir John French, chief of the imperial general staff (CIGS), that troops would not be called on to enforce the home rule bill in Ulster.⁷⁴ To receive a guarantee in writing from the secretary of state of war, and the head of the army was a remarkable achievement, particularly for a junior brigadier.

During the crisis, details of the events were passed on to some unionists in Kildare who immediately made contact with the leadership of the Conservative party. Sir William Goulding in Millicent House wrote to Bonar Law, the Conservative leader, giving him the exact number of resignations in the Curragh area.⁷⁵ Captain Henry Greer, a retired officer who resided close to the Curragh, was sent to London on behalf of the protesting officers to lay their case before Law and Lord Landsdowne. Apart from the political aspect of the affair, another issue of contention was the threat made by Paget in the Curragh that any officer who resigned due to the ultimatum was regarded as dismissed, thus forfeiting the right to a pension. However, due to the resolution of the affair his mission was unnecessary.⁷⁶

By the time Gough returned to Ireland on 24 March, he had become a hero among the officers in the Curragh.⁷⁷ An anonymous non-commissioned officer's wife described how 'all the cavalry turned out in review order and escorted him home in his carriage as if he was a king'.⁷⁸ According to the *Kildare Observer*, his speech to a welcoming party thanked all ranks for backing him and his fellow officers in their fight

⁷⁰ Fergusson, *Curragh incident*, p. 386; on Wilson see Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: a political soldier* (Oxford, 2006).

⁷¹ Beckett, *Curragh incident*, p. 183, citing Wilson's diary of 23 Mar. 1914.

⁷² Gough, *Soldering on*, pp 105-6.

⁷³ Correspondence relating to recent events in the Irish Command (TNA, WO 35/60), p. 11; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, pp 8-9; Holmes, *French*, pp 187-8.

⁷⁴ Correspondence relating to recent events in the Irish Command (TNA, WO 35/60), p. 11; Homes, *French*, p. 188; Gough, *Soldering on*, p. 109.

⁷⁵ Goulding to Bonar Law, 21 March 1914 (Parliamentary Archives, Bonar Law papers, BL 32/1/40); Pauric J. Dempsey and Shaun Boylan, 'Goulding, Sir William Joshua', *DIB*.

⁷⁶ Derby to Bonar Law, 22 March 1914 (Parliamentary Archives, Bonar Law papers, BL 32/1/43). On Greer, see Angela Murphy, 'Greer, Sir (Joseph) Henry', *DIB*.

⁷⁷ Ryan, *Mutiny*, p. 157.

⁷⁸ Beckett, *Curragh incident*, p. 156.

with the War Office.⁷⁹ When Asquith became aware that Seely had added two unsanctioned paragraphs he publicly repudiated the guarantee.⁸⁰ In the Commons he condemned the assurances sought by Gough and his fellow army officers as putting 'the government and the House of Commons, upon whose confidence the government depend, at the mercy of the military and navy'.⁸¹ The three individuals most closely connected with the guarantee – Seely, Spencer Ewart and French – resigned.

Depending on their political affiliation, the various news organs such as *Freeman's Journal*, *Irish Times*, *Leinster Leader* and *Kildare Observer* gave opposing interpretations of the incident. All detailed political plots of some sort. The nationalist *Freeman's Journal* claimed that Gough was guilty of indiscipline in demanding assurances relating to his duties as a soldier and suggested the incident was 'a Tory conspiracy to secure a general election'.⁸² According to the *Leinster Leader*, the objective was to prevent the government proceeding with home rule and to destroy the Parliament Act.⁸³ The unionist *Irish Times* was closer to the truth. It attacked the government both for its initiation of and its handling of the affair. It suggested that a deliberate attempt was made by at least three cabinet members to provoke 'civil war in Ulster, and that it could have succeeded but for the resignations at the Curragh'.⁸⁴ Generally, editorials from newspapers of a pro-government and pro-home rule viewpoint denounced the stance taken by the Curragh officers, while newspapers from a mainly unionist perspective gave a positive account.

In terms of the parliamentary battle between the government and opposition over the home rule bill, the Curragh incident represented an own goal conceded by the cabinet. In London, the resignations of the Secretary of State for War and the head of the army greatly damaged the credibility of the government. Whether it was a genuine case of misunderstanding or whether it was a gamble on the part of the government which backfired, within army circles government credibility was severely damaged. The British government lost any military initiative to quell growing militarization in Ireland and its freedom of movement to implement home rule in Ulster was now limited. Ulster unionists must have taken heart from the fact that an attempt to force them to accept home rule had been thwarted by the army. By contrast, the Curragh incident severely dented nationalist confidence in the government. The events merely confirmed their increasing doubts about Asquith's real commitment to granting Irish self-government and about his willingness to ever

⁷⁹ *KO*, 28 Mar. 1914.

⁸⁰ Cabinet papers relating to the military situation in Ulster, 28 Mar. 1914 (TNA CAB, 41/35/10); Fergusson, *Curragh incident*, pp 158, 162-3; Beckett, *Curragh incident*, p. 193 quoting extracts from the diary from Sir John Spencer Ewart.

⁸¹ *Hansard* 5 (*Commons*), 25 Mar. 1914, vol. 60, col. 420.

⁸² *FJ*, 26 Mar. 1914.

⁸³ *LL*, 20 Apr. 1914.

⁸⁴ *IT*, 26 Mar. 1914.

grapple with unionist militancy. The idea of the army being above politics was undermined and the most significant consequence of the episode in County Kildare was increased support for the Irish Volunteers. Prior to the Curragh incident there had been no Volunteer presence in the county.

The Volunteer movement had a major impact on society and politics in Kildare by uniting nationalists from every strata of society, both male and female. Founded in November 1913, its inaugural meeting in Dublin was described by Michael O'Kelly of the *Leinster Leader* and the IRB, as 'the emergence of a great nationalist movement'.⁸⁵ The RIC Inspector General reported that at the end of March there were an estimated 14,171 Irish Volunteers in eighty-three branches across the country.⁸⁶ However, Kildare was an outlier. A survey of RIC CI's monthly reports and of the *Irish Volunteer* indicates that no Volunteer corps had been established in Kildare before May 1914; the same was true for County Wicklow.⁸⁷ The Volunteers were led by advanced nationalists, and in Kildare, a county dominated by Redmondites, there was little support for the movement. A number of events between early March and late April 1914 stimulated the growth of the Volunteers in Kildare. The Curragh incident greatly dented trust in the army in a county where it enjoyed a respect not evident in other counties outside Ulster. The landing of arms by the UVF on 24-5 April 1914 further alarmed nationalists in Kildare.⁸⁸ This accelerated calls for more militant action by nationalists to counter unconstitutional activities aimed at preventing the passage of the home rule bill. After Larne, Irish Volunteer numbers jumped from 123 branches with 19,306 members to 191 branches with 25,000 members by 1 May.⁸⁹

In Kildare which had no Volunteer presence, the *Leinster Leader* was the sole voice in condemning the Larne gun-running and was strongly critical of both the government and unionists.⁹⁰ By 1 May, Kildare and Wicklow were still the only remaining counties without any Volunteer corps. That position changed radically during May by which point the IPP was forced to reassess the role of paramilitarism within its political strategy. In early April Joseph Devlin, grandmaster of the AOH, instructed the movement in Ulster to associate with the Volunteers.⁹¹ After the third reading of the home rule bill at the end of May, MPs made a spectacular effort all over the country to claim the movement as their own.⁹²

⁸⁵ *LL*, 6 Dec. 1913.

⁸⁶ IG report, Apr. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/57).

⁸⁷ IG reports, Jan.- Apr. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/57); *Irish Volunteer*, 7 Feb. to 9 May 1914.

⁸⁸ *LL*, 2 May 1914.

⁸⁹ IG report, Apr. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/57).

⁹⁰ *LL*, 2 May 1914.

⁹¹ Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 189.

⁹² Michael Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill: scholar and man of action, 1867-1945* (Oxford, 1980), p. 137.

As the Volunteer movement continued to expand, it received extensive coverage in the Kildare press. Behind the scenes Seán O'Connor, an Irish language teacher in Celbridge, had been secretly organizing for the IRB in the northern part of the county, laying the groundwork for the Volunteer movement in his area.⁹³ The official launch of the Athy Volunteers on 14 May was attended by The O'Rahilly on behalf of the provisional committee who called for donations to obtain weapons.⁹⁴ Naas was the first garrison town to form a branch of the Volunteers and Michael O'Kelly was to the fore in this development. The first meeting attracted substantial numbers, with the result that the gathering withdrew to the outer yard of the town hall. When that became too small the meeting was moved to the disused jail nearby.⁹⁵ The movement included two prominent county councillors, George Wolfe and Michael Fitzsimmons, as well as members of the local UDC. Wolfe was one of a small number of Protestants prominent in the Volunteers and became the recognized head in Naas and eventually in the county.⁹⁶

The formation of the various corps in Kildare continued apace. RIC reports indicate that by the end of May, there were seven branches within the county. Two branches had been established during the month at Athy and Castledermot, and branches were in the process of formation at Naas, Celbridge, Maynooth, Monasterevin and Kildare town. The movement had the support of all sections of nationalists, and the persons joining included shop-keepers and their assistants, farmers, labourers and tradesmen.⁹⁷ Local MPs who were slow to give approval now began to cash in on the popularity of the new movement. When John O'Connor attended a Volunteer meeting in Naas, he addressed members as 'fellow soldiers of Ireland'.⁹⁸

Members of the provisional committee in Dublin were frequent visitors to Kildare. For example, Thomas MacDonagh was present when a Volunteer company was established in the garrison town of Kildare on 31 May and on 7 June. The O'Rahilly, Laurence Kettle and Patrick Pearse gave rousing speeches at meetings throughout Kildare.⁹⁹ Pearse inspected a new company in Kilcock and instructed them to get ready to do their duty for Ireland.¹⁰⁰ Undoubtedly, local Redmondite supporters would have felt uncomfortable with some of the language used.

⁹³ Thomas Harris (BMH WS 320, p. 2).

⁹⁴ *LL*, 16 May 1914.

⁹⁵ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 7).

⁹⁶ *LL*, 16 May 1914; *Leinster Leader* Centenary Supplement, 1980.

⁹⁷ *CI* Kildare, May 1914 (TNA, CO 904/ 57).

⁹⁸ *KO*, 6 June 1914.

⁹⁹ *LL*, 6 June 1914.

¹⁰⁰ *LL*, 6 June 1914; Patrick O'Keeffe, 'My Reminiscences of 1914-1923', *Oughterany: Journal of the Donadea Local History Group* 1:1 (1993), 42.

The official launch of the county Volunteer movement was held at Gibbet Rath on the Curragh on 7 June. The location was chosen due to the fact that it was an ancient monument adjacent to the Curragh camp and the site of a massacre of rebels by the Crown forces in 1798.¹⁰¹ It sent a strong message to the establishment and especially to General Gough and the army. Owing to fears that there may be attempts to prevent a meeting taking place so close to the biggest military camp in the country, the location was kept secret until forty-eight hours before. Even so, an estimated 7,000 people, representing branches from all over Kildare and some adjoining counties, attended. Volunteer contingents from the two garrison towns of Kildare and Newbridge marched in military formation to the site. The gathering represented a strong show of unity among nationalists, and the meeting was addressed by the two MPs for the county as well as The O’Rahilly. O’Connor’s speech reflected the general theme of the day – that the army had failed to defend their liberties and that it was ‘the army of one political party not the army of the nation’. That the Volunteers were launched with the assistance of the two local MPs, and practically the entire local nationalist leadership, gave an appearance of nationalist unity in response to recent political developments.¹⁰²

By early summer of 1914 Redmondite supporters constituted the bulk of the membership, but the IPP did not have a prominent role in the leadership of the Volunteers. Negotiations which had been taking place for several weeks between Eoin MacNeill and Redmond stalled, and on 9 June, the IPP leader issued an ultimatum demanding that the provisional committee co-opt twenty-five of his nominees.¹⁰³ There was general support from the nationalist population in Kildare for Redmond’s demand for a majority on the provisional committee, and a resolution calling on the Volunteer leadership to agree to this was unanimously passed by Kildare County Council. A reluctant provisional committee acceded to Redmond’s demand with the only apparent criticism in Kildare coming from Michael O’Kelly in the *Leinster Leader*.¹⁰⁴ Despite the conflict concerning the leadership, members of the provisional committee continued to be in demand at Volunteer public meetings. MacDonagh addressed a meeting in Athy, with an estimated attendance of 5,000, which was the biggest local parade to date of Volunteers in the southern section of the county.¹⁰⁵ By late July the Volunteers in Kildare had increased to an estimated membership of 3,000 members or about 9 per cent of the male of population of

¹⁰¹ Ibid.; for details the massacre at the Gibbet Rath, see Mario Corrigan, *All that delirium of the brave – Kildare in 1798* (Naas, 1997), pp 59-61; Liam Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare 1790-1803* (Dublin, 1998), pp 83-4.

¹⁰² *LL*, 13 June 1914.

¹⁰³ *FJ*, 10 June 1914; McConnell, *IPP*, p. 288; Tierney, *MacNeill*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁴ *LL*, 20 June 1914.

¹⁰⁵ J.J. Bergin to MacDonagh, 8 July 1914 (NLI, Thomas MacDonagh papers, MS 20,643/9); *Irish Volunteer*, 25 July 1914.

32,194 (excluding army personnel).¹⁰⁶ The figures were similar in neighbouring Offaly (3,100/10.4%) and Laois (2,290/8%).¹⁰⁷

The meeting in Athy also witnessed the emergence of a Cumann na mBan branch in Kildare where Elizabeth Bloxham from headquarters in Dublin addressed the meeting.¹⁰⁸ Cumann na mBan also extended to the three garrison towns of Naas, Newbridge and Kildare. Bloxham attended all the inaugural meetings to set out the purpose of the movement, which included first aid, and an involvement in the Defence of Ireland Fund, or collecting money to buy rifles to arm the men.¹⁰⁹ One of the most unusual aspects of the first meeting in Naas was the attendance of representatives of the two religious traditions. Bloxham and Maud Wolfe, daughter of George Wolfe, were members of the Church of Ireland tradition. There was also a Catholic clerical involvement in the form of the local parish priest, Fr Michael Norris.¹¹⁰

On 26 July 1914 the Volunteers took delivery of some 900 Mauser rifles from a private yacht at Howth and this injected new enthusiasm into the movement. There was a small but significant participation by Kildare Volunteers in the gun-running. A detachment of Volunteers from Celbridge assisted by Art O'Connor, president of the local company, travelled by car to Howth and collected twenty-five rifles and ammunition. The guns were then hidden in an outhouse on the O'Connor farm.¹¹¹ Jim O'Keeffe, a member of the Kilcock Volunteers, also participated and smuggled some of the rifles to Kilcock on an evening train.¹¹² That evening the army fired on civilians at Bachelors Walk which resulted in the death of three civilians while thirty-eight others were injured. The incident was widely condemned in Kildare in the press and at public meetings and marches. For example, John Shiel O'Grady, chairman of No. 1, Naas RDC, claimed 'there was one law for the Ulster Volunteers and another law for the Nationalist Volunteers'.¹¹³ Volunteer recruiting increased significantly with the formation of new branches, while existing branches reported a surge in membership.¹¹⁴ With a sense of anger and revulsion directed towards the army there were even threats of trouble from local nationalists if the King's Own Scottish

¹⁰⁶ CI Kildare, July 1914 (TNA, CO 904/58).

¹⁰⁷ CI King's County, July 1914; CI Queen's County, July 1914 (TNA, CO 904/58); *Thom's Directory, 1913*, pp 1197, 1206, 1247, 1279.

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth Bloxham (BMH WS 632, p. 5); *Irish Volunteer*, 25 July 1914; Lil Conlon, *Cumann na mBan and the women of Ireland 1913-1925* (Cork, 1968), pp 7- 8; Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2007), p. 38; Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish republican women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), pp 101-2.

¹⁰⁹ *KO*, 1 Aug. 1914; *LL*, 29 Aug. 1914; *Irish Volunteer*, 25 July, 29 Aug. 1914.

¹¹⁰ *KO*, 1 Aug. 1914.

¹¹¹ Padraig O'Connor (BMH, WS 813, pp 1-2).

¹¹² Patrick O'Keeffe, 'My Reminiscences 1914-1923', 42.

¹¹³ *LL*, 1 Aug. 1914; *KO*, 1 Aug. 1914.

¹¹⁴ *LL*, 1 Aug. 1914, 8 Aug. 1914.

Borderers, the regiment responsible, were moved to the Curragh.¹¹⁵ The events of Howth and Bachelors Walk were overtaken, however, by news of a much greater magnitude – the outbreak of the First World War.

The initial stages of the passage of the home rule bill through parliament caused little excitement or interest among the ordinary people of Kildare. This was in contrast to local politicians who strongly supported the measure. However, forceful and aggressive opposition by Ulster Unionists generated additional interest in the bill in Kildare and eventually activated a profound support for the measure. Throughout the period, support for Redmond remained dominant in Kildare. Michael O’Kelly was one of the few to promote more advanced nationalism. The Dublin labour conflict spilled over into Kildare, but only affected areas adjoining Dublin. This chapter introduces for the first time a Kildare connection to the ‘Kiddie’s Scheme’. Despite the seriousness of the labour conflict, it did not seriously diminish the dominance of the home rule issue.

As one might expect given its economic importance, the British army was popular in Kildare. The Curragh incident altered this. While this affair has received extensive attention from historians, the impact on Kildare has not. The breach of trust with the army never healed. Within weeks, Kildare became a politically reawakened county with companies of Irish Volunteers formed in every locality determined to uphold a role they believed had been relinquished by the army. Kildare was one of the very last counties to adopt the Volunteers. Volunteer headquarters placed considerable emphasis on Kildare as indicated by the number of meetings addressed by Pearse, MacDonagh and The O’Rahilly – an aspect not sufficiently recognized in published accounts of the period. Nationalists in Kildare watched the unfolding of double standards by the army, which in March refused to engage the unionists for political reasons, and yet had no difficulty in engaging militarily with nationalists in late July resulting in loss of life at Bachelors Walk. The ensuing backlash was more obvious in Kildare, given the large army presence in the county, than elsewhere. But the outbreak of war soon became the focus of attention across the country, and the passions generated by the Bachelor’s Walk incident were suddenly cooled.

¹¹⁵ CI Kildare, July 1914 (TNA, CO 904/58).

3: The impact of the First World War in Kildare, August 1914 – March 1916

The First World War had a profound impact on Ireland, politically, socially, economically and in terms of casualties. It would also impact socially and economically. In Kildare, given the sheer extent and size of the British army garrisons, and the fact that large numbers from the county had a tradition of army service, the impact would be more pronounced than in most other counties with the exception of the Ulster counties. To add to the complexity of the period, the initial support for the war that existed between August 1914 and March 1916, evolved to an increasing opposition and even hostility from some elements in society. The home rule question remained the central political issue, but as the war progressed, the uncertainty of its implementation added to increased political pressures. The issue of conscription also emerged, and vigorous recruitment methods contributed to the tension and had an important effect on the political mood of the nationalist population.

The chain of events that began on 28 July 1914, when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, was closely monitored in Ireland. There was much support for the British government's policy relating to the impending war.¹ In the House of Commons on 3 August, Redmond proposed that the Irish Volunteers should join with the Ulster Volunteers and take the place of the army in guarding the country against a German invasion.² This was welcomed by both nationalists and unionists in Kildare and the county council pledged that staff who took up arms would have a job to which they could return. Another sign of the changed atmosphere was the granting of permission by the army for the Volunteers of Naas and district to drill in the barrack square three times a week from 11 August.³ George Wolfe, Volunteer chief inspecting officer for Kildare, euphorically declared that he would provide the British army with seven battalions if home rule was passed. Support for the war effort in Kildare was confirmed by CI Supple's observation of a 'spirit of loyalty ... among the masses'.⁴

This spirit of loyalty in Kildare was aided by Bishop Patrick Foley's pastoral letter on 17 August. Redmond deliberately attended Mass in the diocese at Baltinglass and was so impressed with the wording that he sent the pastoral to Asquith on 22 August as well as the sermon given by the officiating priest in which he

¹ *KO*, 8 Aug. 1914

² *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 3 Aug. 1914, vol. 65, col. 1828; *FJ*, 4 Aug. 1914; *LL*, 8 Aug. 1914; *KO*, 8 Aug. 1914.

³ *LL*, 8 Aug. 1914; *KO*, 8 Aug. 1914; Minutes, 17 Aug. 1914 (KCoA, county council meetings).

⁴ CI, Kildare, Aug. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94).

defended the justice of England's cause.⁵ Foley's pro-war stance, which has not received much historical attention, contrasted sharply with that of Archbishop William Walsh of Dublin who forbade the placing of recruiting posters on the railings of churches and did not aid the recruiting campaign in any way.⁶ In Kildare, Catholic clergy were more publicly vocal in supporting the war than their Church of Ireland counterparts who left it to the House of Bishops to comment. When hostilities began Archbishop Peacocke offered prayers that God would 'bless our efforts and defend our right'.⁷ His successor, John H. Bernard, who lost a son during the Gallipoli campaign, justified the war as a fight for 'civilization against a sudden revival of barbarism'.⁸

The outbreak of war jeopardized the implementation of home rule. On 30 July the prime minister, with Redmond's consent, announced that the amending bill would be postponed in the interests of national unity.⁹ The *Leinster Leader* questioned Redmond's judgement and suggested that 'a one-sided deal had been made regarding postponement of the amendment bill'. It also proposed that nationalists should take advantage of the war to gain political concessions.¹⁰ The largely unionist *Kildare Observer* accepted the inevitability of home rule, 'not total separation but the utilitarian home rule which preserves and increases loyalty to the British constitution'.¹¹ Redmond's efforts to have the home rule bill signed into law met with limited success. On 15 September, Asquith announced that the bill would be put on the statute book, but along with a measure that suspended its operation for the duration of the war.¹² This was celebrated as a victory by nationalist Ireland, and in Naas the local Volunteers marked the event with bonfires while in other Kildare towns similar celebrations were held.¹³

With strong support for Redmond's home defence policy, and the threat of civil war receding, large numbers continued to join the Irish Volunteers throughout August and early September when 4,492 members in thirty-two branches were recorded. However, only 162 were armed.¹⁴ The IPP attempted to redress the

⁵ Redmond to Asquith, 22 Aug. 1914, (Bodleian Library, Asquith papers, MS Asquith, 36/79); *IT*, 16 Aug. 1914; David Miller, *Church, state and nation in Ireland, 1898-1921* (Dublin, 1973), p. 310.

⁶ Michael J. Curran (BMH WS 687, pp 1, 13); Daithí Ó Corráin, 'Archbishop William Joseph Walsh' in Eugenio Biagini and Daniel Mulhall (eds), *The shaping of modern Ireland: a centenary reassessment* (Sallins, 2016), p. 120; Curran served as Walsh's secretary.

⁷ *KO*, 31 Oct. 1914; Clinton and Hourican, 'Peacocke, Joseph Ferguson', *DIB*.

⁸ Alan Megahey, *The Irish Protestant Churches in the twentieth century* (London, 2000), p. 39; Paucic J. Dempsey, 'Bernard, John Henry', *DIB*.

⁹ Denis Gwynn, *The life of Redmond* (London, 1932), pp 348-9; Jackson, *Home rule*, p. 164.

¹⁰ *LL*, 8 Aug. 1914.

¹¹ *KO*, 22 Aug. 1914.

¹² O'Day, *Irish home rule*, p. 261; Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 381.

¹³ *LL*, 26 Sept. 1914; *KO*, 26 Sept. 1914.

¹⁴ IG report, Sept. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94); Breandán Mac Giolla Choille (ed.), *Intelligence notes, 1913-1916, preserved in the State Paper Office* (Dublin, 1966), p. 111.

deficiency of Volunteer arms. As early as mid-June 1914, Redmond had secured 4,000 rifles with ammunition from Belgium. Tom Kettle, together with three MPs – Willie Redmond, Richard McGhee and John O'Connor – were involved in the transportation of the rifles from the continent. O'Connor had past experience of gun-running for the Fenians in the 1870s. He delivered some weapons to Kildare, leaving Broadstone station in Dublin with a consignment of rifles for the Kilcock Volunteers in late September.¹⁵ More of the weapons were delayed on the continent and various attempts by O'Connor to acquire rifles over the following twelve months proved unsuccessful, despite contacts with Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, the foreign secretary, and General Kitchener, secretary of state for war.¹⁶

Having obtained the concession which placed the home rule bill on the statute book, Redmond was obliged to respond with a substantial nationalist initiative towards the war effort. This came on 20 September at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow when he urged Irish Volunteers to engage 'where the firing line extends'.¹⁷ This call to join the British army for foreign service caused much disquiet among nationalists and split the Volunteers. The original members of the pre-Redmondite provisional committee denounced Redmond's exhortation to enlist and expelled his nominees from the committee. They broke away retaining the name Irish Volunteers with the Redmondite majority becoming the National Volunteers.¹⁸ Following Woodenbridge, the decline in Volunteer membership was as dramatic as the increase had been in the early summer. In late September, a membership of 181,722, was recorded but by December the figure was 147,050. The number of Irish Volunteers at the end of 1914 was an estimated 9,700.¹⁹

The split within the ranks of the Volunteers did not become evident in Kildare until the first week of October. The Kildare county committee met at Naas town hall on 6 October and condemned the action of the MacNeillite provisional committee. Yet, almost half expressed reservations about Redmond's call to action; this was carried by nine votes to five with four members abstaining. Art O'Connor and Éamon Ó Mordhain²⁰ who led the opposition to the motion departed.²¹ This was a great loss to the organization as O'Connor had been to the forefront in promoting the Volunteers, especially in north Kildare. The dissention that surfaced at the county

¹⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 30 Sept. 1914.

¹⁶ O'Connor to Kitchener, 26 July 1915 (NLI Redmond papers, MS 15201/1); O'Connor to Gray, 26 July and 3 Sept. 1915 (NLI, Redmond papers, MS 15,214/3); copy O'Connor to Sir Edward Grey, 28 May 1915 (NLI, Moore papers, MS 10,544/2/69); James Connel, 'Après la guerre: John Redmond, the Irish Volunteers and the armed constitutionalism, 1913-1915' in *The English Historical Review*, 131: 553, (Dec. 2016), 1445-70.

¹⁷ *FJ*, 21 Sept. 1914.

¹⁸ *FJ*, 25 Sept. 1914; Dermot Meleady, *John Redmond: the national leader* (Dublin, 2014), p. 307.

¹⁹ IG report, Sept. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94); IG report, Dec. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/95).

²⁰ Éamon Ó Mordhain also known in documents as Éamon or Edward Moran.

²¹ *LL*, 10 Oct. 1914; *KO*, 10 Oct. 1914.

committee was replicated in branches throughout the county, but in particular those near Dublin where advanced nationalists occupied leading positions. In north Kildare, the Volunteers in most towns split into two factions, but in all cases Redmond's supporters were overwhelmingly in the majority.²² The Celbridge committee initially declared its allegiance to the Irish Volunteers, but at a meeting on 4 October, with twenty members present, a majority including Hubert O'Connor, declared for Redmond and formed a new corps of National Volunteers.²³ In Maynooth, 135 of the 157 present backed Redmond.²⁴ In Kill, the majority were in favour of Redmond's policy while in Staplestown there was only one dissenter.²⁵ The scale of the division was similar to other counties with Redmond winning the support of every branch of the movement. In late November 1914 CI Supple believed there were only 344 Irish Volunteers in the county and that they did not pose a threat.²⁶

The most blistering attack on Redmond's policy came from Michael O'Kelly in the *Leinster Leader* on 10 October. He accused the IPP leader of engaging in propaganda for recruitment while Edward Carson used every opportunity to undermine home rule.²⁷ It was unwise for the editor of a newspaper with a Redmondite readership to criticize Redmond's policy in such a manner. The pronounced anti-English tone of the article, as well as the editor's penchant for publishing articles from advanced nationalist newspapers in Dublin, were noted by the CI who described the article as seditious.²⁸ Under pressure from the directors of the newspaper, who repudiated the editorial, O'Kelly was forced to exercise a pro-Redmondite line in future editorials. Nevertheless, he published advanced nationalist views and articles that were negatively disposed towards war whenever the opportunity arose.²⁹ Redmond's Woodenbridge speech was well received by unionists in Kildare many of whom offered support to the Volunteers. Lord Mayo donated £15 and his near neighbour, Colonel T.J. de Burgh £25.³⁰ The *Kildare Observer* commended Redmond and suggested that it was the duty of Irish and Ulster Volunteers to unite in defending the country.³¹ Colonel Francis Wogan-Browne, a prominent Catholic unionist and magistrate, motivated by Redmond's speech of 3 August, established a mounted volunteer corps, drawn from the gentry and farming

²² *LL*, 24 Oct. 1914.

²³ *KO*, 10 Oct, 21 Nov. 1914; Pdraig O'Connor (BMH, WS 813, p. 1). Hubert O'Connor a prominent officer in the Celbridge Volunteers enlisted and died in Flanders in 1915. See obituary, *The Clongowian* (1917), pp 119-20 (Clongowes Wood College Archive).

²⁴ Patrick Colgan (BMH, WS 850, p. 6); *KO*, 10 Oct 1914.

²⁵ *LL*, 7 Nov. 1914.

²⁶ CI, Kildare, Nov. 1914; Dec. 1914 (TNA, CO 940/95).

²⁷ Michael O'Kelly (BMH, WS 1,155, p. 12); *LL*, 10 Oct. 1914.

²⁸ CI, Kildare, Sept. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/94).

²⁹ CI Kildare, Oct. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/95); Michael O'Kelly (BMH, WS 1,155, p. 12). *LL*, 4 Oct. 1914.

³⁰ *Northern Whig*, 5 Aug. 1914; *II*, 10 Aug. 1914; Thomas Hennessy, *Dividing Ireland: World War 1 and partition* (London, 1998), pp 61, 66.

³¹ *KO*, 22 Aug. 1914.

class. It was named the 'Kildare Horse,' but did not progress as anticipated. When the corps assembled in Naas Barracks for its first drill on 13 August, its leadership, including Wogan-Browne, refused to sign a Volunteer enrolment form because it would have suggested support for home rule.³² The mounted corps was an example of the somewhat unreal atmosphere in August and September 1914 which led to some unionist-nationalist military collaboration. The corps continued to drill afterwards, with newspapers reporting their activity until early November.³³ Although unionists and nationalists supported the war, their motivations differed considerably. Unionist support emanated from a loyalty to king and country while nationalists were motivated by nationalist objectives such as support for the IPP and the implementation of home rule. This spirit of unusual cooperation, however, did not last, and by September had dissipated as it had in other counties.

In the early days of the war several German and Austrian nationals were detained in Dublin. The RIC throughout Kildare followed this up by searching for foreigners and on 10 August, two travelling Jews were taken into custody but released when it was discovered they were Russian emigrants living in Dublin. Two days later three priests staying in a Naas Hotel who were suspected as Austrians were also detained. However, following interrogation they were released when it was discovered they were Belgian nationals on holiday in Ireland.³⁴

On the outbreak of war, support for the army throughout Kildare revived overnight, particularly for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers (RDF) based in Naas. Many of the non-officer rank in the RDF were nationalist in politics and supporters of home rule. A considerable number of the Volunteer drill-instructors were ex-British army, and most were army reservists. When over 300 RDF in Naas left for Flanders on 6 August, they were given a spectacular send-off. The band of the Naas Volunteers led a procession, followed by the regimental band which played *A Nation Once Again*, *Who Fears to speak of 98*, and *The Wearing of the Green* as the men marched to the train station at Sallins. The soldiers joined in the singing and even cheered for home rule!³⁵ Similar scenes occurred in Dublin when the Royal Field Artillery from Kildare left for the front on 15 August 1914.³⁶ In the Curragh camp with large numbers of new recruits arriving to avail of training facilities, existing quarters were soon filled to capacity and tented accommodation had to be provided. By early October an estimated 14,000 soldiers were camped at the Curragh, in addition to those in Kildare

³² *LL*, 15 Aug. 1914; *KO*, 15 Aug. 1914.

³³ *KO*, 7 Nov. 1914.

³⁴ *LL*, 15 Aug. 1914; For details of the treatment of aliens see, Clare O'Neill, 'The Irish home front 1914-1918 with particular reference to the treatment of Belgian refugees, Prisoners of war, enemy aliens and war casualties' (PhD, NUI Maynooth, 2006).

³⁵ *LL*, 8 Aug. 1914; *KO*, 8 Aug. 1914.

³⁶ Catriona Pennell, 'Going to war' in John Horne (ed.), *Our war: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008), p. 40.

and Newbridge. The influx resulted in training areas becoming inadequate and additional shooting ranges were constructed.³⁷ This vast resident army led to an economic bonanza for shopkeepers and publicans in the towns surrounding the Curragh. Reports suggest that in the nearest licensed premises to the Curragh at Maddenstown up to fifty soldiers socialize during the daytime. In an effort to prevent drunkenness the authorities made an order restricting opening hours.³⁸

In Kildare, Redmond's supporters did not flock to enlist after Woodenbridge. The CI reported that many preferred to stay at home and leave the fighting to others.³⁹ Nonetheless, over 400 men from Athy had enlisted by the end of 1914. Active members of the National Volunteers were prepared to fight and defend Ireland as a home defence force, but not to carry the fight abroad as members of the British army.⁴⁰ Throughout October, drill practice among the National Volunteers declined quickly with the CI predicting that interest would soon disappear completely.⁴¹ The position of the National Volunteers was not helped by the War Office which refused to recognize them in the same way as the Ulster Volunteers. One of Kitchener's many snubs to the Irish war effort included the return of proposed colours for the Irish brigade produced by the Countess of Mayo's School of Art.⁴² Although Lord Mayo had supported the National Volunteers in August 1914, his clumsy public statements in the House of Lords in January 1915 alleging cowardice on the part of the Irish Volunteers hindered enlistment.⁴³ This related to a demonstration in Dublin on 7 December at which Irish Volunteers in uniform distributed anti-recruiting leaflets. Mayo alleged that if the Germans came to Ireland the Irish Volunteers would 'most likely run away'.⁴⁴ Nationalists in Kildare denounced the statement arguing that it might be misinterpreted as referring to the Redmondite National Volunteers.⁴⁵ In an attempt to limit the damage, Mayo made the situation worse by suggesting that if Irish nationalists had supported the Irish National Volunteers with money and arms to the same degree that Ulstermen had supported their Volunteers, the force would have been efficient and capable of resisting invasion.⁴⁶ This seemed to imply that the Ulster Volunteers were superior to the National Volunteers. On 13 January 1915 Naas Board of Guardians passed a

³⁷ *LL*, 12 Sept. 1914; *II*, 10. Oct. 1914; Con Costello, *A most delightful station*, p. 281.

³⁸ Con Costello, *A most delightful station*, p. 284.

³⁹ CI Kildare, Oct. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/95).

⁴⁰ *KO*, 2 Jan 1915.

⁴¹ CI Kildare, Oct. 1914 (TNA, CO 904/95).

⁴² Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 39; Lady Fingall, *Seventy years young: memories of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingall* (Dublin, 1991), p. 348. On Mayo and the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland and guild of Irish Art-Workers, see *FJ*, 5 May 1915.

⁴³ *II*, 9 Jan. 1915; *IT*, 9 Jan. 1915; *LL*, 16 Jan. 1915.

⁴⁴ *Hansard (Lords)*, 8 Jan. 1915, vol. 18, col. 358-60; *II*, 9 Jan. 1915; *LL*, 16 Jan. 1915.

⁴⁵ *FJ*, 12 Jan. 1915; *IT*, 12 Jan. 1915.

⁴⁶ *FJ*, 14 Jan. 1915.

resolution urging the government to intern Mayo as the speech impeded recruitment. Kildare County Council condemned Mayo's behaviour as 'scandalous and murderous'.⁴⁷ Mayo's credibility was damaged and he made no further public comments about the Volunteers for the remainder of the war.

As elsewhere, the agricultural sector in Kildare received a substantial boost due to an extraordinary price increase in almost every farm-related product. Conversely, the price of imported foodstuffs and other essential goods such as sugar, bread and tea rose sharply in the first week of August. Sugar increased from 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ *d.* to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* per pound almost overnight on 5 August.⁴⁸ Commodities in the shops in Newbridge and the Curragh camp, where members of the military largely did their shopping, also increased in price.⁴⁹ By mid-August, increased prices even outpaced price rises in Britain as it was reported that bacon was selling in Athy at 1s. 6*d.* while it was fetching 1s. 2*d.* in Manchester. By late August it was reported that householders in Naas had to pay 1*d.* per pound more for their meat since the war began.⁵⁰

In terms of farm produce the price of cattle, the largest sector in Kildare, increased significantly. Between 1910 and 1913 the average price for 3-year-old cattle was £12 18s 9*d.* By the end of 1915 it was £18 2s. 9*d.*, a staggering increase. There were similar sizeable increases in the prices of lamb, mutton, pork, butter, eggs, and particularly wool which increased by over fifty-five percent in the twelve-month period between December 1914 and December 1915.⁵¹ The price of crops also increased dramatically; wheat was fifty-one percent more expensive at the end of 1915 than twelve months previously.⁵² The equine industry also benefitted handsomely. On the outbreak of the war, the cavalry divisions at the Curragh requisitioned horses, beginning with all the horses at the Kildare hunt stable at Jigginstown.⁵³ While temporary arrangements were made to requisition the horses, unusually there was no formal remount depot in Curragh. On 30 March 1916, Denis Kilbride raised both points in the House of Commons and proposed that a remount depot be opened in the Curragh so that Kildare farmers could offer their horses to help the war effort.⁵⁴ His intervention was successful as a remount depot was opened two weeks later. Despite being plagued with difficulties, the new remount depot eventually provided employment for 200 men for the duration of the war, with a solid weekly wage of £1. 5s. ⁵⁵

⁴⁷ *LL*, 16 Jan. 1915; Minutes, 20 Jan. 1915 (KCoA, county council meetings).

⁴⁸ *LL*, 8 Aug. 1914; *KO*, 8 Aug, 15 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁹ *LL*, 8 Aug 14; Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 279.

⁵⁰ *KO*, 22, 29 Aug. 1914.

⁵¹ *Agricultural Statistics, Ireland 1917-18* (Cd. 8453), p. 10.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵³ *LL*, 8 Aug. 1914.

⁵⁴ *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 30 Mar. 1916, vol. 81 col. 905.

⁵⁵ For details see Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 289.

As consumers suffered inflated prices, the families of servicemen received generous financial benefits known as separation allowances. The allowance to the wife of a soldier at the front amounted to 1s. 1d. per day with an extra 2d. a day for each dependent child and 3s. 6d. from compulsory allotment out of her husband's pay. From 1 March 1915 the allowance was increased. Wives of privates and corporals were paid 12s. 6d. per week with further allowances for children, ranging from 5s. per week for the first child to 3s. 6d. for a second child and an additional 2s. for each child thereafter. A sergeant's wife got an extra 2s. 6d. over and above these rates.⁵⁶ In October 1915 the weekly payment of separation allowances from Naas post office alone amounted to £155.⁵⁷ The separation allowances far exceeded most wages earned at the time. Labourers earned between 15s. and 18s. weekly although agricultural wages could be as low as 13s.⁵⁸ By contrast, Mary Reilly, the wife of a soldier from Naas in the RDF with three children, received an allowance of 23s.⁵⁹ While the vast majority of women in receipt of allowance behaved splendidly, the conduct of a minority was a cause of concern. With extra cash and an inability to control finances some were convicted of various charges of anti-social behaviour mainly drunkenness. According to Holly Dunbar, the First World War exacerbated concerns about women's drunkenness which was seen as unnatural. The number of women imprisoned for the offence during the war years did not increase but with many young men away at war it surpassed the number of men by 1915. Statistics for 1916 indicate that sixty-five percent of those who were imprisoned for drunkenness were women, bringing greater attention to an issue that had not in real terms become worse.⁶⁰ Nonetheless the perception was that this problem was prevalent in all the garrison towns in County Kildare in addition to Athy. The increased focus on this behaviour, which was not likely to encourage enlistment, caused unease in the county.⁶¹

The welfare of troops was another concern and various fund-raising activities for the RDF took place from the beginning of the war. A stream of wealthy and well-connected people in the county, mainly of unionist background, volunteered to assist on relief committees. Many ladies were to the forefront of this relief work. Numerous fund-raising events such as collections, dances, fêtes, sales of produce and raffles

⁵⁶ *KO*, 22 Aug. 1914; Frank Taaffe, 'Athy and the Great War' in Nolan & McGrath (eds), *Kildare*, p. 589; Paul Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory* (Oxford, 2013), p. 343.

⁵⁷ *KO*, 9 Oct. 1915.

⁵⁸ Pádraig Yeates, *City in wartime: Dublin, 1914-1918* (Dublin, 2011), p. 48; McCarthy, *Waterford*, p. 32; Thomas P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English soldiers? The times and world of a southern Catholic Irishman (1876-1916) enlisting in the British army during the First World War* (Liverpool, 1995), pp 103-7.

⁵⁹ *KO*, 4 Sept. 1915.

⁶⁰ Holly Dunbar, 'Women and alcohol during the First World War in Ireland', *Women's History Review*, 27: 3 (2018), pp 381-, 392.

⁶¹ Costello, *A most delightful station*, p. 296; Durney, *In time of war*, pp 120-4.

took place all over the county. Regular supplies of comforts were sent to the troops at the front.⁶² Comforts were also provided to prisoners of war in Germany.⁶³ By mid-1916 it was reported that forty-one men from the county were in German prison camps.⁶⁴ County Kildare RDF sent out fortnightly food parcels to all the RDF prisoners of war who were confined in over twenty different camps in Germany.⁶⁵

Kildare hosted a small number of Belgian refugees who were accommodated for a short time in Celbridge workhouse.⁶⁶ The first batch of refugees recounted graphic stories of German atrocities on their arrival on 17 October 1914.⁶⁷ The refugees were treated as guests and care was taken to avoid linking them with the stigma of pauperism.⁶⁸ Collections for the refugees were taken up in local Catholic parishes and were well-supported.⁶⁹ Some of the Belgians from a well-to-do background were provided with dwellings more in keeping with their socio-economic status. Madam de Monck was accommodated in Straffan Lodge, a two-story over basement residence and provided with maintenance for herself and her household which included wages for servants.⁷⁰ The sojourn in Celbridge workhouse was relatively brief and gradually the refugees were transferred between mid-December and late March 1915 when the last eleven left Celbridge for Dunshaughlin.⁷¹ The plight of the Belgians was used for pro-war propaganda and recruitment purposes. At a dance in Naas town hall for the local Belgian refugees fund, the hall was decorated with Union Jacks and Irish, Belgian and French flags.⁷² Similarly, at a subsequent concert, the Union Jack and Belgian flag provided the backdrop while children danced jigs and three-hand reels.⁷³ However, the special treatment of Madam de Monck, who remained in Straffan Lodge until November 1915, was hardly an incentive to support the war effort.⁷⁴

⁶² RDF website: <http://www.dublin-fusiliers.com/Naas/naas.html> (accessed 2 May 2016); *KO*, 24 Apr. 1915; *IT*, 7 Nov. 1914, 23 Oct. 1915.

⁶³ *KO*, 31 Oct 1914.

⁶⁴ *KO*, 10 June 1916. On POW camps see Heather Jones, *Violence against prisoners of war in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁶⁵ *LL*, 11 Sept. 1915.

⁶⁶ Clare O'Neill, 'The Irish home front 1914-1918 with particular reference to the treatment of Belgian refugees, prisoners of war, enemy aliens and war casualties' (PhD, NUI Maynooth, October 2006), pp 52-83; Fionnuala Walsh, 'The impact of the First World War on Celbridge, Co. Kildare', *JKAS*, 20:3 (2012-13), 295-7.

⁶⁷ Belgian Refugee Committee minutes, 21 Oct. 1914, p. 7 (UCDA, Belgian Refugees' Committee, P105); *KO*, 24 Oct. 1915.

⁶⁸ *LL*, 31 Oct. 1914, 17 Apr. 1915; *KO*, 16 Jan., 6 Mar. 1915.

⁶⁹ Bishop Browne of Cloyne to Archbishop Walsh, 31 Dec. 1914 (Dublin Diocesan Archives, William Walsh papers, 384/4 Bishops 1914); *LL*, 21 Nov. 1914.

⁷⁰ Belgian Refugee Committee, 29 Apr. 1915; p. 80; 1 Sept 1915, p. 117 (UCDA, P105).

⁷¹ *KO*, 3 Apr. 1915.

⁷² *KO*, 28 Nov. 1914.

⁷³ *KO*, 17 Apr. 1915.

⁷⁴ Belgian Refugee Committee, 1 Sept. 1915, p. 117.

Reporting of the war in the press was curtailed by censorship. The Defence of the Realm Act, enacted four days after hostilities began, gave the authorities power to suppress criticism of the war effort.⁷⁵ The Kildare local press reflected the viewpoints of their respective readership in reporting the war. The *Kildare Observer* published selected accounts of bravery and heroism whereas the *Leinster Leader* was more impartial in its coverage of military engagements. When conscription became an issue in 1915 the divergent stances of the two newspapers became more noticeable with the *Observer* generally supportive.⁷⁶ Although publishing recruitment advertisements and enlistment figures, the *Leader* was strongly opposed to conscription.⁷⁷ Both newspapers generally supported the Liberal government. However, this consensus ended when the new coalition administration which included Tory and Unionist ministers was formed in May 1915. While the *Observer* supported the inclusion of new cabinet ministers the *Leader* was vocal in its opposition.⁷⁸ The tone of two other nationalist newspapers with a circulation in Kildare, the *Meath Chronicle* and *Carlow's Nationalist and Leinster Times*, were representative of the slightly more radical viewpoint in neighbouring counties. This may have encouraged Michael O'Kelly to continually promote an advanced nationalist agenda in the *Leader*, despite Kildare's status as a moderate nationalist county. Although press censorship seemed to work effectively, the weekly reports of mounting casualties had a negative effect in Kildare.

The Gallipoli campaign had a significant impact on Kildare. Reports from the first week of May 1915 indicated that large numbers of officers and men from the county had been killed.⁷⁹ A list of casualties, including a number of officers connected to Kildare and the RDF depot in Naas was also published.⁸⁰ Despite strict censorship, the horror of the Dardanelles campaign became evident by 7 July when casualties arrived in the RDF depot military hospital in Naas and were allowed visitors.⁸¹ Letters from the front highlighting the bravery of Irish soldiers were published occasionally with many including graphic details of loss of life. For instance, an account detailing an ill-conceived military manoeuvre was published in the *Leinster Leader* in which William Harris from Athy described how there were only four survivors of his

⁷⁵ *LL*, 15 Aug. 1914; Donal Ó Drisceoil, 'Keeping disloyalty within bounds?: British media control in Ireland, 1914-19', *IHS* 38:149 (2012), 52-69.

⁷⁶ *KO*, 22, 29 May 1915.

⁷⁷ *LL*, 2 Nov. 1915.

⁷⁸ *KO*, 29 May 1915; *LL*, 5 June 1915.

⁷⁹ *LL*, 8 May 1915. On Gallipoli, see Philip Orr, *Field of bones: an Irish division at Gallipoli* (Dublin, 2006); Tom Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki: the story of the Irish regiments in the Great War, 1914-18* (London, 1992), pp 104-5, 152; R.R. James, *Gallipoli* (London, 2004), p. 348; James Durney, *In a time of war: Kildare, 1914-18* (Sallins, 2014), p. 60.

⁸⁰ *KO*, 8, 22 May 1915.

⁸¹ *KO*, 10 July 1915.

platoon.⁸² Letters from servicemen at the front published in the *Kildare Observer* had a more jingoistic tone with detail not likely to damage morale. Nonetheless, many letters captured the excessive losses, with W.J. Clery, a bank official from Naas, writing on 19 September, that his brother, who was an officer in the 6th RDF, had been killed and that his own company had been 'practically cut up, and about four officers left in the battalion out of about twenty-five'.⁸³ Although the full particulars of the war were censored, the local populace was in no doubt about the scale of the carnage. This did not entice further enlistment.⁸⁴

Between the outbreak of the war in August 1914 and October 1916, some 1,644 recruits from County Kildare enlisted from an estimated total of 2,581 men deemed available for military service. This represented about sixty-four per cent of the available number. Neighbouring counties ranged from a high of seventy-one per cent in Carlow to thirty-one per cent in Meath.⁸⁵ In this light the figures for Kildare, a garrison county, appear to be disappointing. In the twelve-month period from 15 December 1914, 689 Kildare men enlisted which was the second highest in Leinster. Of these, 611 were Catholic and seventy-eight Protestant.⁸⁶ It was estimated that 390 or sixty per cent of these were National Volunteers. Contemporaneous press reports suggested that a staggering 800 men from Athy were at the front in mid-1915. Celbridge, a smaller town, provided as many as 200 recruits, of which fifty-four percent had been National Volunteers.⁸⁷

Inevitably, as casualties mounted, enthusiasm for the war waned. This was evident by the summer of 1915. During the first five months of the war, sixty-four Kildare men had died in the conflict, with another 220 fatalities during 1915.⁸⁸ The first sign of disenchantment was noticed when the number of recruits began to fall. Nationally, 95,152 men enlisted between August 1914 and February 1916. A total of 75,342 enlisted during the first year of the war but only 19,323 joined the army between August 1915 and February 1916.⁸⁹ Heavy losses prompted calls for a more intense recruitment drive to fill depleted ranks. Conscription began to be discussed

⁸² *LL*, 7 Aug. 1915.

⁸³ *KO*, 23 Oct. 1915.

⁸⁴ Terence Denman, *Ireland's unknown soldiers: the 16th (Irish) division in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Dublin, 1992), pp 131-2.

⁸⁵ *Statement giving particulars regarding men of military age in Ireland, 1916* (Cd. 8390) vol. xvii, p. 3. See also David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 388.

⁸⁶ Mac Giolla Choille (ed.), *Intelligence notes*, pp 142, 146, 181-2; Walsh, 'The impact of the First World War on Celbridge', 290; Durney, *Time of war*, p. 55.

⁸⁷ *KO*, 5 June; 11 Sept; 23 Oct. 15; Walsh, 'The impact of the First World War on Celbridge', 290.

⁸⁸ Durney, *Time of war*, p. 197.

⁸⁹ Patrick Callan, 'Recruiting for the British army in Ireland during the first World War', *Irish Sword*, 17 (1987-90), 42.

and was used as a threat to entice enlistment.⁹⁰ The formation of a coalition government in May 1915 generated considerable anxiety in Kildare about the fate of home rule and the possibility of conscription. At a county council meeting on 31 May 1915 several councillors claimed that Carson's appointment to government would undermine support for the war and enlistment in Ireland.⁹¹ The *Observer* linked the formation of the new ministry with the inevitability of conscription amid general fears that this would come to pass.⁹²

In an effort to stave off conscription, several IPP MPs, aided by local politicians at constituency level, assisted in a new recruitment drive across the country.⁹³ While John O'Connor wholeheartedly supported the war, Denis Kilbride was not as active. In August 1915 when the two shared a platform at a UIL meeting in Athy, Kilbride gave one of his only speeches on conscription pointing out that the measure would never become law so long as Redmond, Devlin and the IPP sat in parliament.⁹⁴ Many of the most prominent county councillors such as George Wolfe, Michael Fitzsimons, John Healy, Patrick Phelan, all stood side by side on platforms at recruiting meetings with MPs, army officers and local unionists such as Lord Frederick FitzGerald.⁹⁵

Despite Archbishop Walsh's lack of support for the war effort, many of his diocesan clergy assisted at recruiting meetings. Canon Mackey, parish priest of Athy, was one of the most vocal. Justifying the war effort at a meeting in Athy in August 1915, he declared that 'our soldiers are defending a cause both sacred and just.'⁹⁶ In November 1915 a letter from Bishop Foley was read at a recruiting meeting in Carlow acknowledging his support for recruitment. He felt that Ireland had contributed more proportionately than England or Scotland.⁹⁷ At the Church of Ireland Dublin diocesan synod on 15 November 1915, Archbishop Bernard expressed the view that 'we continue to give freely of our best ... and every able-bodied man that we could spare' because 'the cause of the Allies is the cause of Ireland no less than of Britain'.⁹⁸

By the early winter the public mood at recruitment meetings had become increasingly hostile with heckling and jeering a common occurrence. When John O'Connor denounced Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick at a meeting in Maynooth on 22 November a voice from the crowd called for a cheer for the bishop and a cheer was

⁹⁰ *KO*, 17 Apr. 1915.

⁹¹ Minutes, 31 May 1915 (KCoA, county council meetings); *KO*, 5 June 1915, *LL*, 5 June 1915.

⁹² *KO*, 29 May 1915.

⁹³ On IPP MPs and enlistment, see James McConnel, 'Recruiting sergeants for John Bull? Irish Nationalist MPs and enlistment during the early months of the Great War', *War in History* 14:4 (2007), 408-28.

⁹⁴ *KO*, 7 Aug. 1915.

⁹⁵ *LL*, 27 Nov. 1915.

⁹⁶ *KO*, 7 Aug 1915.

⁹⁷ *Irish Catholic*, 6 Nov. 1915; Miller, *Church, state and nation in Ireland*, pp 313-14.

⁹⁸ *FJ*, 16 Nov. 1915.

given.⁹⁹ The bishop had taken issue with the pro-British policy of the IPP and incurred the wrath of the party when he publicly criticized Redmond's description of attempts by Irish emigrants in Liverpool at avoiding conscription as cowardly.¹⁰⁰ When Lieutenant Delaney urged recruits to come forward and fill the gaps in the Irish regiments, a voice from the crowd suggested he fill them with the King's Own Scottish Borderers and that he should remember Bachelors Walk. Unsurprisingly, despite the attendance of high-profile speakers no recruits came forward.¹⁰¹ The army was now so desperate for recruits that offenders on minor charges had their summons withdrawn if they undertook to enlist. At the conclusion of Robertstown petty sessions in early December, the sergeant produced a number of warrants against men who had joined the army since the summonses had been issued, and, as a result, charges were cancelled.¹⁰² Attempts to compel some to enlist also occurred at this time. Michael Cosgrove from Timahoe near Robertstown, who had found work in County Kilkenny, was dismissed from his employment so he would have to enlist. Instead, he obtained employment in Dublin and joined the Irish Volunteers.¹⁰³

Conscription was introduced in Britain in January 1916, but not in Ireland. Although Ireland's exclusion was greeted with relief in Kildare, a fresh recruiting scheme caused disquiet. Canvassers called to almost every house in the county with householders having to explain why eligible family members had not joined the army.¹⁰⁴ The diary of Barbara Synnott, a member of the Kildare gentry, who undertook a recruitment drive near Naas in early 1916 at the request of the Central Council for the Organization of Recruiting in Ireland, captures how unpopular the war and recruitment had become.¹⁰⁵ One man whose son was of military age, indicated that he would rather see his son shot by the Germans at his own door than let him go to the front where so many went to be killed. Another informed her that he was not going to fight and if the authorities brought in conscription, 'they can shoot me or put me in prison'.¹⁰⁶ The war had become very unpopular, with politicians, whose word was previously unquestioned, now facing mounting criticism. As a member of the Athy Board of Guardians put it: 'the people could not understand the attitudes of the MPs going about as recruiting sergeants and at the same time saying they were

⁹⁹ *LL*, 27 Nov. 1915; see also Jerome aan de Wiel, 'Mgr. O'Riordan, Bishop Dwyer and the shaping of new relations between nationalist Ireland and the Vatican during World War One,' <http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/o%27dwyer,%20edward%20thomas%2019.pdf>, (accessed 24 Apr. 2016).

¹⁰⁰ *Munster News*, 10 Nov. 1915; *KO*, 20 Nov 1915; Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer of Limerick, 1842-1917* (Dublin, 2003), pp 368-9.

¹⁰¹ *LL*, 27 Nov. 1915.

¹⁰² *KO*, 4 Dec. 1915.

¹⁰³ Sworn statement by Michael Cosgrove, 13 Mar. 1937 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF4156).

¹⁰⁴ *KO*, 29 Jan. 1915.

¹⁰⁵ David Synnott, 'Diary of a recruiting drive for the British armed forces undertaken by Barbara Synnott, Co. Kildare, 24 January to 2 February 1916', *JKAS*, 19:3 (2004-5), 549-58.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 533, 545.

opposed to conscription (then) telling the people if enforced they would take to the hillsides with them'.¹⁰⁷

County Kildare heads the list of the Leinster counties as regards the number enlisting up to 1916. The proportion of enlistments in comparison with the number of military age is one-fourth higher than any other county in the province. Outside Ulster the only other county with the same level of enlistment was Waterford.¹⁰⁸ Although the garrison status of the county was a factor for the high-level of enlistments, two towns, Athy and Celbridge where recruitment was above average were also contributing factors.

The outbreak of war, which brought to an end the political tensions caused by the home rule crisis, was felt in a more immediate and visible way in Kildare than in most other parts of Ireland due to the army presence in the county. From the beginning, there was widespread support in Kildare for the war. The local economy benefitted greatly, both through an increased need for materials and animals, and as a result of the financial assistance that was made available to soldiers and their dependants. With John Redmond enjoying unqualified support among nationalists, his offer to provide volunteers for home defence unified all strands of nationalist and unionist opinion in the county, albeit for a short time. However, the impact of his Woodenbridge speech, split the Volunteers and led to the virtual demise of the National Volunteers. Although the rank and file unionists were not visibly active in politics, they were to the forefront in assisting in the war effort. Unionists women dominated comfort committees that provided war-related relief to soldiers at the front. Despite the initial enthusiasm for the war, numbers enlisting in Kildare began to decline after the summer of 1915, with more noticeable reductions outside the garrison towns. The extent to which the war had become unpopular and the reluctance of young men to enlist in many areas of Kildare proved a challenge for the authorities who began to consider conscription. In addition to the waning enthusiasm for the war effort, the political tensions that emerged due to the appointment of Carson to the cabinet in the summer of 1915, had a further negative effect on enlistment as well as evoking criticism from nationalist bodies in Kildare. Despite an initial outcry, local politicians continued to support the government's policy on war and enlistment. By the winter of 1915 signs of a breach between local MPs and constituents had emerged. John O'Connor's criticism of Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick was indicative of a collapse in support for the war, but also an early sign of waning support for Redmondism and the IPP.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *LL*, 13 Nov. 1915.

¹⁰⁸ *KO*, 18 Nov. 1916.

¹⁰⁹ *LL*, 27 Nov. 1915.

4: Rebellion and its Aftermath: Kildare in 1916

The 1916 Rising and the response of the British government to it was a watershed in Irish history. The small Kildare rebel participation in the Rising has been well documented.¹ By contrast, the central role of the extensive numbers of British army based in the Curragh camp in suppressing the insurgency has not been adequately explored. Augustine Birrell, Irish chief secretary, told the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland that the outbreak was a failure from the beginning because reinforcements arrived quickly and in number from the Curragh before the end of the first day of the rising.² This chapter utilizes accounts from army field journals to shed greater light on how the British army stationed in Kildare responded to the Rising. The unpopularity of the executions and an emerging political prisoner issue, which had a profound impact nationally, influenced the political mood in Kildare. Public disquiet saw the beginning of a changing political landscape with prisoner support groups emerging and forming a base for an advanced nationalist movement which challenged IPP dominance.

Advanced nationalists, who were small in number in Kildare, vigorously opposed the war. Following the Volunteer split only two Irish Volunteer companies – Maynooth and Celbridge – remained active. Both were influenced by well-known individuals in their respective areas such as Domhnall Ua Buachalla in Maynooth and Art O'Connor in Celbridge.³ Other prominent advanced nationalists such as Michael O'Kelly, Éamon Ó Mordhain and Jack Fitzgerald either fronted depleted companies or served as individual Irish Volunteers.⁴ During 1915 a number of events gave the local organization an impetus that led to a revival. In July the annual Wolfe Tone Bodenstown commemoration attracted an attendance in excess of 2,000.⁵ Some of the Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army who were accompanied by their leader, James Connolly, were armed with rifles and bayonets.⁶ They were joined by local contingents of Irish Volunteers and National Volunteers from Newbridge, Naas and Kill.⁷ Addressing the gathering, Thomas Clarke presciently indicated that 'the time for words is past ... it is now action and action alone'.⁸ Clarke, who fronted an IRB military

¹ Patrick Colgan, 'The Maynooth Volunteers in 1916', *An tÓglach*, 8 May 1926, 3-5.

² *Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland: report of commission* (June 1916), Cd. 8279, p. 26.

³ Domhnall Ó Buachalla (BMH WS 194, pp 1-2); Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 6).

⁴ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 9); Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, pp 1-2); Thomas Harris (BMH WS 320, p. 3).

⁵ Reports of attendance varied. The CI suggested 1,500, CI Kildare, July 1915 (TNA, CO 904/97); 2,000 according to *II*, 21 June 1915; and 9,000 according to the *LL*, 26 June 1915.

⁶ Thomas Pugh (BMH WS 397, p. 22); *FJ*, 21 June 1915.

⁷ *LL*, 26 June 1915; *KO*, 26 June 1915.

⁸ *FJ*, 21 June 1915. On Clarke, see Gerard MacAtasney, *Tom Clarke: life, liberty, revolution* (Sallins, 2013); Michael T. Foy, *Tom Clarke: the true leader of the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2014).

council along with Seán Mac Diarmada, gave the clearest signal yet to militant activists that they would soon be called into action. In his opening remarks he addressed both Irishmen and Irishwomen, indicating that both genders would be expected to serve. Unambiguously, he declared that ‘... the rifle is taking the world over to-day and is going to talk in Ireland too.’⁹ Although the event was monitored by the RIC, no alarm bells were sounded. The CI simply detailed the size of the attendance and the different groups present.¹⁰

The second event was the funeral of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa on 1 August 1915 which saw an involvement by the Kilcock branch of the National Volunteers.¹¹ One former member, Jim O’Keeffe, who was living in Dublin, acted as a pall bearer and one of the firing squad who discharged a volley over the grave.¹² The second half of 1915 saw a re-alignment of Volunteer companies in Kildare as many National Volunteers switched their allegiance to the Irish Volunteers. The Kill National Volunteers was one example.¹³ Similarly, a split in the Athgarvan Volunteers in the autumn of 1915 saw the majority go over to the Irish Volunteers.¹⁴ A section of National Volunteers in Kilcock did likewise in November 1915.¹⁵ The emergence of Irish Volunteer companies signalled the beginning of a period in which an even greater level of militancy was to emerge.

Ted O’Kelly, a medical student from Maynooth and a member of the IRB, was appointed the Irish Volunteer organizer for Kildare, Carlow and Kilkenny. His brief in Kildare was to re-organize local Volunteers so as to hamper troop movements from the county to the capital during the planned rising.¹⁶ From September 1915 O’Kelly based himself in the Prince of Wales Hotel, Newbridge almost opposite the Dublin entrance into Newbridge Military Barracks. His presence soon came to the attention of the local RIC which was aware that he held meetings with Jack Fitzgerald, the chairman of the GAA Kildare board, and William Jones, a demobilized army reservist and drill inspector of the Athgarvan Irish Volunteers.¹⁷ O’Kelly made rapid progress in promoting and re-organizing the Irish Volunteers and gained the support of Ua

⁹ LL, 26 June 1915.

¹⁰ CI Kildare, June 1915 (TNA, CO 904/97).

¹¹ CI Kildare, Aug. 1915 (ibid.).

¹² O’Keeffe family papers, Thomas O’Keeffe, Kilcock, hand written account of Patrick O’Keeffe’s reminiscences of 1914-23.

¹³ Daithí Ó Corráin, ‘A most public spirited and unselfish man: the career and contribution of Colonel Maurice Moore, 1854-1939’ *Studia Hibernica*, 40 (2014) 104; LL, 26 June 1915; James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, p. 1).

¹⁴ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1531, p.1).

¹⁵ LL, 27 Nov. 1915; Patrick O’Keeffe, ‘My reminiscences of 1914-23’, 42.

¹⁶ Sworn statement by Edward O’Kelly, 27 Apr. 1935 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF4176); Daithí Ó Corráin, ‘J.J. O’Connell’s memoir of the Irish Volunteers, 1914-16, 1917’ *Analecta Hibernica*, 47 (2016), 15-6, 84.

¹⁷ CI Kildare, Sept. 1915 (TNA, CO 904/98).

Buachalla, Michael O'Kelly, Ó Modhráin and Art O'Connor.¹⁸ By October, O'Kelly had formed an organizing committee for north Kildare where at least five companies were now active with Michael Smyth, captain of the Athgarvan Company, appointed secretary.

Due to its strategic position on the edge of the Curragh, the Athgarvan Company was selected by O'Kelly for special activities, and, as a result, it became one of the most active units in the county. The activities included rifle and revolver practice. Ironically, these sessions took place in trenches on the Curragh created by the British army.¹⁹ In November, Smyth was given about £300 mandated by Volunteer headquarters in Dublin to purchase Martini Enfield rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition from the British army. This material was then passed to Dublin Volunteers.²⁰ Within six months of his arrival in Kildare, O'Kelly had re-organized a handful of companies working to a plan dictated by Volunteer headquarters.

As the military council's plans progressed, help was received from the United States. The most significant figure was Kildare-born John Devoy, president of Clan na Gael. He bankrolled the Rising and was reputedly responsible for the inclusion of the phrase – 'Ireland ... supported by her exiled children in America' in the 1916 proclamation.²¹ He was held in high-esteem in his native Kildare, even hero-worshiped by some advanced nationalists such as Patrick Colgan.²² Devoy was at the centre of the three-way transatlantic negotiations between Germany, the IRB and Clan na Gael from 1914 to 1916. Several couriers immediately before Easter Week working for Devoy delivered some \$25,000 to the Volunteers.²³ One of those who also acted as his personal envoy to Germany was fellow Kildare-man John Kenny, president of the New York branch of Clan na Gael.²⁴ Some of the funds couriered by Kenny were used in Kildare by Michael Smyth to purchase arms.²⁵

In the weeks before Easter 1916 there were rumours among the Kildare Irish Volunteers that a rising was imminent. According to the CI, three Volunteer companies with a total of fifty-three members were active. There was a similar level

¹⁸ Michael O'Kelly, (BMH WS 1155, pp 2, 13-14); Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1531, p. 2).

¹⁹ *FJ*, 24 Sept. 1915; Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1531, p. 2).

²⁰ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1531, p. 3); *Gaelic American*, 23 Jan. 1925; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* (Shannon, 1969), pp 403-4.

²¹ On Devoy see Terry Golway, *Irish rebel: John Devoy and America's fight for Ireland's freedom* (New York, 2008) and Robert Schmuhl, *Ireland's exiled children: America and the Easter Rising* (Oxford, 2016), pp 24-37.

²² Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 3).

²³ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 477.

²⁴ John Kenny, 'John Kenny's trip to Germany with plea to Kaiser' in *Gaelic American*, 26 Apr. 1924; Frances Christ, 'John Kenny, 1847-1924', *JKAS*, 20:4 (2014-15), 183-206. Kenny was born in Kilcock in 1847. After emigrating to New York he became a leading figure in Clan na Gael.

²⁵ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1531, p. 3).

of activity in the neighbouring counties.²⁶ Two weeks before Easter 1916, Tom Byrne, a captain in the Dublin Volunteers and a Boer War veteran, was appointed by Pearse to take charge of Kildare, with O'Kelly as second-in-command. Pearse wanted someone who had knowledge of explosives and military experience to carry out the military council's two-pronged plan for Kildare.²⁷ First, the various companies were to mobilize and march to Bodenstown churchyard. A railway bridge on the Great Southern line near Sallins was to be blown up to cut off rail transport and delay British army re-enforcements from reaching Dublin. Secondly, the Kildare units were to reconnoitre the area between the Curragh and Dublin and hamper communications by destroying telegraph and telephone lines as well as railway tracks and roads.²⁸ If the railway line in Kildare was closed then British army reinforcements – those in Kildare, numbering a quarter of the total number in Ireland, as well as troops from Cork, Limerick, Waterford – would be forced to route march from the Curragh to Dublin.

On 19 April, Byrne and O'Kelly travelled to Kildare and made contact with the active Volunteer companies. The following day, Byrne received a dispatch from Pearse indicating that the rising was definitely fixed for Easter Sunday with orders to mobilize all the companies and assemble in Bodenstown. These instructions were conveyed to all the companies. On Saturday evening explosives for the Sallins bridge operation were delivered by Miss Sheehan from Phibsboro, who travelled from Kingsbridge to Newbridge with sixty sticks of gelignite. At Newbridge station some soldiers helped her carry the bag containing the explosives.²⁹ The gelignite was hidden overnight near the Dominican College.³⁰

On Easter Sunday Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order published in the *Sunday Independent* virtually cancelled all mobilization activities. In Kildare some of the companies, unaware of the cancellation, were already heavily engaged in preparations. Michael Smyth had the Athgarvan Company mobilized for 11 a.m. Confusion then reigned when they became aware of MacNeill's countermand which was also sent around the country by courier. Ó Modhráin passed MacNeill's dispatch to other companies without consulting Ted O'Kelly. Smyth proceeded to Newbridge where O'Kelly instructed him to keep his unit mobilized.³¹ Similarly, the Maynooth Volunteers also mobilized. No sooner had they received MacNeill's order than a

²⁶ CI Kildare; Meath; Wicklow; Carlow; Kings County; Queens County, Mar. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/99).

²⁷ Thomas Byrne (BMH WS 564, pp 3-16). Byrne was born in Carrickmacross in 1877 and emigrated to Johannesburg 1896. In South Africa he joined McBride's Irish Brigade when the Boer War began in 1899. After the war he settled in America, subsequently returned to Ireland and joining the Volunteers in 1913.

²⁸ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 7).

²⁹ Thomas Byrne (BMH WS 564, pp 17-18).

³⁰ Thomas Harris (BMH WS, 320, p. 7).

³¹ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, pp 5-6).

second arrived from Pearse with the instruction that they 'were not to leave their district but to await further orders'.³² The Kildare leadership in Newbridge refused to believe the countermanding order.³³ Despite a dispatch from Pearse informing O'Kelly that activities were postponed until noon on Easter Monday, MacNeill's countermand had thrown everything into confusion.³⁴ Byrne and O'Kelly, assisted by Thomas Harris of the Prosperous company, had a busy afternoon on Sunday as they contacted companies to inform them of the postponement.³⁵ Overall, the response in many of the areas visited was poor.

The first incident of the Rising in Kildare involved Laois Volunteers, under Éamon Fleming, who blocked a section of the Kilkenny to Kildare railway line at Maganey just outside Athy. The aim was to disrupt troop movements from Rosslare. Telegraph wires were also cut.³⁶ Little went right for the Kildare Volunteers tasked with blowing up the railway bridge at Sallins. First, the expected support did not turn up at Bodenstown. Second, the bridge at Sallins was deemed too risky as the local RIC barracks was only fifty yards away. Sherlockstown bridge, one mile from Bodenstown graveyard was targeted instead.³⁷ It was expected that trains would cease operating from Kingsbridge when the Rising commenced and Byrne was puzzled when trains continued to use the line.³⁸ The trains were probably special military trains sent from Kingsbridge to the Curragh siding when the Rising began. The first of these passed under Sherlockstown bridge at approximately 1.30 pm.³⁹ Putting the safety of rail passengers first, Byrne aborted the demolition and curiously did not consider alternatives such as cutting the railway line which would have been straightforward with a small quantity of gelignite. The explosives were disposed of in rabbit-holes close to the railway line in Sherlockstown. Byrne and his two companions went to Maynooth and from there to Dublin.⁴⁰ A handful of other Volunteers such as Michael O'Kelly proceeded to Bodenstown, but suspecting that something was amiss, returned home.⁴¹

³² Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 7-9).

³³ Thomas Harris (BMH WS, pp 5-6); Thomas Byrne (BMH WS 564, p. 16).

³⁴ Sworn statement by Edward O'Kelly, 27 Apr. 1935 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF4176).

³⁵ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1531, p. 6); Thomas Harris (BMH WS 320, pp 6-7).

³⁶ Éamon Fleming statement (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF21802); Michael Gray (BMH WS 489, p. 4); CI Kildare, Apr. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/99).

³⁷ 'Details of finding explosives in Sherlockstown' (NAI, CSORP, 1916/18311); CI Kildare, Oct. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/101).

³⁸ Thomas Byrne (BMH WS 564, p. 18).

³⁹ Service time tables 1911-, trains Dept. Easter Monday, 24 Apr. 1916, details also on a handwritten note written on the blank page opposite, p.7. (Irish Railway Records Society Archives, Heuston station, Dublin).

⁴⁰ 'Details of finding explosives in Sherlockstown' (NAI, CSORP, 1916/18311); Thomas Byrne (BMH WS 564, p. 18).

⁴¹ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 16); *An tÓglach*, 22 May 1926, 5.

The countermand only partially explains the failure of the Volunteer operation in Kildare. Another contributory factor was the caution of Byrne and the IRB who did not share the plans with local company leaders. The failure to blow up the bridge or cut the railway line had a major bearing on the course of the Rising. A successful operation would have prevented troop movement by rail to Dublin possibly for several days and this could have prolonged the Rising. Notably, the attempted sabotage of rail transportation has not featured prominently in the historiography of the Rising. In Maynooth, the local company had received no word from Byrne or O’Kelly. On Easter Monday, Ua Buachalla cycled to Dublin in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain instructions.⁴² Meanwhile, Colgan mobilized twelve members of the Maynooth company. This included Patrick Weafer, captain of the local National Volunteer branch.⁴³ Byrne took command on his arrival and fifteen men proceeded to Maynooth College to obtain clerical support for their actions. The only armed incident involving a Volunteer and the RIC in Kildare during Easter Week was when Ted O’Kelly threatened two RIC constables with his revolver to prevent them from following. Monsignor Patrick Hogan, president of Maynooth College, appealed to the Volunteers to return home, stating ‘they were poor fools who were going to be slaughtered’. Although they ignored his appeals, he nevertheless blessed them.⁴⁴ The contingent followed the Royal Canal tow-path to Dublin and spent the night in Glasnevin cemetery before reaching the GPO on Easter Tuesday morning where they were welcomed by Pearse and Connolly.⁴⁵ This contingent was the only sizeable number of Volunteers to reach Dublin after the Rising had begun. It had been an exhausting journey, especially for the Newbridge based trio who covered thirty miles, twice the distance of the Maynooth company.

At least twenty-six Kildare-born men and women took part on the rebel side during the Rising in Dublin, with many distinguishing themselves. In addition to the contingent that arrived from Kildare, five others who were based in Dublin were members of the GPO garrison. These included Jim O’Neill, a senior Citizen Army officer, and the Burke siblings from Carbury.⁴⁶ Frank Burke was a former student of Pearse and a member of the Scoil Éanna company.⁴⁷ His sister, Eve, was a nurse who offered her services to Pearse when the rising broke out. She later assisted in dressing James Connolly’s wounds. At the evacuation she accompanied the wounded to Jervis

⁴² Domhnall Ó Buachalla (BMH WS 194, p. 2).

⁴³ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 8-10).

⁴⁴ Domhnall Ó Buachalla (BMH WS 194, p. 3); Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 9-11).

⁴⁵ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 10, 12); Thomas Byrne (BMH WS, pp 19-20).

⁴⁶ Sworn statement by James O’Neill, 22 July 1935 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF8368).

⁴⁷ Feargus de Búrca (BMH WS 694); Sworn statement by Frank Burke, 10 May 1935 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF1124); Gerry Cummins and Éanna de Búrca, *The Frank Burke story: patriot, scholar, GAA dual-star, guardian of Pearse’s vision and legacy* (Naas, 2016).

Street Hospital and avoided capture.⁴⁸ Two other Kildare men were members of Boland's Mills garrison and three were members of the Four Courts garrison.⁴⁹ Katie Daly, a 27-year-old Cumann na mBan activist from Kildare town was attached to the Four Courts garrison and has not featured in the historiography. She delivered dispatches to the garrisons on the north side of the city and ammunition to the GPO. Her statement to the Military Service Pensions Board conveyed the danger involved: 'if you were in the GPO or in the Four Courts you would have been safer, but we [Cumann na mBan] were out under fire, out in the streets looking at the dead men on the street, the whole time'.⁵⁰

George Geoghegan was the only rebel born in Kildare who was killed in the fighting. He was a member of a Citizen Army unit that captured City Hall and was shot through the head during heavy crossfire in the early hours of Wednesday 26 April.⁵¹ Although he was of Dublin background he was born in the Curragh camp in 1880 where his father, a member of the RDF, was stationed.⁵² Of the Kildare rebel participants, twenty-two were detained, including three who returned to Kildare. Among them was Thomas Harris who was wounded in the evacuation of the GPO and who was taken to Dublin Castle hospital where all the patients were closely guarded.⁵³ Ted O'Kelly received a foot wound in the evacuation of the GPO and was removed to Jervis Street Hospital, but on admission was recognized by medical staff who placed him among civilian casualties in the hospital.⁵⁴ Katie Daly avoided

⁴⁸ Sworn statement by Aoife de Búrca, 8 Feb. 1938 (IMI, MSPC, WMSP34REF53445). Personal communication with Éanna de Búrca. Mr de Búrca is son of Frank Burke. Jimmy Wren, *The GPO garrison: a biographical dictionary* (Dublin, 2015), p. 17.

⁴⁹ See the following pension files: Sworn statement by Mark Wilson, 16 Feb. 1926 (IMA, MSPC, 24SP9687); Sworn statement by Michael Cosgrove, 13 March 1937 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF4156); Sworn statement by Catherine Beattie, 8 Feb. 1938 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF40382); Sworn statement by Patrick Brennan, 7 July 1937 (IMS, MSPC, WMSP34REF1513); Sworn statement by Seán McGlynn, 21 June 1938 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF22827). For details of Patrick Brennan from Monasterevin, see *LL*, 14 Jan. 1967.

⁵⁰ Sworn statement by Catherine Beattie, 8 Feb. 1938 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF40382). Katie was also known as Dolly. For details of the activity of women activists, see Senia Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013), pp 170-81. For details of women activists attached to the Four Courts garrison see Mary McAuliffe & Liz Gillis, *We were there: 77 women of the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2016), pp 46-53.

⁵¹ R. Henderson (BMH WS 1686, p. 22); Identity statement for Republican Soldiers', 1916 (UCDA, Republican Soldiers Casualty Committee, P156/61); *1916 Sinn Féin Rebellion handbook* (Dublin, 1917), p. 264; James Durney, *On the one road: political unrest in Kildare, 1913-1994* (Naas, 2001), p. 25; http://www.nga.ie/1916-George_Geoghegan.php (accessed 23 July 2016).

⁵² George Geoghegan, death certificate, General register office (GRO), Dublin.

⁵³ Thomas Harris (BMH WS 320, p. 11).

⁵⁴ Sworn statement by Edward O'Kelly, 27 Apr. 1935 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF4176); Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 29-31).

arrest.⁵⁵ Astonishingly, Tom Byrne, the highest ranking Kildare Volunteer also escaped arrest and remained at liberty.⁵⁶

Four of the dead civilians were originally from Kildare. The case of Michael Kavanagh is one of the most widely documented. He was born in Ballinafagh, Prosperous in 1880 and moved to Dublin in his youth. A carter by occupation, on Easter Monday he was delivering theatrical equipment to the Shelbourne Hotel when his cart was commandeered for barricading purposes by the Citizen Army. He was shot in the head while remonstrating. Kavanagh lingered on until 17 May and was interred in Ballinafagh, his native area in Kildare.⁵⁷ Peter Connolly, a 39-year-old shopkeeper and native of Celbridge, was one of several civilians killed by the British military in the North King Street area on 29 April.⁵⁸ Edward Murphy, a 42-year-old from Kilcullen, and Francis Salmon, a teenager from Straffan, were accidentally shot dead.⁵⁹

British troops stationed in Kildare played a leading role in suppressing the rebellion in Dublin. Prior to Easter Week the military authorities were mindful of the threat posed by the Irish Volunteers, and were aware that a rising was contemplated.⁶⁰ A report in March 1916 indicated that 'young men of the (Irish) Volunteers were very anxious to start business at once, and were backed up strongly by Connolly of the Citizen Army, but the heads of the Volunteers were against the rising at once'.⁶¹ General Friend, General Officer Commanding (GOC), concerned at the deteriorating situation, wrote to Kitchener in March to request extra troops. Arrangements were made to have a reserve brigade sent at once to Ireland if required by the Irish authorities.⁶² Two weeks before the Rising, Major Ivor Price, intelligence officer at military headquarters, reported that the Sinn Féiners 'were working up for a rebellion in Ireland if they got the chance'.⁶³ This intelligence prompted Friend to request that a specialist be appointed to command the special reserve in the Curragh. Colonel Bertram Portal, who was engaged in active service in

⁵⁵ Sworn statement by Catherine Beattie, 8 Feb. 1938 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF40382).

⁵⁶ Tom Byrne (BMH WS 564, pp 23-7).

⁵⁷ Michael Kavanagh, death certificate, GRO, Dublin; *LL*, 27 May 1916; James Stephens, *The insurrection in Dublin* (New York, 1916), pp 21-4.

⁵⁸ <http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/bitstream/10599/11507/5/Fragment1916.pdf>, pp 12-3.

⁵⁹ <http://www.glasnevintrust.ie/visit-glasnevin/news/edward-murphy-1874-1916> (accessed 24 July 2016); *II*, 26 Oct. 2015.

⁶⁰ Geoffrey Sloan, 'The British State and the Irish Rebellion of 1916: an intelligence failure or a failure of response?' *Intelligence and national security*, 28:4 (2013), 453-94.

⁶¹ *Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland: minutes of evidence and appendix of documents* (1916), Cd. 8311, p. 7; *Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland: report of commission* (June 1916), Cd. 8279, p. 158.

⁶² *Commission on the Rebellion: report*, p. 166.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

France, was transferred to the Curragh in this capacity.⁶⁴ He was no stranger to Ireland, having lived in Kildare with his wife for long periods.⁶⁵ Portal recalled being warned by Friend two weeks before Easter that an outbreak was possible.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, Friend spent Easter in London and appointed General Lowe of the Curragh Command as acting GOC in his absence. When informed of the Rising on Easter Monday he immediately returned to Ireland.⁶⁷

At 12.30 p.m. on Easter Monday General Lowe received a telephone message of the serious disturbance in Dublin. Captain Henry de Courcy-Wheeler, the administrator in the Curragh in charge of the service side of the barracks and a native of Robertstown, County Kildare, was informed that 'the Sinn Féiners are out, they are trying to take over Dublin'.⁶⁸ Lowe mobilized the special column and dispatched it to Dublin, under Portal's command, on trains which first had to be requested from Kingsbridge. Service timetables for Kingsbridge confirm that four empty trains left the station for the Curragh siding between 1:10 p.m. and 2:10 p.m. on Easter Monday. By 5:20 p.m. the entire column comprising 1,600 officers and other ranks from the 3rd Reserved Cavalry Brigade had reached Dublin. The records also show an additional order later that evening for two trains to convey 1,000 troops from the Curragh siding which left at 8:25 p.m. and 8:50 p.m. respectively.⁶⁹ In addition, military reinforcements from Athlone, Templemore and Belfast were ordered to Dublin. Portal served as the operational commander throughout Easter Week making on-the-spot decisions, but working in close consultation with General Lowe who assumed direct command of the forces in Dublin on Easter Tuesday.⁷⁰ The fact that large numbers of troops could be deployed from the Curragh within five hours of the beginning of the Rising demonstrated the significance of the rail link. Arguably, in

⁶⁴ *Irish Mirror*, 29 Apr. 2013; *IT*, 4 May 2013; http://www.mullocksauctions.co.uk/lot-60736-ireland_easter_rising_diary.html?p=10 (accessed 15 Aug. 2016). Sir Bertram Portal (1866-1949), was commissioned in 1885 and fought in the Boer War before retiring in 1907. When WW1 broke out in 1914 he re-enlisted. In 1917, he was honoured by King George with a CB, for his services in Ireland. Later appointed commander of a cavalry brigade serving in France until 1918, he was promoted Brigadier General in 1919. Following his retirement he served as a county councillor in Hampshire, see details <http://thepeerage.com/p43338.htm> (accessed 30 July 2016).

⁶⁵ *II*, 23 June, 27 Sept. 1915; *FJ*, 25 Oct. 1915, 8 Feb. 1916; Costello, *Delightful station*, pp 295-6.

⁶⁶ <http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/british-colonels-diary-suggests-top-1860268> (accessed 15 Aug. 2016); Charles Townshend, *Easter Rising 1916: the Irish Rebellion* (London, 2005), p. 143.

⁶⁷ *1916 Rebellion handbook*, p. 172; Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Stroud, 2004), p. 79.

⁶⁸ Army field message book of H. de Courcy-Wheeler, 29 Apr. – 1 May 1916 (NLI, de Courcy-Wheeler papers, n.5670, p.5892); Alex Findlater, *1916 surrenders: Captain H.E. de Courcy-Wheelers eyewitness account* (Dublin, 2016).

⁶⁹ Trains Dept. Easter Monday, 24 Apr. 1916, also manuscript notes (Irish Railway Records Society Archives).

⁷⁰ *1916 Rebellion handbook*, p. 93.

military terms the failure of the Volunteers to destroy the rail link doomed the Rising to failure.

Throughout the remainder of the week, troops garrisoned in Kildare continued to spearhead the push against the insurgents. By Thursday evening, with Portal in charge on the ground, the military had formed a cordon around the O'Connell Street area.⁷¹ All the leading officers involved in Pearse's surrender were from the Curragh. Both Portal and de Courcy-Wheeler have left written accounts.⁷² Portal's prominent role in suppressing the Rising has largely been overlooked by historians and his diary has not featured in any 1916 publications.⁷³

De Courcy-Wheeler was ordered to report to Lowe's staff in Dublin on Easter Friday. He was initially ordered to keep guard over Pearse. Later he was sent to Dublin Castle where James Connolly was a prisoner to obtain his signature on a surrender document. Another duty was to transport and accompany Nurse O'Farrell to the various rebel commands around the city with surrender orders. One of the most difficult duties for de Courcy-Wheeler was the arrest of Countess Markievicz who was his wife's first-cousin.⁷⁴ He later gave evidence at her court-martial as well as those of Pearse, Connolly, MacDonagh and Mallin.⁷⁵ His respect for Markievicz was not just an empty gesture. His daughter Kathleen, born in the Curragh shortly before the Rising, was given the additional names Constance Gore after the countess.⁷⁶

De Courcy-Wheeler was one of many Kildare men serving in British army regiments in Dublin during Easter week. Three men from the county, Captain Alfred E. Warmington, Private James Duffy and Private William Mulraney were among the fatalities. Warmington from the 3rd Royal Irish Regiment, a veteran of the Boer War, was from Naas where his father was a local bank manager.⁷⁷ He was killed on Easter Monday while leading a charge on the Volunteer position at the South Dublin Union

⁷¹ Orders from General Lowe to Portal to maintain a cordon, 27 Apr. 1916 (NLI, de Courcy-Wheelers papers, MS 15,000/7/8-9).

⁷² Army field message book of H. de Courcy-Wheeler, 29 Apr. – 1 May 1916 (NLI, de Courcy-Wheeler papers, n.5670, p.5892); <http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/british-colonels-diary-suggests-top-1860268> (accessed 15 Aug. 2016).

⁷³ Townshend mentions Portal in a minor role following the surrender: Townshend, *Easter Rising*, p. 272; Foy and Barton only acknowledge Portal's role in establishing a line of posts from Kingsbridge to Trinity College, see Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p. 336.

⁷⁴ Alex Findlater, *Findlaters: the story of a Dublin merchant family, 1774-2001* (Dublin, 2001), pp 281-2 (Alex Findlater is a grandson of de Courcy-Wheeler); Anne Haverty, *Constance Markievicz: Irish revolutionary* (Dublin, 2016), pp 174-5.

⁷⁵ For details of arresting leading rebels and giving evidence at court-martials, see Army field message book of H. de Courcy-Wheeler, 29 Apr. – 1 May 1916 (NLI, de Courcy-Wheeler papers, n.5670, p.5892).

⁷⁶ Findlater, *Findlaters*, p. 287; *Burkes Irish family records* (London, 1976), p. 1204.

⁷⁷ KO, 6 May 1916; Volunteer, 'South Dublin Union area', *Capuchin Annual* (1966), 206-7, 209; Stannus Geoghegan, *The campaigns and history of the Royal Irish Regiment: Vol. II from 1900 to 1922* (Edinburgh, 1927), p. 159; Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 294.

as was Private Duffy who was originally from Killeel.⁷⁸ A veteran of the Boer War, Mulraney from Timahoe re-enlisted when war broke out in 1914 in the King's Royal Irish Hussars. He had been gassed on the Western Front and was recuperating in the military hospital in the Curragh when ordered to Dublin on Tuesday. He died the following day in an exchange on the north side of the city.⁷⁹

The inevitable arrests began as early as Easter Thursday when Michael O'Kelly, his 15-year-old nephew, Alf Sweeney, and five others from Naas were arrested by the RIC.⁸⁰ In swoops, both guilty and innocent were arrested over the following days, including Volunteers such as Michael Smyth, Éamon Ó Modhráin and Jack Fitzgerald.⁸¹ Five of the Rathangan National Volunteers who had been in contact with Ted O'Kelly during Holy Week were also arrested. Although CI Supple emphasized that the National Volunteers did not support the Rising, he was suspicious of their loyalty and pointed out that 239 members were not in sympathy with Redmond or the IPP.⁸² The Maynooth participants in the Rising, Patrick Weafer, Seán Graves and Joseph Ledwith were picked up on their return to Maynooth, court-martialled and sentenced to two years imprisonment.⁸³ Michael Smyth was given a similar sentence.⁸⁴ All the Kildare prisoners were initially confined in the Curragh camp.

A total of fifty-two Kildare men were arrested, including twenty-one who had actually participated in the Rising in Dublin. Eighteen were detained at the surrender in Dublin and three in Kildare.⁸⁵ A further five non-participants were also detained in Dublin.⁸⁶ Twenty-six were arrested in Kildare.⁸⁷ A number of prominent Volunteers who were not suspected of involvement, such as Art O'Connor, remained free. Many of those arrested were innocent and some were released within a week of arrest; Thomas J. Williams was detained for only a day. In late May, John O'Connor MP visited many of the prisoners in British prisons and suggested the release of a number

⁷⁸ Durney, *Foremost and ready*, p. 181; Mary Gallagher, *16 lives: Eamon Ceannt* (Dublin, 2014), pp 246-8.

⁷⁹ *KO*, 13 May 1916, 14 April 1917.

⁸⁰ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 17); Alphonsus Sweeney (BMH WS 1147, p. 2).

⁸¹ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 6); Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 17). For details of numbers arrested nationally, see William Murphy, *Political imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-21* (Oxford, 2014), p. 54.

⁸² CI Kildare, Apr. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/99).

⁸³ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 19).

⁸⁴ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, pp 3, 6).

⁸⁵ Sworn statement by Patrick Brennan, 7 July 1937 (IMS, MSPC, WMSP34REF1513); Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 42); Thomas Harris (BMH WS 320, p. 12); *KO*, 13, 20 May 1916. *LL*, 20 May 1916; *1916 Rebellion handbook*, pp 70-81. Graves, Ledwith and Weafer, participants in Dublin, were arrested in Kildare.

⁸⁶ *1916 Rebellion handbook*, p. 75; Durney, *Foremost and ready*, pp 178-9.

⁸⁷ Michel O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 17); Michael Smyth (BMH WS, 1,531, p. 6); *LL*, 20 May, 24 June 1916; *1916 Rebellion handbook*, pp 82-91; Durney, *Foremost and ready*, pp 119, 179.

of influential prisoners.⁸⁸ The following week some men were released, including Michael O'Kelly and Jack Fitzgerald.⁸⁹ Ted O'Kelly recuperated in Jervis Street Hospital. With the assistance of his fiancée, Maisy Stallard, her sister Josephine and Fr Conlon, a Dominican priest from Kilkenny, O'Kelly sensationally escaped disguised in clerical garb.⁹⁰

The widespread arrests and, in particular, the executions of the leaders of the Rising alienated even moderates. According to Michael Laffan, the arrests provoked nation-wide resentment and may have been as important in transforming public opinion as were the firing squads in Kilmainham.⁹¹ This was certainly the case in Maynooth College. On 21 May, General Maxwell discussed the rebels' visit to the college on the first day of the Rising with Monsignor Hogan. The clerical students had prior knowledge of the visit and were confined to their quarters after expressing their negative feelings towards the general. Over dinner, Hogan maintained that interference with the spiritual authority of the Catholic Church would not be tolerated.⁹²

The three bishops with ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Kildare reacted differently to the events of Easter Week. Archbishop Walsh, who showed an understanding of the rebel position, had put his name to a petition urging clemency for Casement. He had long been sceptical of the strategy of the IPP and in one of his first statements in the aftermath of the Rising he wrote disapprovingly about the policy of the party.⁹³ By contrast, Bishop Patrick Foley of Kildare and Leighlin was a vocal opponent of the outbreak. At a confirmation ceremony in Allen church on 10 May 1916, he told his congregation that any grievance that would justify the rebellion had been removed during the previous twenty years and that they were living under one of the most democratic governments in the world. He warned that Catholics who took up arms to resist the civil authority, or who aided and abetted those resisting, were liable to excommunication.⁹⁴ Archbishop Bernard was also vocal in his condemnation, emphasizing that 'the guilty must be punished for the sake of the innocent and of the generations to come'.⁹⁵ The events of Easter Week seemed to rekindle fears of unpleasantness among unionists. Prominent Kildare unionist, Sir William Goulding, chair of W.&H.M. Goulding Limited, and of the Great Southern &

⁸⁸ *LL*, 27 May 1916.

⁸⁹ *KO*, 3 June 1916.

⁹⁰ Fr Pat Conlon to Maisy O'Kelly, Apr. 1940, Ted O'Kelly papers, Edward O'Kelly, London; Josephine Clarke (BMH WS 0699, pp 2-3).

⁹¹ Michael Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 53.

⁹² Ailbe Ó Monacháin (BMH WS 298, p. 45); Durney, *On the one road*, p. 33.

⁹³ Thomas Morrissey, *William J. Walsh, archbishop of Dublin, 1841-1921: no uncertain voice* (Dublin, 2000), pp 294-5.

⁹⁴ *LL*, 13, 27 May 1916; *KO*, 13 May 1916.

⁹⁵ *IT*, 8 May 1916; *LL*, 13 May 1916.

Western Railway, had been marooned at Kingsbridge during Easter Week, and under fire for two days. In a letter to Bonar Law in early May, he alleged that 'In my own county Kildare three-fourths of the people were waiting for news of success of the rebels to at once join in, so-called National Volunteers and others – and I have met every train from the country and friends from all parts of the south and west have told me that it was exactly the same in every county'.⁹⁶ Although this was an over statement, Goulding, had every reason to feel aggrieved as the outbreak had not only resulted in personal financial losses, but rekindled memories of atrocities from 1798.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Goulding was acutely aware of advanced nationalist activity which was openly displayed each year at Bodenstown, half a mile from his residence, Millicent House, Sallins.

The gradually changing popular mood become more evident as the summer progressed. During May, the insurrection was condemned by the various councils in Kildare, including the county council, but the executions were also condemned.⁹⁸ In late May, Asquith proposed an initiative to bring about a permanent home rule settlement in Ireland and appointed David Lloyd George, then minister for munitions, to implement the scheme. The scheme was doomed from the start as Carson was given a written guarantee that Ulster would not be forced into home rule. The IPP, sensing a slippage in support in the aftermath of the Rising, were prepared to concede the temporary exclusion of six Ulster counties from the initial implementation of the Home Rule Act.⁹⁹ Their supporters on Kildare County Council loyally followed the party line and endorsed the policy of temporary exclusion in July.¹⁰⁰ However, the scheme collapsed in late July when amendments, insisted on by unionists, proposing permanent exclusion and a reduction of Ireland's representation in the House of Commons were tabled. This was unacceptable to Redmond and also to southern unionists.¹⁰¹ This inflicted considerable damage on the IPP. By early August, with the political initiative in tatters, the changing mood was illustrated by Athy Union which unanimously carried a resolution sympathizing with Roger Casement's relatives, though the chairman's description of Casement as a patriot and great Irishman 'done to death by tyrannical rulers' did not receive general acclaim.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Goulding to Bonar Law, 4 May 1916 (Parliamentary Archives, Bonar Law papers, BL 53/2/5).

Goulding was subsequently chairman of the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee.

⁹⁷ *IT*, 11 Aug 1916.

⁹⁸ *KO*, 13 May 1916.

⁹⁹ Patrick Maume, *The long gestation: Irish nationalist life, 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999), pp 182–4; F.S.L. Lyons, *John Dillon: a biography* (London, 1968), pp 285–6.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes, 14 July 1916 (KCoA, county council meetings).

¹⁰¹ Headings of a settlement as to the Government of Ireland (1916) Cd. 8310; O'Day, *Irish home rule*, p. 274.

¹⁰² *KO*, 12 Aug. 1916.

The Casement affair was soon eclipsed by news from the western front where the Somme offensive began on 1 July 1916. The first day of the battle was the bloodiest day of the entire war with 19,240 British troops losing their lives, among them at least nine Kildare men.¹⁰³ Thirty-three of the 3,500 Irish soldiers who died in the Somme were from Kildare but press censorship meant that this was not immediately disclosed. During 1916 a total of 183 Kildare fatalities were recorded.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, recruitment in Kildare collapsed. The RDF recruiting depot in Naas recorded a decrease of fifty-two per cent in the six months from February to August of 1916.¹⁰⁵ In the House of Commons, John O'Connor MP, a strong supporter of the war and recruitment, blamed the mishandling by the authorities of their response to the Rising and its aftermath:

Before these events happened, I could go down to that constituency [North Kildare] and stand upon platforms side by side with high sheriffs, landlords, with people of the class who had regarded me as their enemy from the past 40 or 50 years – I could go on the platform with them and call ... for recruits and my appeal was never made to my constituents in vain. Since these events have taken place I dare not address my constituents and ask them for recruits to the army.¹⁰⁶

This speech clearly outlines the reasons for the changed mood in Kildare and why enlistment drives in a garrison county no longer obtained support. The fall-off was also captured in CI Supple's monthly reports. For example, in May, enlistment was at a standstill and the following month was 'practically a dead letter'.¹⁰⁷

The declining popularity of the army and the war led to a row in Naas that involved the *Leinster Leader* and the local UDC. Michael O'Kelly criticized Naas UDC's decision to provide a tea recreation room in the town hall for the Sherwood Foresters who were quartered in the town.¹⁰⁸ Differences between O'Kelly as editor and the directors of the newspaper had been festering for a long time and his employment was terminated. However, this backfired when the directors were pressured to rescind their action by a deputation from the UDC. O'Kelly was duly reinstated and his reputation was restored.¹⁰⁹ Before the Rising the importance of the British army to the local economy ensured that criticism of it was not tolerated. That no longer obtained in the second half of 1916.

¹⁰³ *Irish Examiner*, 1 July 1916; James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1916: Sir Douglas Haig's Command to the 1st July: Battle of the Somme*, Vol. 1 (London, 1993), p. 483.

¹⁰⁴ Durney, *Time of war*, pp 75, 197.

¹⁰⁵ Callan, 'Recruiting for the British army', 44.

¹⁰⁶ *KO*, 26 Aug. 1916.

¹⁰⁷ CI Kildare, May, June 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100).

¹⁰⁸ *KO*, 4 Nov. 1916; Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 297.

¹⁰⁹ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, pp 28-9); *KO*, 2 Dec. 1916.

Mounting public disquiet due to arrests and internments soon found an organizational outlet when in May 1916 the Irish Volunteer Dependents' Fund (IVDF) and Irish National Aid Association (INAA) emerged to assist the families of imprisoned and dead Volunteers.¹¹⁰ According to Townshend, these groups provided a link to the deported prisoners, whose incarceration became a key aspect to the rebellion's ultimate impact.¹¹¹ As long as the prisoners were detained they became the objects of widespread sympathy and agitation.¹¹² The IVDF was made up primarily of female relatives of the executed men with Kathleen Clarke, Áine Ceannt and Sorcha McMahon the most prominent.¹¹³ The INAA was founded by influential women, men and clerics and was much more widespread than the IVDF. Significantly, it had the support of the Catholic clergy with Archbishop Walsh agreeing to act as president.¹¹⁴ After a tedious series of negotiations, the two groups amalgamated to become the Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund (INAAVDF).¹¹⁵

Initially, many areas in Kildare were slow to assist the INAAVDF. The first donation of £60 came from Maynooth College where practically the entire teaching staff contributed. This may have been a means of expressing displeasure with General Maxwell's attempted interference with the spiritual authority of their president. The first organized collection in the county took place in Kildare town in mid-July and yielded £8.¹¹⁶ Two individuals from the area had been imprisoned: Laurence Rowan, a popular local doctor who was not a member of the Irish Volunteers, was imprisoned for a short time as was Michael Smyth from nearby Athgarvan.¹¹⁷ Collections in various parishes followed in July and August. In Kill parish, Fr Matthew O'Brien, the curate, organized the collection which raised £23. 14s. 6d. He had been closely connected with the Kill Volunteers during Easter Week. Even though large numbers from Athy were serving at the front, £37. 14s. was raised.¹¹⁸ Fund-raising in Naas was not straightforward. After many difficulties, such

¹¹⁰ Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association and the radicalization of public opinion in Ireland, 1916–1918', *Historical Journal* 55:3 (2012), 706–7; Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, pp 71–5.

¹¹¹ Townshend, *Easter Rising*, p. 316.

¹¹² Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 66.

¹¹³ Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary woman: my fight for Ireland's freedom* (Dublin, 1991), pp 127, 137.

¹¹⁴ M.J. Curran (BMH WS 687, p. 97, 101); Morrissey, *William J. Walsh*, pp 289, 293.

¹¹⁵ Correspondence suggesting co-operation between the Irish National Aid Association and the Volunteer Dependents' Fund, letter of 6 July 1916 and 12 July 1916 (NLI, Irish National Aid Association papers, MS 24,345); IG report, Aug. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100); M.J. Curran (BMH WS 687, p. 102); *II*, 12 Aug. 1916; *Evening Herald* (hereafter *EH*), 19 Aug. 1916.

¹¹⁶ List of parishes with accounts collected in each on behalf of the I.N.A.V.D.F., 1916–1917 (NLI, Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents Fund papers, MS 24,381).

¹¹⁷ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 19).

¹¹⁸ List of parishes with accounts collected in each on behalf of the I.N.A.V.D.F., 1916–1917 (NLI, Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents Fund papers, MS 24,381); *Leinster Express*, 8 July 1916.

as opposition to the INAA from the parish priest, the first recorded contribution to the INAAVDF was £45 on 20 January 1917.¹¹⁹ Many local nationalists in Kildare suspected that the National Aid was in the hands of advanced nationalists and that this would adversely affect support for Redmond and the war effort. The RIC also disliked the INAAVDF with the inspector general alleging that the joint secretaries were 'extremists' and that the movement was 'controlled by advanced nationalists'.¹²⁰ The INAAVDF kept the separatist spirit alive in Kildare

The first batch of Kildare internees were released in late July 1916 when many of the lesser known participants in the Rising were freed.¹²¹ By the end of October only six Kildare men were still incarcerated: Domhnall Ua Buachalla, Patrick Colgan, Thomas Mangan and John Maguire, from Maynooth; Frank Burke, Carbury and Michael Smyth, Athgarvan. Smyth was a sentenced prisoner whereas the others were internees.¹²² A campaign to obtain their release was initiated with local councils passing motions demanding their release. When Lloyd George dislodged Asquith as prime minister he released all remaining internees in December 1916.¹²³ On Christmas Day the six men returned to a rousing reception in Kildare. Ua Buachalla and his fellow Maynooth men returned home as heroes and, in Athgarvan, Smyth was given an ovation when he attended a concert shortly afterwards.¹²⁴ They provided the impetus for and leadership of the SF movement in 1917.

Although the war was continuing to influence opinion in Kildare throughout 1916 it was the traumatic events of Easter Week that had catastrophic consequences leading to a collapse in enlistment and a changing political viewpoint. The change of mood in the country following the Rising was a slow process in Kildare, unlike many other counties where the decline in IPP support was more immediate.

¹¹⁹ 'Irish National Aid Association meeting, Naas' (NAI, CSORP, 1916/16,257); List of parishes with accounts collected in each on behalf of the I.N.A.V.D.F., 1916-1917 (NLI, Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents Fund papers, MS 24,381).

¹²⁰ Reports on the state of public feeling in Ireland, July 1916 (NLI, Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26,182); IG report, Aug. 1916 (TNA, CO 904/100). On advanced nationalist control, see Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, pp 73-4.

¹²¹ KO, 29 July 1916.

¹²² 'List of prisoners detained Oct. 1916' (NAI, CSORP, 1916/18970; 1916/17714).

¹²³ Townshend, *Easter Rising*, pp 326-7.

¹²⁴ Ó Súilleabháin, *Ua Buachalla*, p. 88; LL, 6 Jan. 1917.

5: The emergence of a new political order, 1917-18

The period between the 1916 Rising and the 1918 general election saw a radical realignment of political opinion in Ireland which had a significant impact on Kildare. The emergence of a strong SF and Volunteer movement, dominated by released prisoners, initially eroded support for Redmond and eventually caused the collapse of the IPP. The internees had plenty of time to consider their future strategy with the key to this being the linkage of the reorganized Volunteers to a revamped SF party which could supply a broad political platform and strategy. According to Laffan, many people, and especially young men, were waiting for a lead and once it was given, they followed it with enthusiasm.¹ Early in 1917 the released men began to reorganize the Volunteers. But they also reactivated the political wing of the separatist movement which had been dormant for many years. In Clare for instance, it was noted that 'in each place where an interned prisoner has returned, the Sinn Féiners have begun to meet, use seditious expressions and up to a certain point defy law and authority.'² The same applied in Kildare. Redmondite nationalists, however, did not regard the Easter Week participants with admiration. Although Frank Burke received a joyous welcome at Enfield train station before his return to Carbury, he was aware that there were not many supporters of revolutionary action among the strong farmers and professional class in that parish.³ The decline of the IPP in Kildare during the period had a number of causes. These included the 1917 by-elections, the failure of the Irish Convention to salvage home rule and the continuing war in Europe in which Kildare participants suffered heavy casualties. As conscription loomed large in early 1918, Kildare played a critical part in the anti-conscription campaign, with all sections of nationalism uniting in common cause to defeat the measure. During the crisis, memories of the Curragh incident were revived when General Gough was dismissed as head of the 5th Division.⁴ As elsewhere in Ireland, the conscription crisis prepared the ground for SF's landslide victory at the December 1918 general election. The contest in Kildare demonstrated the extent to which dissatisfaction with the IPP led voters to transfer their allegiance to SF between the 1916 Rising and the end of the First World War.

The first attempt at reorganization of the Volunteers was made by Michael Collins, then an unknown activist, who was secretary of the National Aid Committee. In Frongoch he shared a hut with Patrick Colgan and swore him into the IRB on 16

¹ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 76.

² CI Clare, Feb. 1917 (CO 904/102); Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 77.

³ Personal communication Éanna de Búrca, 2 Aug. 2015; Cummins and de Búrca, *The Frank Burke story*, p. 103.

⁴ *EH*, 4 Apr. 1918; *FJ*, 8 Apr. 1918.

December 1916.⁵ In February 1917 Colgan was invited to a meeting in Dublin attended by Collins and other activists including Richard Mulcahy. Collins invited Colgan to re-organize the Volunteers in north Kildare. Using his GAA and Volunteer connections Colgan set about the task. Prominent pre-Easter Week Volunteers contacted by Colgan such as Art O'Connor in Celbridge, Thomas Patterson in Naas, Patrick Dunne in Kill and Jack Fitzgerald in Newbridge all re-formed companies in their respective districts.⁶ In Maynooth, Ua Buachalla, who at 50 was one of the oldest participants in the Rising, surprisingly took a back seat in the leadership of the company.⁷ The RIC seemed unaware of this Volunteer activity.⁸ The reorganization even took place in Athgarvan, within one mile of the Curragh camp, and at Naas and Newbridge, both garrison towns. Within three months, there were companies in sixteen locations and Colgan was instructed by Collins to appoint battalion staff. Following a meeting in Prosperous on 17 May 1917, Colgan was appointed battalion commandant, Thomas Harris vice-commandant, Art O'Connor quartermaster, and Michael Smyth adjutant.⁹ This was an extraordinary success for Colgan within five months of his release. In Meath the expansion did not occur until late 1917 and early 1918 when Seán Boylan organized new companies in every town and parish.¹⁰ The Volunteers in south Kildare were organized from Carlow by Gearóid O'Sullivan, a cousin of Collins and fellow West Cork man who was a teacher in Knockbeg College, just outside Carlow town. O'Sullivan became officer commanding (O/C) of a battalion based in Carlow which initially included south Kildare.¹¹ Throughout 1917 he laid the groundwork for a future brigade that included all County Carlow, south Kildare and parts of Laois and Wicklow.¹² In south Kildare Éamon Ó Modhráin and Éamon Malone were prominent. Malone was largely responsible for establishing the Volunteers in Athy in 1917. With the formation of a Volunteer company in Kildare town that same year, all garrison towns in the county had a Volunteer presence.¹³ The first activity by the re-formed Volunteers occurred during the anniversary of Easter Week when rebel flags were erected in several locations throughout the county, including a number of hotspots noted for dissident activity during the previous year such as Maynooth and Athgarvan.¹⁴ Clearly, the intention to commemorate Easter Week and

⁵ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 53, 55).

⁶ Ibid, pp 48, 58; James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 2).

⁷ Sworn statement by Donal Buckley, 22 Dec. 1941 (IMA, MSPC, WSP34REF8261).

⁸ CI Kildare, May, June 1917 (TNA, CO 904/103).

⁹ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 58-9); Smyth (BMH WS 1531, p. 7).

¹⁰ Seán Boylan (BMH WS 1,715, p. 2).

¹¹ Pádraig Ó Catháin (Patrick Kane) (BMH WS 1572, p. 3); William Nolan, 'Events in Carlow, 1920-1921', *Capuchin Annual* (1970), 582, 584; Patrick Long, 'O'Sullivan, Gearóid', *DIB*.

¹² Patrick Doyle (BMH WS 807, p. 6); Pádraig Ó Catháin (Patrick Kane, (BMH WS 1572, pp 3, 4).

¹³ Michael Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin, 1970), 570.

¹⁴ *LL*, 5, 12 May 1917.

the executed leaders, succeeded in a most visual way, particularly in the two districts that participated in the Rising.

As first anniversary commemorations of Easter 1916 were taking place, the Volunteers had already moved to an involvement in constitutional political activity by assisting in the promotion and formation of SF. Count Plunkett's victory in Roscommon North in February had opened up the possibility of a dramatic reinvention of the separatist movement.¹⁵ According to Laffan, it was through the informal process of working together in Roscommon that they initiated the formal and deliberate policy of reviving the movement.¹⁶ The victory had consequences for Kildare, generating debate in many of the local district councils. Plunkett's aim was to inaugurate a national policy whereby Ireland would take control of its affairs. A circular, inviting delegates to a conference in the Mansion House, Dublin, was sent to various organizations, every county and district council in the country.¹⁷ The Plunkett circular was not well-received in Kildare. At Athy Guardians, John Conlan, a prominent Redmondite county councillor, claimed that the new policy was misleading the young and leading them on to revolution and socialistic paths. At a meeting of Naas No. 1 RDC on 4 April, George Wolfe denounced Plunkett's abstentionist policy.¹⁸ Although the motion was defeated, it was supported by three district councillors including Éamon Ó Modhráin.¹⁹ James Corrigan, who lived close to Athgarvan, voted against the initiative and on 15 April, a meeting of Athgarvan SF called for his resignation from the RDC. This marked the arrival of SF politics in Kildare and a new form of constitutional opposition to Redmondism in the county.²⁰

By the late spring and early summer 1917 the Volunteer companies in north Kildare had established SF clubs as the legal political wing of the more secretive Volunteer branch. With the existing organization structure already in place, this new constitutional movement, consisting mainly of young activists, quickly extended throughout the county. This followed a general pattern taking place elsewhere.²¹ The by-elections were watched with great interest by the Kildare public. Michael Smyth and Éamon Ó Modhráin assisted with the campaign of Joe McGuinness in South Longford in early May, and the SF success was celebrated in Naas.²² Archbishop Walsh's criticism of the IPP policy on partition on the eve of the South Longford by-election in a letter to the *Evening Herald* is regarded as contributing to SF's success.²³

¹⁵ Townshend, *Easter Rising*, p. 327.

¹⁶ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 90-3.

¹⁸ *KO*, 24 Mar., 7 Apr. 1917; Nelson, *Through peace and war*, pp 183-4.

¹⁹ *KO*, 7 Apr. 1917.

²⁰ *LL*, 21 Apr. 1917.

²¹ See Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 94-6.

²² *LL*, 12 May 1917.

²³ Ó Corráin, 'Archbishop William Joseph Walsh', p. 120.

The archbishop's opposition to the IPP and partition was a message that would not go unheeded in Kildare where SF continued to flourish.

Michael O'Kelly from Naas was central to the emergence of the SF organization in the county. Not only was he instrumental in publicizing the movement locally in the *Leinster Leader*, but he was influential in the formation of the Naas SF club which eventually became the hub of the organization in Kildare. O'Kelly was also actively involved in forming a County Kildare SF organizing committee.²⁴ Delegates from Athgarvan, Naas, Straffan and Carbury attended a meeting on 3 June 1917, with Ó Modhráin presiding and Smyth serving as secretary.²⁵ Art O'Connor and Jack Fitzgerald also emerged as promoters of the local SF organization. Within four weeks, the movement had spread in a more general way throughout the county with many of the newly formed branches established in a blaze of local publicity with large numbers joining, such as in Clane and Rathcoffey where reports suggested sixty-four new members.²⁶ James O'Connor of Celbridge, and William Burke of Carbury were now representing the party on the county council and an increasing number of district councillors also switched to SF.²⁷ At the end of July the RIC recorded four SF clubs in Kildare compared to twelve in Offaly and six in Laois; and 336 in the country overall.²⁸ This may have underestimated the strength of SF in the county, but it lagged behind neighbouring counties. By this time Redmond and the two Kildare MPs were rarely mentioned in the local press. With the IPP in disarray the government proposed an Irish Convention aimed at producing agreement on the home rule issue, and in the hope that it might reverse the decline in constitutional politics.²⁹ The announcement was welcomed at a meeting of Kildare County Council on 14 June 1917, although, there were differences of opinion with James O'Connor pointing out that a large section of the people did not favour the convention.³⁰ Throughout the summer, more open support for SF surfaced at local authority meetings, particularly following the election of Éamon de Valera in East Clare which was celebrated with bonfires in Naas and Timahoe.³¹ A proposed vote of congratulations to de Valera caused unease at Naas Board of Guardians on 8 August. Michael Gogarty described SF as 'as rainbow chasers' who wanted to 'to do away with the flag and set up this miserable tri-colour rag and call it a republic'. He

²⁴ Michael O'Kelly (BMH, WS, 1,155, pp 31-2).

²⁵ KO, 9 June 1917.

²⁶ LL, 23 June 1918.

²⁷ For named councillors supporting SF, see LL, 2 June -28 July 1917.

²⁸ CI Kildare, July 1917; CI King's County, July 1917; CI Queen's County, July 1917 (TNA, CO 904/103); David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921* (2nd ed. Cork, 1998), p 120.

²⁹ For details of the Irish Convention see R.B. McDowell, *The Irish Convention, 1917-18* (London, 1970); Alvin Jackson, *Home rule*, p. 177; Nicholas Mansergh, *The unresolved question: the Anglo-Irish settlement and its undoing, 1912-72* (London, 1991), pp 103-7.

³⁰ LL, 16 June 1917.

³¹ KO, 14 July 1917.

proposed a counter motion welcoming the convention and supporting the IPP which was carried by twenty votes to four against.³² The fact that four members elected as Redmondites were opposed to IPP policy was another sign that the old order was crumbling. The decline in IPP support was also recognized by CI Supple who noted in June 1917 that 'SF ideas are spreading'.³³ The following month he suggested that a SF candidate could be elected in Kildare if there was a by-election.³⁴ Although the mood had changed radically in the county it was still not fertile territory for advanced nationalism and was unlikely that either of the Kildare constituencies were ready to elect a SF MP.

The sitting MPs, as one might expect, sharply criticized SF. Denis Kilbride deemed an Irish republic an impossible dream, and John O'Connor described the policy as 'the greatest humbug put before the Irish people'.³⁵ By the late autumn, however, in an attempt to staunch the flow of support from the IPP, O'Connor adopted a conciliatory tone. At a committee meeting in the Commons in October 1917, he complained of biased treatment of nationalists. He reminded the committee that in suppressing the recent rebellion, Irish rebels who were already wounded, were put into a chair and shot, while at the same time the arch rebel, Edward Carson, was not only elevated to a government position, but into the War Ministry. 'These things' he stressed, 'irritate the people of Ireland and they object to this differential treatment'.³⁶ Two months later he swung back towards the IPP by denouncing SF in the Commons as 'irresponsible advocates of wildcat schemes of government'.³⁷

Bishop Foley also attacked SF. While not condemning the party by name, he warned in September 1917 that 'rebellion ... was absolutely unjustifiable from the point of view of Divine Law' and that if 'any man of influence, lay or cleric, asserted the contrary there or elsewhere in the diocese, it would be his duty to warn the people against him'.³⁸ This was a warning not only to the laity but also to priests in the diocese who openly associated with SF – such as Fr Matthew O'Brien, curate in Kill, who chaired several public SF meetings in north Kildare.³⁹ Although many of the clergy were in agreement with Foley's politics, others disagreed. When a new SF branch was established at Suncroft three weeks after the bishop's sermon, it was presided over by the local curate, Fr A. Farrell.⁴⁰ As SF continued to gain momentum,

³² *KO*, 11 Aug 1917.

³³ *CI Kildare*, June 1917 (TNA, CO 904/103).

³⁴ *CI Kildare*, July 1917 (*ibid.*).

³⁵ *KO*, 1 Sept. 1917.

³⁶ *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 18 Oct. 1917, vol. 98, col. 313.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 Dec. 1917, vol. 100, col. 536; *LL*, 24 Nov. 1917.

³⁸ *KO*, 6 Oct. 1917.

³⁹ *KO*, 11 Aug. 1917; *LL*, 29 Sept. 1917.

⁴⁰ *LL*, 20 Oct 1917.

clerical support became more explicit. When a branch was established in Ballymore-Eustace in Dublin diocese, Fr Patrick J. Bryan wrote: 'As the archbishop said a few months ago that the IPP had sold the country, I believe that the SF party are the only real national party in Ireland'.⁴¹ SF's support continued to increase and the IPP's to decline. Much now depended on the success of the Irish Convention.

Kildare unionists had a strong voice in the Convention with the participation of Lord Mayo, a representative of the Irish peers; William Goulding, a government nominee; and John Bernard, Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin. Representing Kildare County Council, Matthew Minch was the sole nationalist representative from the county. Goulding was the most active of the three and was a supporter of the Midleton initiative.⁴² So too was Bernard. Lord Midleton, leader of the southern unionists, promoted a home rule settlement without partition subject to certain financial restrictions.⁴³ It provided for certain safeguards for unionists in an all-Ireland assembly with powers to levy internal taxes but with customs duty remaining under the jurisdiction of Westminster.⁴⁴ The prelates with ecclesiastical authority over Kildare were clearly divided in their political viewpoints, with Bernard and Foley sharing a distrust of SF, while Walsh proved more receptive. On the issue of partition, Walsh and Bernard shared common ground and both actively campaigned against the measure.

While the principal news topic of 1917 both nationally and in Kildare was politics and the growth of SF, the war on the Western Front continued relentlessly. The year also saw a higher number of casualties than the previous year, with 187 from Kildare dying on the battlefield, four more than in 1916.⁴⁵ Enlistment nationally continued to decline with 11,400 joining between February 1917 and January 1918. The only figures available for Naas RDF depot are from the period February to August 1917 which indicated that 1,238 recruits joined, 429 fewer than the previous six-month period.⁴⁶ In March, the CI described recruitment as bad, but by May he indicated that it was practically nil.⁴⁷

In the second half of 1917, as support for enlistment and the war continued to decline, SF became more audacious. The first outdoor public meeting of the party

⁴¹ *LL*, 6 Oct. 1917.

⁴² McDowell, *Irish Convention*, pp 151, 221, 224-5.

⁴³ O'Day, *Irish home rule*, p. 283; Robert H. Murray, *Archbishop Bernard: professor, prelate and provost* (Dublin, 1931), pp 315-27.

⁴⁴ Jackson, *Home rule*, p. 181; Hennessy, *Dividing Ireland*, pp 206-12.

⁴⁵ Durney, *Time of war*, p. 197;

<http://www.kildare.ie/Library/KildareCollectionsandResearchServices/World-War-One/Kildare-Casualties-World-War-1.asp> (accessed 1 Nov. 2016).

⁴⁶ Callan, 'Recruiting for the British army', 42, 44. According to Callan, no separate figures for regimental recruiting centres were given after mid-1917, subsequently only a total of the entire country was given.

⁴⁷ CI Kildare, Mar., May 1917 (TNA, CO 904/102 and 103).

in the county, planned for 5 August on the Main Street in Naas, was banned under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). But the organizers outmanoeuvred the authorities by changing the venue at short notice to the local football ground. The meeting marked the first occasion of a public address in Kildare by Arthur Griffith.⁴⁸ The following month, SF headquarters appointed Éamon Fleming, who had participated in Easter Week in the Athy area, as the party organizer for Kildare. He quickly established several new branches in areas such as Carbury and Prosperous.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, many of the Easter Week participants had resumed political activity and were re-arrested under the DORA. Thomas Ashe and Austin Stack had gone on hunger strike. On 23 September a large public meeting in Naas, addressed by Fr O'Brien, Jack Fitzgerald and Éamon Fleming, protested against the arrests.⁵⁰ Two days later, Ashe died as a result of force feeding, and a wave of anger swept across the county. Large numbers from Kildare attended the funeral in Dublin, with many of the local SF branches represented. The following week, resolutions condemning his death and the treatment of political prisoners by the government were passed by both Naas and Athy UDCs.⁵¹ Every action involving SF generated immense publicity and sympathy, with supporters of the IPP in local councils being placed in the difficult position of passing resolutions condemning the authorities for various acts committed against their rivals.

A number of Kildare delegates attended the SF ard fheis in the Mansion House on 25 October at which de Valera replaced Griffith as leader of the party. Also at this time local SF officers organized two large outdoor meetings at Newbridge and Athy on the weekend following the ard fheis. The two principal SF leaders, de Valera and Griffith, agreed to speak at both meetings. However, the choice of Newbridge was contentious as it was the most garrisoned town in the country with the civilian population totally dependent on the garrison for their livelihood. The authorities, fearing general disorder and violence in the town, banned the meeting, but allowed the event to proceed in Athy.⁵² Strong preventative measures were put in place around Newbridge to stop the meeting taking place. Mounted detachments of military guarded the different roadways bordering the Curragh while the railway was strongly protected by RIC and military guards. Some 300 RIC were on standby in Newbridge and the surrounding district.⁵³

By contrast, security was not as intensive in Athy, with only thirty members of the RIC on duty. Almost 2,000 attended the meeting, with contingents travelling

⁴⁸ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 35); *KO*, 11 Aug. 1917.

⁴⁹ *LL*, 29 Sept. 6 Oct. 1917; CI Kildare, Sept. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/104).

⁵⁰ *KO*, 29 Sept. 1917; *LL*, 29 Sept. 1917.

⁵¹ *KO*, 6 Oct 1917.

⁵² *II*, 5 Nov. 1917; *NLT*, 10 Nov. 1917.

⁵³ *FJ*, 5 Nov. 1917.

from all parts of south Kildare and adjoining districts. De Valera used the opportunity to deliver a major policy speech in which he defended the right of priests to participate in politics.⁵⁴ This may have been in response to Bishop Foley's intervention five weeks previously. The meeting passed off largely without incident although there were some interruptions by relatives of soldiers, with a number of women waving Union Jacks and shouting 'for king and country'. De Valera responded that he 'felt very sorry and sympathetic for the poor ignorant people who did not know any better when they followed the advice of their leader [Redmond] and went out [to the front]'.⁵⁵ Bizarrely, Supple did not mention de Valera's speech in his monthly report. Instead, he stated that no clergy or people of note attended which, he concluded, 'put a damper on Sinn Féinism in the county'.⁵⁶ Although several elected boards in the Athy area passed resolutions welcoming the visit, support was far from unanimous. The vote by Athy UDC was carried by only one vote.⁵⁷

By November, Michael Smyth claimed thirty branches of SF had affiliated. The following month a reorganization of the SF county committee took place. An executive organization was formed for each of the two parliamentary divisions.⁵⁸ In North Kildare Fr Matthew O'Brien became president, with Fr John James of Balyna and Art O'Connor as vice presidents. In South Kildare Éamon Ó Modhráin was elected president. Michael Smyth was appointed secretary and also served as joint secretary of the northern executive.⁵⁹

Although the political side of the movement was active in a more public way a vigorous militant side continued to progress in the second half of 1917. By the late autumn they became more daring. On 21 October an estimated 150 Volunteers took part in a mobilization in Maynooth that blatantly contravened DORA.⁶⁰ The RIC took no action, a sign of the force's weakness in the face of increasing militancy. Volunteer activity also increased in south Kildare. In September 1917 Éamon Price, an Easter Week veteran, came to Carlow as a Gaelic League organizer and joined the Carlow Brigade staff.⁶¹ When Gearóid O'Sullivan was recalled to Dublin, Price served as vice commandant with Seán O'Farrell as new O/C. Price remained in position until he joined general headquarters (GHQ) staff as director of training in autumn 1919.⁶² As in north Kildare, the Volunteers grew bolder. When de Valera and Griffith addressed a meeting in Athy on 4 November the local Volunteers wore uniforms and carried

⁵⁴ Ibid.; CI Kildare, Nov. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/104).

⁵⁵ *FJ*, 5 Nov. 1917.

⁵⁶ CI Kildare, Nov. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/104).

⁵⁷ *FJ*, 5 Nov. 1917; *LL*, 10 Nov. 1917.

⁵⁸ *LL*, 10, 17 Nov. 1917.

⁵⁹ *LL*, 8, 15 Dec. 1917.

⁶⁰ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 62); *LL*, 27 Oct. 1917.

⁶¹ Sworn statement by Éamon Price, 21 Jan. 1925 (IMA, MSPC, 24SP5655).

⁶² Pádraig Ó Catháin (Kane) (BMH WS 1572, p. 5).

arms.⁶³ Later that month 170 Castledermot Volunteers commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Manchester Martyrs with some wearing uniform and bandoliers.⁶⁴

By late 1917 the Volunteers and SF had gained sufficient support to enable them to engage in issues of a more socio-economic nature. SF's involvement in land agitation capitalized on the widespread disenchantment of small farmers and the landless.⁶⁵ The land issue in Kildare was not as overt as in constituencies such as North Roscommon where SF called for agitation to 'secure the ranches for the landless people of Ireland'.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, Kildare was still a county of large estates, where substantial divisions were let to graziers on the eleven months system. The graziers and substantial landowners were more likely to be moderate nationalists while the smallholders and farm labourers were more likely to be shifting their political allegiance to SF.

The most effective weapon used in land protest was 'cattle driving', and in the Kill area in early 1918 a number of holdings were targeted, including land owned by the Earl of Mayo and N.J. Synnott. The cattle were discovered wandering the roads with placards tied around their necks which read: 'the land for the people and the road for the bullocks'.⁶⁷ Thirty extra police were reportedly drafted into Kill and, according to the CI, Fr O'Brien, the president of the north Kildare SF executive, and Pat Dunne, captain of Kill Volunteers, were the ringleaders.⁶⁸ In Kildare the agitation was supported by leading SF figures and Laurence Ginnell, the maverick MP, who attended a function in Naas in January 1918 to encourage the protests.⁶⁹ The land agitation quickly spread to other localities including Clane, Donadea and Kilcock.⁷⁰ Although many local politicians stayed out of the row, two councillors, John Healy and Patrick Phelan shared a platform with Art O'Connor and supported the land agitation.⁷¹ John O'Connor was noticeably silent. Cattle-driving was also prevalent in Laois and Offaly.⁷²

The agitation achieved one notable success which related to the O'Kelly estate of Barrettstown, outside Newbridge, where notorious evictions had taken

⁶³ CI Kildare, Nov. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/104).

⁶⁴ Details of illegal drilling in Castledermot, 23 Nov. 1917 (TNA, CO 904/122, File no. 17346/S); *NLT*, 1 Dec. 1917.

⁶⁵ Fergus Campbell, *Land and revolution: nationalist politics in the west of Ireland, 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005), pp 242-3; Paul Bew, 'Sinn Féin, agrarian radicalism and the war of independence, 1919-1921' in D. G. Boyce (ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp 221-2.

⁶⁶ Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p. 243.

⁶⁷ *LL*, 5 Jan. 1918; *KO*, 12 Jan. 1918.

⁶⁸ 'Kill district cattle drives' (NAI, CSORP/1918/1784); CI Kildare, Jan. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

⁶⁹ *KO*, 26 Jan. 1918.

⁷⁰ *LL*, 9, 16 Feb. 1918.

⁷¹ *LL*, 19 Jan. 1918.

⁷² *FJ*, 25 Feb. 1918; *NLT*, 9; 23 March 1918; Campbell, *Land and revolution*, pp 240-6.

place during the Land War.⁷³ The local SF branch objected to the letting of a small portion of land and demanded that it be divided among uneconomic holders. A protest meeting attended by over 1,000 people included large numbers of Volunteers in uniform. The trustees of the Barretstown land immediately settled with the protestors and the land was acquired by the adjoining tenants.⁷⁴ This was a classic example of SF championing a local issue for its political advantage. Protests of this nature were not always successful. Forewarned of a cattle drive in Donadea, the RIC under CI Supple baton-charged the drivers and arrested six men.⁷⁵ By March, agitation had eased off in Kill following negotiations between the protesters and Lord Mayo.⁷⁶ But in other areas such as in Kilcock an inflammatory speech by Laurence Ginnell on 2 March appeared to advise the landless to take possession of land by force.⁷⁷ However, before his advice could be carried out the conscription crisis had gripped Ireland.

In early April 1918 nationalist Ireland was stunned when it was revealed that the government intended to apply conscription to Ireland. This was prompted by the success of the German spring offensive in which Allied lines were breached in several sectors of the Western Front. The main thrust of the German offensive on 21 March was in the area defended by the 5th Army which included the 16th Division with large numbers from Kildare who mainly belonged to RDF.⁷⁸ The Fifth Army was commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Hubert Gough whose role in the Curragh Incident did not hinder promotion in the army. The casualties suffered by the Irish Divisions were exceedingly heavy.⁷⁹ Gough lost his command. He had never been forgiven by certain elements of the government for his part in the Curragh incident and became the scapegoat for the March disaster.⁸⁰ Under public pressure following the reversals in the war, Lloyd George sought to extend conscription to Ireland and also to older men and further groups of workers in Britain under a Military Service bill.⁸¹ That the government linked the implementation of home rule to the enactment of conscription not only added to the anger of nationalists, but also alienated unionists.

⁷³ Mary Ryan, *The Clongory evictions* (Naas, 2001).

⁷⁴ *LL*, 23 Mar. 1918.

⁷⁵ *KO*, 2 Mar. 1918.

⁷⁶ *KO*, 30 Mar. 1918.

⁷⁷ 'Colonel Burn to Mr Samuels' (NAI, CSORP/ 1918/ 16903); *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 20 Mar. 1918, 104, col. 1012. On Ginnell's support for land radicalism see Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, p. 120.

⁷⁸ Johnston, *Orange Green and Khaki*, p. 390.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁸⁰ *The Times*, 20 Mar. 1963; Potter, 'Gough, Sir Hubert de le Poer'; Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, 'War in the west, 1917-18' in John Horne (ed.) *A companion to World War I* (Chichester, 2012), pp 132-3.

⁸¹ *II*, 10 Apr. 1918.

In addition, the conscription crisis made irrelevant the Irish Convention which in any case had failed to find agreement between nationalists and unionists on home rule.⁸² This had significant implications for southern unionism a few months later. At a meeting of the Irish Unionist Alliance (IUA) in Dublin on 24 January 1919, Lord Midleton, leader of the southern unionists, proposed that the political destiny of southern unionists, who were opposed to partition, should be decided by southern unionists alone.⁸³ This position was supported by Lord Mayo and Sir William Goulding, the leading Kildare unionist figures. The motion was defeated and this caused an open split among unionists with Midleton leading a break-away Unionist Anti-Partition League (UAPL) drawn from the southern provinces.⁸⁴ There was a strong Kildare representation on the executive of the two opposing unionist camps. Lord Cloncurry remained one of the joint vice presidents of the IUA along with other executive members from Kildare including Percy Le Touche, John A. Aylmer and William J.H. Tyrrell.⁸⁵ Some IUA figures from the county such as H.J.B. Clements and William G. Kirkpatrick switched to the UAPL.⁸⁶

Opposition to conscription united all shades of nationalist opinion, including SF and the Catholic Church. In Kildare the CI reported that 'the priests and all nationalists have taken up the anti-conscription agitation'.⁸⁷ Within a week of the news breaking, local councils and boards had passed protest resolutions. Naas Union deemed the measure a betrayal of the liberties and rights of small nations which was one of the Allies' objectives in the war.⁸⁸ The attendance at public protest meetings throughout the county on Sunday 14 April exceeded all expectations. The extent of nationalist unity was demonstrated in Newbridge when an anti-conscription motion was proposed by P.J. Doyle, an IPP supporter, and seconded by Jack Fitzgerald of SF. The *Kildare Observer* predicted that the unrest had the potential to be comparable to proportions not seen since 1798.⁸⁹

The history of the conscription crisis at a national level is well known with a conference of all shades of nationalist opinion at the Mansion House on 18 April leading to an anti-conscription pledge modelled on the Ulster Covenant and successful overtures being made to the Catholic hierarchy. Although Cardinal Logue favoured passive resistance, Archbishop Walsh's advocacy of practical action and

⁸² McDowell, *Irish Convention*, pp 180-4; Jackson, *Home rule*, p. 185.

⁸³ Pádraig Yeates, *A city in turmoil: Dublin 1919 - 1921* (Dublin, 2012), pp 8-9; Patrick Maume, 'Brodrick, William St John Fremantle (Earl of Midleton)', *DIB*.

⁸⁴ *Sunday Independent*, 26 Jan. 1919; Alvin Jackson, *The two unions: Ireland, Scotland, and the survival of the United Kingdom, 1707-2007* (Oxford, 2012), p. 309; R.B. McDowell, *Crisis and decline: the fate of southern unionists* (Dublin, 1997), pp 65-6.

⁸⁵ *II*, 25 Jan. 1919.

⁸⁶ *II*, 29 Jan., 12 Feb. 1919; *II*, 23 Mar. 1920.

⁸⁷ CI Kildare, Apr. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/105).

⁸⁸ *KO*, 13 Apr. 1918.

⁸⁹ *KO*, 20 Apr. 1918.

clear instructions for those prepared to oppose conscription won out.⁹⁰ The bishops issued a statement declaring the conscription decree unjust and calling on Catholics to resist 'by all means that are consonant with the law of God'.⁹¹ An anti-conscription pledge was taken after Mass on 21 April, 'Pledge Sunday'. The active involvement of the Church was critical. As Fergus Quinn, assistant commissioner of the DMP, observed 'that ends conscription in Ireland'.⁹² By contrast, the main Protestant Churches supported conscription. Archbishop Bernard told a service in Dublin that young men should join at once without waiting for conscription.⁹³

County Kildare played its part on Pledge Sunday, with thousands attending meetings throughout the county and taking the anti-conscription pledge. At Mass in Carlow Bishop Foley informed his congregation that they could safely take the pledge.⁹⁴ At a meeting in Naas John O'Connor MP urged the gathering to obey the instructions emanating from the Mansion House conference. The meeting in Athy drew in people from adjoining districts in Laois and a local anti-conscription committee of twenty-four members was formed which included six Catholic clergymen.⁹⁵ At Kill some 3,000 people were reported to have taken the pledge, which was administered by the curate Fr Matthew O'Brien. The signatories included the parish priest Fr J.J. Donovan and N.J. Synnott, chairman of the Bank of Ireland who had also addressed the meeting.⁹⁶ In Rathangan a reported 2,000 people congregated at the meeting which again was presided over by Fr Michael Rice.⁹⁷ Meetings in small villages also attracted substantial numbers. In Staplestown the signing of the pledge was carried out over several days to facilitate non-Catholics and reports suggest a sizeable number signed. In Ballymore-Eustace, two local men assisted Nelly O'Brien, an anti-conscription activist, who aimed to obtain signed pledges from non-Catholics. Their canvass obtained twenty signatures.⁹⁸ In Kildare all the garrison towns and every parish participated in what was the largest and most united demonstration the county had seen to date. Catholic clergymen in Kildare

⁹⁰ See II, 19 Apr. 1918; Thomas J. Morrissey, *Laurence O'Neill, 1864–1943: lord mayor of Dublin 1917–1924: patriot and man of peace* (Dublin, 2014); Miller, *Church state and nation*, pp 404-5; Jerome aan de Wiel, *The Catholic Church in Ireland, 1914-1918, war and politics* (Dublin, 2013), pp 217-9; Michael Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland, 1879-1925* (Manchester, 2009), pp 122-4.

⁹¹ Morrissey, *William J. Walsh*, p. 309.

⁹² For a profile of Assistant Commissioner Quinn, see Gregory Allen, *The Police and the Workers revolt*, p. 3 in <http://www.garda.ie/Documents/User/The%20Workers%20Revolt%20-%20Greg%20Allen.pdf> (accessed 1 Oct. 2018).

⁹³ *IT*, 18, 26 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁴ *NLT*, 27 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁵ *KO*, 27 Apr. 1918; *LL*, 27 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁶ *FJ*, 24 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁷ *KO*, 27 Apr. 1918.

⁹⁸ *LL*, 4 May 1918; Carmel Doyle, 'O'Brien, Ellen Lucy (Nelly)', *DIB*.

acted in a leadership role throughout the anti-conscription campaign as was the case in other counties.⁹⁹

Within two days of Pledge Sunday there was another successful national demonstration – the Trades Union Congress anti-conscription strike. In early 1918 labourers had begun to organize in different areas of Kildare. The first branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) was in Naas.¹⁰⁰ The organization soon spread to Newbridge, Athy and even the Curragh camp, where in mid-March, 200 men employed at the remount depot were informed by the military authorities that they would be liable to dismissal if they remained in the union. The men were also informed that they would be required to wear khaki or face dismissal. The majority of the men who belonged to the union refused, although seven complied. The workers feared that if they complied they would be drafted into a labour battalion. However, within days there was a U-turn by the military which lifted objections to union membership.¹⁰¹ This defused the situation and prevented a strike during one of the most serious set-backs suffered by the army during the war. The anti-conscription strike was effective throughout the country, with the exception of Belfast and the North-East.¹⁰² A complete suspension of work in Dublin resulted in the absence of railway transport in Kildare. There was no service on the Midland Great Western or the Great Southern & Western railways. The strike had a severe effect on the Punchestown races. Owners of horses were unable to get their animals to the race course in time, and the programme had to undergo various alterations and curtailments.¹⁰³ In Athy, business was suspended with shops and workshops all closed.¹⁰⁴ The strike was also well-supported in small towns such as Ballitore where work on the land stopped and education even ceased in the local schools.

On 29 April, Kildare County Council strongly opposed conscription at its quarterly meeting.¹⁰⁵ The most important contribution was made by Joseph O'Connor, a councillor who was not well-known:

When Redmond offered Volunteer support the offer was sneered at, and they were practically told they could win the war without them ... Carson had set an example to them of preaching rebellion. The people could now claim a

⁹⁹ Pauric Travers, 'The priest in politics: the case of conscription' in Oliver MacDonagh, W.F. Mandle & Pauric Travers (eds), *Irish culture and nationalism, 1750-1950* (London, 1983), pp 173-4.

¹⁰⁰ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, pp 32-3); C. Desmond Greaves, *The Irish Transport and General Workers Union: the formative years, 1919-1923* (Dublin, 1982), p. 193.

¹⁰¹ *LL*, 23, 30 Mar. 1918.

¹⁰² For details of the strike regionally see Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, pp 36-7; Arthur Mitchell, *Labour in Irish politics, 1890-1930: the Irish Labour Movement in the age of revolution* (Dublin, 1974), pp 88-9; Greaves, *ITGWU*, p. 201.

¹⁰³ *FJ*, 24 Apr. 1918; *Belfast Newsletter*, 24 Apr. 1918; *KO*, 27 Apr. 1918.

¹⁰⁴ *KO*, 27 Apr. 1918; *NLT*, 24 Apr. 1918; Frank Taaffe, 'Athy and the Great War', p. 610.

¹⁰⁵ *KO*, 4 May 1916.

distinguished example of rebelling against this act. Carson was promoted to the highest position whilst for the same thing other men were put with their backs to a wall and shot. It was a cruel thing to see there was one law for one section of the people and another law for the rest.¹⁰⁶

This was a viewpoint not only shared by the councillors present but also by a substantial section of the general public. There was some support for conscription at a meeting of Celbridge Union with J.W. Shackleton describing opposition to it as cowardly.¹⁰⁷ Nationalists now focused on financing the anti-conscription campaign, and the National Defence Fund which was collected after Mass on Sunday 12 May was well-supported throughout the county. Surprisingly the biggest collection was in the garrison town of Newbridge where £400 was raised. Accounts from less than half of the parishes in the county which were published in the two local newspapers recorded a sum in excess of £2,300.¹⁰⁸ Coming from a garrison county this sent a strong message to the government.

In the event the conscription measure was deferred by the government, but a new round of arrests of nationalist leaders who had frustrated its plans was implemented under the bogus cover of a 'German plot'.¹⁰⁹ Art O'Connor was the only Kildare SF activist on the wanted list. However, details of his impending arrest were leaked by RIC Sergeant Jeremiah Maher, a clerk in the CI's office with nationalist sympathies. This intelligence was conveyed to O'Connor by Alphonsus Sweeney and also to Volunteer headquarters by Séumas O'Kelly.¹¹⁰ O'Connor went into hiding. Kildare County Council condemned the arrests and deportations on 27 May.¹¹¹ A SF protest meeting the previous day resulted in a public relations coup when O'Connor came out of hiding to address the meeting. Following his speech, guarded by Volunteers, he made an even more dramatic escape, amid scuffles between police who attempted to arrest him and Volunteers who resisted.¹¹² O'Connor was eventually arrested in Galway in August.¹¹³ At a meeting of Kildare County Council on 27 May the leading councillors, while emphasizing that they did not support or have

¹⁰⁶ LL, 4 May 1918.

¹⁰⁷ KO, 27 Apr. 1918.

¹⁰⁸ LL, 18 May 1918; KO, 18 May 1918. For details of the conscription fund, see Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 140-1.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Townshend, *The Republic: the fight for Irish Independence, 1918-1923* (London, 2013), p. 15.

¹¹⁰ Personal communication with Deirdre Lawler, daughter of Alphonsus Sweeney, January 2017; Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, pp 43-4); KO, 1 June 1918; James Durney with Liam Kenny, *A rebels desk: Séumas and Michael O'Kelly, Leinster Leader editors in a revolutionary time* (Naas, 2016), p.23.

¹¹¹ LL, 1 June 1918.

¹¹² Michael O'Kelly (BMH, WS, 1,155, pp 45-6); James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, p. 3); KO, 1 June 1918.

¹¹³ O'Kelly (BMH WS 1,155, p. 46); LL, 24 Aug. 1918.

any connection with SF, expressed the opinion that the government's action was inspired 'solely to misrepresent the Irish people in the eyes of the allied nations'.¹¹⁴

Kildare remained in an unsettled state into June. On 18 June at a confirmation ceremony in Derrinturn church in Carbury, Bishop Foley waived the requirement to attend weekly Mass should young men have 'to fly to the bogs and hillsides in resisting conscription'.¹¹⁵ Such a statement from Foley was particularly uncharacteristic as he had been sympathetic to the war effort for the previous three-and-a-half years. Undoubtedly, large numbers of Catholics either serving in the army or obtaining their livelihood from the army would have been dismayed by the bishop's comments. Nevertheless, there was no criticism of the church by lay Catholics connected to the army. The Conscription Crisis boosted Cumann na mBan.¹¹⁶ In mid-June, members organized an anti-conscription meeting in Naas town hall with women signing the pledge and giving an undertaking not to take the place of any man who lost his position to conscription.¹¹⁷ In this way conscription would prove a double-edged sword. Recruits might be obtained, but if women refused to work male jobs, the economy in Kildare would come to a standstill.

The Volunteers experienced a surge in new members during the conscription crisis and the government extended the powers of the DORA to regain authority and curb the growing power of SF. A military proclamation on 4 July proscribed the holding of meetings, assemblies, or processions in public places, without a permit.¹¹⁸ The nationalist organizations affected included SF, the Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, the Gaelic League and the GAA.¹¹⁹ The new legislation was immediately put to the test in Kildare town where a protest rally had been organized for Sunday 7 July along with a football match. Both the meeting and match were banned by the authorities, but the organizers pressed ahead. RIC reinforcements poured into Kildare. The field where the football match was to take place was occupied by the military and the goal posts were removed. However, the GAA secretly rearranged the game for the following Sunday in a different field close by and the banned meeting and football event were held at the same venue.¹²⁰ In protest at the requirement for permits, the GAA organized a series of matches throughout the country for Sunday 4 August which became known as Gaelic Sunday. In Kildare, football matches were played without a permit in almost every parish.¹²¹ No attempt was made to prevent

¹¹⁴ LL, 1 June 1918.

¹¹⁵ LL, 22 June 1918.

¹¹⁶ See McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan*, pp 94-6.

¹¹⁷ LL, 15 June 1918.

¹¹⁸ FJ, 5 July 1918; II, 5 July 1918.

¹¹⁹ KO, 6 July 1918.

¹²⁰ LL, 13, 20 July 1918; KO, 13 July 1918.

¹²¹ LL, 10 Aug. 1918; Richard McElligott, '1916 and the radicalization of the GAA' *Éire -Ireland*, 48: 1 & 2 (2013), 109. For details of Gaelic Sunday in Kildare see Corry, *Kildare GAA*, p. 114.

games taking place, even in garrison towns such as Newbridge or Naas.¹²² SF now followed the example of the GAA by holding meetings without permits all over the country on 15 August at which a statement supplied by headquarters was read.¹²³ Three meetings were held in Kildare and led to the arrests of Michael Stapleton at Kilcock, Michael Sammon a member of the county football team at Kilcullen, and at Athy J.J. (James) O'Byrne, a local schoolteacher.¹²⁴ All were court-martialled for taking part in a meeting without a permit and making statements likely to cause disaffection.¹²⁵ Byrne and Stapleton were convicted on both charges and sentenced to one year, while Sammon was convicted of the first charge only and given a sentence of one month's imprisonment.¹²⁶ The arrests continued to enhance the status and popularity of the party in the county during the autumn of 1918 at a time when IPP supporters appeared to be inactive.

The end of the First World War on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, was a day of celebration throughout Ireland, and especially in military centres. But due to the altered political climate celebrations were restrained in many areas. The Spanish influenza may also have been a factor as regular reports of the epidemic were given on the week prior to the armistice when the death rate was at its highest.¹²⁷ Kildare suffered the highest rate of death per head of the population of any county in the country.¹²⁸ The reasons for this is not clear but it has been suggested that Kildare's associations with the army, through the Curragh barracks, played a role with inadequate sanitary conditions in Naas also contributing.¹²⁹ Joy at the end of the war was tinged by sorrow for the families and friends of the more than 800 Kildare people who died; in 1918 alone there were 151 fatalities. Athy suffered in excess of 118 fatalities, twenty more than Naas the next highest.¹³⁰ Three days after the war ended it was announced that the long-awaited general election would be held on 14 December.¹³¹ There had been no election since 1910. The extended franchise due to the Representation of the People Act 1918 had more than doubled the electorate nationally. Voting rights for women over thirty had been granted for the first time,

¹²² *LL*, 10 Aug. 1918; *KO*, 10 Aug. 1918.

¹²³ Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the making of a new Ireland* (2 vols Dublin, 1926), i, pp 224-5.

¹²⁴ *KO*, 24 Aug. 1918; *LL*, 24 Aug. 1918.

¹²⁵ *LL*, 28 Sept. 1918.

¹²⁶ Request for ameliorations, Oct. 1918 (NAI, GPB Dora Box 7, 1917-20/6290); *LL*, 12 Oct. 1918.

¹²⁷ *KO*, 9 Nov. 1918.

¹²⁸ Ida Milne, *Stacking the coffins: influenza, war and revolution in Ireland, 1918-19* (Manchester, 2018), p. 63.

¹²⁹ Ida Milne, 'The 1918-19 influenza pandemic: a Kildare perspective of a global disaster' in *JKAS*, 20:3 (2012-13), 304-7.

¹³⁰ For details of county Kildare casualties see <http://www.kildare.ie/library/kildarecollectionsandresearchservices/World-war-One/Kildare-Casualties-World-War-1.asp> (accessed 24 Sept. 2016); Taaffe, 'Athy and the Great War', p. 615; Durney, *Time of war*, pp 196-7.

¹³¹ *FJ*, 15 Nov. 1918.

and men over twenty-one and military servicemen over nineteen could vote in parliamentary elections without property qualifications.¹³²

The election was a straight contest between the IPP and SF as Labour had agreed not to participate. In October, delegates from trade unions from north Kildare met in Newbridge and unanimously decided not to contest the election in the constituency.¹³³ A well-prepared SF had selected their candidates for the two Kildare constituencies two months earlier. However, at the North Kildare convention held in Prosperous on 12 September, a split arose due to the emergence of two distinct points of view within the party. One a more militant opinion supported by the original volunteer wing and the second, a more pragmatic and constitutional viewpoint of new SF members. Patrick Colgan O/C North Kildare battalion, supported by his colleagues, proposed Ted O'Kelly. Strong support also emerged for the imprisoned Art O'Connor from delegates favouring a more constitutional agenda, including Seumas O'Kelly.¹³⁴ They strongly advocated adopting the example of South Longford the previous year by putting O'Connor in to get him out. The split was resolved when Colgan proposed Domhnall Ua Buachalla who reluctantly agreed.¹³⁵ The South Kildare SF convention was held two days later and O'Connor, the only candidate, was unanimously selected.¹³⁶

John O'Connor was selected as the IPP candidate for North Kildare at a convention in Naas on 25 November. Although the speakers denounced SF policy, with one referring to it as political suicide, there seemed to be a grudging admiration for Ua Buachalla.¹³⁷ Doubts about whether 70-year-old Denis Kilbride would stand for re-election were dispelled when he was chosen at a well-attended convention in Athy on 22 November.¹³⁸ Kilbride was noted for raising concerns in parliament on behalf of unionists in his constituency and his nomination was supported by Thomas Plewman, a noted local unionist.¹³⁹ During the second week of the campaign, three of the four bishops in the ecclesiastical province of Dublin, Brownrigg bishop of Ossory, Codd of Ferns and Foley of Kildare and Leighlin published letters in support of the IPP. Foley had 'no faith in Sinn Féinism as a policy nor in abstention from parliament as a means of political salvation'.¹⁴⁰ Archbishop Walsh, who was sympathetic to SF, differed from his suffragan bishops.¹⁴¹ On 27 November he

¹³² John Coakley, 'The Impact of the 1918 Reform Act in Ireland', *Parliamentary History* 37:1 (2018), 116-32.

¹³³ *KO*, 19 Oct. 1918; Mitchell, *Labour in Irish politics*, p. 97.

¹³⁴ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p.62); Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 8); *LL*, 14 Sept. 1918.

¹³⁵ Patrick Colgan (BMH, WS, 850, p. 62); *LL*, 14 Sept. 1918.

¹³⁶ *LL*, 21 Sept. 1918; *KO*, 23 Nov. 1918; Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 62).

¹³⁷ *KO*, 30 Nov. 1918; *LL*, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹³⁸ *LL*, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹³⁹ *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 26 July 1916, vol. 84, col. 1799; *LL*, 23 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁰ M.J. Curran, BMH WS 687, pp 318-19; *II*, 21, 26 Nov. 1918; Morrissey, *William J. Walsh*, pp 316-7.

¹⁴¹ Ó Corráin, 'Archbishop William Joseph Walsh', pp 119-21.

explained that he had lost confidence in the IPP as early as 1904 and that his views were 'altogether different from those expressed in the letters of those three venerated prelates'.¹⁴² For the first time the Catholic clergy in Kildare were on opposite sides in an election. It was common practice for clerics to sign nomination papers. John O'Connor was proposed by Fr Norris, the parish priest of Naas, and his nomination papers were signed by Monsignor Thomas Tynan, parish priest of Newbridge, and Fr Joseph Seaver, a curate in Maynooth. Kilbride was proposed by Canon Mackey, parish priest of Athy. SF also had clerical support with Fr Matthew O'Brien seconding Ua Buachalla whose nomination papers were signed by Fr John James and Fr J.J. Doyle from Celbridge.¹⁴³ A generational divide among the clergy in the election was evident with senior parish priests supporting the IPP and younger priests more inclined to support SF. In terms of female involvement in the campaign SF was the more progressive. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington urged the women in Monasterevin to vote for independence while in Straffan Miss Ryan urged support for Ua Buachalla.¹⁴⁴ The IPP, damaged by conscription and the lack of progress on home rule, was pitted against the rising political party. Even before the campaign began the signs pointed to a triumph for SF with its superior party machine. Nationally, twenty-five constituencies were uncontested by the IPP but Kildare experienced the novelty of contested elections for the first time in decades.¹⁴⁵ North Kildare was last contested in 1900 and South Kildare in 1892.¹⁴⁶ John O'Connor's campaign was plagued with difficulties. On 20 November he attended the Naas fair. Although, the town was thronged with farmers who usually supported the IPP, no interest was taken in the proceedings and a planned public meeting was abandoned. The following Sunday, he was unable to hold an after-Mass meeting in Two-Mile-House due to constant heckling.¹⁴⁷ On 1 December the most serious disruption to O'Connor's campaign occurred in Kilcock, where, due to a noisy SF procession, twenty armed soldiers intervened to allow a meeting to continue without interruption.¹⁴⁸ The support of the military was not likely to enhance O'Connor's chances of re-election. On the same day Ua Buachalla encountered some hostilities in Naas where he was accompanied by Fr Michael O'Flanagan, SF vice-president, who was on a speaking tour in the constituency.¹⁴⁹ Soldiers erected a Union Jack which was pulled down by younger SF adherents and a minor scuffle ensued.¹⁵⁰ It was hardly surprising that anti-SF sentiment surfaced in Naas, a garrison town with large

¹⁴² M.J. Curran (BMH WS 687, p. 319-21); *FJ*, 28 Nov 1918.

¹⁴³ *KO*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁴⁴ *LL*, 14 Dec. 1918. Miss Ryan's forename has not been identified. She may have been either Bridget or Mary Ryan from Main St, Naas who were among the nominators for Ua Buachalla.

¹⁴⁵ J.J. Lee, *The modernization of Irish society, 1848-1918* (Dublin, 2008 [1973]), p. 164.

¹⁴⁶ Brian Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), pp 355-6.

¹⁴⁷ *LL*, 23, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁸ *II*, 3 Dec. 1918; *KO*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁴⁹ Patrick Maume, 'O'Flanagan, Michael', *DIB*.

¹⁵⁰ *KO*, 7 Dec. 1918.

numbers of service men, ex-service men and relatives of casualties. As it happened Kilbride was also heckled at a meeting in Athy on 1 December. Tactlessly, given the imprisonment of Stapleton, O'Byrne and Art O'Connor, he raised the treatment of political prisoners in inflammatory terms:

one would think that for the first time in Ireland men went to jail in 1916. The first thing done in 1916 was to show the sore leg. In the old days they took their punishments and their plank beds without showing the sore leg. Today, no political prisoners had to lie on plank beds. All they wanted was cigarettes, chickens etc.¹⁵¹

Kilbride also denounced SF: 'As for establishing a republic of Ireland they might as well ask for a piece of the moon.'¹⁵² The claims did little to enhance his campaign. Art O'Connor's imprisonment in England gave him a significant advantage.

National issues such as the viability of SF's policy of abstention from parliament and attendance at the Peace Conference dominated the election campaign. But local topics such as the IPP support for the war and the political prisoner issue caused the most heated exchanges. SF capitalized on the war issue with Ua Buachalla accusing John O'Connor of attempting to 'send the manhood of Ireland to leave their bones bleaching in France or Gallipoli'.¹⁵³ In Kilcock, veteran Volunteer Jim O'Keeffe described O'Connor as a recruiting sergeant for the British army. In addition, he reminded the audience that O'Connor had served as crown prosecutor in Bristol in 1909.¹⁵⁴ Apart from a handful of incidents, the campaign passed off without any significant disturbance.¹⁵⁵ This was in contrast to other counties such as Waterford where the rough and tumble of elections was very evident.¹⁵⁶ The Kildare Volunteers guarded the polling booths and the ballot boxes until the counting began; this was also the case in other counties.¹⁵⁷

In North Kildare, as expected, Ua Buachalla had a resounding victory by 5,979 votes to 2,772 for O'Connor. However, with an electorate of 13,275 eligible voters, the turnout was just 66 per cent.¹⁵⁸ It was obvious that a sizeable number, mainly farmers, did not vote. They were disenchanted IPP supporters who were unwilling to support SF. The size of Ua Buachalla's majority was a surprise given that the constituency included a large number of strong farmers and two major barracks at Naas and Newbridge. In South Kildare, Art O'Connor received 7,140 votes to

¹⁵¹ *II*, 2 Dec. 1918; *KO*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵² *KO*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵³ *LL*, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁴ *LL*, 7 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁵ CI Kildare, Dec. 1918 (TNA, CO 904/107).

¹⁵⁶ McCarthy, *Waterford*, pp 56-7.

¹⁵⁷ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 9); *KO*, 21 Dec. 1918.

¹⁵⁸ *KO*, 4 Jan. 1919.

Kilbride's 1,545.¹⁵⁹ Although apathy in the southern constituency was similar to the northern constituency, the votes cast for SF represented a clear majority of the total on the register. It is obvious that the result was not influenced to any great extent by commercial advantages relating to the Curragh camp and the garrison at Kildare town. The Kildare result surprised SF headquarters which had predicted that the party would be handicapped by the large military vote.¹⁶⁰ Although the army presence in Kildare was a factor it did not have any significant effect on the election result. The decisive margin of victory for the two Kildare SF TDs confirmed the extent to which public opinion had shifted from the IPP.

The new political order that emerged throughout 1917 was slow to gain ground in Kildare unlike other counties where by-elections led to the defeat of nationalists. It was not until the Conscription Crisis that SF could claim a degree of superiority. The experience of Kildare during the Crisis is a perfect example of how revolutionary movements find it easier to mobilize popular support against a perceived threat or injustice rather than in favour of a vision or an ideology.¹⁶¹ The decisive victory margin for the two SF candidates in the 1918 election confirmed the extent to which public opinion had shifted from the IPP. However, although SF held an electoral mandate from Kildare, supporters of the old order controlling the local councils and boards would clearly present challenges in the months ahead. According to Joost Augusteijn, Volunteer activity such as raiding for arms during 1917 and 1918 was a key indicator of an escalation of violence early in the next phase of the struggle.¹⁶² The absence of such activity in Kildare during this period was a significant indicator of the low levels of violence that was to follow.

¹⁵⁹ *LL*, 4 Jan. 1919.

¹⁶⁰ *KO*, 30 Nov. 1918.

¹⁶¹ William Murphy, 'How Ireland was lost in the 1918 conscription crisis' in *Sunday Business Post*, 15 Apr. 2018.

¹⁶² Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: the experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), 71-3; 340-1.

6: War of Independence, 1919-21

The War of Independence between January 1919 and July 1921 was a conflict in which both political activists represented by SF and IRA militants (as the Volunteers were styled from 1919) combined to make British rule impossible and advance the objective of an Irish republic. The first section of this chapter considers political developments in Kildare. At the beginning of 1919 local government bodies were in the hands of the IPP and, over the next eighteen months, SF engaged in a political struggle for local dominance. The second section focuses on advanced nationalist militancy. Peter Hart, Tom Garvin and Michael Hopkinson have all pointed to Kildare's high level of inactivity. In his study of the geography of the revolution from 1917 to 1923, Hart found that only Counties Dublin, Wicklow and Antrim had similar or lesser levels of IRA violence per 10,000 people than Kildare from January 1920 to December 1922.¹ Garvin concluded that in east Leinster, only Wicklow and Kilkenny were less active, whereas Hopkinson maintains that Kildare and four neighbouring counties 'adopted an almost apologetic air as excuses are sought for their minimal involvement'.² Kildare was not suited to an overt military campaign due to the overwhelming concentration of Crown forces in the county. Caution marked the approach of the IRA in Kildare who to some extent lacked the leadership of their Munster colleagues and were inhibited by a lack of arms. Militant activity took different forms such as acts of civil disobedience. Labour played a decisive role in this regard by supporting republican hunger strikes with a countrywide work stoppage in April 1920 and also through the munitions strike. Many Labour activists in Kildare were also members of the IRA. Particular attention will be paid to the largely unheralded, but pivotal role played by the Kildare IRA in supplying intelligence to IRA GHQ which arguably changed the course of the War of Independence. Efforts were made to enforce the Belfast boycott, establish Dáil courts and progressively make the county ungovernable by undermining the RIC.

Following the general election, SF activists in Kildare concentrated on obtaining the release of the German Plot prisoners with a series of public meetings on 5 January 1919. In Naas, Ua Buachalla claimed the arrests were futile because if the authorities 'put a thousand SF leaders in jail there would be a thousand more to take their place'.³ Art O'Connor was in jail when Dáil Éireann met for the first time on

¹ Peter Hart, 'The Geography of revolution in Ireland, 1917-23', *Past and Present*, 155:1 (May 1997), 147.

² Tom Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics* (Dublin, 1981), p. 123; Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2002), p. 145.

³ *LL*, 11 Jan. 1919.

21 January 1919, but Ua Buachalla was present. The Dáil met for two days in January, but there was no further meeting until April. During the intervening period, Ua Buachalla, while attending a meeting in Staplestown, argued that SF politicians and the Dáil were not inactive, arguing that their work 'would bear fruit'.⁴ At a local level the focus remained on political prisoners and the tactic of obstructing fox-hunting, already used in other counties, was adopted.⁵ This was the principal sporting pastime of the landed gentry, the magistrates and the British army in Kildare. In late January, the master of the Kildare Fox Hunt was informed by the secretary of Kilcock SF that he would not be permitted to hunt until the prisoners were released.⁶ The threat to the hunt was not supported by RDCs in the county. At a meeting of Naas No. 1 RDC on 5 February, George Wolfe suggested that SF 'may as well stop golfing'.⁷ Protests at hunt meetings by SF members became common, with Michael O'Kelly actively participating.⁸ Initially the hunt managed to dodge the protestors in some area, but on 20 February at Davidstown in south Kildare the IRA made hunting impossible by sounding horns close to coverts. Hunting was then abandoned for the season.⁹ The row over hunting soon pitted SF and the IRA against farmers and traders who benefitted commercially from the equine industry. The Kildare Hunt Club, which was infuriated by SF's successful efforts, retaliated by cancelling the Punchestown races in April. The meeting was of vital importance to the local economy and to the equine industry in the county, and had been curtailed by the conscription crisis in 1918. In Meath, the Fairyhouse and Navan races were likewise abandoned.¹⁰ The Kildare Farmers' Union tried to persuade the Hunt Club to alter its position on Punchestown and collected 1,532 signatures from farmers.¹¹ The Hunt Club was unmoved. On 6 March the situation was eased with the sudden release of the German Plot prisoners following the death from influenza of Pierce McCann, a Tipperary TD.¹² Suffering from flu, Art O'Connor was confined to the prison hospital in Durham and was one of nine prisoners unable to travel home due to illness.¹³ Following his release the following month, he lost no time in returning to politics by involving himself in Dáil business.¹⁴

⁴ *KO*, 1 Mar. 1919.

⁵ *LL*, 10 Nov 1917; *NLT*, 10 Nov. 1917; William Murphy, 'Sport in time of revolution: Sinn Féin and the hunt in Ireland, 1919' in *Éire-Ireland* (Spring 2013), pp 112-47.

⁶ *CI Kildare*, Jan. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/108).

⁷ *KO*, 8 Feb. 1919.

⁸ Murphy, 'Sport in time of revolution', pp 125, 132.

⁹ *LL*, 15 Feb. 1919; *CI Kildare*, Feb. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/108).

¹⁰ *KO*, 8, 15 Mar. 1919.

¹¹ *LL*, 8 Mar. 1919; *KO*, 22 Mar. 1919.

¹² *EH*, 6 Mar. 1919; *Nenagh Guardian*, 8 Mar. 1919.

¹³ *EH*, 11 Mar. 1919.

¹⁴ *NLT*, 12 Apr. 1919.

Although the prisoner issue was somewhat resolved in March, two incidents in April triggered a fresh cycle of arrests in Kildare. On 23 April the RIC was refused entry to a Naas SF concert in the town hall. Three days later at another SF concert in Ballymore Eustace the police were requested to leave.¹⁵ This was prompted by de Valera's appeal in the Dáil for a boycott of the RIC.¹⁶ Thomas Patterson and Jimmy Whyte, SF members in Naas, were fined and when they refused to recognize the court or pay up were given sentences in Mountjoy.¹⁷ Likewise, following the incident at Ballymore Eustace, William McGrath of Kilgowan, secretary of the south Kildare SF executive, and Dr Thomas F. O'Higgins, brother of Kevin O'Higgins TD for Laois, were imprisoned for one month.¹⁸

Incidents like these were useful for propaganda purposes, enhanced the standing of the republican movement in Kildare and led to great rejoicing following the release of the prisoners. McGrath's release was celebrated with a large reception at Newbridge railway station on 19 July. The IRA marched triumphantly through Newbridge and through part of the Curragh on to Athgarvan.¹⁹ The sight of Volunteers marching through Newbridge, past one of the largest cavalry garrisons in the country, then proceeding to the Curragh and passing within one mile of the largest military camp in the country celebrating the release of a republican prisoner, was clearly an embarrassment to the authorities. Receptions had now become a common occurrence for released political prisoners in Kildare. J.J. O'Byrne was released in late May due to ill-health after serving ten months and was given a public reception in Athy on 30 June.²⁰

Receptions for released prisoners in Athy were not always peaceful occasions. Official celebrations on 20 July to mark the Peace Treaty (which was signed on 28 June 1919) were cancelled as a protest against the government. A homecoming reception also on 20 July for Seán Hayden, a political prisoner who had been court-martialled the previous January for being in possession of a seditious document, was marred by scuffles between SF supporters and ex-soldiers. The following night the ex-soldiers marked Peace Day before running amok and damaging a bicycle shop. The five local policemen were powerless to intervene.²¹ This resulted in calls by Athy UDC to enrol local citizens into a Volunteer force to preserve the peace.²² The incident prompted the CI to obtain military assistance from the Curragh to forestall any

¹⁵ CI Kildare, Apr. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/108).

¹⁶ On the boycott see Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp 10-11.

¹⁷ *KO*, 7 June 1919; *LL*, 7 June 1919.

¹⁸ CI Kildare, June 1919 (TNA, CO 904/109); *NLT*, 14 June 1919.

¹⁹ *LL*, 26 July 1919.

²⁰ *LL*, 7 June 1919; *NLT*, 7 June, 12 July 1919.

²¹ CI Kildare, July 1919 (TNA, CO 904/109); *NLT*, 26 July, 2 Aug. 1919.

²² *NLT*, 26 July 1919; Frank Taaffe, *Athy Urban District Council: a brief overview of its first 100 years* (Athy, 2001), pp 68-9.

further potential trouble.²³ At Athy petty sessions those prosecuted for the trouble were described by the magistrates as a pack of savages 'fighting like mad dogs about the streets of Athy.'²⁴ Peace Day celebrations did not go to according to plan in the Curragh camp either. When fire-works caught fire, and rockets went off like machine-guns, thousands of people on the green stampeded and fifty-three were injured.²⁵ In the aftermath of the Peace Day trouble, extra police were drafted into north Kildare to deal with labour troubles in the region.²⁶

A local farm labourers' strike in late June in the Celbridge area soon spread throughout the entire county and created a delicate and complicated situation for SF and the IRA.²⁷ Kildare farmers were a very powerful lobby with 1,100 affiliated to the Farmers' Union which had an organization in every district.²⁸ Farm labourers were by far the largest workforce in the county and were equally well-organized with the majority having joined the ITGWU. Politically, farmers, especially those who belonged to the strong farmer class, were not supporters of SF while their employees, the farm labourers, largely supported the republican movement. The Agricultural Wages Board recommended an increase from £1. 8s. per week to £1. 12s., but the ITGWU sought £2. 5s. per week which was the going rate for labourers in Dublin city.²⁹

The all-out strike posed a dilemma for the Kildare IRA. With farmer pitted against labourer and with intimidation by the strikers a common occurrence, the farmers found themselves driven to seek protection from the RIC. This alarmed the IRA which had portrayed itself as the army of the republic. Patrick Colgan, commandant North Kildare Battalion and a member of the ITGWU, informed the farmers that if they sought RIC protection he would encourage the strikers to attack both those needing protection and the police. In return for co-operation on this issue he offered to assist in keeping order. The farmers accepted Colgan's advice and he told the BMH that the IRA leadership kept both sides within bounds.³⁰ In south Kildare, Art O'Connor, who came from a strong farmer background, assisted in mediation, but his efforts were unsuccessful.³¹ Inevitably, many arrests were made during the strike. At Celbridge assizes when suspects accused of intimidation appeared in court, the authorities took no chances and fifty armed soldiers were

²³ CI Kildare, July 1919 (TNA, CO 904/109).

²⁴ *NLT*, 2 Aug. 1919.

²⁵ *KO*, 26 July 1919; Costello, *Delightful station*, pp 311-12.

²⁶ *NLT*, 9 Aug. 1919.

²⁷ *KO*, 5, 12, July 1919; Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 214; Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 111.

²⁸ *KO*, 26 July 1919; Dan Bradley, *Farm labourers: Irish struggle, 1900-1976* (Belfast, 1988), p. 45.

²⁹ *KO*, 5 July 1919; *LL*, 19 July 1919.

³⁰ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 66).

³¹ *KO*, 19 July 1919; *II*, 22 July 1919.

drafted in to keep the peace.³² The strike was not confined to Kildare. In Meath, an estimated 1,600 ITGWU members were in dispute with the local Farmers Union.³³ By contrast, in Carlow, farmers and their labourers successfully settled their differences.³⁴ On 20 August, to the relief of all concerned, a compromise was reached between the Farmers' Union and the ITGWU. Agricultural labourers in the Celbridge area and much of north Kildare received an increase of 2s., more than the wage recommended by the Wages Board.³⁵ One of the ITGWU signatories to the agreement was Michael Smyth in his capacity as a senior union negotiator. With labour difficulties settled, the republican movement could concentrate on extending its electoral mandate at the local elections.

In spring 1919 the government introduced proportional representation for local elections which, it was hoped, might limit SF's progress.³⁶ The elections took place in two stages: the towns of Naas, Athy and Newbridge which had municipal status in January 1920 and other councils, such as county councils, district councils and boards of guardians, in June. Nationally, 126 urban centres voted in the first round, and, in contrast to the 1918 general election, only nine of the councils or corporations went uncontested.³⁷

In the January urban elections the nine-seat Naas UDC was hotly contested. Eight outgoing Redmondites went forward as independent nationalists. They were opposed by six candidates standing under the collective banner of SF and Labour who cooperated to maximise their vote. This group included Tommy Patterson who had been imprisoned in 1919. The occupations of the various candidates varied, with the outgoing nationalist candidates mainly self-employed merchants and auctioneers, while the republican candidates who were younger men included insurance agents and clerks.³⁸ The turnout was high at sixty-nine per cent; six outgoing nationalists were returned (with a combined sixty-six per cent of the vote) and three from SF and Labour were elected (on thirty-one per cent). The Naas result went against the national trend. It represented a significant victory for the still sizeable remnants of the IPP and an underperformance by SF which claimed that 'the military population had been marched down to the polling booths four deep for the purpose, and they had the police officials' votes, which was not a vote for republican principles'.³⁹ The status of Naas as a garrison and county town was a factor in SF and Labour's poor

³² *KO*, 23 Aug. 1919.

³³ *KO*, 12 July; 2 Aug. 1919.

³⁴ *KO*, 16 Aug. 1919.

³⁵ *KO*, 30 Aug. 1919; Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 216.

³⁶ *KO*, 19 Apr. 1919; Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 324.

³⁷ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 326.

³⁸ *KO*, 10 Jan. 1920.

³⁹ *KO*, 17 Jan. 1920.

showing. There was much tension at subsequent meetings of Naas UDC between republican and nationalist members.

In Athy there were fifteen seats to be filled. The turnout was seventy-two per cent. Labour won seven seats, SF four, independent nationalists two and unionists two (with a respectable twelve percent of the vote).⁴⁰ This result was a surprise given Athy's First World War connection. The election for Newbridge Town Commission proved to be one of the most divisive within the republican movement with SF and Labour competing against one another and well-known individuals such as Michael Smyth and Jack Fitzgerald were on opposing sides. Although Smyth was a leading IRA and SF figure, he contested the election as a Labour candidate. Surprisingly, the outgoing nationalists who controlled the Town Commission conceded without a fight despite the advantage of the proportional representation system.⁴¹ Four days before the election, attempts to forge a pact between the two sides, ended with an altercation between the leaders.⁴² In a mainly working-class and garrison town, Labour emerged as the real winners obtaining a majority of the votes and gaining five seats to four for SF.⁴³ After the election in Newbridge, SF refused to support William Cummins, the Labour nominee for the chairmanship of the Town Commission. Newbridge became the only town in Ireland where this position was contested Labour with Cummins defeating Jack Fitzgerald.⁴⁴

The Kildare urban results contrasted sharply with figures at national level. Excluding Ulster, SF obtained 41% of the vote, Labour 17%, Nationalists 14%, independents 21% and unionists 7%.⁴⁵ With thirty-three seats available in the three Kildare towns, Labour was the most successful party with twelve seats. SF won eight seats, and those under the banner of SF and Labour obtained three. The level of Labour's success in Kildare was unusual. To the surprise of many, the expected overwhelming defeat of outgoing nationalists and unionists who obtained eight and two seats respectively did not materialize.

The June elections in Kildare were contested in every electoral area with the exception of Clane, where three members were returned unopposed.⁴⁶ Kildare County Council accepted an offer by the IRA to keep order at polling stations. The RIC, whose remit this would ordinarily be, were withdrawn to the larger barracks for

⁴⁰ *NLT*, 24 Jan. 1920; *KO*, 17, 24 Jan. 1920.

⁴¹ *KO*, 17 Jan. 1920.

⁴² CI Kildare, Jan. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/111).

⁴³ *KO*, 24 Jan. 1920; *LL*, 24 Jan. 1920; *Watchword of Labour*, 31 Jan. 1920.

⁴⁴ *LL*, 31 Jan. 1920. For details of the career of William Cummins, later a senator, see *LL*, 31 July 1943.

⁴⁵ Hugh Martin, *Ireland in insurrection: an Englishman's record of fact* (London, 1921), p. 217; Richard Sinnott, *Irish voters decide: voting behaviour in elections and referendums since 1918* (Manchester, 1995), p. 28.

⁴⁶ *LL*, 12 June 1920; Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 229.

the day.⁴⁷ Apathy was widespread with an unusually low turnout in many areas of below fifty per cent. The IRA presence at polling stations, and the fear of their influence on voters, may have deterred nationalist supporters. Indeed, the extent to which the election was dominated by republicans could be seen everywhere, even in the garrison town of Kildare where the tri-colour was flying from the polling station with the red flag of Labour nailed to the mast above the tri-colour.⁴⁸ Predictably, SF gained control of the administrative machinery of the entire county of Kildare, as indeed it did in practically every county in Ireland outside the north-east. Only one outgoing independent nationalist, Michael Fitzsimmons, was returned in the county council election; SF won fifteen county council seats and Labour five.⁴⁹ The republican success in Kildare County Council was repeated throughout the south of the country. One major difference between the 1918 election and the local elections was a reduced clerical involvement. Most notable was Fr Matthew O'Brien's diminished role in SF politics. In August 1919 he was transferred from Kill to a curacy in Laois.⁵⁰ The involvement of Fr John James, curate in Balyna in north-west Kildare, also declined. There is no record of a public chastisement by Bishop Foley, but episcopal censure was probable given their republican credentials

The success of SF and Labour in Kildare resulted in interesting personnel at the helm at council and board level. Patrick Colgan and Thomas Corcoran were elected chairmen of the Celbridge and Athy Boards of Guardians as Labour nominees, while Thomas Harris and Thomas Patterson, both active IRA members, became chair of Naas No. 1 RDC and Naas Board of Guardians respectively.⁵¹ A tri-colour was attached to the flag pole over Naas courthouse, even though it was adjacent to the CI's office, for the first meeting of Kildare County Council on 24 June.⁵² Ua Buachalla was elected chairman and Éamon Ó Modhráin vice chairman. The latter proposed that the council acknowledge the authority of Dáil Éireann with only Fitzsimmons dissenting. The new council included five members who had Easter Week connections and, unsurprisingly, a motion to rescind the condemnation of the Easter Rising was carried.⁵³

Allegiance by KCC to the Dáil government soon brought it into conflict with the Local Government Board (LGB) who cut off government grants to the council on

⁴⁷ Minutes, 25 May 1920 (KCoA, county council meetings); *KO*, 29 May 1920; *NLT*, 5 June 1920; Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 226.

⁴⁸ *LL*, 12 June 1920; *KO*, 12 June 1920. For examples of workers flying Red Flags, see Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, pp 70, 115, 164.

⁴⁹ *KO*, 12 June 1920; Liam Kenny, 'Kildare County Council, 1919-1921' in Nolan & McGrath (eds), *Kildare*, p. 662. See Appendix 3 for membership.

⁵⁰ *LL*, 23 Aug. 1919.

⁵¹ *NLT*, 19 June 1920; *KO*, 19 June 1920.

⁵² *KO*, 26 June 1920.

⁵³ Minutes, 29 May 1916 (KCoA, county council meetings); Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 232.

1 October 1920. The following month a raid during a council meeting by the RIC supported by the military, confiscated council records including rate collectors' lodgement abstracts. Although the collection of rates was difficult with many withholding payments the council continued to function with a loan from the Hibernian Bank. The council denied that compromises made during the dispute did not amount to a repudiation of the authority of the Dáil.⁵⁴

In the aftermath of the local elections unionism in Kildare continued to fracture with support drifting to yet another splinter group, the Irish Dominion League, formed by Sir Horace Plunkett in June 1919 to promote dominion status for Ireland within the empire as a compromise alternative solution to partition and republicanism.⁵⁵ A conference organized largely by the league in Dublin in August 1920 was well-supported with a strong representation of Kildare unionists, including Rev. Lionel Fletcher, rector of Straffan, Major Henry de Courcy-Wheeler, now an ex-army officer, and George Mansfield, deputy lieutenant, JP and a Catholic unionist member of the landed gentry.⁵⁶ Support for the aims of the Irish Dominion League from Kildare was reinforced by magistrates from the south of the county at a meeting in Athy the following month. Twelve magistrates passed a motion which called on the government 'to adopt a measure of the fullest and most comprehensive colonial home rule, if our country is to be saved from ruin'.⁵⁷ Many had previously opposed even the most watered down measure of home rule. The change of stance belied a fear of isolation from the numerically strong Ulster unionist population in a partitioned Ireland. Dominion status also found favour among the military in the Curragh. During a chance conversation between General Judewine, O/C 5th Division, and Paddy Mullaney, an IRA officer from Leixlip at the scene of a minor automobile accident in south Kildare in May 1920, the general indicated that he was in favour of 'colonial home rule'.⁵⁸ The exchange took place while the league was introducing a dominion of Ireland bill in the House of Lords which was defeated during its second reading on 1 July 1920.⁵⁹

Opposition to the Government of Ireland bill of 1920, which proposed to establish a northern and southern parliament and would marginalize southern unionists, continued unabated throughout the second half of 1920 with Kildare unionists prominent at executive level of both the IUA and the IAPL.⁶⁰ In the House of Lords, Mayo claimed the bill would introduce partition and asked: 'what is to become of the minorities in the south and west ... who gave their sons and daughters'

⁵⁴ Nelson, *Through peace and war*, pp 234-8

⁵⁵ *II*, 28 June 1919.

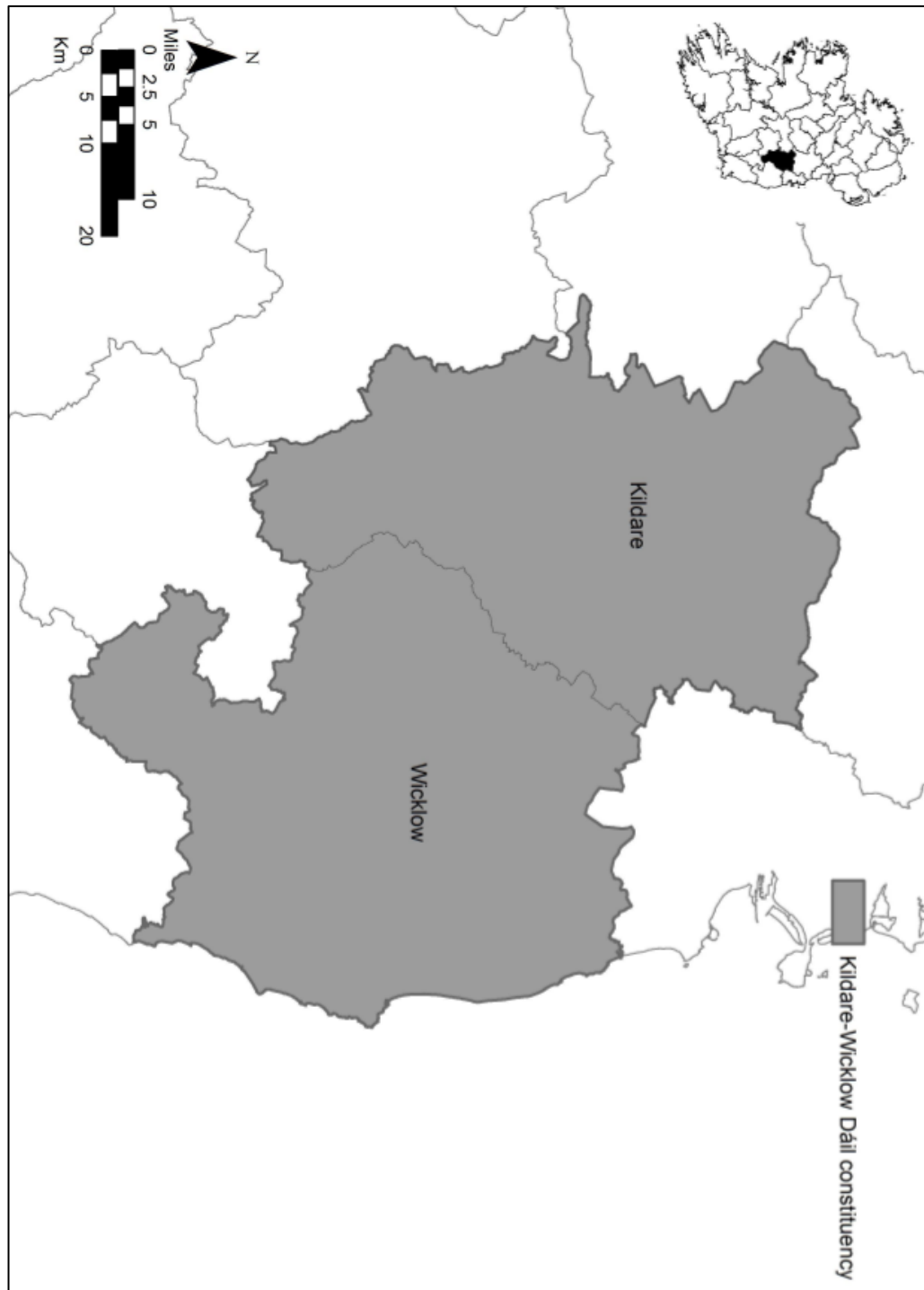
⁵⁶ *IT*, 25 Aug 1920; *FJ*, 25 Aug. 1920; McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, p. 106.

⁵⁷ *KO*, 25 Sept. 1920.

⁵⁸ Paddy Mullaney interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/106,110).

⁵⁹ Dominion of Ireland Bill, *Hansard (Lords)*, 1 July 1920, vol. 40, col. 1157.

⁶⁰ *IT*, 29 May, 21 Aug. 1920.



Map 4: Parliamentary constituencies in 1921 and 1922

lives during the war, and were they to be left to the tender mercies of a SF parliament?' Mayo suggested that a SF parliament would 'get rid of them [unionists] and tax them out of the country'.⁶¹ Despite considerable support in the Lords, southern unionists failed to muster enough support to block the bill.⁶²

To some degree, politics resumed in late spring 1921 when elections to the parliament for Southern Ireland held under the Government of Ireland Act necessitated constituency reorganization. Paudeen O'Keeffe TD, general secretary of SF, encountered difficulties when proposing a new five-seat constituency encompassing Kildare and Wicklow (see map 4). When SF in Kildare proved unable to arrange a joint convention, O'Keeffe threatened to allocate all five seats to the better organized Wicklow side. He also asserted that Domhnall Ua Buachalla did not even know the names of the SF branches in the constituency.⁶³ The election scheduled for May 1921 did not take place in any meaningful sense, but was used by SF to elect members to the second Dáil; all candidates were returned unopposed. This included Ua Buachalla and Art O'Connor, the sitting TDs for Kildare, together with Wicklow-based Erskine Childers, Robert Barton and Christopher Byrne.⁶⁴ The Government of Ireland Act also created a senate for Southern Ireland on which Kildare unionists were represented by Lord Mayo, Lord Cloncurry, Sir William Goulding and Sir Bryan Mahon. The latter settled at Mullaboden, Ballymore Eustace following his retirement from the army in 1921 and became involved in County Kildare affairs. The election of May 1921 contributed indirectly to bringing the fighting to an end. Laffan argues that with Ulster unionists now satisfied following the creation of a separate assembly in Northern Ireland, their Conservative mentors were ready to display some flexibility towards nationalist Ireland.⁶⁵

The War of Independence was in large measure a conflict between the police and the IRA. In his classic *The British campaign in Ireland*, Charles Townshend identifies three distinct phases of the War of Independence. The first from 1918 to winter 1919-20 comprised a long period of low-level activity by the IRA which involved boycotting and social ostracization of the police. The second phase during 1920 saw the more direct influence of IRA GHQ being brought to bear in respect of attacks on larger police barracks and the emergence of Dáil courts. The third phase from autumn 1920 until the truce saw a reorganization of the IRA which engaged in more offensive actions and an intensification of countermeasures by the Crown

⁶¹ *Hansard (Lords)*, 24 Nov. 1920, vol. 42, cols. 592-600; *IT*, 25 Nov. 1920.

⁶² McDowell, *Crisis and decline*, pp 74-7.

⁶³ C.M. Byrne to Dulcibella Barton, 1 May 1921 (NLI, Dulcibella Barton papers, MS 8786). Dulcibella Barton was a sister of Robert Barton.

⁶⁴ *LL*, 21 May 1921. For profiles of the Wicklow based nominees see Pauric Dempsey and Shaun Boylan, 'Barton, Robert Childers', *DIB*; Michael Hopkinson 'Childers, (Robert) Erskine', *DIB*; Emmet O'Byrne, 'Byrne was a devoted local figure: Wicklow history: respected Ashford politician C.M Byrne' in *Wicklow People*, 4 May 2011.

⁶⁵ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 341.

forces. This model only partly reflects the experience in Kildare where there were no large-scale attacks on police barracks and few significant engagements. The Kildare IRA focused on smaller operations aimed at hindering the mobility of the Crown forces. It also played a pivotal role in the intelligence war.

As major road and rail networks passed through north Kildare, the Kildare IRA, periodically assisted by Cumann na mBan, played an important communications role by conveying dispatches between IRA GHQ and the south and west of the country. Patrick Colgan, O/C Kildare Battalion, was responsible for dispatch delivery operating from his place of work. On other occasions, letters from Michael Collins were sent to him using his brother's address in Carton demesne.⁶⁶ When the volume of work increased, GHQ appointed Michael Fay, an activist from Celbridge as a special courier from the Kildare Battalion. A medical student in UCD, Fay was able to travel to and from Dublin unnoticed.⁶⁷ A system for communication between GHQ and the south of Ireland through central Kildare was also devised. From Dublin, dispatches would proceed through Naas to Kildare and on to the next destination. Dispatches for Dublin came through Kilcullen to Naas and eventually to the city. Various activists were in charge of delivery, with Alf Sweeney responsible in Naas where six couriers were available to convey them.⁶⁸ From a communications perspective, it was advantageous to GHQ that north Kildare remained largely peaceful. It was also a safe-haven for men on the run. The most famous example occurred in May 1919 when five members of the Tipperary IRA involved in the Soloheadbeg ambush and Knocklong rescue, including Dan Breen, Seán Treacy and Seán Hogan, were given refuge in Maynooth.⁶⁹

The IRA in Kildare excelled at intelligence-gathering and provided vital assistance to IRA GHQ. In early 1919 Alphonsus Sweeney, intelligence officer in the Naas company, was tipped off by Sergeant Jeremiah Maher, a clerk in CI Supple's office, of his impending arrest due to involvement in the anti-hunt protests. Advised to leave Naas, Sweeney moved to Dublin.⁷⁰ Maher continued to pass intelligence to the IRA through Thomas Harris, but grew uneasy given Harris's IRA profile. For this reason, in August 1919 Seán Kavanagh, a Waterford native who moved to Naas as an Irish teacher, became the sole intelligence officer who liaised with Maher.⁷¹ Michael Collins was anxious to obtain secret police cypher codes and directed Maher to assist in this endeavour. Kavanagh obtained police telegrams in cypher from Maher along with decoded copies. Together they decoded the cypher. Subsequently, deciphered RIC messages were passed to Collins. Each month a new cypher was issued which the

⁶⁶ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 73); James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, pp 2, 6).

⁶⁷ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 63, 67).

⁶⁸ Alphonsus Sweeney (BMH WS 1147, pp 3-4); James Dunne (BMH WS, 1571, p. 2).

⁶⁹ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 64-5).

⁷⁰ Alphonsus Sweeney (BMH WS 1147, p. 5).

⁷¹ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS, 850, pp 71-2).

CI kept in his safe. Maher succeeded in passing an impression of a key to unlock the safe to Collins who had a duplicate made. This allowed Maher ready access to the safe and the monthly cyphers. Kavanagh visited Maher two or three times a week and passed on every piece of information that might be of interest to the IRA as well as replies to Collins's queries. Maher also recruited Constable Patrick Casey, a fellow policeman in Naas barracks, to assist in intelligence work. One of their most valuable pieces of intelligence concerned a scheme of co-operation between the police and military in the event of major activities on the part of the local IRA. The information pertaining to the military was of considerable importance to Collins.⁷² Collins and Kavanagh established a network by which messages were sent through railway employees in Heuston and Sallins. Secret messages and police codes could reach Collins within hours.⁷³ Messages for the IRA were also conveyed occasionally by Fr Patrick Doyle, a curate in Naas and a close friend of Collins.⁷⁴ The intelligence from the CI's office in Naas changed the course of the War of Independence and an analysis of the Kildare IRA's pivotal role has been largely overlooked in the broader historiography.

In mid-August 1920 the RIC discovered that the IRA were obtaining secret police cyphers because when Terence MacSwiney was arrested he was in possession of the newly issued cypher which had not yet reached the Cork CI. Kavanagh had acquired it from Maher in Naas.⁷⁵ The police authorities immediately changed the key but not the type of cypher used or the mode of delivery. Inevitably, Maher came under suspicion from his superiors. He had been offered promotion to head constable which would have necessitated his transfer from Naas. He declined and continued with his intelligence activities.⁷⁶ Maher came under renewed suspicion when, following the Kill ambush in August 1920, firearms permits were withdrawn and the police were ordered to collect the weapons to prevent them falling into the hands of the IRA. However, in many cases the IRA had already collected the arms and clearly had insider information.⁷⁷ Although there was no evidence implicating Maher, Collins advised him to resign from the RIC.⁷⁸ Unbelievably, Maher was succeeded as clerk to the CI by Casey, who continued to supply intelligence to Kavanagh, including

⁷² Seán Kavanagh (BMH WS, 524, p. 5).

⁷³ Seán Kavanagh, 'The Irish Volunteers' intelligence organisation', *Capuchin Annual* (1969), 360. This replicates his statement to the BMH.

⁷⁴ Patrick Doyle (BMH WS, 807, p 25).

⁷⁵ Hugh Jeudwine, 'History of the 5th Division in Ireland, November 1919 – March 1922', p. 143 (Imperial War Museum (IWM) London, Jeudwine papers, 72/82/2); Seán Kavanagh (BMH WS, 524, p. 3).

⁷⁶ Seán Kavanagh (BMH WS, 524, p. 3).

⁷⁷ *LL*, 11 Sept. 1920.

⁷⁸ *LL*, 25 Sept. 1920. Kavanagh, 'Irish Volunteers Intelligence', 359-60; Maher later became the first Garda Síochána chief superintendent in charge of Kildare and Carlow and was based in Naas barracks where he had previously served.

the secret cyphers. In November 1920 Kavanagh learned of his impending arrest and went on the run. He became adjutant Kildare No. 2 Battalion and participated in armed raids on the Dublin to Cork train searching for Dublin Castle mail until his arrest in January 1921.⁷⁹

With the IRA still able to obtain the secret codes, the efficiency of CI Kerry Supple was called into question, and in January 1921, his retirement was announced. Aged fifty-nine, he had not been due to retire for another six years.⁸⁰ Supple was succeeded by Major Victor Henry Scott, who had been adjutant of Gormanston Black and Tan Camp. He proved more efficient than Supple and within a month of his appointment changed his office staff. Casey was transferred to the Down CI's office in Downpatrick and continued to supply intelligence to the 3rd Northern Division IRA.⁸¹

In January 1919 *An tÓglach*, the IRA organ, declared that every IRA Volunteer was entitled to use 'all legitimate methods of warfare against soldiers and policemen, and to slay them if necessary.'⁸² By late 1919 the scale of violence directed against the RIC by the IRA, was beginning to have a detrimental effect on the force generally.⁸³ Although the attacks were initially confined to the south-east and Dublin, by the late autumn the activity had spread to Meath with attacks on Ballivor and Lismullen RIC barracks.⁸⁴ Shortly afterwards, a number of outlying barracks in north Kildare were vacated, including Sallins, Donadea and Ballinadrimna.⁸⁵ The Meath IRA was more militant than the Kildare Battalion and posed a danger to isolated barracks close to the Meath-Kildare county boundary. According to the IG, by November 1919 'the police were confronted with almost insuperable difficulties ... owing to the state of terror organized by the Republican Party'.⁸⁶ One civilian was shot dead by a military sentry near the Curragh, but little occurred in Kildare until late November when members of the Naas company severed the gas connection to the town hall.⁸⁷ More seriously, on 22 December shots were fired into the home of CI Supple on Sallins Road in Naas.⁸⁸ This was the first engagement involving the use of firearms

⁷⁹ Seán Kavanagh (BMH WS, 524, pp 4-5); Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 11).

⁸⁰ LL, Jan. 1921; CI Kildare, Jan. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

⁸¹ LL, 5 Mar. 1921; Seán Kavanagh (BMH WS, 524, p. 5). Casey later joined the Gardaí where he obtained the rank of superintendent.

⁸² *An tÓglach*, 31 Jan. 1919.

⁸³ Laffan, *Resurrection*, pp 75-6.

⁸⁴ Seán Boylan, 'Meath -1920', *Capuchin Annual* (1970), 540.

⁸⁵ LL, 8 Nov. 1920.

⁸⁶ IG report, Nov. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110). On the difficulties experienced by police see Joost Augusteijn, *The memoirs of John Regan: a Catholic officer in the RIC and RUC, 1909-1948* (Dublin, 2007), pp 113-75.

⁸⁷ CI Kildare, Nov. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110); Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS, 1,155, p. 60); KO, 29 Nov. 1919.

⁸⁸ CI Kildare, Dec. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110).

and was followed by a second incident at the house on 3 January 1920, when five activists, with Tommy Patterson in charge, fired shots that hit a lower window.⁸⁹

An assault on Baltinglass RIC barracks in late January, situated two miles from the county boundary with Kildare, sent shock waves throughout the RIC in Kildare. The operation involved up to fifty men, including many from south Kildare.⁹⁰ It was a hit and run encounter with the perpetrators making no attempts to capture the building. Nevertheless, one constable died and another was wounded. The shooting and the wave of violence was condemned by Bishop Foley, who intimated that the perpetrators faced excommunication.⁹¹ The closure of smaller police barracks was now accelerated in Kildare beginning with Leixlip in early March (see map 5, Distribution of Crown forces).⁹² Practically all the police barracks in rural districts of Kildare had been vacated by mid-March. As a result, large stretches of the countryside were without any police presence. When Robertstown barracks closed, west Kildare became one of the most unpoliced regions in the east of the country, with Edenderry being the nearest barracks to the north, Celbridge to the east and Naas to the south. Art O'Connor, who on occasion did not see eye to eye with the local IRA, refused to cooperate with the destruction of the Mill complex in Celbridge which housed the local RIC.⁹³ The three garrison towns of Naas, Newbridge and Kildare were served by larger RIC barracks, with Kilcullen near the Curragh camp also remaining open. The smaller barracks at Kill and Monasterevan on the main Dublin to Cork/Limerick road also continued to operate. The only barracks remaining in south Kildare was at Athy.⁹⁴ The number of RIC barracks decreased from twenty-five in the autumn of 1919 to just eight by the summer of 1920 as the preservation of law and order in large areas of rural Kildare had passed from the RIC to the local IRA. The IRA's policing function in Kildare was reported in the *Kildare Observer* in late April 1920.⁹⁵

In late March 1920 rumours that the barracks in Maynooth was to be re-opened prompted the local IRA to burn the building on 3 April.⁹⁶ Care was taken to find alternative accommodation for the wife of Sergeant Moore who resided in the barracks. The destruction may have prevented the re-occupation of the barracks.

⁸⁹ Brigade activity reports, 7th Bde. 1st Eastern Division (IMA/MSPC/A/62(1)); CI Kildare, Jan. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/111).

⁹⁰ *LL*, 31 Jan. 1920; Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 570; Kevin Cullen, 'The RIC and the IRA in Wicklow's War of Independence', *West Wicklow Historical Journal*, 7 (2013), 66-7.

⁹¹ *II*, 23 Feb. 1920.

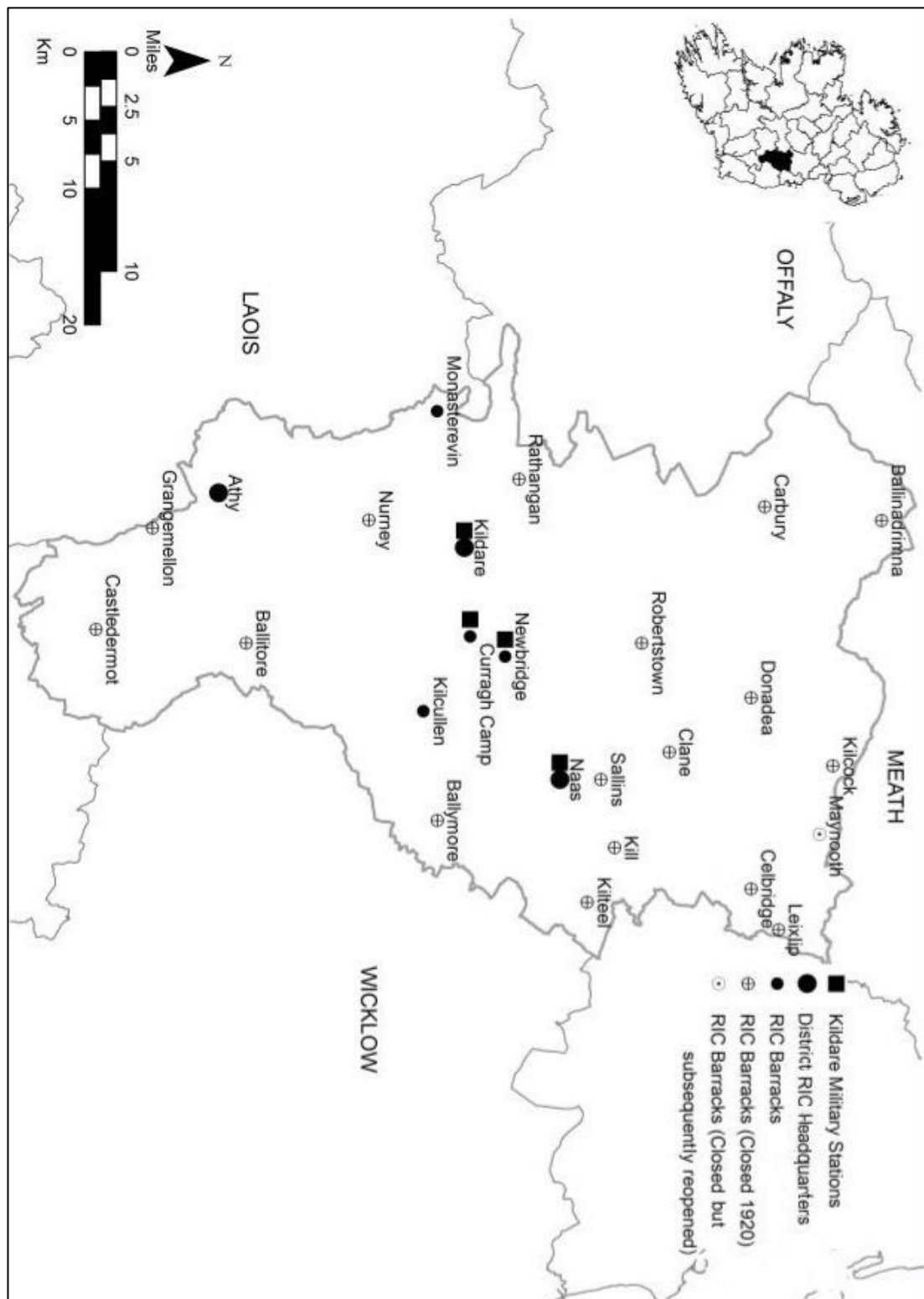
⁹² *LL*, 6 and 13 Mar. 1920.

⁹³ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, pp 69-70).

⁹⁴ *LL*, 13 Mar. 1920; Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare', p. 629; W.J. Lowe, 'The war against the RIC, 1919-1921', *Éire-Ireland* 37:3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2002), 107-13.

⁹⁵ *KO*, 24 Apr. 1920.

⁹⁶ *LL*, 23 Mar. 1920; *KO*, 23 Mar. 1920.



Map 5: Distribution of Crown forces

That week it was reported that the RIC had returned temporarily to the vacated barracks at Rathangan.⁹⁷ At Easter 1920, IRA GHQ authorized the destruction of all vacated barracks and 300 were destroyed throughout the country.⁹⁸ The Kildare IRA burned six vacant barracks from Ballinadrimna in the north to Ballitore in the south. In all cases a large number of armed and disguised men took part and the raids were carried out with the greatest speed.⁹⁹ The only difficulty was at Leixlip where the local RIC sergeant and his family resided in the building. They were allowed to salvage some belongings before being removed.¹⁰⁰ During summer 1920 the remaining vacated barracks were burned. Sallins required three attempts to complete the task.¹⁰¹ The consideration shown to the families of RIC in north Kildare was extended to the south of the county. Before the IRA burned Castledermot barracks arrangements were made for the safe removal of the sergeant's wife, family and furniture. However, the job did not go to plan as an IRA Volunteer was accidentally trapped in the burning building and had to be rescued by Paddy Cosgrave, the IRA leader and a first cousin of W.T. Cosgrave, a member of the Dáil government.¹⁰²

With the RIC largely neutralized throughout rural Kildare, the local IRA targeted other areas of British administration by destroying a number of courthouses and raiding customs offices. The extent to which the IRA controlled rural towns in Kildare during the late spring and early summer of 1920 was illustrated by the ease with which Maynooth town hall was destroyed when it was believed that the RIC intended to use it to re-establish a police barracks.¹⁰³ Stephen O'Reilly, attached to the transport section of the Dublin Brigade, carried out the operation, travelling by train to Maynooth with 30 lbs of gelignite. After reporting to Ua Buachalla, he was assisted by the local IRA including Patrick Colgan. The explosives did not destroy the building which had to be set on fire.¹⁰⁴ With no British security presence in the area, Michael Collins was able to travel to Maynooth shortly afterwards to inspect the damage.¹⁰⁵

The closure of Celbridge barracks in August 1920 left only six RIC barracks operating in the county: Naas, Newbridge, Kildare, Kilcullen, Monasterevin and Athy. Unionists felt exposed, but there were only two significant incidents between Kildare unionists and the IRA. The first occurred in late July at Ballindoolan, a remote area of

⁹⁷ *LL*, 3 Apr. 1920.

⁹⁸ Townshend, *British campaign*, p. 65.

⁹⁹ *LL*, 10 Apr. 1920; *KO*, 10 Apr. 1920.

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication, Tony Maher, Celbridge, 2010. For details of compensation claimed by Sergeant Lane see compensation Ireland commission county Kildare, 1919-1922 (TNA, CO 905/7/307).

¹⁰¹ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 10); Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare', p. 629.

¹⁰² Smyth, 'Kildare battalions', 570.

¹⁰³ *LL*, 22 May 1920.

¹⁰⁴ Stephen O'Reilly (BMH WS 1,761, pp 3-4).

¹⁰⁵ Patrick McCrea (BMH WS 413, p. 40).

north-west Kildare, when William Tyrrell, an executive member of the IUA and a grandmaster of Edenderry Orange lodge, successfully resisted an attempt by the IRA to seize his firearms.¹⁰⁶ The following month the IRA raided the Hendy family home at Kilcrow House, Athy. The family's submission to the Irish Grants Committee revealed the trauma endured by them. Jane Hendy suffered a nervous breakdown and gave birth prematurely to twins, John and Robert. Her health never recovered and she died in June 1922; her twins had predeceased her.¹⁰⁷

The need to bolster numbers in the RIC was a matter of urgency and the government initiated a recruitment drive in Britain of mainly ex-servicemen. The new force, officially known as the RIC Special Reserve, but nicknamed the Black and Tans, made their appearance in Kildare on 12 April 1920 at a new training depot in Hare Park Camp, the Curragh.¹⁰⁸ Two companies of the Auxiliary Division, recruited from ex-army officers, were formed at Hare Park Camp in June and July 1920. The RIC Hare Park depot was relocated to Gormanston in October 1920.¹⁰⁹

From the spring of 1920 the legal system underwent a transformation with the administration of justice carried out by a new republican courts system instigated by Dáil Éireann.¹¹⁰ Until June 1920 they only provided for arbitration courts but had greater powers thereafter. Two types of courts emerged, parish courts with powers to deal with claims of under £10 and district courts for more serious offences.¹¹¹ By May 1920 republican courts were reported in the garrison towns and surrounding areas. In Newbridge three men who pleaded guilty to stealing oats were fined and ordered to make immediate restitution.¹¹² When cattle were reported missing in the Kilcullen area and sheep from the Curragh borders, the IRA investigated the matter and arrested five men. Subsequently, reports indicated that some of the cattle had been returned to the owners.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Compensation Ireland Commission County Kildare, 1919-1922 (CO 905/7/277); *KO*, 14 Aug. 1920; Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 67).

¹⁰⁷ Compensation Irish Grants Committee claim of Henry Hendy, 12 Feb. 1929 (TNA, Irish Grants Committee, CO 762/197/4); Author's observation of Hendy gravestone in Timolin churchyard.

¹⁰⁸ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 35; Richard Bennet, *Black and Tans* (New York, 1995), p. 77; Lowe, 'The war against the RIC', 107-13.

¹⁰⁹ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 25; for details of the Auxiliaries, see A.D. Harvey, 'Who were the Auxiliaries?', *Historical Journal*, 35:3 (1992), 665-9.

¹¹⁰ The constructive work of Dáil Éireann, no. 1, 6 (NAI, decree no. 8 Session 4 1919); Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary government in Ireland: Dáil Éireann, 1919-1922* (Dublin, 1995), pp 138-9.

¹¹¹ Rules and forms of parish and district courts (NAI, Dept. of Justice files H 140/5 also 47/17); Seán O'Duffy (BMH WS 619, p. 3); Mary Kotsonouris, *Retreat from revolution: the Dáil courts, 1920-24* (Dublin, 1994); Francis J. Costello, 'The republican courts and the decline of British rule in Ireland, 1919-1921', *Éire-Ireland*, 25:2 (1990), 36-55.

¹¹² *FJ*, 4 June 1920; *KO*, 5 June 1920.

¹¹³ *IT*, 31 May 1920; Francis Costello, *The Irish revolution and its aftermath, 1916-1923: years of revolt* (Dublin, 2003), pp 198-9.

As the summer of 1920 progressed, republican police recruited from the ranks of the IRA emerged. An order issued by Richard Mulcahy in June 1920, provided for a police officer to be appointed at company, battalion, and brigade level.¹¹⁴ On 18 July a SF meeting was held publicly in Athy workhouse to elect republican magistrates and to arrange for courts that would oust the Crown court system.¹¹⁵ By this point, IRA or republican police had all but replaced the RIC in north Kildare where 'volunteer police patrols' were active nightly in Maynooth and Kilcock enforcing an order issued by Dáil Éireann, that public-houses should only supply drink from 7 a.m. until 10.30 p.m.¹¹⁶ Republican police were also vigilant at various outdoor social events, and on one occasion in early July at an aeridheacht in Ballitore, two policemen in plain clothes were detected and removed by the IRA.¹¹⁷ In the first week of August, two republican courts which were open to the public were held in the Christian Brothers school in Kilcock with solicitors representing the plaintiffs and the defendants in attendance.¹¹⁸

One of the most remarkable achievements of SF was to make the administration of justice through the Crown courts unworkable in large areas of Kildare and instigate a parallel mechanism in the form of republican courts from the spring of 1920. However, the scale of apparent public acceptance of republican courts outside the major towns was not surprising due to a gap left by the withdrawal of the RIC from rural areas. Successful policing by the IRA which prevented a breakdown of law and order particularly in rural areas further reduced the acceptability of the RIC among nationalists in the county. This was illustrated during the trial of Joseph Cusack, a SF county councillor from Robertstown, arrested for being in possession of seditious documents. Cusack admitted that he settled small differences at republican courts in the absence of any other authority and suggested that 'If they did not keep the blackguards down they would be over-run by them'. Cusack was found not guilty and discharged.¹¹⁹

In tandem with the campaign against the RIC was an attack on the prison system with a surge of hunger strikes in Irish and English jails. Since January 1919 IRA prisoners had been under orders to defy the prison regulations and generally to subvert prison discipline if denied political status.¹²⁰ On 2 October all DORA prisoners in Mountjoy sought full political status through their spokesman, Kildare 1916 leader

¹¹⁴ Simon Donnelly (BMH WS 481, pp 35-8); Mitchell, *Revolutionary government*, p. 151.

¹¹⁵ CI Kildare, July 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112).

¹¹⁶ *KO*, 24 July 1920.

¹¹⁷ *KO*, 17 July 1920.

¹¹⁸ CI Kildare, Aug. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112); *KO*, 7 Aug 1920.

¹¹⁹ *KO*, 20 Nov. 1920.

¹²⁰ Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 157.

Ted O’Kelly, who was serving a two-year sentence for political activities.¹²¹ When the authorities refused, many of the prisoners, including O’Kelly, went on hunger strike. A riot in the prison involving forty-four prisoners ensued on 5 October. Two days later, O’Kelly, the ring-leader, was transferred to a prison in Derry, but his health deteriorated and he was released under the Cat and Mouse Act on 11 October which meant that he was liable to re-arrest if he offended. Under the same provision the first batch of prisoners on hunger strike in Mountjoy was released on 14 October and over the next week all were freed.¹²² Kildare IRA activist, Richard Higgins, who had been arrested in September when two pounds of gunpowder were found in his premises, subsequently joined the hunger-strike, but was released in early November when his health deteriorated.¹²³

The hunger strike continued to be used by the IRA in 1920. In April, Athy’s Éamon Malone was part of the leadership group behind the hunger strike in Mountjoy led by Peadar Clancy.¹²⁴ Malone was commandant 5th battalion and later O/C of the Carlow Brigade. On the run since September 1918, he was arrested in November 1919 and had been intermittently on hunger-strike since Christmas. He was commandant of the prisoners in the jail before and during the strike.¹²⁵ Within a week, 101 men were refusing food. Thousands gathered outside the prison and scuffles with the troops on guard became menacing.¹²⁶ By the beginning of the second week, the city’s attention seemed directed entirely upon the prison and the Catholic hierarchy intervened condemning the government.¹²⁷ The two prelates with authority in Kildare – Archbishop Byrne and Bishop Foley – issued several statements during the War of Independence. Although they stopped short of recognizing Dáil Éireann, they continually reaffirmed the right of the Irish people to self-determination.¹²⁸

In this highly-charged atmosphere labour leaders called for a general strike on 12 April.¹²⁹ This was observed throughout the country, apart from Belfast and

¹²¹ O’Kelly to Max Green, 2 Oct. 1919 (NAI, General Prisons Board – Hunger strikers 1915-1920, (hereafter, GPBHS) 1919/8622); *EH*, 7 Oct. 1919; Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 158. O’Kelly now used Éamon as his forename.

¹²² Munro to Green, 11-14 Oct. 1919 (NAI, GPBHS/1919/7213-7282); *II*, 20 Oct. 1919; Frank Gallagher, *Four glorious years* (Dublin, 2005 [1953]), pp 143-6; Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 159.

¹²³ CI Kildare, Sept 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110); CI Kildare, Dec. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/113); *LL*, 20 Sept., 25 Oct., 8 Nov. 1919.

¹²⁴ Pauric J. Dempsey, ‘Clancy, Peadar’, *DIB*; Gallagher, *Four glorious years*, p. 162.

¹²⁵ *LL*, 10, 24 Apr. 1920.

¹²⁶ *II*, 10 Apr. 1920; Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 165; Townshend, *Republic*, pp 142-3.

¹²⁷ Nevil Macready, *Annals of an active life*, ii (2 vols London, 1924), p. 445; Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 165.

¹²⁸ Miller, *Church state and nation*, p. 483; Morrissey, *William J. Walsh*, p. 347.

¹²⁹ Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 165; *Irish Bulletin*, 15 Apr. 1920; Mitchell, *Labour in Irish politics*, pp 119-20.

Derry. In many cases it led to workers taking control of their towns. Even Naas, which had elected a majority of independent nationalists three months previously, was virtually taken over by local trade union activists who formed a strike committee (council) headed by Tommy Patterson, president of the local branch of the ITGWU.¹³⁰ Thomas Foran, who participated in the Naas protest, recalled that 'if a shop had dared to open there would have been murder'.¹³¹ A procession through the town was attended by almost 1,000 people of all classes and creeds. For the third year in a row, Punchestown Races was a casualty of the civil unrest.¹³² The strike in Naas was a remarkable success.¹³³ Newbridge and Kildare were also taken over by strikers. Businesses were closed and work suspended, including the Newbridge fair. In Kildare, strong pickets were mounted each night as the police were withdrawn from the streets.¹³⁴ The local strike committee styled itself 'The Kildare Soviet' and there were accusations of intimidation of army employees.¹³⁵

Rail communications were closed down on 13 April when workers of the Great Southern & Midland Company refused to move any trains. The use of the main Dublin to Cork road was also seriously curtailed as Naas was firmly controlled by labour activists and Newbridge was also in the hands of the strikers. The British army in Kildare was therefore virtually cut off from the outside world. At Easter 1916 regiments from Kildare could reach Dublin within five hours, but this was not possible in April 1920 as the crisis in Mountjoy unfolded and rumours of a new rising circulated. With strike committees controlling virtually every town outside the north-east, the country was fast receding into the equivalent, as Conor Kostick suggests, of the Russian Revolution of February 1917.¹³⁶ In most places the police abdicated their responsibilities and the maintenance of order was taken over by the local workers councils.

Lord French and General Macready, GOC of the British army, knowing that the government was shaken by the militancy of the general strike, decided to release the hunger strikers on parole.¹³⁷ The official who wrote the release order failed to note that half the parolees, as sentenced men rather than internees, were not entitled to parole.¹³⁸ The error delivered a dramatic republican triumph.¹³⁹ Celebrations greeted the released men throughout the country. In Athy, Éamon

¹³⁰ *LL*, 31 Jan. 1920, 17 Apr. 1920.

¹³¹ T. Foran to William O'Brien, 15 Apr. 1920 (NLI, William O'Brien papers MS, 15,670).

¹³² *KO*, 17 Apr. 1920.

¹³³ T. Foran to O'Brien, 15 Apr. 1920 (NLI, O'Brien papers MS, 15,670).

¹³⁴ *LL*, 24 Apr. 1920.

¹³⁵ *LL*, 15 May 1920.

¹³⁶ Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 128.

¹³⁷ Townshend, *Republic*, pp 143-4; Keith Jeffery, 'Macready, Sir (Cecil Frederick) Nevil' in *ODNB*.

¹³⁸ *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 15 Apr. 1920, vol. 127, col. 1810-12; Seán McConville, *Irish political prisoners, 1848-1922: theatres of war* (London, 2003), p. 721.

¹³⁹ Dublin district historical record, April 1920 (TNA, WO 141/93).

Malone was given a hero's welcome by 3,000 well-wishers, including a large contingent of ex-army men.¹⁴⁰ During the crisis, SF politicians, both nationally and locally, were side-lined by the events. According to Kostick, the two days of general strike, did more to undermine British authority than months of armed struggle.¹⁴¹ General Sir Hugh Jeudwine, commander of the 5th Division based in the Curragh from 1919 until 1922, regarded the wholesale prisoner release as having a detrimental effect on relations between the army and civilians which up to that point had been good.¹⁴² The outcome was also a severe blow to the police, the prison system and the Dublin Castle administration.¹⁴³

The munitions strike of 1920 also created difficulties for the British army. From 1 June, railwaymen in Kildare refused to handle munitions or operate troop trains and the strike continued until December. The strike generated an unusual unity of support for the railway workers from politicians and clergy.¹⁴⁴ For Jeudwine the strike caused a great inconvenience and steps had to be taken to convey armed personnel and munitions by road.¹⁴⁵ The strike, which lasted for eight months, resulted in the widespread dismissal of workers and was not broken until December of 1920.¹⁴⁶ The terrain of the 5th divisional area, especially the Bog of Allen, was covered with a haphazard network of narrow secondary and third-class roads. The poor state of the roads assisted the IRA, who as discussed below, successfully interrupted army communications from December 1920.¹⁴⁷

The second phase of the War of Independence, as outlined by Townshend – the ambushing of police patrols to obtain arms – was slow to begin in Kildare. Kill barracks, which was manned by twenty-two men, was the only police establishment located outside the towns in Kildare. A party of RIC regularly cycled from the barracks to take up guard duty at the Naas residence of the CI, a distance of almost four miles. On the night of 21 August, four policemen were ambushed at Greenhills near Kill. Sergeant Reilly and Constable Haverty subsequently died of their wounds and the two others were captured. The IRA seized two revolvers and two carbines.¹⁴⁸ Evidence differs as to whether the police were given adequate opportunity to

¹⁴⁰ *LL*, 24 Apr., 8 May 1920; *NLT*, 8 May 1920.

¹⁴¹ Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 127.

¹⁴² Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 143.

¹⁴³ Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 167.

¹⁴⁴ *KO*, 3 July 1920; see Charles Townshend, 'The Irish railway strike of 1920: industrial action and civil resistance in the struggle for independence', *IHS*, 21:83 (1979), 265-82.

¹⁴⁵ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 50; Cases of refusal by railway employees to operate trains carrying troops or military stores, July-Dec. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/157/2).

¹⁴⁶ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 286.

¹⁴⁷ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 15.

¹⁴⁸ Brigade activity reports, 7th Bde. 1st Eastern Division (IMA/MSPC/A/62(1)); James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, pp 6-7); *LL*, 28 Aug. 1920; *KO*, 28 Aug. 1920; James Durney, *War of Independence*, pp 110-13.

surrender. At the inquest one of the survivors stated that a call to surrender was accompanied by a volley of shots whereas James Dunne told the BMH that Reilly opened fire when called on to surrender which led to general firing.¹⁴⁹ Haverty was 39-years-old, single and had been in the force for nineteen years. Reilly was married, and after twenty-six years' service was just three weeks from retirement. In 1916 he had been in charge of Swords barracks which was captured by the Irish Volunteers.¹⁵⁰ The ambush was widely condemned, with the most vocal criticism coming from Bishop Foley, who referred to the encounter as assassination and murder.¹⁵¹ However, the horror was quickly overtaken by acts of retaliation by the police when, on 26 August, a party of twenty heavily armed Black and Tans, arrived in Kill by lorry and looted and shot up Broughall's public house.¹⁵² The following night they turned their attention to Naas and burned Boushells' shop. Although near the RIC barracks the police did not intervene.¹⁵³ The incident caused hysteria among the inhabitants of Naas, with some families leaving their homes and staying with friends. With the impact now affecting ordinary people it did nothing to enhance the acceptance of the RIC in Naas and evaporated any sympathy that had existed for the RIC fatalities at Kill.¹⁵⁴

After the Kill ambush, Celbridge and Kill barracks, the last remaining RIC barracks in north Kildare, were vacated and subsequently burned by the IRA.¹⁵⁵ The ambush also led to an increasing number of resignations from the RIC.¹⁵⁶ David Fitzpatrick has shown that in the country as a whole, 1,590 RIC men resigned during 1920 and 1,428 in 1921. However, Terence Dooley records only eight policemen resigning in Kildare between January 1920 and July 1921.¹⁵⁷ Kildare magistrates also resigned with seven resigning in one week in early September.¹⁵⁸ Attacks on the Kildare RIC continued in September when Constable Everard who was off-duty and James Doyle, an ex-soldier from Baltinglass suspected as a spy, were ambushed at Coolrake, near Moone. Both suffered gun-shot wounds but escaped.¹⁵⁹

¹⁴⁹ *FJ*, 25 Aug. 1920; *KO*, 28 Aug. 1920; James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, pp 5, 6).

¹⁵⁰ CI Kildare, Aug. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112); *LL*, 28 Aug., 4 Sept. 1920; Richard Abbott, *Police casualties Ireland, 1919-1922* (Cork, 2000), p. 112. Prior to his posting to Kill he was in charge of Clane barracks.

¹⁵¹ *LL*, 28 Aug. 1920. Bishop Foley's letter was published in *KO*, 4 Sept. 1920.

¹⁵² Compensation Ireland commission Kildare, 1919-1922 (TNA, CO 905/7/207); *LL*, 28 Aug. 1920; *II*, 28 Aug. 1920.

¹⁵³ *LL*, 28 Aug. 1920; *KO*, 28 Aug. 1920; *NLT*, 4 Sept. 1920.

¹⁵⁴ *KO*, 4 Sept. 1920; CI Kildare, Aug. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/112).

¹⁵⁵ Compensation Ireland commission county Kildare, 1919-1922 (TNA, CO 905/7/198); Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p.70); *KO*, 7 Aug. 1920. *LL*, 4 Sept. 1920.

¹⁵⁶ *LL*, 4 Sept. 1920; *KO*, 4 Sept. 1920.

¹⁵⁷ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life* p. 35; Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare', p. 629.

¹⁵⁸ *KO*, 11 Sept. 1920.

¹⁵⁹ *LL*, 25 Sept. 1920; Sworn statement by Christopher Murphy, 9 Mar. 1937 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF15040).

As 1920 progressed the IRA became better organized and trained. In July, a training camp was established at Ladytown, Naas under the control of Peadar McMahon, a GHQ organizer. The following month, Dowdingston House, four miles south of Naas, was taken over as battalion headquarters, and fortnightly meetings of the battalion council were held there.¹⁶⁰ A reorganization of the Kildare Battalion, which controlled an extensive area of northern Kildare and some adjoining areas, was undertaken by McMahon in September when two new battalions were formed: the Kildare No. 1, encompassing the northern region with Patrick Colgan in charge; the remaining area became Kildare No. 2 under Thomas Harris.¹⁶¹

In October, the Kildare IRA experienced a major setback when an arms and ammunition dump close to Monasterevin was discovered. This at least partially explains the lack of militancy in late 1920.¹⁶² Another reason was a reluctance by some in the local leadership to engage in ruthless activities, and for very good reasons. In the wake of the death of Terence MacSwiney, Éamon Ó Modhráin, a senior figure in both SF and the IRA, was discharged from the Volunteers by GHQ for refusing to kill unarmed RIC men. Ó Modhráin, who knew the position on the ground far better than his superiors in Dublin, was fully aware of the sympathies of many RIC members to the movement, and argued that the IRA were obtaining vital intelligence from friendly policemen. He was reinstated on appeal.¹⁶³ However, one of the principal reasons for a lack of militancy was the spate of arrests after Bloody Sunday 21 November 1920. Throughout the country over 500 arrests were made and this included virtually the entire IRA leadership in Kildare, including Thomas Harris, Tommy Patterson and Jack Fitzgerald.¹⁶⁴ The authorities also tracked down IRA figures on the run such as Colgan, Ó Modhráin and Éamon Malone, O/C Carlow Brigade.¹⁶⁵ They were held in Hare Park, the military prison camp in the Curragh. Vice-commandants had to step up with Michael Smyth becoming O/C Kildare No. 2 Battalion and Frank Purcell O/C No.1 Battalion.¹⁶⁶ The Bloody Sunday arrests filled Ballykinlar internment camp and a new internment centre called Gibbet Rath Camp was established at the Curragh for prisoners from the 5th Division and the Dublin

¹⁶⁰ Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', pp 564-5.

¹⁶¹ Patrick Colgan BMH WS 850, p. 71; Michael Smyth (BMH WS, 1,531, p. 9).

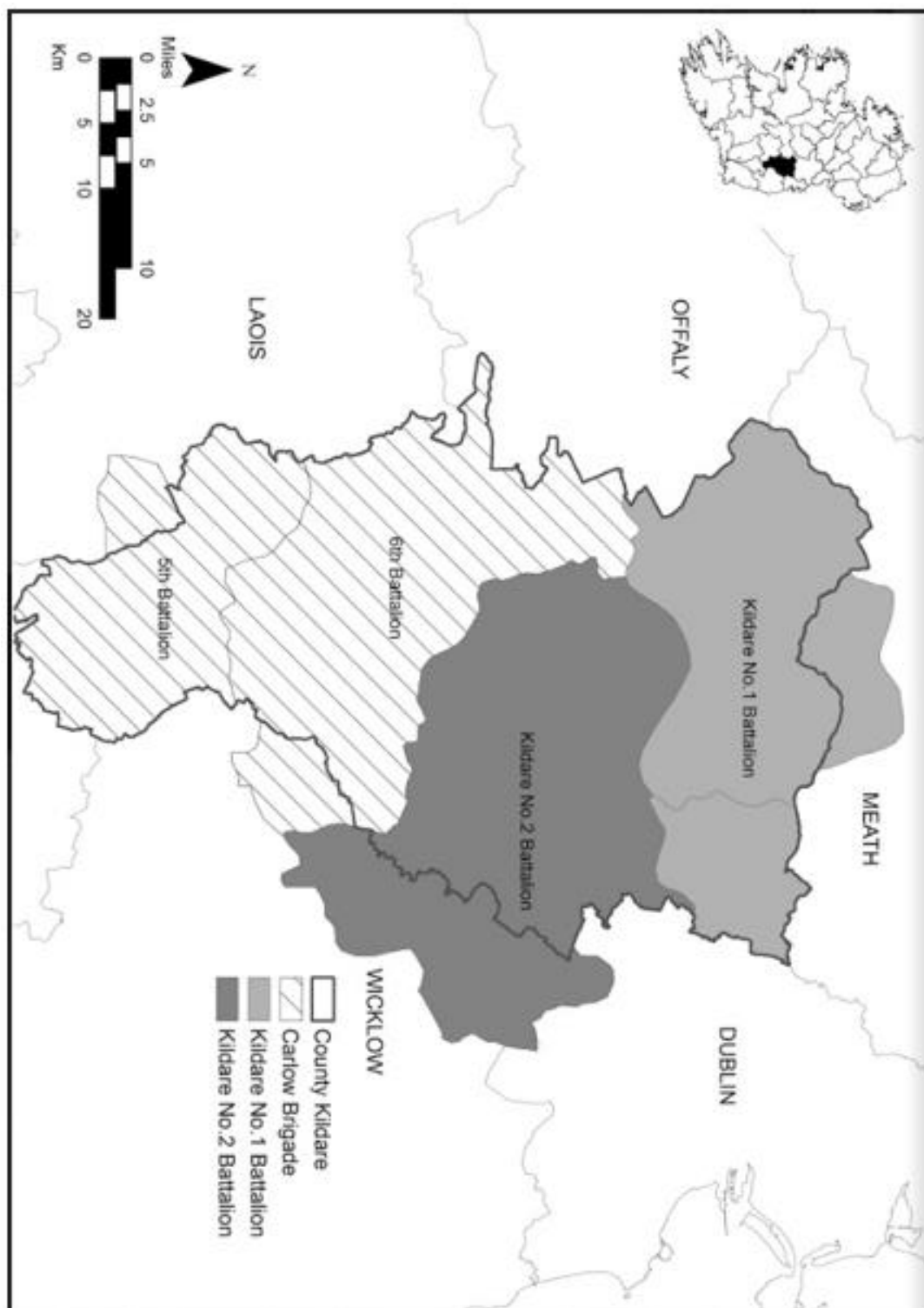
¹⁶² CI Kildare, Oct. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/113); *KO*, 16 Oct 1920; Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 573.

¹⁶³ *IT*, 1 Nov. 2013.

¹⁶⁴ Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 566; *LL*, 20 Nov. 1920; *KO*, 27 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶⁵ Patrick Colgan (BMH WS 850, p. 75); *KO*, 6 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 11); Frank Purcell was a member of Celbridge Guardians. Subsequently, he served as secretary general of the ITGWU and a member of the Senate in the 1950s. See his obituary in *LL*, 9 Apr. 1960.



Map 6: Kildare battalion areas, Sept. 1920

District. In due course there were inmates from every area of the 5th Division, and every parish in Kildare.¹⁶⁷ The most prominent were Desmond Fitzgerald and Rory O'Connor. Escape attempts from Rath camp were a regular occurrence. One of the first to succeed was Rory O'Connor who escaped with another prisoner disguised as construction workers.

The second phase of the War of Independence saw the attempted enforcement of the Belfast boycott in Kildare. This was initiated in August 1920 in response to the outbreak of sectarian violence in Belfast. Resolutions in favour of boycotting goods from Belfast and later from Britain were passed by local government bodies in Kildare between mid-August and mid-September.¹⁶⁸ The organized destruction of Belfast goods began on 8 October when forty bags of bran were taken from a Kildare town railway goods store and burned. Two days later five cases of boots from a Belfast firm were taken at Maganey station.¹⁶⁹ English Sunday papers were also targeted with a consignment burned at Sallins.¹⁷⁰ After an initial upsurge, interest in the boycott declined until the spring of 1921 when a re-escalation of activity began. By April many shops in Kildare stocking goods from Belfast had been raided.¹⁷¹ Flax crops grown on land rented by Belfast merchants were also targeted and in many cases the crops were destroyed.¹⁷² In addition, some food destined for the military was targeted. For example, twenty tons of flour was taken off a barge at Robertstown and thrown into the canal by the IRA.¹⁷³ Overall, however, enforcement of the Belfast boycott in Kildare was well below the level that obtained in other counties. According to a Dáil report it was the sixth lowest.¹⁷⁴ The most serious incident during the boycott campaign was the burning of the newly built Ulster Bank building in Kilcock on 15 March 1921. The IRA believed the building was due to be used as a barracks for the Crown forces, but this was discounted by the CI. There followed a concerted effort by the IRA to force Ulster Bank account holders throughout the county to withdraw their business from the bank.¹⁷⁵ Some were even threatened with having their houses burnt. In most cases this had the desired effect. The boycott caused considerable hardship for local traders while depriving the public of much needed commodities that were not available in the south.

¹⁶⁷ Lists of prisoners in Rath camp, Curragh, 1921 (TNA, WO 35/140/1; WO 35/141/1; WO 35/143).

¹⁶⁸ KO 4 Sept. 1920; LL, 18 Sept. 1920.

¹⁶⁹ CI Kildare, Oct. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/113).

¹⁷⁰ LL, 25 Sept. 1920.

¹⁷¹ CI Kildare, May and June 1921 (TNA, CO 904/115); II, 28 May, 18 June 1921; KO, 18 June 1921.

¹⁷² Compensation, Ireland commission county Kildare, 1919-1922 (CO 905/7/101); LL, 13, 21 May 1921.

¹⁷³ CI Kildare, Apr. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/114).

¹⁷⁴ Dáil Éireann Department of Labour report, May 1921 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/A/63).

¹⁷⁵ Compensation, Ireland (Shaw) commission Kildare, 1919-1922 (CO 905/7/24); CI Kildare, Mar. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114); David Johnson, 'The Belfast boycott 1920-1922' in J.M. Goldstrom & L.A. Clarkeon (eds), *Irish population, economy, and society* (Oxford, 1981), p. 299.

During the third phase of the War of Independence the Crown forces stepped up counterinsurgency measures. One indication of this was the commencement in October 1920 of a three-day guerrilla warfare course at the Curragh consisting of lectures and practical exercises.¹⁷⁶ There was greater coordination between units of the military at the Curragh and the police. Under DORA, military courts operated in several locations including the Curragh.¹⁷⁷ The Curragh garrison provided a GHQ reserve called 'The Curragh Mobile Column' which comprised one convoy regiment and one squadron of cycles, a composite battalion of three companies of infantry cycles, a section of royal engineers (cycle and motor transport), one section of eighteen pounders and a supply of baggage column of motor vehicles. Military duties included provision of guards and escorts, conducting patrols, searches and arrests. Between 1 January 1921 and the truce in the 5th Divisional area some 1,600 arrests were made.¹⁷⁸ One of the most spectacular military drives took place between 27 May and 16 June 1921 in the north-midlands where the 5th Division employed four regiments, reinforced by local infantry units, to traverse eight counties. The operation began and ended in the Curragh.¹⁷⁹ Jeudwine later admitted that the drives produced little results beyond providing excellent training operations.¹⁸⁰

Although these operations increased popular discontent with the military, the army was not targeted to the same degree as in several other counties. One incident in the spring of 1921 shows the extent to which the military and IRA co-existed in the Curragh region during this period. On the night of 13 February three masked men armed with revolvers approached while a private from the 12th Lancers and his 24-year-old girlfriend from Newbridge were in a compromising position on a bye road. They requested the soldier to leave the scene and for the girl to remain. The private, suspecting their intention was to cut the girl's hair as a punishment for keeping company with a soldier, refused to comply. The armed men, at that point, warned them not to return to that area again and departed without harming the couple.¹⁸¹ This is one of the many examples of the IRA in Kildare acting in a more lenient manner when compared to Munster, where a similar encounter would almost certainly have resulted in the execution of the soldier and some degree of violence directed towards the girl.

¹⁷⁶ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 68; Townshend, *British campaign*, p. 146.

¹⁷⁷ Jeudwine, '5th Division', appendix viii; Colm Campbell, *Emergency law in Ireland, 1918-1925* (Oxford, 2005), pp 9-38; Keith Jeffery, 'The British army and Internal security 1919-1939,' *Historical Journal* 24:2 (1981), 377-97

¹⁷⁸ Jeudwine, '5th Division', pp 25, 26, 86.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., appendix xviii.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁸¹ Returns of outrages, daily summeries, Jan-Mar. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/144).

In early 1921, the policing presence in Kildare was increased. Larine House in Maynooth became the Black and Tan headquarters for north Kildare.¹⁸² Police patrols were restored throughout the town. On the night of 21 February a six-man patrol was ambushed near the Catholic church and Sergeant Hughes was fatally wounded. The 34-year-old was a native of Wolfhill, County Laois with twelve years of service.¹⁸³ According to Paddy Mullaney, vice-commandant Kildare No. 1 Battalion, it was a big operation carried out by the Kilcock company with other contingents assisting in outpost duty, but it failed in its principal aim to capture weapons. Mullaney revealed how poorly armed his men were. They had only shot-guns and due to dampness the cartridges had to be heated before use.¹⁸⁴ This was yet another occasion that a serious incident impacted on the lives of the ordinary people. Fears of retaliation by the Black and Tans following the ambush led to an almost complete evacuation of the civilian population from Maynooth.

There was also a psychological toll on serving policemen with the violence they encountered leaving many disturbed and unsettled.¹⁸⁵ The threat or expectation of violence could be as terrifying as violence itself and in many respects the revolution did not need to be very violent for terror to take its effect. Evidence has shown that Crown forces must have been terrorised by what they imagined far more than what they fought and this had consequential effects in quiet counties such as Kildare.¹⁸⁶ On 19 February, Constable Thomas Bradshaw committed suicide in a stable at the rear of the Monasterevin barrack before he was to take part in a patrol.¹⁸⁷ On 7 March Constable Harold Stiff, originally from London and stationed in Maynooth, likewise committed suicide in the barracks.¹⁸⁸ Coming two weeks after the Maynooth ambush this tragic event has similarities with the suicide of Cadet Henry Spence in Dublin on Bloody Sunday, where his comrades believed that the terror that morning had caused him to act.¹⁸⁹

For a short time in the spring of 1921, Séamus Finn, director of training for the Eastern Division of the IRA, was sent to Kildare. He noted that the Kildare battalions were not as well developed as in other areas and that the county posed

¹⁸² CI Kildare, Feb. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

¹⁸³ *EH*, 22 Feb. 1921; *II*, 23, 25, 26 Feb. 1921; *FJ*, 22, 23 Feb. 1921; *LL*, 26 Feb. 1921; Abbott, *Police casualties*, p 200.

¹⁸⁴ Paddy Mullaney interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17b/106,110); Brigade activity reports, 1st Meath Bde. 1st Eastern Division (IMA/MSPC/A/57(2)).

¹⁸⁵ For details see Anne Dolan, 'The British culture of paramilitary violence in the Irish War of Independence' in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds.), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), pp 206-7.

¹⁸⁶ Anne Dolan, 'The shadow of a great fear: terror and revolutionary Ireland' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Terror in Ireland, 1916-1923*, (Dublin, 2012), p. 35.

¹⁸⁷ *Leinster Express*, 26 Feb. 1921; *LL*, 2 Apr. 1921; Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 315.

¹⁸⁸ Inquest on the death of Harold Stiff, 7 Mar. 1921 (TNA, WO/159B/14); *LL*, 12 Mar. 1921.

¹⁸⁹ Dolan, 'The shadow of a great fear', pp 29-30.

more challenges in comparison to other counties for engaging in a successful campaign. He described Kildare as

honeycombed with police and military. Naas was chunk full and the Curragh was right in the centre. The country was as flat as a proverbial pancake and the cavalry (motorised security forces) were operating in rather strong forces. The curfew was at 10 p.m. while there was a complete ban on the use of bicycles.¹⁹⁰

The military presence was more significant than in any other county. In May 1921 there were 5,348 men of all ranks in Kildare, of which 4,177 were stationed in the Curragh camp, 651 in Newbridge, 452 in Kildare town, and 68 in Naas.¹⁹¹ This was in marked contrast to other neighbouring counties such as Meath where 563 soldiers were stationed, Offaly with 536, and Laois with 76.¹⁹² Nonetheless, under Finn, Kildare No. 2 Battalion became more active, but the focus was on the RIC not the military. Three ambushes were scheduled for Easter 1921 but failed to transpire. The most significant was an ambush of a police tender on the Hill of Allen, but this failed when the lorry did not appear at the expected time.¹⁹³ An IRA Active Service Unit (ASU) was formed in the Kildare No. 2 area in April 1921 under the command of Martin O'Neill, an ex-British soldier from Ballymore Eustace.¹⁹⁴ The CI believed that the ASU assisted the Carlow No. 6 battalion which was responsible for firing at Athy RIC barracks on 22 May and Kilcullen barracks four days later.¹⁹⁵ These incidents followed an unsuccessful IRA ambush at Barrowhouse, just outside the Kildare county boundary in Laois close to Athy on 16 May in which two IRA Volunteers were killed.

Kildare No. 1 battalion assisted GHQ with attempts to hamper troop trains. In June 1921 King George V opened the new Northern Ireland parliament and substantial numbers of soldiers were drafted into Belfast including many from the Curragh. Troop trains returning to Dublin were attacked at Adavoyle in south Armagh and at Killester near Dublin. Another train carrying 700 soldiers of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry to the Curragh was targeted with Michael Collins personally choosing Stacumny, close to Celbridge as the ambush point, where the tracks would

¹⁹⁰ Seamus Finn (BMH WS 1,060, p. 52).

¹⁹¹ 'General monthly return of the regimental strength of the British army, May 1921', pp 105, 108-9 (TNA, WO 73/114); Jeffery, 'The British Army and Internal Security,' 377-97.

¹⁹² 'General monthly return of the regimental strength of the British army, January 1921', pp 104-109 (TNA, WO 73/114).

¹⁹³ Report No. 2 Batt Kildare to GHQ, 22 Apr. 1921 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/A/39); Brigade activity reports, 7th Bde. 1st Eastern Division (IMA/MSPC/A/62(1)); CI Kildare, Mar. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

¹⁹⁴ Report No 2. Batt Kildare to GHQ, 22Apr. 1921 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/A/39); Michael Smyth (BMH WS 1,531, p. 13).

¹⁹⁵ CI Kildare, May 1921 (TNA, CO 904/115); KO, 28 May 1921.

be blown up as the train passed. This was the biggest planned IRA operation in Kildare during the War of Independence with Volunteers from Meath, Dublin and Kildare mobilized for the job. Seán Boylan, O/C Eastern Division, was in overall command.¹⁹⁶ Paddy Mullaney, who provided the local knowledge of the area, reported afterwards that there were more than 120 men present.¹⁹⁷ As with other planned ambushes in Kildare, Stacumny also ended in failure. Alerted by fallen trees in the area, the authorities scrambled a patrol of the South Lancashire regiment from Baldonnell and they surprised the IRA as the train, accompanied by a spotter plane, was approaching. There was a brief exchange of fire before the entire IRA contingent escaped.¹⁹⁸

Following Stacumny, attacks on troop trains continued with an attack on 8 July at Ballyfermot bridge on a train carrying an advance party of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders to the Curragh. At this point, due to the IRA offensive against troop-trains, transport of troops by rail was temporarily suspended. This caused considerable inconvenience for the army. The main body of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders had to travel on foot to the Curragh and did not arrive until 10 July.¹⁹⁹ The Stacumny ambush was the only incident during the War of Independence in which shots were fired at regular British soldiers in Kildare. Significantly, however, no shots were fired by Kildare IRA members on that occasion.

The Cumann na mBan in Kildare were active throughout the War of Independence and did much useful work by carrying dispatches, arms and ammunition, fund raising and distributing food parcels to interred or imprisoned IRA members.²⁰⁰ Branches were present in all the big towns with membership ranging from fifteen in Castledermot to seven in Leixlip. Branches also flourished in rural areas such as Maganey in the southern tip of the county which boasted six members fronted by Mary Malone.²⁰¹ Another rural branch was located at Two-Mile-House, where Molly Curran even studied Morse code.²⁰² Many of the most prominent members were close relatives of well-known SF and IRA activists such as Bridget and Fanny O'Connor, sisters of Art O'Connor TD. May and Fanny Dunne were daughters of Patrick Dunne of Kill. Mary Cosgrave was a sister of Paddy Cosgrave of

¹⁹⁶ Seán Boylan (BMH WS 1,715, p. 37); see also Seamus Cullen, 'Attempted ambush and escape from Stacumny, 2 July 1921', *Irish Sword*, 29:115 (Summer, 2013), 62-77.

¹⁹⁷ Paddy Mullaney interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, p17B/106); Seamus Finn (BMH WS 1,060, pp 52-6).

¹⁹⁸ Brigade activity reports, 1st Meath Bde. 1st Eastern Division (IMA/MSPC/A/57(2)); Paddy Mullaney interview (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, p17B/106); Seán Boylan (BMH WS 1,715, p. 38); Matthew Barry (BMH WS 932, pp 9-19); John Gaynor (BMH WS 1,447, pp 28-32); Seamus Finn (BMH WS 1,060, pp 52-7); *KO*, 9 July 1921.

¹⁹⁹ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 54.

²⁰⁰ Michael Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 568.

²⁰¹ [MA-MSPC-CMB-144 / 146.Pdf](#) (accessed 7 May 2017).

²⁰² Durney, *War of Independence*, p. 148.

Castledermot. Kitty Patterson, who served as adjutant of the North Kildare executive, was a sister of Tommy Patterson, and another sister, Daisy, was active in both Kildare and Dublin.²⁰³ Peg and Lucy Daly from Kildare town were sisters of Katie Daly who was active during Easter Week.²⁰⁴ Clair Moran, from Naas served as President of the North Kildare executive.²⁰⁵ The best known Cumann na mBan activist associated with Kildare was Brighid O'Mullane who was sent to the county by the executive of the movement in late 1920 as an organizer.²⁰⁶ However, her work came to an abrupt end when she was mistaken by the locals for a spy during the mass arrests that followed Bloody Sunday. She was obliged to leave Kildare for her own safety as the local IRA had plans to kill her.²⁰⁷ O'Mullane learned afterwards from Máire Comerford that there was a female spy operating in Kildare. The spy was sentenced to leave the country following a republican court-martial.²⁰⁸ Only one member of Cumann na mBan was arrested in Kildare – Nelly Wallace, daughter of a Newbridge shopkeeper, who was detained overnight on 8 April 1921.²⁰⁹ The Crown forces were hampered by a lack of female searchers. According to General Jeudwine, throughout 1920 there were practically no female searchers in the whole of 5th Divisional area, and by June 1921, there were only twelve.²¹⁰

Fianna Éireann was not as strong in Kildare as in other counties. During the War of Independence a branch emerged in Newbridge under Patrick Fullam for which some records have survived. In general, the Fianna were regarded as a recruitment body for the local IRA. Accordingly, Fullam and James Clancy progressed to full membership of the IRA. By mid-1921 membership of the Newbridge Fianna stood at thirty-six with 17-year-old James Sheehan in charge.²¹¹ An examination of census records indicates that the most of the members were aged between sixteen and seventeen with two as young as fourteen. Some were siblings of other republican activists. For example, Patrick Wallace was a brother of Nelly Wallace.²¹²

Small operations such as disrupting communications, severing telephone and telegraph wires, and raiding mails achieved greater success than bigger and more

²⁰³ <http://www.leinsterleader.ie/news/news/205008/Naas-woman-Daisy-s-daring-deeds.html> (accessed 7 May 2017).

²⁰⁴ MA-MSPC-CMB-144.Pdf; MA-MSPC-CMB-146.Pdf (accessed 7 May 2017); Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 571.

²⁰⁵ Sworn statement by Kathleen Browne, 19 Jan. 1956 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF14843).

²⁰⁶ McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan*, p. 130.

²⁰⁷ Brighid O'Mullane (BMH WS 450, pp 21-4); Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 571; Anne Dolan, 'Spies and informers beware ...' in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds.), *Years of turbulence: the Irish Revolution and its aftermath: in honour of Michael Laffan* (Dublin, 2015), p 159.

²⁰⁸ Brighid O'Mullane (BMH WS 450, pp 23-5).

²⁰⁹ CI Kildare, Apr. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114); LL, 16 Apr. 1921.

²¹⁰ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p.50.

²¹¹ http://msearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files//Pdf_Membership/10/MA-MSPC-FE-37.Pdf.

²¹² Census of Ireland 1911 / Kildare / Newbridge Urban-Rural & Morristownbillir.

violent operations. Trenching roads, felling trees and damaging bridges involved considerable risk and required greater manpower than ambushes. The first road-cutting to encumber the mobility of the Crown forces was recorded at Christmas 1920 in Rathangan.²¹³ Until the truce in July 1921 there were regular and numerous reports of IRA efforts to disrupt communications. For example, in March 1921 there were thirty-six reported incidents.²¹⁴ By June so many roads and bridges had been blocked or destroyed that even horse-drawn cavalry had difficulty travelling. One cavalry officer wondered: 'if it is like this within twenty miles of the Curragh, what is it going to be like in Cork (the rebel stronghold)?'²¹⁵ With IRA activity escalating the military authorities, on two occasions, imposed certain restrictions under the Restoration of Order Act in Kildare. The first was in response to a series of road trenchings and the demolition of bridges in the Castledermot area in early February. The order signed in the Curragh on 15 February, prohibited the holding of fairs and markets within a five-mile radius of Castledermot. Likewise, following the ambush in Maynooth a similar order was issued on 25 February banning fairs and markets within a two-mile radius of the town.²¹⁶ This restriction, which caused disruption to economic activity in two localities, is another example of the effect the ongoing unrest had on ordinary lives. Following the March incidents, the RIC responded by arresting a number of individuals in the Naas area which included Michael O'Kelly, who until that time despite an active behind the scenes involvement had escaped detection.²¹⁷ Michael Smyth's March report to GHQ, detailed an intensification of activities. However, his superiors gave a mixed review. While supporting activities requiring small numbers such as road blocking, concern was expressed regarding mustering large numbers without proper training. The abortive Hill of Allen ambush in which fifty-five men were mobilized was one example that was highlighted.²¹⁸ The disruption to mail courier services prompted the military to initiate an air mail facility, which was undertaken three times weekly from Baldonnell to the Curragh and other stations in the 5th Divisional area. A daily postal lorry service between the Curragh and GHQ Dublin was also introduced during this period.²¹⁹ In addition, by 1921 all the major barracks in the division were connected with the army's wireless transmitting service including Coolmany in the Glen of Imaal.²²⁰ The disruption to communications also inconvenienced the civilian population of Kildare. Dorothea Findlater, daughter

²¹³ CI Kildare, Dec. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/113).

²¹⁴ Ibid., Mar. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/114).

²¹⁵ CI King's County, May 1921 (TNA, CO 904/115); Keith Jeffery, *The British army and the crisis of empire, 1918-22* (1984), pp 88-90; W.H. Kautt, *Ambushes and amour: the Irish rebellion, 1919-1921* (Dublin, 2010), p. 160.

²¹⁶ Jeudwine, '5th Division', Appendix XV & XV (b).

²¹⁷ Sworn statement of Michael O'Kelly (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF9986).

²¹⁸ Report No. 2 Batt. Kildare to GHQ, 22 Apr. 1921 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/A/39).

²¹⁹ Jeudwine, '5th Division', pp 66, 90.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp 29, 91.

of Captain de Courcy-Wheeler, recalled having to climb 'over two or three trees getting from our house in Robertstown to church in Kilmeague two miles away on Sundays'.²²¹ When the truce was declared, numerous roads were impassable. The Crown forces left it to Kildare County Council to clear them.²²²

Inevitably, in a garrison county activity by informers was a cause of concern to the IRA.²²³ At the second attempt Philip Dunne, who lived close to the Hill of Allen, was fatally wounded by the IRA in mid-June 1921.²²⁴ Michael Power, an ex-serviceman from Nurney, was another identified as a suspected spy. Initially, he took refuge in the nearby Curragh camp when sentenced to banishment by a republican court. But, on 10 June while visiting the house of a relative close to the Curragh camp, he was shot dead by a party of IRA.²²⁵ As a result, some other suspect spies, including a woman, who were under observation by the IRA took refuge in the Curragh camp. Suspected spies were also punished in other localities such as in Castledermot where a man was paraded in front of the congregation emerging from Mass with a placard indicating that he had given information to the authorities.²²⁶ Lists of suspects were forwarded by the IRA in Edenderry and Naas to GHQ.²²⁷ Although the IRA took effective measures against a small number of suspected informers, they did little to weed out such activities. Dooley suggests that they did not seem to have had the necessary callous streak to exterminate them.²²⁸ The fact that only two suspected spies, a civilian and an ex-serviceman were killed, reinforces Kildare's status as a quiet county during this phase of the conflict. A number of other individuals suspected as spies were threatened with violence or ordered to leave the country.²²⁹ One example of the latter was 26-year-old Paul Goodwin from Fontstown, Athy who was ordered to leave Kildare in June 1921. After a one month in England, he moved to Longford

²²¹ Alex Finlater, *Findlaters*, pp 295-6. Dorothea Findlater was Ireland's oldest woman when she died in Nov. 2017 aged 107, see *IT*, 25 Nov. 2017.

²²² CI, Kildare July 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

²²³ For a chart detailing civilian spies and informers killed by the IRA, by county 1920-1 see, Eunan O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing during the War of Independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers' in James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (eds.) *Death and dying for Ireland, Britain and Europe: historical perspectives* (Sallins, 2013), pp 328-9.

²²⁴ CI, Kildare, June 1921 (TNA, CO 904/115); *KO*, 25 June 1921; Michael Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 568.

²²⁵ Compensation Ireland commission Kildare, 1919-1922 (TNA, CO 905/7/70); CI Kildare, June 1921 (TNA, CO 904/115); *KO*, 18 June 1921; Michael Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 571.

²²⁶ *LL*, 9 April 1921; Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare', pp 628-9. For details of the punishment of alleged spies and informers in Cork, see Hart, *The IRA and its enemies*, pp. 293-315. For a chart showing the extent of IRA violence in various counties, see Hart, *The IRA at war*, p. 36.

²²⁷ Lists of enemy agents forwarded to GHQ from Brigade no 6, Edenderry, July 1921; Report from Brigade No. 7 Naas, Sept. 1921 [but dating from pre-truce period] (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7a/6).

²²⁸ Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare', p. 637.

²²⁹ Detail of three samples from the Irish Grants Committee see claim of Pim Goodbody, James Bedford and Frank Latimer (TNA, CO 762/85/1; CO 762/84/8; CO 762/38/15).

and returned home some months later.²³⁰ Violence directed against unionists in Kildare was not as widespread or fatal as in the more violent counties, with the IRA more inclined to give warnings in advance which obtained the desired results. Peter Hart argues that if there was a low level of IRA violence then there would be a low level of state violence: violence was cyclical.²³¹ This assessment certainly applies to Kildare where the pattern of IRA activity was firmly low-key and violence by the Crown forces was notably lower than in more the violent counties.

The King's speech at the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament in June set in motion a series of contacts and meetings that led to a truce. This came into effect on 11 July 1921. During the War of Independence there were eleven fatalities attributable to political violence in County Kildare: no British military, five police (this includes two suicides), five civilians and one IRA member. The civilians included Patrick Gavin apparently accidentally shot in February 1919 by a British army sentry on the approaches to the Curragh camp.²³² Two other civilian deaths occurred in Newbridge on 7 July when the IRA burned the Navy and Air Force canteen, killing (unintentionally) Bridget Doran and her 13-year-old step-son, John.²³³ Jack (Seán) Sullivan, a Kildare IRA volunteer, died outside the county in Ballykinlar following an assault after his arrest.²³⁴ He was the only Kildare IRA man to die during the conflict.

The low number of fatalities illustrates the sharp difference in IRA effectiveness between Kildare and the adjacent midland counties. Nonetheless, the IRA was virtually able to gain control of much of the countryside and smaller towns in the county due to the abandonment of rural RIC barracks. They also successfully established Dáil courts. SF's political progress at local government level saw various councils and boards transfer their allegiance to Dáil Éireann – an important aspect of sustaining the Dáil counter-state. The Kildare IRA had little success in acquiring arms. Of the four attempted or actual ambushes, only one yielded captured firearms. Although small quantities of firearms were obtained from the Curragh camp, no serious attempt was made to obtain weaponry from the ordnance store there, the largest store of military equipment in the country. Despite facing a large military presence which severely restricted movement and organization, the Kildare IRA certainly made enough of a nuisance of itself to disrupt communications and pin down Crown forces that might have been deployed elsewhere. The most significant contribution during the War of Independence was in the acquisition of high level intelligence from the CI's office in Naas. While engaging in low-level militancy, the IRA in Kildare managed to avoid any serious defeat at the hands of the vastly superior

²³⁰ Irish Grants Committee claim of Paul Goodwin, 5 Jan. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/193/7).

²³¹ Hart, *The IRA at War*, pp 75-6.

²³² *KO*, 15 Feb. 1919.

²³³ Brigade activity reports, 7th Bde. 1st Eastern Division (IMA/MSPC/A/62(1)); Compensation Ireland commission Kildare, 1919-1922 (TNA, CO 905/7/66 and 68); *FJ*, 8 July 1921.

²³⁴ Liam Ó Duibhir, *Prisoners of war: Ballykinlar internment camp, 1920-21* (Cork, 2013), pp 91-3.

Crown forces and despite the arrests of key figures, they remained a strong force as the country entered a new phase.

7: From Truce to Civil War, July 1921-June 1922

The period between the truce negotiations in the summer of 1921 and the outbreak of Civil War in late June 1922, saw the most radical transformation of the country's political system in over seven centuries. This chapter examines in turn the political and military developments in Kildare during the period. Kildare overwhelmingly supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty. In the June 1922 general election more than eighty per cent of the vote favoured pro-Treaty candidates. Labour were the real winners, with the constituency recording the fourth highest percentage of Labour support in the country and returning the only deputy from Kildare county to the third Dáil.¹ The withdrawal of the British army from Kildare – from three extensive barracks and the Curragh, the largest military camp in the country – was the outstanding development of this period. With the emergence of the new state, a new army and Civic Guard were instituted with both having strong early connections to Kildare. The beginnings of the National army in Celbridge in January 1922 are not well known. Eight years after the Curragh incident, Kildare was once again at the centre of a mutiny when the Civic Guard in Kildare Barracks were involved in a potentially explosive stand-off with the Provisional government. A majority of the IRA remained loyal to the government.

The truce was announced simultaneously by the British and Irish sides. The IRA would cease all attacks and the British would end military manoeuvres, raids and searches. An undefeated IRA was allowed retain its arms and activists on the run were allowed to return home without fear of arrest. Generally, the IRA viewed the truce as a form of victory. As General Jeudwine put it, IRA leaders 'came out of their hiding places – convincing themselves and the population generally they had won the war'.² Similarly, the CI in Offaly reported the jubilation of the republican movement.³ The general public in Kildare welcomed the truce. The local press reported celebratory bonfires in several areas, including Newbridge, Kildare and Athy. While the IRA endeavoured to ensure that the conditions for the truce were being observed, the military, likewise, displayed an eagerness to keep its side of the agreement.⁴ To ensure that the agreement operated smoothly, truce liaison officers were appointed by both sides. Thomas Lawler from Naas, who succeeded Michael Smyth as O/C Naas Battalion, was appointed liaison officer with responsibility for

¹ Michael Gallagher, 'The pact general election of 1922', *IHS*, 21:84 (1981), 414.

² Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 110; Paul McMahon, 'British intelligence and the Anglo-Irish truce, 1921', *IHS*, 35:140 (Nov. 2007), 529.

³ CI King's County, July 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

⁴ *LL*, 16, 23 July 1921; *KO*, 23 July 1921.

north Kildare; in the Carlow Brigade area of south Kildare, Liam Stack, O/C Carlow Brigade, was appointed.⁵

Reaction to the truce among the Crown forces was mixed. The RIC greeted the news with uncertainty and were suspicious that the force would be let down by the British government.⁶ The Kildare CI reported that the IRA behaved in an exemplary way, but nonetheless, the police were still subjected to intimidation when travelling outside the county.⁷ The British military did not relax general precautions. According to Jeudwine, his

officers could not but feel humiliation and disappointment at the necessity for treating on equal terms with those whom they regarded as callous and treacherous murderers, and among those victims were reckoned many of their friends.⁸

The military authorities also found it unpalatable to be forced to refer to the armistice as a truce. General Macready preferred the term 'agreement' and regarded its effects as a 'Suspension of Activities'.⁹ There was also a distaste for dealing with the IRA liaison officers, a class which Jeudwine asserted 'left much to be desired'. He referred disparagingly to Liam Stack as merely a chemist's assistant. The rank and file were relieved at the truce which promised if not a quick release from duties in Ireland then at least more uninterrupted sleep. The British army complied promptly with the truce regulations and by 14 July all restrictions, besides curfew, had been removed from the 5th Division area. People could once again move freely.

Although Kildare unionists welcomed the truce, there was an inherent fear that the release of IRA prisoners might result in revenge attacks on them. Such fears were justified. As Brian Hughes has shown, the IRA could achieve cooperation from local communities through fear and intimidation rather than by creating support.¹⁰ Soon after the truce, intimidation of unionists, particularly those who had regular contact with the RIC, the army, or the Dublin Castle authorities began.¹¹ Claims made to the Irish Grants Committee (IGC) indicate that unionists in south Kildare were more likely to suffer intimidation than those in north Kildare which was closer to

⁵ Breaches of the truce, July to Nov. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/153).

⁶ Pádraig Ó Ruairc, 'The Anglo-Irish truce: an analysis of its immediate military impact, 8-11 July 1921', (PhD, University of Limerick, 2014), pp 229-30.

⁷ CI Kildare, July 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

⁸ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 110. See also McMahon, 'British intelligence and the Anglo-Irish truce' 526-7.

⁹ Jeudwine, '5th Division', appendix xxi.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 110; KO, 16 July 1921.

¹¹ See Brian Hughes, 'Loyalists and loyalism in a southern Irish Community, 1921-1922', *Historical Journal*, 59:4 (2016), 1075-1105; Andy Bielenberg, 'Exodus: the emigration of southern Irish Protestants during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War', *Past and Present*, 218 (2013), 206-9.

Dublin. In some instances, government agencies issued warnings and offered advice to persons in danger. For example, four days after the truce came into force Leonard Wilson-Wright, high sheriff of Kildare and a cousin of Sir Henry Wilson, received an urgent telegram from London advising him to leave Ireland immediately as his life was in danger. Wilson-Wright who lived in Timahoe, an isolated area of west Kildare where the nearest RIC barracks was twelve miles away in Edenderry, left Ireland as directed.¹²

From the beginning, the terms of the truce were interpreted differently by the opposing sides. As a result, breaches occurred and the liaison officers were kept busy. The IRA seemed to test the water initially, but gradually flexed its muscles and eventually controlled the countryside outside the big towns in Kildare. By mid-July the RIC reported that the IRA was engaged in drilling at various locations in the county.¹³ The military authorities were aware of the situation. Within a week of the truce they received reports of drilling and training by the IRA on an extensive scale. On 18 August it was reported that an IRA training camp had been established at Duckett's Grove on the Carlow – Kildare county boundary.¹⁴ The IRA was also enlisting new members (so-called truceleers), which was clearly a breach of the truce. According to the RIC, the local liaison IRA officer gave the impression of being annoyed over the matter and reprimanded his followers.¹⁵ In Meath, two IRA training camps were established. One was close to Maynooth at Ballymacoll, but the IRA confined activities to within the precincts of the camp.¹⁶ By September the IRA in Kildare also openly held republican courts.

As the IRA continued to strengthen its position, its members became more daring, establishing large training camps within the county with Dowdingstown House, emerging as the official training camp. Other camps included vacant big houses such as Kildangan Castle owned by the More O'Ferrall family which accommodated sixty IRA members on two weekends during September. Harristown House owned by the La Touche family was occupied for a week until a local loyalist, Pim Goodbody reported the matter to Andy Cope, the under secretary, who duly arranged for the IRA to vacate the premises. Goodbody was subjected to intimidation when the IRA established a new camp closer to his house than the previous base.¹⁷ In north Kildare an additional training camp was established in Celbridge Union under Robert Crone of Leixlip for which the IRA truce liaison officer was bluntly

¹² Irish Grants Committee claim of L.A.W. Wright, 31 Jan. 1927 (TNA, CO 762/117/16).

¹³ CI Kildare, July 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

¹⁴ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 112.

¹⁵ CI Kildare, Aug. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116); for details of RIC dealings with liaison officers, see Augusteijn, *The memoirs of John M. Regan*, pp 176-8.

¹⁶ CI Meath, Aug. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

¹⁷ Irish Grants Committee claim of Pim Goodbody, 30 Dec. 1926 (TNA, CO 762/85/1); CI Kildare, Sept. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

unapologetic when challenged by the RIC.¹⁸ The IRA camps acquired provisions from the local inhabitants, men were billeted and levies were imposed to pay for running costs. In the Carlow brigade area, levies of one shilling in the pound on all valuation were imposed as well as a demand of a fixed monthly payment in support of the Republican Prisoners' Fund. In practically all the cases the sums were paid.¹⁹

By late September the IRA in Kildare had greatly increased in strength, although claims by the CI that it had grown by 5,000 in Kildare alone seem excessive. Jeudwine suggested that the IRA nationally numbered 200,000 men.²⁰ Military intelligence reported that large quantities of rifles and ammunitions had been landed on the coast and rifles were seen at IRA parades in Kildare.²¹ Greater numbers of men and arms allowed the IRA to gain almost complete control of the Carlow Brigade area which included much of south Kildare.²² RIC authority in Kildare was further restricted with the closure of Monasterevin and Kilcullen barracks which reduced the number of police barracks in the county to five.²³ The republican police had stepped into the breach and effectively took over policing from the RIC in most of the small towns, villages and rural areas. However, they did not function in Naas or Maynooth, and had a limited role in the other big towns.²⁴

With the IRA engaged in military preparations, the British army took precautionary steps lest the truce break down. A month's reserves of a non-perishable food as well as ammunition were collected by the army for the police. Following serious hitches in the peace negotiations on 14 August and 5 December, troops were ordered to be prepared for a breakdown of negotiations. On 25 October 1921 it was agreed by both sides that seventy-two hours' notice would be given should there be a termination of the truce. In that scenario troops would be directed to engage organized parties of rebels, undertake raids for known members of the IRA, assist the RIC and re-impose curfew regulations pending the coming into force of martial law.²⁵

While the truce held one of the principal functions of the army in Kildare was the management of Rath Camp in the Curragh. Prisoners were not provided for in the truce agreement. Internees were therefore instructed by the IRA that they were

¹⁸ Membership 3rd Batt. 1st Meath Bde (IMA, MSPC, RO/482); KO, 15 Oct. 1921; Breaches of the truce, July to Nov. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/153).

¹⁹ For details, see CI Carlow, Sept. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116); Brian Hughes, *Defying the IRA: intimidation, coercion and communities during the Irish Revolution* (Liverpool, 2016), pp 91-6.

²⁰ CI Kildare, Sept. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116); Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 118.

²¹ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 116.

²² CI Carlow, Oct. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

²³ KO, 29 Oct. 1921.

²⁴ Breaches of the truce, July to Nov. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/153); LL, 29 Oct. 1921.

²⁵ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 122; Macready, *Annals*, ii, pp 602-6; S.M. Lawlor, 'Ireland from truce to Treaty: war or peace? July to October 1921', *IHS*, 22:85 (1980-1), 49-64. See also Michael Hopkinson (ed.), *The last days of Dublin Castle: the Mark Sturgis diaries* (Dublin, 1999), pp 213-14.

free to escape.²⁶ A series of escapes from both the Curragh's Hare Park Camp and Rath Camp caused tensions. The number of escape tunnels prompted Jeudwine to describe Rath Camp as a 'regular rabbit warren'. Due to the escapes, the internees had their privileges curtailed and accusations of mistreatment followed.²⁷ Responding, the military authorities allowed three members of the British press to visit the Rath Camp. Their report in the *Manchester Guardian* gave a mainly even-handed account.²⁸ Despite a tightening up of security by the prison authorities escapes continued. As the Anglo-Irish negotiations progressed, many men were released on parole. By 7 November eighty-nine internees had been released from the Rath and other camps. Two Kildare county councillors, Éamon Ó Modhráin and Thomas Harris had been freed by the end of that month.²⁹

From July until September the Dáil and the British government continued their diplomatic though unproductive dealings. On 30 September de Valera accepted an invitation to negotiate a settlement. On 7 October five plenipotentiaries were appointed, one of whom was Robert Barton, TD for the Kildare/Wicklow constituency. The feeling in Kildare at this time was that 'peace is at hand'.³⁰ In the Curragh, signs of army disengagement were evident, with some of the military works closing down.³¹ While the negotiations were taking place, politicians refrained from comment, with the local politicians continuing to carry out business in the local bodies throughout the county. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921. The Irish delegation won a considerable measure of sovereignty with the status of a dominion but were forced to accept an oath of allegiance (bound into article 4), partition (masked by a Boundary Commission) and various concessions on security. The Treaty was greeted by celebrations throughout Kildare. The *Leinster Leader* described the agreement as a truly remarkable achievement while observing that the terms fell short of the 'standard of republican government'.³² Bishop Foley officiated at a peace thanksgiving service in Carlow cathedral for the successful conclusion of the Anglo-Irish negotiations.³³ The celebrations became even more intense with the release of hundreds of internees from Rath Camp and Ballykinlar Camp within two days of the signing of the Treaty. According to Jeudwine, there were nearly 1400 internees in the Rath Camp prior to their release.³⁴

²⁶ Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 238.

²⁷ Jeudwine, '5th Division', appendix xvi; *LL*, 17 Sept. 1921. For a full account of the escape see James Durney, 'The Curragh internees', *JKAS*, 20:3 (2010-11), 14.

²⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 10 Oct. 1921; Murphy, *Political imprisonment*, p. 221.

²⁹ *LL*, 12, 26 Nov. and 3 Dec. 1921.

³⁰ *CI Kildare*, Oct. 1921 (TNA, CO 904/116).

³¹ *LL*, 10 Sept. 1921.

³² *LL*, 10 Dec. 1921.

³³ *NLT*, 10 Dec. 1921.

³⁴ Jeudwine, '5th Division', appendix xvi.

As the Treaty debate began in the Dáil amid a divided political leadership, an intense wave of support for the Treaty spread throughout Kildare. Almost all public bodies and organizations called meetings to lobby their representatives. In Athy, Art O'Connor was urged by both constituents and the local UDC to support the Treaty.³⁵ A special sitting of Kildare County Council debated the Treaty on 30 December. The degree of unanimity was not as strong as other public bodies with Éamon Ó Modhráin, who chaired the meeting, opposed to ratification. Thomas Harris argued that the Treaty was not what the men of Ireland gave their lives for and abstained from the vote. A resolution in favour of the Treaty was passed, however.³⁶ The north Kildare executive of SF unanimously passed a motion on 1 January 1922 calling on the TDs for the constituency to vote for the Treaty. Kildare Farmers' Union, one of the few organizations in the county that included both nationalists and unionists, unanimously favoured ratification. Bertram Barton, a unionist and second cousin of Robert Barton, told a meeting that the time had come to bury past feelings of animosity.³⁷ The two Kildare TDs, Ua Buachalla and O'Connor, gave their views on the Treaty at the resumed session of the Dáil after the Christmas break. O'Connor opposed the Treaty and mocked his own constituents by referring to the lobbying as 'howling at us and telling us where our duty lay'. He seemed to be most irritated by the Farmers' Unions and claimed 'people of that ilk never did an hour's honest work'.³⁸ He was forced to apologize to the farmers for this slur. Ua Buachalla also opposed the Treaty, arguing that the plenipotentiaries had signed for something less than the freedom of Ireland. While wisely refraining from making personal attacks on supporters of the Treaty, his reference to 'stampeding the representatives' may have been a veiled reference to the pro-Treaty lobbyists in his constituency.³⁹ Three deputies in the constituency voted against the Treaty. Erskine Childers joined Ua Buachalla and O'Connor, while Barton and Christopher Byrne voted in favour. The Treaty vote caused a political split in SF at a national and county level but, as will be shown, the more significant split occurred in the IRA.

The first opportunity for the SF grassroots to express its viewpoint on the split came on 18 January at a meeting of the Naas branch, hitherto the largest in the county with 400 members. Neither Ua Buachalla nor O'Connor were present, but Christopher Byrne spoke in favour of the Treaty. A motion giving instructions to the ard fheis delegates to support the Treaty was passed with only three of the 150 in

³⁵ *NLT*, 31 Dec. 1921; *LL*, 31 Dec. 1921, 7 Jan. 1922.

³⁶ *LL*, 7 Jan. 1922; *KO*, 7 Jan. 1922; Nelsen, *Through peace and war*, pp 254-7.

³⁷ *LL*, 7 Jan. 1922; *KO*, 7 Jan. 1922.

³⁸ <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates>, vol. T, no. 10, 3 Jan. 1922 (accessed 2 Aug. 2017); *FJ*, 4 Jan. 1922.

³⁹ <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates>, vol. T, no. 11, 4 Jan. 1922 (accessed 2 Aug. 2017); *FJ*, 5 Jan. 1922; Ó Súilleabháin, *Ua Buachalla*, pp 148-50.

attendance voting against. Athy gave delegates no mandate relative to the Treaty.⁴⁰ Smaller SF clubs that voted on the Treaty issue included Clane which gave its unanimous support, while nearby Timahoe was an example of a split vote, with fifteen for and eight against.⁴¹

Anti-Treaty activists came out in force to a north Kildare SF executive meeting in Prosperous on 21 January at which eleven SF clubs were represented. Surprisingly, by a two to one majority the meeting voted to oppose the Treaty. It was attended by Barton, Childers and Ua Buachalla. Barton explained his reasons for signing and then renouncing the agreement.⁴² However, it subsequently emerged that the meeting had been illegally packed with anti-Treaty members and did not reflect the actual viewpoint of the branches.⁴³ Ua Buachalla attended a number of SF meetings at which he maintained that the minority who went out to fight for freedom in 1916 were proven right, and in 1922 that same minority would also be proven right.⁴⁴ Over the following month, the split in the SF movement widened with the anti-Treaty side strengthening its position. At the ard fheis on 21 February, a weakened pro-Treaty camp agreed to delay a proposed general election and that the ard fheis would reconvene in three months.⁴⁵

Pro-Treaty SF candidates launched their election campaign in Kildare on 14 March with Naas town hall as headquarters.⁴⁶ Distinct divisions had become apparent at a local level. In Athy, a pro-Treaty election committee was formed while local Cumann na mBan campaigned for the anti-Treaty side.⁴⁷ The campaign in south Kildare began with a pro-Treaty meeting in Athy on 9 April followed by heckling and disturbances. Anti-Treaty SF organized election committees in all the local towns and distributed literature at chapel gates.⁴⁸ In mid-April, the pro-Treaty side in Kildare received a major boost when Michael Collins and several Provisional government ministers attended an election rally in Naas. Collins argued that the alternative to the Treaty involved the return of the British forces, the renewal of warfare, and the improbability of further negotiation with the representatives of a country whose delegates were already repudiated by a minority.⁴⁹ Pro-Treaty SF nominated Thomas Lawler and James Kavanagh to represent respectively the north Kildare and west

⁴⁰ *LL*, 21 Jan. 1922; *NLT*, 28 Jan. 1922.

⁴¹ *LL*, 4 Feb. 1922.

⁴² *LL*, 28 Jan. 1922.

⁴³ *KO*, 4 Feb. 1922.

⁴⁴ *LL*, 4 Feb. 1922.

⁴⁵ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p. 370.

⁴⁶ *KO*, 18 Mar. 1922.

⁴⁷ *LL*, 1 April 1922; *NLT*, 1 April 1922.

⁴⁸ *LL*, 15 Apr. 1922; *NLT*, 15 April 1922.

⁴⁹ *II*, 17 Apr. 1922.

Wicklow districts of the constituency. Simon Malone from Rathangan was selected for the south Kildare area.⁵⁰

On 20 May, Collins and de Valera approved an election pact which provided for an agreed list of candidates from both sides to fight the general election jointly and form a coalition government afterwards.⁵¹ The pact was described by Townshend as pure election-rigging in which the contours of the split would be artificially preserved.⁵² In Kildare, the two anti-Treaty TDs would have a free run in the county with no pro-Treaty SF candidate opposing them although pro-Treaty SF supporters would have the opportunity to support Wicklow-based Byrne. The candidates selected at pro-Treaty conventions in Kildare were required to stand down and all four anti-Treaty TDs – O'Connor, Ua Buachalla, Barton and Childers were selected to contest the constituency. On 14 June de Valera spoke at public meetings in Athy, Kildare town and Naas where a crowd, estimated at 3,000, attended. Many of the best-known anti-Treaty activists in the country addressed the Naas meeting such as Barton, Harry Boland and Austin Stack. Art O'Connor used the opportunity to mend fences with farmers.⁵³ Under pressure from the British government which regarded the pact as a violation of the Treaty, Collins virtually ended the pact at an election meeting in Cork when he specifically urged support for pro-Treaty candidates.⁵⁴

The Labour movement emerged in the post-Treaty period as the most efficient political organization in the county. On 26 March a meeting of the Trades Council, with eight unions represented, was held in Newbridge and a decision to contest the election was carried.⁵⁵ Athy was the venue for the next Labour gathering when the local branch of the ITGWU and Labour Party members of different councils unanimously voted to nominate James Everett from Wicklow as the Labour candidate for south Kildare. He was joined by Hugh Colohan in north Kildare.⁵⁶ By pitching Labour against two anti-Treaty SF candidates in Kildare, the pact was advantageous to Colohan, particularly as the county was strongly pro-Treaty. Unlike other counties, where anti-Treaty supporters intimidated Labour candidates into withdrawing, there was no intimidation of this kind in Kildare.⁵⁷ Colohan indicated that it was time for the country to get on with practical work by suggesting that 'the rule of the gun

⁵⁰ *KO*, 15 Apr. 1922; *II*, 4 May 1922; *LL*, 6 May 1922.

⁵¹ See *KO*, 27 May 1922; Gallagher, 'The pact general election', 404-21.

⁵² Townshend, *Republic*, p. 398.

⁵³ *II*, 15 June 1922; *KO*, 17 June 22.

⁵⁴ *II*, 15 June 1922; Garvin, *Irish nationalist politics*, p. 133; Gallagher, 'The pact general election', 412.

⁵⁵ *LL*, 1 Apr. 1922; *KO*, 1 Apr. 1922.

⁵⁶ *LL*, 15 April 1922.

⁵⁷ See Niamh Puirseil, *The Irish Labour party, 1922-73* (Dublin, 2007), pp 11-12.

should give way to the rule of the spade'.⁵⁸ The Farmers' Union, which included former Redmondite nationalists and unionists, was not affiliated to any political party. It sought to obtain a strong representative political voice for farmers.⁵⁹ Farmers were not normally supporters of SF, but had strong links with the Ratepayers Association, an urban movement which campaigned for a reduction of rates.⁶⁰ In May 1922, the Farmers' Union held public meetings at nineteen locations throughout Kildare. The outcome was the selection of candidates for a Farmers and Ratepayers Party: J.J. Bergin from Athy, Patrick Phelan, a county councillor from Timahoe, and Richard Wilson who had been nominated by County Wicklow constituents.⁶¹ Unlike other counties, there were no reports of intimidation being used to force farmer candidates to withdraw in Kildare and Wicklow.

On 19 January, Lord Mayo organized a meeting of fellow unionists in Dublin to endorse the new Provisional government.⁶² He was supported by a sizeable number of southern unionists, including a large contingent from Kildare such as Lord Cloncurry and General Bryan Mahon. Mayo urged the gathering to realize that the union and the past were dead. Archbishop John Gregg of Dublin pointed out that it would be a serious mistake for former unionists to withhold their co-operation from the new constitutionally-appointed government. A resolution declaring that southern unionists recognize the Provisional government was passed unanimously.⁶³

A general meeting of the UAPL, chaired by Lord Midleton, was held on 21 January and attended by Mayo, Sir William Goulding, Col. T.J. de Burgh, H.J.B. Clements, and W.T. Kirkpatrick. In view of the altered situation it was decided to drop the term unionist from the party name and adopt the title 'Constitutional Anti-Partition League' instead. It was also agreed to make every effort to secure co-operation of all classes in establishing stable and constitutional government in the country. The more hard-line Irish Unionist Alliance met in Dublin on 26 January, but decided, due to the uncertainty of the whole position, not to take any definite action.⁶⁴ Despite this, within two months, Protestants in many parts of the south were subjected to intimidation and murder.⁶⁵ On 12 May a deputation from the General Synod of the Church of Ireland comprising Archbishop Gregg and Bishop Miller as well as Sir William Goulding met the Provisional government to discuss the

⁵⁸ *LL*, 27 May 1922.

⁵⁹ *KO*, 27 May 1922.

⁶⁰ See *Irish Farmer*, 26 Mar. and 14 May 1921; see also Raymond Ryan, 'Farmers, agriculture and politics in the IFS area, 1919-1936', p. 43 (PhD UCD, 2005). For a comparative view of the activities of the Ratepayers Association in Sligo, see Farry, *Sligo*, pp 74-5, 114.

⁶¹ *KO*, 27 May, 3 June 1922.

⁶² *IT*, 17 Jan. 1922.

⁶³ *II*, 20 Jan. 1922; *KO*, 21 Jan. 1922.

⁶⁴ *IT*, 28 Jan. 1922.

⁶⁵ Macready to Jeudwine, 2 May 1922 (IWM, Jeudwine papers, 72/82/2); Hart, *The IRA and its enemies*, pp 273-92.

violence.⁶⁶ The problem was prevalent in Kildare. Claims submitted to the IGC reveal that many unionists were forced from their homes such as Charles Bury who lived three miles from Goulding's residence.⁶⁷ The deputation demanded to know if the government 'wanted to keep the Protestant community in Southern Ireland or to expel them'. While Collins gave assurances that the government would protect its citizens and ensure civil and religious liberty, he claimed that sectarian violence in Belfast had a bearing on the situation.⁶⁸

The election on 16 June 1922 was generally peaceful except for one tragic incident when Thomas Dunne, an anti-Treaty IRA Volunteer, was accidentally shot dead in Castledermot by government forces.⁶⁹ The total electorate of 58,584 eligible voters were almost evenly divided between the two counties, with Kildare totalling 29,505 or 700 more than Wicklow. The turnout was low at sixty-two per cent or 35,674 voters; this included 1,160 spoiled votes.⁷⁰ Turnout was four per cent lower than in December 1918. As expected, the election produced a resounding victory for pro-Treaty candidates who won 81 per cent of the vote. Christopher Byrne topped the poll with 9,170 first preferences – more than one and a half quotas. Both Hugh Colohan and James Everett for Labour also exceeded the quota.⁷¹ Colohan's 6,522 votes almost matched the combined total of the four anti-Treaty candidates who had a disastrous day. Only Robert Barton was elected for anti-Treaty SF. The combined Farmers Party obtained a respectable vote of 6,261, a mere 307 votes less than the anti-Treaty vote, which was enough to elect Richard Wilson.⁷² Of the five TDs, Hugh Colohan was the only Kildare resident. A substantial pro-Treaty SF vote from Kildare went to Christopher Byrne while preferences from Kildare farmers helped to elect Wilson.

While a bitter loss for O'Connor, Ua Buachalla and Childers, it was not unexpected. Childers and Ua Buachalla stayed away from the count centre. Support for anti-Treaty candidates in Kildare reflected the average vote received nationally which was twenty-one percent or two percent more than in Kildare and Wicklow. The Labour Party vote of thirty-six percent was the fourth highest in the country,

⁶⁶ *IT*, 13 May 1922; *II*, 13 May 1922.

⁶⁷ Irish Grants Committee claim of Esmee Lascelles and Doreen Buchanan, 15 Jan. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/199/5).

⁶⁸ *IT*, 13 May 1922.

⁶⁹ Éamon Kane, 'The Civil War in Castledermot and Graney', *JKAS*, 21:1, (2016-2017), 221-4.

⁷⁰ *KO*, 24 June 1922; <http://www.electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1922> (accessed 10 Aug. 2017)

⁷¹ For details of Labour's success nationally see Emmet O'Connor, *A labour history of Ireland, 1824-2000* (Dublin, 2011), p. 125; Francis Devine, *Organising history: a century of SIPTU, 1909-2009* (Dublin, 2009), p. 128.

⁷² <http://www.electionsireland.org/result.cfm?election=1922> (accessed 10 Aug. 2017). For details of the success nationally of the Farmers Party see 'Farmers Union report for the year 1922', 15 Mar. 1923 (NLI, Irish Farmers' Union papers, MS 43,567/1).

while the Farmers party, with eighteen percent, was substantially higher than the national average of seven percent.⁷³ The message from the voters was clear. Four out of five people supported the Treaty. The combined Labour and Farmers vote of fifty-eight per cent signified an economic message. While Labour championed the issue of unemployment, the Farmers Party highlighted rising rates brought on by the War of Independence.

One of the most momentous consequences of the Anglo-Irish Treaty was the withdrawal of the British army from Ireland and Kildare. The evacuation began on 16 January 1922 when notice was received that the Treaty was officially ratified.⁷⁴ That night, ninety-three RAF personnel from Baldonnell aerodrome and an advance party of thirty artillerymen were shipped out from the North Wall, Dublin.⁷⁵ The withdrawal was conducted in three phases. The first was to move out of the country all troops not required for the garrisons in Dublin, Cork and the Curragh; the second phase involved evacuating Cork and the Curragh, and the final phase was the evacuation of Dublin. This was to avoid leaving units in potential flashpoints where they might be called on to aid the civil power.⁷⁶ The military authorities in the 5th Division planned to evacuate in two stages. All stations outside County Kildare would be evacuated first; departure from Kildare, Newbridge, Naas and the Curragh would form the second stage. As divisional troops were withdrawn they passed through barracks in Kildare before embarking for Britain.⁷⁷ As a result, the Curragh camp was heaving with activity as units and surplus equipment were funnelled through the camp.⁷⁸ On 25 January Clogheen in County Tipperary and Baltinglass were the first stations to be evacuated. The following day it was the turn of two stations in the Glen of Imaal.⁷⁹ On 7 February Carlow barracks, garrisoned by 437 Northumberland Fusiliers, was evacuated and handed over to the Carlow Brigade adjutant, Jim Lillis.⁸⁰ On the same day, the RDF departed from the depot in Naas, the secretary of state for war having announced the disbandment of the regiment.⁸¹ The Provisional government had pressed for an early evacuation of Naas Barracks which they wanted to use as a military officer training college. However, the British army authorities

⁷³ Gallagher, 'The pact general election', 414.

⁷⁴ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 112.

⁷⁵ Properties handed over to the Provisional government by 18 May 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE/14/2); Anthony Kinsella, 'The British military evacuation', *Irish Sword*, 20:82 (Winter 1997), 277; Michael C. O'Malley, *Military aviation in Ireland, 1921-45* (Dublin, 2010), p. 9.

⁷⁶ Kinsella, 'British military evacuation', 275.

⁷⁷ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr.- 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A).

⁷⁸ *LL*, 4 Feb. 1922.

⁷⁹ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 132; 'General Monthly returns of the army Jan. to June 1922', p. 93 Jan. 1922 figures (TNA, WO 73/116).

⁸⁰ Properties handed over to the Provisional government by 18 May 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE 14/2); 'General monthly returns of the army, Jan. to June 1922', p. 94 (TNA, WO 73/116); John Duggan, *A history of the Irish army* (Dublin, 1991), p. 76.

⁸¹ Kinsella, 'British military evacuation', 281.

decided to retain Naas until the transfer of the Curragh.⁸² The Leicestershire Regiment were posted to Naas which continued to house troops in transit until 16 May.⁸³

An incident in early February temporarily halted the withdrawal. The British army in Kildare had not been seriously targeted until after the signing of the Treaty. On 8 January 1922 Lieutenant Bevin of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, a plain clothes intelligence officer was fired on three miles south of the Curragh.⁸⁴ Following the incident, pre-truce precautions requiring officers to be armed or provided with an escort were restored. These orders had not reached the O/C of the artillery barracks in Kildare when on 10 February, Lieutenant John Wogan-Browne, serving in Royal Field Artillery in Kildare, was shot dead when he tried to resist the attempted robbery of the regimental pay of £135 which he had collected from a local bank.⁸⁵ Wogan-Browne was from Naas, the only surviving son of Colonel Francis Wogan-Browne, a leading Catholic unionist. His death was the most serious incident during the evacuation. Although the local IRA were not directly involved and assisted in the pursuit of the killers, feelings of resentment were high among the military. On the evening following the shooting, six soldiers from Kildare barracks broke some windows in the local cinema where John Breslin, who was suspected of involvement, was caretaker. Immediately, republican police opened fire on them, resulting in the wounding of three soldiers. The serious situation developing in Kildare was defused when Seán Kavanagh, liaison officer, contacted Commandant-Colonel Percy Skinner, O/C Curragh command, to have soldiers confined to barracks while he endeavoured to deal with unauthorized persons possessing firearms.⁸⁶ The War Office suspended the evacuation of troops and moved the 1st Royal Dragoons from Ballinasloe to the Curragh camp for a period.⁸⁷ Fortunately, the killing did not escalate into a crisis. Within days, Collins contacted Churchill, secretary for the colonies, informing him that suspects had been arrested. This enabled Churchill to give a favourable report to the House of Commons.⁸⁸ The evacuation programme resumed on 27 February after a 15-day hiatus.⁸⁹ Three IRA men from the Suncroft area on the southern fringes

⁸² Emmet Dalton to J.J. O'Connell, 28 Feb. 1922 (NLI, J.J. O'Connell papers, MS 22126).

⁸³ *LL*, May 20; Townshend, *Republic*, p. 393.

⁸⁴ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 119; *LL*, 4 Feb. 1922.

⁸⁵ Officers service papers, Lt. John Wogan-Browne, 1914-1923 (TNA, WO 339/43238). The killing of Wogan-Browne features in many accounts of the Irish Revolution in Kildare, see Costello, *Kildare: saints, soldiers and horses*, pp 92-4; James Durney, *The Civil War*, pp 37-43; Mark McLoughlin, 'The killing of Lt. John Wogan Browne on 10 February 1922: a test of Anglo-Irish relations', *JKAS*, 20:3 (2012-13), 9-25.

⁸⁶ Report by Seán Kavanagh to Chief Liaison Officer, 13 Feb. 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE/4/14).

⁸⁷ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A); Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 128.

⁸⁸ *IT*, 14, 15 Feb. 1922; *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 14 Feb. 1922, vol. 150, col. 807.

⁸⁹ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 128.

of the Curragh were believed to have been responsible. The accused never went on trial for the Wogan-Browne shooting and they were released from Mountjoy in May 1922 due to the unwillingness of any party to testify.⁹⁰ Wogan-Browne was the only serving British soldier to be shot dead in Kildare during the Irish Revolution in what was a botched robbery rather than a politically-motivated killing.

In addition to the evacuation of army personnel, a vast quantity of property and equipment was also removed and a considerable volume of non-fixtures, temporary structures and stores was sold by public auction. This included all huts and other military stores. The first of a series of auctions took place in Naas Barracks on 2 February with various household furniture and a quantity of timber on offer.⁹¹ The biggest sale was held in the Curragh camp on 16 and 17 February, with the contents of the Frenchfurze and Rath Camps which included, among other items, 250 huts, kitchen ranges and boilers. The personal property of army officers was also sold at this time, including dwelling houses and horses.⁹² On 23 February, Richard Mulcahy visited the Curragh camp and held discussions with senior British army officials regarding preparations for the final evacuation which was planned for late May.⁹³

All married families of both officers and other ranks from the army stations in County Kildare were ordered to depart Ireland by 15 April.⁹⁴ Kildare artillery barracks was the first station to be evacuated. The 4.5 inch Howitzer battery was transferred to Newbridge; personnel moved to both Newbridge and the Curragh. Some minor incidents took place prior to evacuation. A safe which contained a considerable sum of cash was robbed from a canteen in the barracks and three days before departure, Connacht Lodge, owned by an army officer, was burned maliciously.⁹⁵ The deployment of some 1,800 men of the Royal Field Artillery on Saturday 15 April completed the evacuation. The extensive military barracks was then taken over by a body of 300 National army soldiers supervised by Captain Cotter and Lieutenant Roe who were appointed by GHQ.⁹⁶ The bulk of the Irish soldiers came from the National army camp at Celbridge.

Arrangements for the handover of the Curragh, Newbridge and Naas were handled by Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Elphinstone-Dalrymple of the 5th Division and

⁹⁰ Report by Seán Kavanagh to Chief Liaison Officer, 29 Mar. 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE/4/14); McLoughlin, 'Wogan Browne', 22.

⁹¹ *KO*, 28 Jan. 1922.

⁹² *FJ*, 4 Feb. 1922; *KO*, 4, 25 Feb., 4 Mar. 1922

⁹³ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 129; Visit of Mulcahy to the Curragh, 23 Feb. 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE 14/2).

⁹⁴ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A).

⁹⁵ Irish Grants Committee claim of Ernest Northern, 26 Oct. 1926 (TNA, CO 762/143/1); *LL*, 1 Apr. 1922; McLoughlin, *Kildare barracks*, p. 141.

⁹⁶ Emmet Dalton to the Adjutant General, 12 Apr. 1922; *LL*, 22 Apr. 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE 14/2).

General Emmet Dalton, chief liaison officer National army.⁹⁷ Some weeks prior to the Curragh evacuation Ballyfair House, the residence of General Jeudwine, was transferred and used as an assembly area for Irish troops destined to take over the Curragh camp.⁹⁸ Considerable preparatory work had to be undertaken by the British army in the Curragh. All ordnance and barrack stores belonging to the Royal Engineers and Royal Army Service Corps – about 1,000 tons – had to be moved to Britain and Northern Ireland. The Royal Scots Fusiliers departed from Hare Park on 4 April together with the remaining disbanded RIC.⁹⁹ Certain civilian employees from the various administrative departments were selected by the British army to take over installations and stores in the camp. But the fire brigade, which was often of service to the local community, was withdrawn to Dublin.¹⁰⁰ The Curragh military hospital was closed on the first day of the evacuation, but provision was made for patients who were unfit to travel.¹⁰¹

On the morning of 15 May, troops of the 30th Brigade RHA, and 2nd Royal Welsh Fusiliers marched out to the Curragh Siding and departed for Dublin. Later, an advance party of about eighty National army troops, commanded by Commandant Patrick Cronin, arrived by train from Beggars Bush barracks, Dublin and settled in overnight in Hare Park.¹⁰² Two of the officers, Captain Hugh McNally and Lieutenant Éamon Prendergast, were from Monasterevin and veterans of the War of Independence in Kildare who had been detained in the camp for two weeks in 1920. Later that night, they were joined by General J.J. O'Connell, Commandant Bisette and Captain O'Byrne.¹⁰³

The British forces had an early start the following morning. By 9 o'clock all roads from the camp were filled with lines of marching troops, with over 300 motor lorries and armoured cars, making their way to Dublin. The infantry, composed principally of Leicesters and Northampton Regiments, proceeded to the railway sidings.¹⁰⁴ The official handover took place at 10.30 a.m.¹⁰⁵ O'Connell at the head of his staff met Lt-Col. Elphinstone-Dalrymple who was accompanied by other British

⁹⁷ Movement and evacuations of British army personnel and units, Jan.-May 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE 14); Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A).

⁹⁸ Properties handed over to the Provisional government by 18 May 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers LE 14/2); Macready to Jeudwine, 2 May 1922 (IWM, Jeudwine papers, 72/82/2).

⁹⁹ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A).

¹⁰⁰ KO, 20 May 1922.

¹⁰¹ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (WO 35/182A).

¹⁰² Niall Brannigan, 'Changing of the guard: Curragh evacuation seventy years on', *An Cosantóir: the Irish Defence Journal*, 52:12 (Dec. 1992), 30.

¹⁰³ Desmond Swan, 'The Curragh of Kildare', *An Cosantóir: the Irish Defence Journal*, 32:5 (May 1972), 67; LL, 20 May 1922. Both McNally and Prendergast were officers in the Monasterevin IRA Company.

¹⁰⁴ LL, 20 May 1922.

¹⁰⁵ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A).

officers at the staff house. The two senior officers of each group proceeded to Beresford (now Ceannt) Barracks where the handover took place.¹⁰⁶ There was no ceremony to mark the surrender of 'England's greatest military stronghold in Ireland'.¹⁰⁷ Elphinstone-Dalrymple then escorted O'Connell around the south perimeter road for an inspection while Lt-Col Stockwell of the divisional staff escorted Commandant Cronin along the north perimeter road for a similar inspection.¹⁰⁸ The withdrawal of the last troops was supervised by Commandant-Colonel Percy Skinner who waited for the two platoons of Northamptonshire Regiment to form up, as a trumpeter sounded the last call. They were followed shortly afterwards by Elphinstone-Dalrymple and Stockwell. As the British troops marched out, detachments of Irish troops arrived from Kildare and Newbridge railway stations. Commandant Barra Ó Briain, with a contingent of Irish troops, passed the last of the British column to leave the Curragh. He observed that some in the British cavalcade engaged insensitively in catcalling and cautioned his own men to keep calm.¹⁰⁹ As was the custom, the British removed the flagpoles before their final departure. It was not until 12 o'clock that a flagpole was obtained by the National army and the tricolour was hoisted by O'Connell over the water tower in the camp.¹¹⁰

Newbridge was also vacated at the same time on 16 May with entry routes for the National army and exit routes for the British army agreed in advance. The British troops marched out of the barracks at 10:30 a.m. and proceeded to Newbridge station where two trains transported 209 men to Dublin.¹¹¹ At 10:30 a.m. the barracks was formally taken over on behalf of the Provisional government by Captain O'Kelly and Captain Joseph Rowan.¹¹² Naas was the last British army station to be vacated in County Kildare. The same procedure was adopted with the company of Leicesters marching out at mid-day, one and a half hours after the evacuation of the Curragh and Newbridge. Following the departure, the depot was taken over by Brigadier Thomas Lawler, with Captain J. Joyce appointed O/C in charge of the barracks.¹¹³

The departure of the British army in early 1922 caused severe economic consequences throughout Kildare. Within days of the departure forage prices collapsed with hay fetching only £9 a ton instead of the usual £14. The substantial

¹⁰⁶ *IT*, 20 May 1922; Brannigan, 'Changing of the guard', 30.

¹⁰⁷ *FJ*, 17 May 1922.

¹⁰⁸ *IT*, 20 May 1922.

¹⁰⁹ Swan, 'The Curragh of Kildare', 67-8.

¹¹⁰ *IT*, 20 May 1922; *LL*, 20 May 1922.

¹¹¹ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A).

¹¹² *LL*, 20 May 1922. Captain J. Rowan was appointed in charge of the Newbridge police district following the departure of the RIC.

¹¹³ *LL*, 20 May 1922; *KO*, 20 May 1922.

reduction in the number of horses not alone harmed the breeders and suppliers of fodder but caused hardships for tillage farmers and vegetable growers who had utilized manure from military camps.¹¹⁴ During the period between April 1921 and April 1922 almost all agricultural commodities recorded double digit price reductions of between ten and forty-six per cent.¹¹⁵ The residents of Newbridge and the Curragh lobbied the Provisional government to choose the Curragh and Newbridge as the headquarters of the new Irish army and for the creation of light industry in the barracks.¹¹⁶ In March 1922 Naas UDC requested assistance from the minister for labour for individuals who had become unemployed following the withdrawal of the British army. Following the evacuation of Kildare artillery barracks in April 1922, the deployment of the new Civic Guard to the complex provided a short-term boost to the area, but did not compensate for the commercial loss to the town due to the departure of the British military. The Curragh camp was described by a contemporary as more like a modern industrial estate with large workshops and stables.¹¹⁷ In late December 1921 the weekly wage paid to the large workforce in the camp amounted to £7,000 and it was estimated that between £90,000 and £100,000 a month was circulated by the military in the Curragh district.¹¹⁸ Following the British evacuation in mid-May 1922, the local economy was decimated, with normal business practically ceasing. Only a fraction of those previously employed by the British military were retained by the National army. It was reported that in the Curragh region no less than 1,100 men were unemployed.¹¹⁹ No town in Kildare was more dependent economically on the British army or more adversely affected by the withdrawal than Newbridge. As one local resident put it

One lived off the army; no matter what one had to sell the army bought it, from a horse to a chicken. One could poach a salmon or shoot a pheasant, anything, the army would buy it, hay, straw, logs. There was no fear in the town, very little violence and no sectarianism, they were part of society and they were welcome.¹²⁰

As a result of the severe economic consequences all of the garrison towns experienced a notable decline in population.

¹¹⁴ Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 340.

¹¹⁵ 'Average prices of agricultural products sold at fairs and markets in Ireland, May 1922' in *Monthly statistical statement, issued by Department of Agriculture, 1921- 1923* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 16.

¹¹⁶ Memo detailing a meeting between members of the Provisional government and a deputation from the Curragh area, undated (NAI, Department of Justice, H/99/10); *LL*, 11 Feb. 1922.

¹¹⁷ Jim Smith, *The Curragh camp pre -1922: Through the eyes of a young boy Jim Smith*, in <http://www.curragh.info/articles/smith.htm> (accessed 23 Oct. 2017).

¹¹⁸ *IT*, 24 Dec. 1921.

¹¹⁹ Evacuation of the Curragh camp, 1 Apr. - 31 May 1922 (TNA, WO 35/182A); Memo detailing a meeting between members of the Provisional government and a deputation from the Curragh area, undated (NAI, Department of Justice, H/99/10); *LL*, 11 Feb. 1922.

¹²⁰ Costello, *Delightful station*, p. 345.

Against the background of the withdrawal of the British army a serious division occurred in the IRA over the Treaty. On 11 January at least three anti-Treaty members of GHQ and some divisional commanders called on Richard Mulcahy, chief of staff of the IRA, to hold an army convention to discuss their opposition to the Treaty. Six days later, the 2nd Southern Division repudiated the authority of the GHQ. The leadership of the 1st Eastern Division in north Kildare and the 2nd Eastern Division in south Kildare both accepted the Treaty.

While the IRA leadership wrangled over the Treaty, the Provisional government took steps to form the National army. The nucleus came from the Dublin Guard, a combination of Collins's old squad and the Dublin ASU, which in late January were assembled at Celbridge barracks to 'train and equip' as the first unit of the National army.¹²¹ Pádraig O'Connor, who had been a member of the Irish Volunteers in Celbridge in 1914, was one of the National army officers in Celbridge. He described how recruits in their new uniforms paraded around Celbridge charming 'the female hearts in the manner of soldiers the world over'.¹²² Collins went to Celbridge to inspect the men as they were the first to be issued uniforms. On 31 January the Celbridge unit, under Captain Paddy O'Daly, took charge of Beggars Bush barracks in Dublin – the first barracks to be handed over by the British army.¹²³ During an intensive recruitment drive, some of the new members of the National army came from Kildare. In early April, for example, twenty-two men who recently joined the IRA from Newbridge and Castledermot were reported to have gone to Celbridge and Beggars Bush Camp for training.¹²⁴

At this time anti-Treaty IRA grew disillusioned, feeling they had been duped by Collins. At a meeting in Newbridge on 5 February, chaired by Éamon Ó Modhráin, more than 100 ex-prisoners from the county expressed their grievances.¹²⁵ Men who were in senior positions in the IRA prior to their arrest did not regain their positions on release as the pre-truce command structure of the battalions in Kildare remained in place. An ex-internee association was formed with Thomas Harris, who was opposed to the Treaty, elected as commandant in charge.¹²⁶

In March the RIC were evacuated from the last five police barracks in the county which were then transferred to the local IRA. The handover was smooth and low-key with only trusted pro-Treaty IRA personnel installed in the barracks by GHQ. This meant that the most experienced IRA companies such as Maynooth which had

¹²¹ Duggan, *Irish army*, p. 75; Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War, 1922-23* (Dublin, 1969), p. 89.

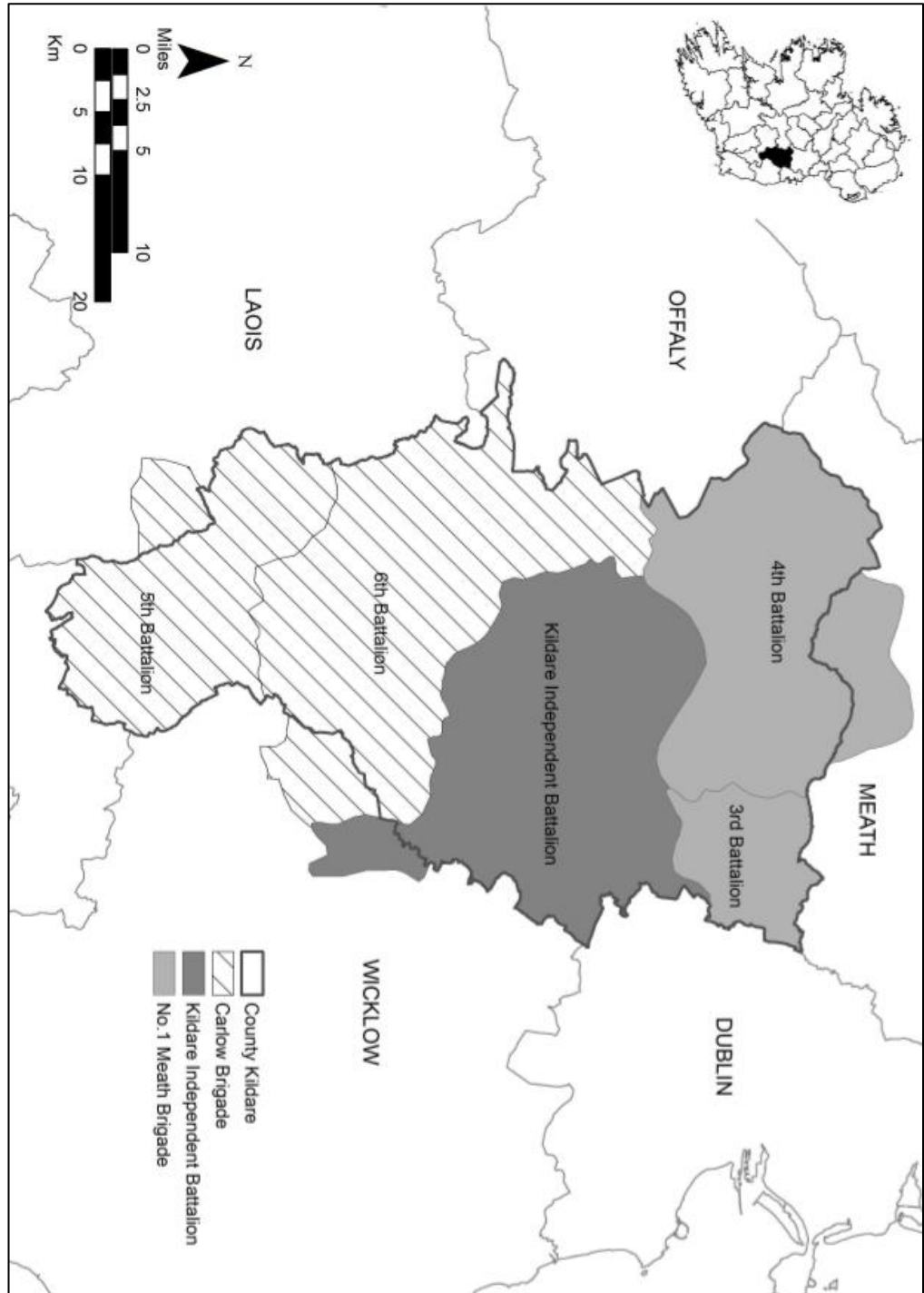
¹²² Diarmuid O'Connor and Frank Connolly, *Sleep soldier sleep: the life and times of Pádraig O'Connor* (Dublin, 2011), p. 67.

¹²³ *IT*, 2 Feb. 1922; *An tÓglach*, 7 Apr. 1923, 14-15; O'Connor and Connolly, *Sleep soldier sleep*, p. 67.

¹²⁴ *LL*, 15 Apr. 1922.

¹²⁵ *LL*, 11 Feb. 1922.

¹²⁶ James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 9).



Map 7: Kildare battalion areas, 11 July 1921

fought the RIC for six years were excluded. Resentment was inevitable. Athy was the first to be vacated on 10 March and it was taken over by personnel appointed by IRA headquarters. In Maynooth, the barracks was taken over by Captain McKenna from GHQ and Seán Kavanagh, liaison officer. The barracks in Newbridge was passed to republican police loyal to GHQ; likewise Kildare town.¹²⁷ On 24 March the final and most important evacuation occurred of Naas barracks, the headquarters of the RIC'. It was handed over to Brigadier Thomas Lawler, O/C Naas (7th Brigade). Under CI Murphy the RIC moved to quarters in Hare Park, Curragh which was used as a demobilization centre.¹²⁸

The split in the IRA became more pronounced following the convention on 26 March at which a resolution stating that the IRA be maintained as the army of the Irish Republic under an executive appointed by the convention and headed by Liam Lynch. Two days later the executive renounced the Provisional government's control over the IRA and ordered an end to recruitment for the National army and Civic Guard.¹²⁹ In Kildare, the resolution shattered the fragile unity that held the pro- and anti-Treaty wings of the IRA together. Almost immediately, the anti-Treaty side took the initiative by firing on Newbridge police barracks on 4 April with a second incident in Monasterevin.¹³⁰ There were also a number of arms raids by anti-Treaty units. On 8 April a daring raid, planned by Paddy Mullaney, O/C Leixlip Battalion, and Andrew Cooney, O/C Eastern Division anti-Treaty IRA, was made on the headquarters of the official IRA Eastern Division in Dunboyne. The raiders captured a large quantity of arms.¹³¹ On the same day General Eoin O'Duffy visited Naas to put the Treaty position before officers of the local 7th Brigade, 1st Eastern Division. While the meeting was in progress, James Dunne, vice O/C 1st Battalion, with eight men raided the police barracks in Naas and made off with about twenty shotguns, some revolvers, ammunition and explosives.¹³²

The IRA split in Kildare replicated the pattern identified by Hopkinson where rank and file tended to follow their commander's position on the Treaty, although this was not universal.¹³³ The largest territorial area in Kildare was that of the 7th Brigade, 1st Eastern Division which stretched from near Rathcoole to Rathangan. This area was formerly the Kildare Independent battalion which was rearranged as a brigade area by GHQ (see map 7 Kildare battalion areas, July 1921 and appendix 4). The new brigade consisted of six battalions and controlled the key locations of Naas,

¹²⁷ *NLT*, 18 March 1922; *LL*, 1 and 8 Apr. 1922; *KO*, 8 Apr. 1922.

¹²⁸ *LL*, 1 Apr. 1922.

¹²⁹ *LL*, 1 Apr. 1922; Neeson, *Civil war*, p. 96; Patrick Taaffe, 'Richard Mulcahy and the genesis of the Civil War', *Irish Sword*, 29:118 (Winter 2014), 452.

¹³⁰ *LL*, 8, 15 Apr. 1922.

¹³¹ Michael McEvilly, *A splendid resistance: the life of IRA chief of staff, Dr Andy Cooney* (Dublin, 2011), pp 72-3; *Meath Chronicle*, 15 Apr. 1922; *Drogheda Independent*, 15 Apr. 1922.

¹³² James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, pp 9-10); *KO*, 15 Apr. 1922.

¹³³ Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 43-4.

Newbridge, Kildare and the Curragh. This brigade was Thomas Harris's old division prior to his arrest; he was elected O/C of the rival anti-Treaty 7th Brigade in mid-April 1922 which claimed to have 400 men. New leaders were appointed in the various battalions. In the 1st Battalion covering the Naas-Kill area, 19-year-old James Dunne was appointed O/C. In other areas such as the 4th Battalion, Edward Tracy O/C and Thomas McHugh Vice O/C, having chosen the anti-Treaty side, simply renounced the authority of the Thomas Lawler-led official IRA brigade and transferred allegiance to Harris.¹³⁴ Almost the entire leadership of the Eastern Division chose the pro-Treaty side with only Mullingar and Leixlip taking the anti-Treaty side.¹³⁵ The battalion staff in Leixlip and the Maynooth Company followed the anti-Treaty stance of Paddy Mullaney.¹³⁶ Most, but not all, of the battalion based at Kilcock (4th Battalion, Meath No. 1 Brigade) led by Michael Flynn chose the pro-Treaty side with headquarters in the re-built Ulster Bank building. In Carlow, there was little sign of dissent at first. The brigade staff, including James Lillis, the adjutant who had served in the IRA close to the Curragh, chose the pro-Treaty side.¹³⁷ Among the rank and file, approximately half the members adopted a neutral path, and the remainder took positions for and against the Treaty.¹³⁸ Seán Hayden from Athy, a senior ex-internee IRA officer, became O/C 5th Battalion, Carlow Brigade anti-Treaty IRA (ATIRA) based in Athy.¹³⁹

The divisions within the IRA and the departure of the RIC resulted in a virtual breakdown of law and order throughout the county in the late spring and early summer of 1922. In Kill, attacks on the homes of former RIC members, raids and inspections of canal boats for boycotted Belfast goods became the order of the day.¹⁴⁰ Elements within the ATIRA engaged in a campaign of intimidation of pro-Treaty SF supporters and unionists. Near Robertstown, the house of Joseph Cusack, a pro-Treaty county councillor, was fired on and his farm buildings burned.¹⁴¹ This area of west Kildare was virtually controlled by the ATIRA and criminal gangs were rampant.¹⁴² In an effort to enforce law and order, an ATIRA unit, commanded by

¹³⁴ Sworn statement by Thomas McHugh, 10 Mar. 1936 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF15403); James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 10).

¹³⁵ *An tÓglach*, 25 Apr. 1922.

¹³⁶ Paddy Mullaney interview, p. 27 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/106); Sworn statement by Thomas Mangan, 5 Jan. 1937 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF10614); Sworn statement by Tim Tyrrell, 5 Jan. 1937 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF10613).

¹³⁷ Duggan, *Irish army*, pp 76, 330-1.

¹³⁸ Patrick Kane (BMH WS, 1,572, pp 22-23).

¹³⁹ Michael O'Kelly (BMH WS, 1,155, p. 68).

¹⁴⁰ Report by Seán Kavanagh to Chief Liaison Officer, 17 March 1922 (IMA, Liaison and evacuation papers, LE/4/14); *KO*, 11 Mar., 22 Apr., 20 May 1922; *LL*, 22 Apr. 1922.

¹⁴¹ *KO*, 20 May 1922.

¹⁴² *LL*, 13 May 1922.

Harris, commandeered a vacant house in the area and established a barrack with Paddy Brennan in charge.¹⁴³

The level of intimidation directed against unionists was low when compared to other counties such as Cork or Cavan.¹⁴⁴ A meeting of Athy Protestants adopted a resolution expressing abhorrence at the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and recording their appreciation of the good feeling that existed between themselves and their Catholic neighbours.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, in early April a number of houses belonging to Protestants in the area of Kildare town were burned. This prompted the local IRA to issue a statement denying involvement.¹⁴⁶ In Athy in early June the windows of several Protestant houses and the Methodist church were broken.¹⁴⁷ Sarah Giltrap from Ballymore Eustace had her gun taken and a number of cattle stolen. She believed these cattle were driven to the ATIRA camp at Kilbride and earmarked to feed the occupants of the Four Courts garrison in Dublin.¹⁴⁸ During a raid on a Protestant household in Moone in south Kildare in May 1922, by men claiming to be members of the IRA, Thomas Glynn suffered serious injuries from which he died four years later.¹⁴⁹ Some of the victims of intimidation left the country. Robert Eccles, an ex-serviceman and a Freemason, was a successful chemist in Athy. He emigrated with his family to Australia after receiving a threatening letter.¹⁵⁰ Harry Andree, a photographer in Newbridge, likewise moved with his family to England due to threatening letters.¹⁵¹ In west Kildare, intimidation of Protestants prompted Fr Michael Kelly, curate of Staplestown, to describe the perpetrators as vile cowards who 'remained quiet while the foreigners stalked the country, and now when the danger was over, they came out to pursue their own countrymen – their own neighbours.'¹⁵²

The divisions in the IRA also contributed to a crisis that marked the early weeks of the newly formed Civic Guard later to be known as the Garda Síochána. In February 1922 Collins appointed a committee to oversee the establishment of a police force which recommended that the Civic Guard be essentially modelled on the

¹⁴³ James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, p. 10); *LL*, 6 and 20 May 1922.

¹⁴⁴ Hart, *IRA and its enemies*, pp 273-92; Hughes, 'Loyalists and loyalism', 1075-1105.

¹⁴⁵ *KO*, 01 Apr. 1922.

¹⁴⁶ Details of the various houses burned acquired from: Irish Grants Committee claim of Ernest Northern, 26 Oct. 1926 (TNA, CO 762/143/1); *NLT*, 15 Apr 1922; *LL*, 29 Apr. 1922.

¹⁴⁷ *II*, 15 June 1922; *KO*, 17 June 22; *LL*, 17 June 1922.

¹⁴⁸ Irish Grants Committee claim of Sarah Giltrap, 29 Jan. 1927 (TNA, CO 762/147/12). Kilbride Camp is situated four miles north-east of Blessington.

¹⁴⁹ Irish Grants Committee claim of Anna Glynn, 23 Nov. 1926 (TNA, CO 762/79/16).

¹⁵⁰ Irish Grants Committee claim of Robert Eccles, 14 Nov. 1928 (TNA, CO 762/189/3).

¹⁵¹ Compensation claims of Loyalists, Harry Andree, 28 Oct. 1922 (NAI, Department of Finance 1922-1924, FIN 1/1084 303/31); Irish Grants Committee claim of Harry Andree, 28 Oct. 1926 (TNA, CO 762/59/11).

¹⁵² *KO*, 20 May 1922.

RIC.¹⁵³ According to Brian McCarthy, the committee failed to anticipate the degree of suspicion and resentment among ex-IRA men, the main source of recruits, towards former RIC men as 'the mood of the country at the time demanded the replacement of the RIC, rather than the enshrinement of it'.¹⁵⁴ Discontent increased in late April when some 800 Civic Guard recruits were moved from Ballsbridge into the evacuated British army artillery barracks in Kildare town. They were unhappy at being instructed by their former enemies in the RIC who were continually appointed to positions of every rank above that of sergeant. By mid-May, apart from Michael Staines, the commissioner, and Patrick Brennan, the deputy-commissioner, both prominent members of the IRA, virtually all the remaining headquarters staff comprised ex-RIC men.¹⁵⁵ Resentment came to a head in mid-May when five ex-RIC were promoted: Patrick Walsh to deputy commissioner, Jeremiah Maher to private secretary, and three superintendents. All five had assisted the IRA during the War of Independence.

On 15 May a protest committee issued an ultimatum to Commissioner Staines demanding the immediate expulsion of the five appointees.¹⁵⁶ This was mutiny and Staines mishandled the developing crisis by employing confrontation rather than diplomacy. Unwisely, he called a full parade of all 1,250 recruits in the barracks. This resulted in a confrontation between himself and the signatories of the ultimatum, with the vast majority choosing the side of the protest committee which took control of the barracks.¹⁵⁷ Staines reported the mutiny to the Provisional government and sought military assistance. Fortunately, when the Free State soldiers arrived at the barracks they were persuaded by the armed Civic Guards to withdraw.¹⁵⁸ Negotiations between the government, Staines and Walsh from the Civic Guard management and two members of the protest committee failed to end the dispute. Neither did a visit by Michael Collins to the barracks on 26 May to address the mutineers. A standoff now ensued with the Provisional government halting supplies, cutting off pay and diverting new recruits to a new headquarters in Dublin.¹⁵⁹ For almost two months the new Civic Guard was divided into two rival groups, one in Kildare under virtual siege and the other in Dublin.

On the night of 17 June an anti-Treaty faction within the depot led by Thomas Daly and Seán O'Brien, who were secretly in contact with the leadership of the anti-

¹⁵³ Provisional government minutes, 31 Jan. 1922 (NAI, TSCH/1/1/1); Report of the commission of inquiry into the Civic Guard mutiny, 17 Aug. 1922 (NAI, TAO/ S 9048); Brian McCarthy, *The Civic Guard mutiny* (Cork, 2012), p. 54.

¹⁵⁴ McCarthy, *Civic Guard mutiny*, p. 55.

¹⁵⁵ Conor Brady, *Guardians of the peace* (Dublin, 1974), p. 54.

¹⁵⁶ Evidence of J.A. O'Connell, 15 July, Civic Guard mutiny inquiry, 1922 (NAI, JUS/ H 235/329).

¹⁵⁷ Gregory Allen, *The Garda Síochána: policing independent Ireland, 1922-82* (Dublin, 1999), pp 33-6; McCarthy, *Civic Guard mutiny*, pp 92-7.

¹⁵⁸ Brady, *Guardians*, pp 58-9.

¹⁵⁹ Brady, *Guardians*, pp 60-1; Liam McNiffe, *A history of the Garda Síochána: a social history of the force, 1922-52 with an overview of the years 1952-97* (Dublin, 1997), p. 21.

Treaty forces in the Four Courts, openly joined the ATIRA.¹⁶⁰ Rory O'Connor, Ernie O'Malley and Tom Barry led a party from the Four Courts garrison, and with the assistance of Daly and O'Brien held up a number of the Guards, first on the Curragh and also in the Kildare depot where they raided the armoury acquiring the entire supply of weapons. A number of the Guards who assisted Daly and O'Brien left the Kildare depot and joined the Four Courts garrison.¹⁶¹ The incident led to the reopening of talks on 24 June when Arthur Griffith and Éamonn Duggan visited Kildare barracks and an agreement was reached. The men were granted all monies due to them for past services and it was agreed that an inquiry would be held without delay.¹⁶² This was headed by Kevin O'Shiel and Michael McAuliffe, two senior administrators in the Provisional government, who were also tasked with providing recommendations relating to the future structure of the Civic Guard.¹⁶³ The findings acknowledged that the mutiny was engineered by the Four Courts leadership with a small number of anti-Treaty men identified as provoking the hostility. Jeremiah Maher was singled out as a man wrongly listed on the ultimatum as a demobilized member of the RIC, even though he joined the IRA. The key recommendations included the disbandment of the Civic Guard and selective re-enrolment of current-men, the creation of an unarmed force and the appointment of a new commissioner.¹⁶⁴ Eoin O'Duffy succeeded Staines and Patrick Walsh was re-deployed in a non-commissioned capacity.¹⁶⁵

In the period following the truce, with the army and police largely confined to barracks, the extent to which a new order had emerged was evident by the growing authority exercised by the Kildare IRA, particularly in rural areas. The split that emerged in the aftermath of the Treaty produced an unusual scenario in Kildare with a strongly pro-Treaty county at odds with the two Dáil representatives. The 1922 election consolidated public support for the Treaty, but the electorate also adopted an independent line by voting on economic issues rather than personalities. The contest saw the emergence of a four-party political system which was to become a permanent feature in the future political set-up of the county. This was set against the evacuation of the British army from Kildare and the handing over the barracks to the National army in May 1922. Arguably, this was one of the most profound events

¹⁶⁰ <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates>, vol. 1, no. 2, col. 72, 11 Sept. 1922 (accessed 20 Oct. 2017).

¹⁶¹ Report of the commission of inquiry into the Civic Guard mutiny, 17 Aug. 1922 (NAI, DT S 9048); Ernie O'Malley, *The singing flame* (Dublin, 1978), pp 106-8; McCarthy, *Civic Guard mutiny*, pp 124-8.

¹⁶² McCarthy, *Civic Guard mutiny*, pp 131-3; Allen, *Garda Síochána*, pp 65-6.

¹⁶³ On O'Shiel see Eda Sagarra, *Kevin O'Shiel: Tyrone nationalist and Irish state-builder* (Dublin, 2013), pp 174-8.

¹⁶⁴ Report of the commission of inquiry into the Civic Guard mutiny, 17 Aug. 1922 (NAI, DT S 9048).

¹⁶⁵ McCarthy, *Civic Guard mutiny*, p. 187; Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005), p. 113.

in Kildare for centuries. The Curragh camp was destined to continue its role as an important military base as the country slid inexorably towards civil war.

8: Unpopular militancy: Kildare during the Civil War, 1922-3

During the Civil War the level of militancy and violence surpassed that of the War of Independence in Kildare. In June 1922 the country was divided politically, with the SF movement split into two opposing camps. Separate armies had emerged, and Kildare was no exception. Following the departure of the RIC and the British army from the county, two factions of the IRA had emerged. However, as a strongly pro-Treaty county the divide in Kildare was not evenly matched as the pro-Treaty side was far superior both numerically and in terms of arms. Furthermore, the new National army was dominant in the Curragh and Naas with the new Civic Guard also controlling the other big towns such as Kildare, Newbridge and Athy. In addition, the pro-Treaty IRA which was now aligned to the National army remained a strong powerful force. Nonetheless, well-organized ATIRA units emerged and were prepared to fight to defend their political viewpoint. The Irish Revolution produced a body of prisoners well experienced in opposing the prison administration. Many were to find themselves back in prison during the Civil War and through the use of successive hunger-strikes and prison escapes, they opposed the pro-Treaty authorities. At one point, two-thirds of the entire political prison population in the Irish Free State (IFS) were confined in jails in County Kildare. This was due to the availability of evacuated British barracks. As a result, the county was to feature in a number of prison escapes and hunger-strikes of national significance during this period of the conflict. Kildare also featured prominently in the policy of executions carried out by the Provisional government.

The Civil War began with the attack on the Four Courts in Dublin on 28 June 1922 and almost immediately, the National army in Kildare set about rounding-up prominent ATIRA activists. Checkpoints were set up on all the main roads and a barricade opposite the police barracks in Naas netted Thomas Harris, ATIRA O/C 7th Brigade, Eastern Division.¹ The following day, three of the leading republican activists in north Kildare – Domhnall Ua Buachalla, Paddy Mullaney O/C 1st Meath Brigade ATIRA and Michael O'Neill – were arrested at Kilcock. The arrests illustrated how previous loyalties had been severed by the Civil War. Captain Mick Flynn, who was in charge of the checkpoint at Kilcock, had served under Mullaney and alongside the other two during the War of Independence. The prisoners were initially confined in the local barrack, formerly the Ulster Bank.² Intelligence relating to ATIRA militancy was passed on to army authorities by Patrick Colgan who spent five days on holidays

¹ KO, 1 July 1922.

² Paddy Mullaney interview, p. 26 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/106); Mick O'Neill interview, p. 47 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/107); LL, 22 July 1922; O'Keeffe, 'My reminiscences of 1914-23', 45; Ó Súilleabháin, *Ua Buachalla*, p. 169.

in Maynooth during the early days of the conflict. According to Colgan, the ATIRA in Maynooth established a base in a house on the Main Street in the town and were holding a brother of Captain Flynn in their custody. This group had also been responsible for railway disruption close to Maynooth.³ The first exchange of fire in north Kildare in the Civil War occurred at the end of June in Maynooth.

The arrest of Harris and Mullaney reduced the capacity of the ATIRA during the early weeks of the conflict. However, numerous roads were blocked by fallen trees to disrupt army transport between Newbridge and Naas. In the Curragh area the rail line at Cherryville was dismantled. This did not hamper the army to any great extent.⁴ Paddy Brennan took over command of the ATIRA 7th Brigade with headquarters established at Timahoe in Coolcarrigan House, the residence of Leonard Wilson-Wright. This unit held up vehicles and sniped at National army posts in Naas and Robertstown.⁵ Activity levels increased with the arrival of James Dunne and his unit from Kill. To acquire badly needed rifles, Brennan targeted Rathangan barracks some twelve miles south-west of Coolcarrigan House. After three hours of heavy fighting on 5 July, the 35-man garrison surrendered. There were no fatalities on the ATIRA but a number of National army troops were wounded. Brennan did not leave a garrison in the town and returned to Coolcarrigan. As the superiority of the ATIRA in west Kildare was now apparent, the National army garrison at Robertstown withdrew to the safety of Naas.⁶

Blessington on the fringes of County Kildare was earmarked as a staging rallying point for the ATIRA to provide assistance for their hard-pressed comrades in Dublin. On 30 June, the day the Four Courts fell, Oscar Traynor, O/C ATIRA forces in the capital, sent a mobilization order to Andy McDonnell, O/C South Dublin Brigade based in Bray, and Paddy Brennan of the 7th Brigade.⁷ Responding, McDonnell moved his entire contingent numbering 150-200 men to Blessington which was already occupied by men of the 3rd Battalion commanded by Gerald Boland. Brennan sent forty Kildare men to Blessington, including the brigade adjutant Richard Harris and Willie Byrne O/C 6th Battalion.⁸ Ernie O'Malley assumed command of the assembled men. To defend Blessington and enable ATIRA contingents to move freely, O'Malley ordered the occupation of Baltinglass and Ballymore-Eustace, two strategic towns south of Blessington. On 2 August an anti-Treaty force, commanded by Larry

³ Hegarty to minister for defence detailing a report from Patrick Colgan, 5 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/106/157).

⁴ *LL*, 1 July 1922.

⁵ Sworn statement by Thomas McHugh, 10 Mar. 1936 (IMA, MSPC WMSP34REF15403); *LL*, 1 July 1922; *KO*, 15 July 1922.

⁶ James Dunne (MA, BMH WS 1571, pp 11-2); *FJ*, 11 July 1922; *Southern Star*, 15 July 1922.

⁷ Neeson, *Civil War*, p. 125.

⁸ O'Malley to chief of staff, 12 July 1922 (UCDA, Moss Twomey papers, P69/38/66); James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 12).

O'Brien of the South Dublin Brigade, which included Willie Byrne and thirty Kildare men, captured Baltinglass. There were no fatalities, but three ATIRA and one National army soldier were slightly wounded.⁹ The following day the small barracks at Ballymore-Eustace was captured. The ATIRA, centred in Blessington, now controlled an area extending along the Dublin-Tullow road from Brittas to Baltinglass. O'Malley, having directed a defence scheme in Blessington, moved on to Carlow and instructed Andy McDonnell to keep pressure on Naas and to cut off communication between the Curragh and Dublin.¹⁰

The civilian population in Naas were fearful due to persistent rumours of a republican attack on the town. The rumours were not without foundation. A planned attack was drawn up by Captain James Dowd of the South Dublin Brigade which involved exploding a bomb against the wall of Naas military barracks.¹¹ Harry Boland was involved in these plans, and on 4 July, he linked up with an ATIRA unit led by Con O'Donovan, vice O/C 3rd Battalion, South Dublin Brigade outside Naas. However, the attack was abandoned as news of the National army converging on Blessington forced the republicans to go on the defensive.¹²

The National army offensive began on 5 July by targeting Ballymore-Eustace. Reinforcements from the Curragh, under the command of Commandant Bishop, were required before the ATIRA garrison under Larry O'Brien were forced to withdraw.¹³ This was followed by a three-pronged attack on Blessington directed by Brigadier Niall MacNeill, son of Eoin MacNeill. Initially, outposts were established on all roads leading to the town to prevent the escape of the ATIRA. The first advancing column with Commandant Heaslip in charge headed south from Dublin, the second contingent from the west under Commandant McNulty converged from Kilbride. The third force deployed units of the Curragh Brigade under Commandant Bishop with supporting units advancing from the south through Carlow and Wicklow. They were also assisted by a contingent led by Barra Ó Briain who made a forced march cross-country from the Curragh. Estimates of the number of troops involved vary from 500 to 1,000 in one of the biggest operations of the opening phase of the Civil War.¹⁴ As the forces were about to march out from Ballymore-Eustace, spiritual assistance was rendered by the local parish priest 'who took up a position on the turreted armoured

⁹ Sworn statement by Laurence O'Brien, 24 May 1935 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF1336); O'Malley to chief of staff, 12 July 1922 (UCDA, Twomey papers, P69/38/66); *NLT*, 8 July 1922.

¹⁰ O'Malley to chief of staff, 12 July 1922 (UCDA, Twomey papers, P69/38/66); O'Malley, *Singing flame*, p. 129; David Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish revolution* (Cork, 2003), p. 310.

¹¹ O'Donovan to O/C Batt., 4 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P 7/B/106/347); Duggan, *Irish army*, p. 86.

¹² O'Donovan to O/C, 4 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P 7/B/106/351); *KO*, 8 July 1922.

¹³ O'Malley to chief of staff, 12 July 1922 (UCDA, Twomey papers, P69/38/76); *LL*, 8 July 1922.

¹⁴ *II*, 10 July 1922.

car and gave a general absolution to the entire force'.¹⁵ Having learned of the National army's pincer movement, Traynor travelled to Blessington on 7 July. He was unimpressed with the defences and ordered an immediate evacuation.¹⁶ Richard Harris, one of the last defenders in the town, recommended that the ATIRA should 'dump all arms in safety, give men some rations, and let every man mind himself'.¹⁷ On 8 July 1922 National army troops entered Blessington without opposition. Although the majority of the garrison escaped, the episode was a disaster for the republican war effort; 100 men were arrested, including Andrew McDonnell and Gerald Boland.¹⁸

The National army employed a similar strategy in respect of the ATIRA based in Coolcarrigan and their arsenal even included an eighteen-pound gun. A hurried evacuation of Coolcarrigan took place on 12 July. The main contingent of forty men, led by Brennan and Dunne, while retreating, formed a defensive barricade at Corduff cross. An unfortunate case of friendly fire occurred at the cross when three men in army uniforms, who were on their way to join the ATIRA, were fired on by the retreating republicans. Thomas Reilly from Valleymount died at the scene, while Paddy Tierney and William Rooney were wounded.¹⁹ A second ATIRA party retreating from Coolcarrigan encountered a National army contingent at the entrance to Knockanally House. Following an exchange of fire, some were arrested while others escaped.²⁰ Many of the dispersed Kildare ATIRA ended up in Baltinglass which was captured by the government forces on 17 July. Some managed to escape, but Byrne and a number of Kildare men were taken prisoner.²¹

The early stages of the conflict took a different course in south Kildare. The leadership of the IRA in the Carlow Brigade, which included two battalions in south Kildare area, were strongly pro-Treaty, and, as a result, the National army was firmly in charge of principal towns such as Carlow and Athy. The two battalions in the period prior to the outbreak of hostilities did not split into separate pro- and anti-Treaty units to the same extent as in north Kildare. However, with many of the headquarters staff of the Carlow Brigade such as Liam Stack and Jim Lillis moving to positions in the police and National army respectively, other IRA officers moved into senior positions in the brigade command. At the outbreak of the war, Tommy O'Connell, who emerged as O/C Carlow Brigade IRA, took the ATIRA side.²²

¹⁵ *LL*, 15 July 1922.

¹⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Boland*, p. 331.

¹⁷ Military situation, R. Harris to O/C Barracks, 8 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/60/219); Fitzpatrick, *Boland*, p. 312.

¹⁸ O'Malley to chief of staff, 12 July 1922 (UCDA, Twomey papers, P69/38/78); *II*, 8 & 10 July 1922.

¹⁹ Seán Boylan report, 11 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/60/218).

²⁰ Interview of Thomas McHugh by Seamus Cullen and Des O'Leary, Oct. 1992; Report to HQ Trim, 20 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/107/110); *KO*, 29 July 1922.

²¹ Emmet Dalton report, 17 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/107/77); *NLT*, 22 July 1922.

²² Military report to A/G GHQ, 11 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/106/407).

When hostilities began, the army in this region was to some extent unaware of the political viewpoint of many IRA personnel such as Christopher Murphy, quartermaster 5th Carlow Battalion who had anti-Treaty sympathies. Murphy was in charge of all the battalion arms which were stored at his residence in Moone, and at the commencement of the Civil War, Commandant Tom Finn of the National army had the arms removed. In the last week of July, Murphy, openly involved himself in militant republican activity and fronting a small unit based in a disused house close to Ballitore, managed to escape when attacked by about fifty troops. Murphy went on the run and assisted various ASUs operating in the Baltinglass area. With other republicans from the 5th Battalion, Carlow Brigade he linked up with another group from the 2nd Battalion with James O'Toole as O/C. This unit operated in Wicklow, Carlow and Kildare.²³

Republicans were strong in some areas such as Monasterevan where they held the local barracks and in the early stages of the conflict disrupted communications by blowing up bridges in the locality.²⁴ Some activists in the region, including Peter Lamb and Sylvester Shepherd, joined an ASU and on 2 July vacated and burned the local barracks before engaging in operations in the Athy area. One section of the ASU, which included men from Monasterevan and Athy led by Michael Bryan of Carlow, came into collision with a National army patrol at Rosetown on 4 July, in which Shepherd was fatally injured and the others forced to surrender.²⁵ With a large force, including some Tipperary men, Ernie O'Malley was active in south Kildare at this time. Having left Blessington on 3 July on a sortie, he initially made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain the surrender of Carlow barracks before retiring to Castledermot. O'Malley's force left before the arrival of the National army which entered the town with two armoured cars. Unaware of O'Malley's departure, two motorcars conveying republicans were fired on by the National army. Joseph Sweeney from Dublin was killed and Harry Esmond severely wounded. It was reported that up to twenty arrests were made.²⁶ The National army made several arrests in south Kildare with official accounts suggesting that forty-seven republicans were rounded-up, including senior figures such as Seán Hayden O/C 5th Battalion Carlow.²⁷ Éamon Ó Mordháin, vice-chairman of Kildare County Council, was captured on 5 August.²⁸ Shepherd and Sweeney were the first Civil War fatalities in Kildare.

²³ Sworn statement by Christopher Murphy, 9 Mar. 1937 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF15040).

²⁴ *NLT*, 8 July 1922.

²⁵ Sworn statement by Peter Lambe, 14 June 1937 (IMA MSPC WMSP34REF38425); Hand written material submitted to the advisory committee by Patrick Shepherd, 29 December 1933 (IMA, MSPC DP6497).

²⁶ *NLT*, 8 July 1922; *LL*, 15 July 1922.

²⁷ NA military situation, 9 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P/B/60/220).

²⁸ Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P, digitized collection). This collection includes CW/P/01/01 together with several other ledgers.

Shepherd was buried in Monasterevan without ceremony. By contrast, Seán Nolan, a National army vice-commandant killed in Meath on 6 July, was given an elaborate military funeral at Grey Abbey, Kildare. The cortege was accompanied by 600 Civic Guards in uniform and units of the army under Brigadier-General Lawler.²⁹

In July 1922 the ATIRA reverted to guerrilla tactics which had been successful during the War of Independence. With many republican officers in prison, new personnel were appointed to senior positions. Following the imprisonment of Paddy Mullaney, Mick Price, O/C Eastern Command, appointed Thomas Gallivan acting O/C 1st Meath Brigade. Derry-born Gallivan, who resided in Leixlip, took over command of an area where activities were hampered by a lack of weaponry and men. Price visited the 1st Meath Brigade area on 5 August, and a downbeat Gallivan reported the collapse of the company and battalion organization; there were only twenty-five men armed with four rifles, two revolvers and ten bombs.³⁰ A command structure consisting of a joint command of the 1st Meath Brigade commanded by Galvin and the 7th Brigade commanded by Paddy Brennan was formed.³¹ The two brigades concentrated on destroying communications. One of the most spectacular planned operations was the demolition of the railway bridge close to Sallins where the Great Southern & Western Railway crossed the canal. James Dunne and thirteen men were, however, surprised by a National army patrol and forced the surrender. The loss of the most active members of the ASU in the brigade area, together with their rifles, was a serious setback.³²

Gallivan did not enjoy the full cooperation of republicans in his area for two reasons.³³ First, he had not come up through the local ranks and was not a member of the brigade staff in early July. Second, Thomas Mangan, vice O/C of the brigade, had been given authority by Mullaney, but this had not been sanctioned by headquarters.³⁴ Because of this, Gallivan had to recruit activists from outside the locality.³⁵ His unit was responsible for a number of engagements, including the partial destruction of Leixlip bridge on 25 August and the explosion of a mine on the railway at Hazelhatch, on 1 September which closed the line for two days.³⁶ On 9 September they ambushed a National army convoy of two tenders and a lorry near the Catholic church in Leixlip. Three National army soldiers were wounded and three ATIRA were

²⁹ MC, 8 & 15 July 1922.

³⁰ Report by Price to O'Malley, 5 Aug. 1922 (IMA, S/12006/6).

³¹ ATIRA report, 6 Aug. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6).

³² Memo relating to 7th Kildare Brigade, 5 Aug. 1922 (IMA, CW/CAPT/001/2/04); James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 13), KO, 5 Aug 1922.

³³ Report by Gallivan, 13 Aug. 1922 (IMA, S/12006/6).

³⁴ Sworn statement by Thomas Mangan, 5 Jan. 1937 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF10614).

³⁵ Report by Gallivan, 13 Aug. 1922 (IMA, S/12006/6); Ernie O'Malley papers, interview with Gallagher, 1 July 1922 (IMA, CW/CAP/001/2/03).

³⁶ ATIRA report, 27 Aug. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6); NA military situation Eastern Command, 25 Aug. 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, 7/B/60/99); KO, 2 Sept. 1922.

arrested by reinforcements who arrived from Lucan.³⁷ The ambush represented a major set-back for the ATIRA which may have miscalculated the strength of the convoy. A disillusioned Gallivan was not optimistic about the potential of the 1st Meath Brigade, claiming that the five men brought into the area had been responsible for all of the recent activity; the group was reduced to two as three had been arrested and poorly armed with just five rifles, two revolvers and nine bombs.³⁸ O'Malley contemplated transferring Gallivan but in the event he was arrested.³⁹

As the Civil War progressed increasing numbers of ATIRA were captured and many were imprisoned in Kildare. A number of prisons were established in the Curragh camp and also in Newbridge military barracks. These prisons became the centre of various protests by republican prisoners. The first occurred in July 1922 in the Curragh when James Lennon, a former TD from Carlow, went on hunger-strike to obtain political prisoner status. The hunger-strike was quickly resolved when the Curragh was designated a political detention prison.⁴⁰ Two months later, attention focused on a hunger strike by James Smyth, a 16-year-old from Grangebeg near Dunlavin, and Frank Driver, a 14-year-old from Ballymore-Eustace, in Keane Barracks, Curragh camp. They were the youngest prisoners to engage in this form of protest.⁴¹ They had been detained for ten weeks even though neither had been in possession of arms. Following promises of imminent release, they ended the hunger strike and were removed to the Curragh military hospital. However, the deal did not materialize as they refused to sign the 'form of undertaking' which required prisoners not to engage in anti-government activity.⁴²

Faced with hunger strikes, the prison authorities were determined not to grant concessions. On 1 September 1922, Richard Monks, a republican prisoner from Kilkenny was shot dead as he allegedly tried to escape from custody in the Curragh camp.⁴³ This was the first fatality in any of the Kildare prisons. This heavy-handed approach also extended to other prisons such as Maryborough prison, Portlaoise, where six days later, Patrick Hickey, a prisoner, also died in a shooting incident.

³⁷ Military situation 1st Eastern Division, 10 Sept. 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P/7/B/60/81); *EH*, 9 Sept. 1922.

³⁸ Memorandum from Gallivan to O'Malley, 22 Aug. 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P17A/61); Cormac O'Malley & Anne Dolan, *'No surrender here': the Civil War papers of Ernie O'Malley, 1922-1924* (Dublin, 2007), p. 125.

³⁹ Memorandum from O'Malley to Price, 7 Sept. 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P17A/56 & 61); Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P, digitized collection).

⁴⁰ *Poblacht na h-Éireann, War News*, 25 July 1922; *NLT*, 13 Sept. 1922.

⁴¹ *II*, 22 Sept. 1922; NAI, Census of Ireland, 1911/Kildare/Grangebeg/Gilltown; Census of Ireland, 1911/Kildare/Ballymore-Eustace town/Ballymore-Eustace. The newspaper account incorrectly detailed that Smith was fourteen and Driver was sixteen. An examination of census figures indicates the reverse was the case.

⁴² *II*, 22 Sept. 1922; *LL*, 30 Sept. 1922; Durney, 'Curragh internees', *JKAS*, 20:3 (2010-11), 17-8.

⁴³ *KO*, 9 Sept. 1922, for report on the Curragh shooting; *LL*, 9 Sept. 1922, for report on the Portlaoise shooting.

According to his inquest, he was shot by a sentry who believed the prisoner was attempting to escape.⁴⁴ The two incidents represent a trigger-happy approach in the period following the death of Michael Collins. After the Monks shooting, sentries in Newbridge were given orders to shoot, but not to kill.⁴⁵

Initially, captured republicans from the north of the county were imprisoned in Dundalk. The capture of the jail by Frank Aiken on 14 August resulted in the release of almost 200 prisoners, of which eighty-five were from Kildare, including Domhnall Ua Buachalla, Michael O'Neill and James Dunne.⁴⁶ The freed men were given arms and ammunition before setting out on foot back to their native counties.⁴⁷ For those living in central Kildare this represented a 70-mile journey. James Dunne of the 7th Brigade commanded sixty men from his brigade while Mick O'Neill led twenty men from the 1st Meath Brigade.⁴⁸ The first leg of their journey south took them to Dunleer. The authorities used aerial reconnaissance to track the freed prisoners. Flying from Baldonnell, Brigadier-General W.J. Sweeney described Dunleer at 12.55 p.m. on 15 August as full of Irregulars with about 200 on the street. He also indicated that the bridge south of Dunleer was partially damaged.⁴⁹ This was almost certainly the bridge in Dunleer blown up by Patrick McGee the 7th Brigade engineer acting under instructions from local republicans in Dundalk.⁵⁰ Under cover of darkness, the Kildare contingents crossed the River Boyne at Oldbridge.⁵¹ National army troops from Drogheda and Navan were scrambled to recapture the escaped prisoners and the escapees were trapped in a triangular area between Kentstown, Rathfeigh and Screen.⁵² As National army units closed in there were running battles over several miles of countryside. Dozens of prisoners surrendered with their arms.

In one engagement at Rathfeigh, the National army, complete with a Lewis machine-gun mounted on a Lancia, flushed out a party of forty Kildare men. The majority surrendered, but about ten, including Michael O'Neill, escaped. The prisoners were all from the Maynooth and Celbridge areas and eighteen rifles and a

⁴⁴ *LL*, 9 Sept. 1922.

⁴⁵ Military Governor Newbridge Internment Camp: Instructions to sentries around prisoners' compound, 3 Sept. 1922 (IMA, CW/P/02/01/06A); Anne-Marie McLnerney, 'Internment of the anti-Treaty IRA in the Free State, 1922-4', p. 122 (PhD TCD, 2015).

⁴⁶ Dundalk jail register, transcript of rescued prisoners, 14 Aug. 1922, <https://www.louthcoco.ie/.../PP00011-Transcript-of-Released-Prisoners-from-Dundalk> (accessed 25 Jan. 2018). Prisoners numbered between 196 and 198. For details of the capture of Dundalk, see Donal Hall, *Louth: the Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2019), pp 108-9.

⁴⁷ Mick O'Neill interview, p. 47 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/107).

⁴⁸ James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, pp 13-14).

⁴⁹ Report by General McSweeney, 15 Aug. 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/107/314 & 331).

⁵⁰ James Dunne (BMH WS 1,571, pp 13-14).

⁵¹ Mick O'Neill interview, p. 48 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/107).

⁵² National army report, 14 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P17A/61 & P7/B/59/97); *MC*, 19 Aug. 1922.

number of revolvers were recovered.⁵³ Another encounter near Oberstown Cross resulted in the death of Private Patrick Keogh.⁵⁴ According to James Dunne, twenty men under his command escaped due to the rear-guard action of Patrick McGee and a small party who remained behind to keep the National army engaged.⁵⁵ The running battle lasted from 4 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. and led to the re-capture of at least eighty republican prisoners.⁵⁶ Dunne and O'Neill, with their parties of approximately twenty and five men respectively, avoided capture and returned to Kildare by different routes.⁵⁷ Ua Buachalla managed to board a train for the capital where he spent the remainder of the Civil War keeping out of view in safe houses and not engaging in the militant side of the conflict.⁵⁸ In Kildare, the escapees were joined by Paddy Mullaney, who, with others, had escaped from the Curragh on 20 August by sawing through a dining room window and concealing himself in a Board of Works laundry lorry.⁵⁹ These hardened, experienced, well-armed determined activists would soon make their presence felt with a significant increase in activity throughout the northern section of Kildare.

Michael O'Kelly the versatile republican activist provided sanctuary to some of the escapees and this led to his arrest. His anti-Treaty sympathies surfaced in September when he published a letter in support of a wages and employment issue regarding a republican internee. Furthermore, he was serving as I/O for his local battalion. On 11 November while a Republican meeting was taking place in O'Kelly's residence the house was raided and Gus Fitzpatrick and Walter Halligan, two freed Dundalk prisoners, were found on the premises. O'Kelly and the escapees were placed under arrest.⁶⁰

Many of the recaptured Dundalk prisoners were sent to *The Arvonía* prison ship anchored off Dun Laoghaire before they were moved to a new military prison in Newbridge barracks.⁶¹ Shortly afterwards, some found themselves at the centre of another prison breakout. By September 1922 the prison population was 1,100.⁶² Many prison veterans from the War of Independence period were experts at plotting

⁵³ //, 16 Aug. 1922.

⁵⁴ NA report, 14 July 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/59/97); *FJ*, 17 Aug. 1922.

⁵⁵ James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 14).

⁵⁶ //, 17 Aug. 1922.

⁵⁷ James Dunne, (BMH WS 1571, p. 13); Mick O'Neill interview, p. 48 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/107).

⁵⁸ Mick O'Neill interview, p. 48 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/107); Ó Súilleabháin, *Ua Buachalla*, pp 173-5.

⁵⁹ Paddy Mullaney interview, pp 26-7 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/106); Neeson, *Civil War*, p. 189.

⁶⁰ Sworn statement by Michael O'Kelly, 3 Feb. 1938 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF9986).

⁶¹ Patrick O'Keeffe, 'My reminiscences of 1914-1923'. The *Arvonía* was used as a troop carrier to transport the NA to Cork and elsewhere earlier in the conflict before its use as a prison ship. See *LL*. 31 Dec. 1927.

⁶² *LL*, 16 Sept. 1922.

and carrying out escapes. They discovered that sewer traps ran in a line from the buildings where the prisoners were housed for approximately 500 yards to the Liffey, and that if a tunnel of approximately thirty feet in length was cut from one of the blocks, a connection could be made to the sewer. Despite difficulties, the trench was completed, with inmates using a saw manufactured from a dinner knife, a pointed poker as a pick, and a fire shovel. A second tunnel out of the sewer was dug leading to a sawmill and the River Liffey.⁶³

The escape took place on the nights of 14 and 15 October 1922. On the first night, thirty men who lived furthest away from the prison escaped undetected.⁶⁴ The following night, men from Kildare were among those hoping to escape, but the attempt did not go smoothly. Just after midnight sentries noticed movement and opened fire. Many of those in the tunnel were recaptured. Of the 149 men who broke out over the two nights, thirty-seven were quickly recaptured, but 112 made good their escape.⁶⁵ Commandants Thomas Harris and William Byrne, the Breslin brothers from Kildare, Thomas J. Williams from Naas and Patrick Bagnall from Kildare were among thirty-three escapees from Kildare.⁶⁶ For six of the Kildare escapees it was a case of second time lucky. The O'Keeffe brothers from Kilcock and James Dempsey from Celbridge had been recaptured after escaping from Dundalk Jail.⁶⁷ The break-out from Newbridge was one of the biggest mass escapes in modern Irish history. It was more remarkable than Dundalk as it was initiated and executed by the internees alone without any outside assistance. The return to active service of key activists resuscitated a flagging republican campaign in Kildare.

In early August, the 7th Kildare Brigade ATIRA, despite widespread arrests, was regarded as one of the strongest numerically in the Eastern Division, with Patrick Brennan reporting that he still had 140 men under his command. However, they possessed only nine Lee Enfield rifles and 2,000 rounds of ammunition.⁶⁸ The return of twenty escapees from Dundalk on 20 August was a double boost with the return of James Dunne and the addition of fourteen rifles.⁶⁹ A restructuring of the 7th brigade saw Brennan given a role in Mick Price's headquarters staff as acting brigadier, 1st Eastern Division.⁷⁰ He was arrested following a botched raid on Oriel House, headquarters of the Provisional government detective division, on 17

⁶³ *LL*, 31 Dec. 1927.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *II*, 17, 18 Oct. 1922.

⁶⁶ Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P/01/01); Newbridge numerical list of prisoners, 06/1922-01/1924 (IMA, CW/P/10/15); Newbridge Roll Book, 30/8/1922-09/03/1923, escaped prisoners named (IMA, CW/P/10/16).

⁶⁷ Dundalk jail register; Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P/01/01).

⁶⁸ Report by Price to O'Malley, 5 Aug. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 Aug. 1922 (*ibid.*).

⁷⁰ O'Malley & Dolan, *No surrender here*, p. 555; O'Malley, *Singing flame*, p. 202.

September.⁷¹ Mick Kelly, the divisional training officer, was sent to the 7th Brigade to oversee restructuring and training.⁷² James Dunne was appointed acting O/C under Kelly's authority and in September, Kelly became O/C with Dunne remaining commander of the brigade ASU.⁷³ Other changes in personnel followed. Tom McHugh became O/C of the ASU 4th Battalion when Edward Tracy was arrested on 13 September.⁷⁴ After the Newbridge prison escape Thomas Harris and Willie Byrne resumed their roles as brigade O/C and O/C 6th Battalion respectively.⁷⁵

The leadership changes injected a new dynamism in the republican campaign in Kildare which witnessed attacks on the railway infrastructure and sniping of National army patrols in October and November.⁷⁶ An ASU under Bryan Moore was quite active on the northern fringes of the Curragh. For example, on 9 October it sniped a National army patrol; two days later it blew up a railway bridge outside Kildare and commandeered two train engines which were driven westwards, with one overturning outside the town and blocking the line.⁷⁷ On 14 October an attempt to blow up the Curragh Railway Bridge was unsuccessful as the detonator failed. On 26 October the railway line at Cherryville was torn up and an engine derailed which held up rail traffic for several hours.⁷⁸ Not content with targeting the railways and bridges, the ASU became even bolder. On 28 November it attacked a troop train on its return to the Curragh Siding in Rathbride with four officers and 100 men on board. Two soldiers were wounded and in the confusion of the attack a policeman was accidentally shot by a soldier.⁷⁹

Obviously, the National army needed to eliminate the serious military threat in the Curragh region and it stepped up efforts to capture the ASU. One member of the column, Thomas Behan, who was also the brigade I/O, was concerned at the danger of capture and requested instructions from the O/C and Divisional HQ. On 13 December Bryan Moore's house, where the ASU was based, was raided.⁸⁰ A military report indicated that during a search of the farm-yard a dug-out was discovered underneath the floor of a stable. It contained ten men, ten rifles, ammunition, cables and a quantity of food.⁸¹ Eleven individuals were taken into custody, including

⁷¹ O'Malley & Dolan, *No surrender here*, pp 219, 222.

⁷² Memo by Price, 27 Sept. 1922 (IMA, S/12008); Captured document, 16 Nov. 1922 (IMA, S/12008); James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 16). Dunne incorrectly referred to the trainer as Ted O'Kelly.

⁷³ Price to O'Malley, 6 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CW/CAPT/001/2/14).

⁷⁴ Sworn statement by Thomas McHugh, 10 March 1936 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF15403); NA operations report, 13 Sept 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

⁷⁵ ATIRA memo, 17 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CAP, Lot 25, No 66); James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 17).

⁷⁶ Post-truce claims, Costello, Dublin, 21 October 1922 (NAI, FIN/COMP/2/9/328),

⁷⁷ ATIRA report, 14 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6); NA report, 12 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

⁷⁸ ATIRA reports, 24 and 28 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6).

⁷⁹ NA operations report, 28 Nov. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

⁸⁰ James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, pp 18-19).

⁸¹ NA report, Nov. 1922 – Jan. 1923 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P/7/B/111/8); LL, 23 Dec. 1922.

Moore, his sister Annie, Thomas Behan and Patrick Bagnall, an escapee from Newbridge prison.⁸²

On the eastern side of the brigade area, James Dunne's ASU also caused difficulties for the National army. In the early hours of 3 November, telegraph and telephone wires were cut at Sallins railway station and the signal cabin was damaged.⁸³ When a patrol of eight National army rushed to the scene, Private Francis Crampton was killed and Private Whittle wounded.⁸⁴ The ASU suffered no casualties. Another gun-fight occurred on 17 December when a dance in Johnstown close to Naas was searched by the National army. Dunne had advance knowledge of the search and ambushed the army party. Lieutenant John Keogh was killed.⁸⁵ The National army had been searching for members of the Dunne ASU and misjudged the danger posed in Dunne's home territory. In December Dunne took charge of 7th Brigade following the resignation of Thomas Harris who felt that a continuation of the armed campaign had become impossible.⁸⁶ The loss of large numbers of activists had taken its toll.

While there were two fatalities in north Kildare, the bloodiest encounter took place in south Kildare. From August to October the two battalion areas of the Carlow Brigade seemed to be the least disturbed section of the county. National army garrisons at the Curragh to the north and Athy and Carlow to the south contained ATIRA activity in the region. The apparent tranquillity was shattered on 24 October when an eight-member National army patrol was ambushed at Graney cross. Three soldiers – Pat Allison, Edward Byrne and James Murphy – died at the scene. James Hunt, the driver, died some days later, and four others were wounded. The republican ASU suffered no casualties.⁸⁷ This ambush was the bloodiest military encounter in Kildare during the Irish Revolution.⁸⁸ It had far reaching consequences, not only in Kildare, but also in Wicklow and Carlow.

An extensive search for the assailants was hampered by an increasing level of republican militancy. Following the ambush, in an effort to hamper National army activity, ATIRA laid several strands of wire across the road mid-way between Athy

⁸² Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P, digitized collection).

⁸³ James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 15); *II*, 4 Nov. 1922.

⁸⁴ Operation reports, Eastern Command, 3 Nov. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

⁸⁵ James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, pp 19-20); NA operations report, 17 Nov. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/25).

⁸⁶ Sworn statement by Thomas Harris, 9 Mar. 1936 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF16113); James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 19).

⁸⁷ NA report, 25 Oct. 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/109/4); NA operations report, 2 Dec. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01). For details of the death of James Hunt, see *NLT*, 4 Nov. 1922; <https://www.facebook.com/Coolkennohistory/posts/1560717730892254> (accessed 20 Feb. 2018).

⁸⁸ NA operations report, 25 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01). For details of local tradition relating to the ambush, see Paul Gorry, *Baltinglass chronicles, 1851-2001* (Dublin, 2006), p. 194; Éamon Kane, 'The Civil War in Castledermot and Graney', *JKAS*, 21:1 (2016-17), 232.

and Ballitore.⁸⁹ In the weeks following the ambush some enraged soldiers became trigger-happy. One unlucky motorist was fired on by the army when driving into Castledermot; in Carlow barracks a soldier drew his revolver and wounded a prisoner whom he accused of participation in the ambush.⁹⁰ The ASU suspected of involvement was tracked down on 7 December near Myshall in Carlow. After a shoot-out at Sheean, Myles Carroll from Borris was killed and Jim O'Toole, O/C of the ASU was fatally wounded. Two other members of the ASU were captured.⁹¹ In addition, James Lillis, thought to be a member of the ASU, was arrested in County Carlow on 12 December.⁹²

While the ATIRA ASU in south Kildare gained notoriety due the Graney ambush, in north-east Kildare during the autumn, a new ASU engaged in the most successful guerrilla warfare campaign in the county.⁹³ Thomas Gallivan was succeeded by Paddy Mullaney. Linking up with Mick O'Neill, who had also returned to the area after his escape from Dundalk, Mullaney began the difficult task of forming a new ASU, and together with Jack O'Connor and Tim Tyrrell, the company captains respectively of Celbridge and Maynooth, a new ASU, known as the Mullaney (or Leixlip) Column, emerged. Local support denied to Gallivan was now freely given to Mullaney.⁹⁴ Anti-Treaty militancy increased and, within a month of taking over, Mullaney had shaped the ASU into an effective fighting force of fifteen fully armed men based largely in Castletown Estate, Celbridge. Arms dumps were also prepared in four locations in the area.⁹⁵ The ASU proposed ambitious targets such as the capture of Baldonnell aerodrome and commandeering an airplane to bomb government buildings.⁹⁶ Throughout the autumn, Mullaney made contacts with up to thirty disgruntled members of the National army at Baldonnell who promised to desert and join the ATIRA. There were two attempts to capture Baldonnell. On the first occasion, John Dowling was to take charge, but the operation was postponed for a week. The second attempt on 9 October with Tom Derrig in overall command was spearheaded by the Mullaney ASU and assisted by men from the Dublin Brigade and Kildare 7th Brigade. In total about eighty Kildare men took part. In the event, however, the operation was cancelled by Derrig on the basis that insufficient

⁸⁹ Operation reports, Eastern Command, 30 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4 Nov. 1922 (*ibid.*); *NLT*, 11 Nov., 2 Dec. 1922.

⁹¹ NA operations report, 7 Dec. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01); Hand written material submitted to the advisory committee by Michael O'Toole, 15 July 1933 (IMA, MSPC, 2RB385); *NLT*, 9, 16 Dec. 1922.

⁹² Submission to the advisory committee by Mary Lillis, 30 Jan. 1933 (IMA, MSPC, DP5395).

⁹³ Seamus Cummins, 'A shout in the night: the rise and fall of the Leixlip Irregulars, July – Dec. 1922' [unpublished]; Durney, *Civil War in Kildare*, pp 101-7; Neeson, *Civil War*, pp 188-90.

⁹⁴ Paddy Mullaney interview, p. 27 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/106).

⁹⁵ ATIRA memo Price to O'Malley, 6 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CW/CAPT/001/2/14); ATIRA report from Mullaney, 4 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6); Cummins, 'A shout in the night', p. 11.

⁹⁶ C. S. Andrews, *Dublin made me: an autobiography* (Cork, 1979), pp 237-9; Durney, *Civil War in Kildare*, pp 101-2; Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 146.

numbers had assembled.⁹⁷ In the early hours of 10 October, Mullaney, always the strategist, attacked Lucan barracks as a diversion to enable the safe return of the republican units.⁹⁸ Mullaney then concentrated on destroying communications infrastructure and was impressively successful during the remainder of October and November. The long list of activities included various endeavours at severing communication to the west on the main Dublin to Galway road and the Great Southern & Western railway line. Telegraph communications were cut or destroyed at several locations in the general area between Maynooth and Lucan, with bridges at Straffan, Leixlip and Celbridge blown up.⁹⁹ The ASU largely avoided ambushes with the exception of one engagement on 14 October when a military car was overpowered while the remainder of the ASU was blowing up Louisa bridge in Leixlip.¹⁰⁰ One of the biggest operations was the destruction of the Liffey bridge at Celbridge on 25 October.¹⁰¹ The townspeople were forewarned and the destruction caused severe traffic disruption.¹⁰² On 6 November the old Fever Hospital in Celbridge Union was burned down, apparently to prevent its use by the NA.¹⁰³ As November progressed, the Mullaney column became more daring. On 9 November it occupied Leixlip for two and a half hours apparently planning to ambush a National army party.¹⁰⁴ On 28 November the ASU virtually held up the town of Maynooth in a similar exercise.¹⁰⁵ On that occasion they were fresh from a successful raid on Baldonnell camp earlier that evening. With the help of sympathetic National army personnel, the ASU captured a Lewis gun with spare parts and ammunition, three rifles and fifteen rounds of .303 ammunition. Two soldiers deserted and joined the ASU.¹⁰⁶

Success bred overconfidence. On 30 November the ASU ambushed Commandant Christopher Lynam and two soldiers who had left Lucan barracks with rations for a larger National army party which was searching trains. Lynam and one of his men were captured, but the third soldier escaped and raised the alarm.¹⁰⁷ A

⁹⁷ Mary Flannery Wood (BMH WS 624, pp 3-4); Andrews, *Dublin made me*, p. 238.

⁹⁸ National army operations report, 11 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01); ATIRA report, 14 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6); Sworn statement by William Wyse, 9 Dec. 1938 (IMA MSPC WMSP34REF15040) in author's possession.

⁹⁹ ATIRA reports, 24, 26, 28 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6).

¹⁰⁰ ATIRA report, 24 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6); NA operations report, 14 Oct. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01); *KO*, 21 Oct. 1922.

¹⁰¹ ATIRA report, 28 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6).

¹⁰² ATIRA report by Mullaney, 28 Oct. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6); *KO*, 28 Oct. 1922.

¹⁰³ Post-truce claims, Minister for Local Government (NAI, FIN/COMP/2/9/314); Cummins, 'A shout in the night', p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ Operation reports, Eastern Command, 9 Nov. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

¹⁰⁵ Cummins, 'A shout in the night', p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ ATIRA report, 30 Nov. 1922 (IMA, S/12008/6); Mick O'Neill interview, p. 48 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/107).

¹⁰⁷ National army operations report, 2 Dec. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

National army party under Captain Joseph Ledwith was reinforced by troops under Commandant-General Hugo MacNeill, a nephew of Eoin MacNeill.¹⁰⁸ Mullaney, now based in Grangewilliam house close to Maynooth, had miscalculated the extent of reinforcements and, following a fire-fight in which one soldier had been killed, withdrew, but the ASU was being slowly encircled by a big body of troops with an armoured car and a tender patrolling the roads.¹⁰⁹ At 4 p.m. the ASU was spotted at Ballygoran and after a ten-minute exchange of fire the Mullaney Column, comprising twenty-two experienced men, surrendered.¹¹⁰ This was the most extensive gun-fight during the entire Irish Revolution in County Kildare with exchanges of heavy weaponry from both sides lasting four hours. The encounter exemplified the division among former comrades. Captain Ledwith of the National army and Tim Tyrrell of the Mullaney Column were both members of the Maynooth Company that participated in Easter Week, while Mullaney and Lynam were both residents of Leixlip. General MacNeill acknowledged that Mullaney ‘fought a damn good clean fight’.¹¹¹ Mullaney’s capture ended the career of the most successful military activist in Kildare during the Irish Revolution. Overnight, organized resistance to the National army in Kildare ended.

Throughout the summer and early autumn both church and state condemned anti-Treaty militancy and it was apparent that some special powers by the government were needed to discourage ATIRA activity. Bishop Foley argued that assisting the ATIRA was a violation of the Fifth Commandment: ‘when they shoot their brothers on the other side they are murderers, when they commandeer public or private property they are robbers and brigands’.¹¹² In August, Archbishop Byrne of Dublin was accused of ordering chaplains in Mountjoy to refuse absolution to some republican prisoners. However, following a letter from Art O’Connor, who broke the story to the media, the archbishop allowed additional priests not connected with the prison to attend every week for confessions.¹¹³ Parliamentary politics at national level resumed when the Third Dáil met on 9 September, and it was obvious that some form of legislation was needed to deal with the militancy.¹¹⁴ The government

¹⁰⁸ Mick O’Neill interview, p. 53 (UCDA, O’Malley notebooks, P17/b/107); *IT*, 2 Dec. 1922.

¹⁰⁹ National army operations report, 2 Dec. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01); Paddy Mullaney interview, p. 38 (UCDA, O’Malley notebooks, P17/b/106); *KO*, 16 Dec. 1922.

¹¹⁰ National army operations report, 2 Dec. 1922 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01); Mick O’Neill interview, p. 52 (UCDA, O’Malley notebooks, P17/b/107); *IT*, 2 Dec. 1922.

¹¹¹ Paddy Mullaney interview, p. 38 (UCDA, O’Malley notebooks, P17/b/106); *IT*, 2 Dec. 1922; Christopher Lee, *A dam good clean fight: the last stand of the Leixlip Flying Column*, <http://www.theirishstory.com/2015/01/08/a-damn-good-clean-fight-the-last-stand-of-the-leixlip-flying-column> (accessed 20 Feb. 2018).

¹¹² *IT*, 16 Aug 1922.

¹¹³ O’Connor’s letter, Aug 1922 (MA, Erskine Childers collection, BMH-CD-006-40-01(a)); *FJ*, 11 Sept. 1922; Thomas J. Morrissey, *Edward J. Byrne, 1872-1941: the forgotten archbishop of Dublin* (Dublin, 2010), p. 90.

¹¹⁴ <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie>, 9 Sept 1922, vol 1. no 1. (7) (accessed 28 Feb. 2018).

introduced the Emergency Powers Resolution, otherwise known as the Public Safety bill, which empowered military tribunals with the ability to impose life imprisonment and the death penalty for a variety of offences.¹¹⁵ The bill was passed on 27 September 1922, by forty-one votes to eighteen. All four TDs from the Kildare-Wicklow constituency attended, with Christopher Byrne and Richard Wilson voting in favour while Hugh Colohan and James Everett voted against.¹¹⁶ The four TDs also voted similarly for an amendment the following day which gave greater effect to the measure.¹¹⁷ In a coordinated manoeuvre, at the prompting of the government, the Catholic hierarchy issued a pastoral on 10 October 1922 that gave the appearance of credibility to government policy. It also coincided with an offer of an amnesty to republicans to put down their weapons.¹¹⁸ The pastoral threatened to excommunicate any ATIRA member who continued their campaign against the National army.¹¹⁹ The pastoral, which was read in churches, highlighted the destruction caused by the republicans in the Civil War.

Following the passage of the Act, the first executions took place at Kilmainham Gaol on 17 November 1922 when four anti-Treaty activists from the capital were executed for fire-arms possession. The execution of Erskine Childers, a former TD for the constituency, followed on 24 November.¹²⁰ At the first meeting of Kildare County Council following these events, due to pressure from Labour councillors, a resolution expressing regret that it should be necessary for the government to carry out executions was adopted.¹²¹

Within three weeks, the execution policy effected Kildare to a greater extent than any other county (see appendix 5). The Rathbride ASU was the first group of Kildare prisoners to face a military court. Controversy has surrounded the treatment of the ASU with the trial held in secret, an apparent cover-up and conflicting accounts of the facts. It appears that official records of the trial have either been lost or destroyed. Following the arrests at Rathbride, Annie Moore was imprisoned in Mountjoy and the ten men were taken to the Glasshouse Prison in the Curragh. Before any trial could take place, Thomas Behan died in suspicious circumstances, with conflicting accounts of the events leading to his death. The official army version

¹¹⁵ Campbell, *Emergency law*, p. 196; Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 181.

¹¹⁶ <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie>, 27 Sept. 1922, vol. 1 no. 13 (accessed 28 Feb. 2018).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 Sept. 1922, vol. 1 no. 13 (accessed 28 Feb. 2018); Breen Timothy Murphy, 'The government's execution policy during the Civil War, 1922-1923' (PhD NUI Maynooth, 2010), pp 73-87.

¹¹⁸ Patrick Murray, *Oracles of God: the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish politics, 1922-37* (Dublin, 2006), p. 72.

¹¹⁹ *IT*, 11 Oct. 1922; for an analysis, see Margaret O'Callaghan 'Religion and identity: the church and Irish independence', *The Crane Bag*, 7:2 (1983), 66-71.

¹²⁰ Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 221.

¹²¹ *LL*, 2 Dec. 1922; *KO*, 2 Dec. 1922; Nelsen, *Through peace and war*, pp 270-1.

was that he was shot when attempting to escape.¹²² A more probable explanation is that he died as a result of a serious assault inflicted by his captors. It was alleged that Behan suffered a broken arm during his arrest and was assaulted when unable to climb into the army lorry.¹²³ Another account suggests that he was shot following his arrest. Behan's remains were returned to his relatives in Rathangan.¹²⁴ Seven of the nine remaining men were convicted by a military court for being in possession of rifles, ammunition, detonators and exploders, and were sentenced to death.¹²⁵ Patrick Moore and James White, whose brothers were convicted, escaped execution, apparently due to the National army's reluctance to execute two sets of brothers.¹²⁶ The condemned men were allowed to write letters to family members and were ministered to by Father Donnelly, the Curragh chaplain.¹²⁷ On 19 December at 8.30 a.m., the seven men, who included Bryan Moore and Newbridge escapee Patrick Bagnall, were executed by firing squad in the Military Detention Barracks, Curragh camp.¹²⁸ These were the first executions to take place outside of Dublin and the largest individual set of executions during the Civil War. The men's remains were not passed on to their respective families, but were buried in the grounds of the Detention Barracks. In 1924 they were exhumed and re-buried in Grey Abbey Cemetery, Kildare.¹²⁹ The haste with which the executions took place and the numbers involved shocked the whole country, but particularly Kildare. Although the ASU had successfully hampered rail communications in the Curragh area, the punishment seemed excessive as no members of the National army had been killed.

By contrast, following their arrest at Ballygoran the Leixlip ASU was not subjected to mistreatment. In fact, one National army officer, Jack Logie, who had served under Mullaney, destroyed papers taken from Mick O'Neill.¹³⁰ The prisoners were taken to Wellington Barracks and Hugo MacNeill made sure that no unauthorized soldiers were allowed access.¹³¹ Nevertheless, some soldiers sought access to the prisoners on their first night of captivity. The following day they were interrogated separately, and with the exception of Mullaney and O'Neill all suffered

¹²² LL, 23 Dec. 1922; NA report, Eastern Command, 15 Dec. 1922 (UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/B/111/8). This report indicated that 10 men were arrested.

¹²³ *Éire: the Irish nation*, 31 Mar. 1923; Adrian Mulleney, *Civil War executions, December 19th, 1922*, in <http://www.curragh.info/articles/executions.htm> (accessed 16 Feb. 2018); Durney, *Civil War in Kildare*, pp 124-7.

¹²⁴ Captured note, undated (IMA, CAP, Lot 2, 4/a); Murphy, 'Execution policy', p. 175.

¹²⁵ LL, 23 Dec. 1922.

¹²⁶ Material submitted to the advisory committee by Mary Moore, 9 Mar. 1933 (IMA, MSPC, DP 7504); Material submitted to the advisory committee by Michael White, 23 May 1933 (IMA, MSPC, DP 6027).

¹²⁷ *Éire: the Irish nation*, 31 Mar. 1923.

¹²⁸ LL, 23 Dec. 1922.

¹²⁹ II, 31 Oct. 1924; KO, 1 Nov. 1924.

¹³⁰ Mick O'Neill interview, p. 53 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/106).

¹³¹ Paddy Mullaney interview, p. 38 (ibid.)

assaults.¹³² Five were identified as army deserters who had left their posts in Baldonnell.¹³³ Two were from Kildare: Leo Dowling from Carna near the Curragh and Anthony O'Reilly from Simmonstown, Celbridge. On 11 December the five were tried by court martial in Kilmainham. They were found guilty of treachery in that they assisted certain armed persons in using force against the National troops and of a second charge of consorting with the armed persons mentioned in the first charge. Surviving details of the trial are scant. All five were executed on 8 January 1923 in Keogh Barracks, formerly Richmond Barracks.¹³⁴ Fr Fitzpatrick travelled from Celbridge to attend the men and gave some of them absolution.¹³⁵ The bodies were interred in un-consecrated ground and there was no known public outcry until 1924 when the remains were exhumed and returned to their families for re-burial.¹³⁶

The remainder of the column were removed to Mountjoy on 2 February without being tried.¹³⁷ At this stage most of them had also signed the government undertaking, but Mullaney, O'Neill, Bertie Hawney, John Curley and Thomas Cardwell held out against signing. In mid-March, the five were notified they would be tried by military court on 25 March. James Brady, a solicitor who had been instructed by some friends of the prisoners, held a meeting with Mullaney and O'Neill and informed them that Charles Casey, the prosecutor at the military courts, indicated that the five would be executed unless they signed the undertaking form. At this, Mullaney consulted every officer and person of importance in the wing, but none would give a definite opinion although most favoured signing. Robert Barton, the only republican representing the constituency of Kildare-Wicklow, could not give a decided opinion.¹³⁸ Liam Deasy was another senior figure in the wing and had initiated an unsuccessful appeal to his comrades to end the war, but his action had no effect in influencing Mullaney's decision.¹³⁹ The view of Ernie O'Malley, who was a patient in the hospital section of the prison, was also sought, but his instruction not to sign was not received by Mullaney until the deadline had expired. The O/C of A wing, Seán Lehane, in the absence of O'Malley's reply, advised them to sign. At the eleventh hour Mullaney and the other four signed. Mullaney later gave three principal reasons

¹³² Mick O'Neill interview, p. 53 (ibid.).

¹³³ Gordon file, IRA Court of Enquiry, evidence of Patrick Mullaney, 12 Mar. 1925 (IMA, CAP, Lot. 214, IV (2/2)).

¹³⁴ *II*, 9 Jan. 1923; *KO*, 13 Jan. 1923; *MC*, 13 Jan. 1923.

¹³⁵ Mick O'Neill interview, p. 53 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/106).

¹³⁶ *LL*, 1 Nov. 1924.

¹³⁷ Mick O'Neill interview, p. 44 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/106).

¹³⁸ Gordon file, IRA Court of Enquiry, evidence of Patrick Mullaney, 12 Mar. 1925 (IMA, CAP, Lot, 214, IV (2/2)).

¹³⁹ Liam Deasy, *Brother against brother* (Cork, 1982); Seán Kearns, 'Deasy, Liam', *DIB*; Macardle, *The Irish republic: a documented chronicle of the Anglo-Irish conflict and the partitioning of Ireland with a detailed account of the period, 1916-1923* (4th ed., Dublin, 1951), pp 833-4. Deasy a moderate on ATIRA side commanded the 1st Southern Division during the Civil War until his arrest in January 1923.

for signing: first, he was responsible for the lives of his comrades who would be entirely guided by what he did; second, those in charge of waging the war at GHQ were not serious, emphasizing their faintheartedness to support the Baldonnell operation, and third, with the war practically over, having men executed would be a needless sacrifice of life. Mullaney stressed, however, that had a definite order been given by GHQ or O'Malley against signing he would have obeyed it. The death sentence was commuted to seven years penal servitude.¹⁴⁰

The last prisoner executed for an offence committed in Kildare was Carlow man, Jim Lillis who was linked to the Graney ambush. He was tried by military court in Dublin on 12 December and, according to James Nolan O/C of the ATIRA, Carlow Battalion, one of the National army officers testified that he was a participant at Graney.¹⁴¹ Lillis was convicted of being in possession of a rifle when arrested at Knockquire, County Carlow on 14 December 1922 and also of having taken part in the Graney ambush. He was executed in Carlow Barracks on 15 January 1923.¹⁴² In all, some eighty-one officially sanctioned executions were carried out between 17 November 1922 and 2 May 1923. Four of them were civilians who were not ATIRA members, and as their offences were regarded as non-political, it is generally accepted that seventy-seven was the correct number of state-imposed executions of republicans.¹⁴³

The importance of the Kildare connection to the executions cannot be overstated. It is not widely known that both Dublin and Kildare share in equal terms the highest numbers executed for political offences committed in their respective counties. According to a list compiled by Breen Timothy Murphy, eighteen executions, by far the highest number per county, were carried out in Dublin. However, this number does not take into account the location where the offence that warranted execution was committed. The list includes five of the Mullaney Column whose offences occurred in Kildare, and Erskine Childers whose offence occurred in Wicklow. The number executed for offences committed in Dublin is actually twelve.¹⁴⁴ Equally, twelve were executed for offences committed in Kildare which includes seven of the Rathbride Column and five of the Mullaney Column. This accounts for 15.5%, of the total executed during the Civil War. Although eight prisoners were executed in Galway, two were regarded as civilians for non-political offences. Likewise, in Westmeath where seven were executed, two are regarded as

¹⁴⁰ Gordon file, IRA Court of Enquiry, evidence of Patrick Mullaney, 12 Mar. 1925 (IMA, CAP, Lot, 214, IV (2/2)).

¹⁴¹ Hand written material submitted to the advisory committee by Mary Lillis, 30 Jan. 1933 (IMA, MSPC, DP5395).

¹⁴² Martin O'Dwyer, *Seventy-seven of mine* (Cork, 2006), p. 203.

¹⁴³ Murphy, 'Execution policy', p. 301.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 299-301, 313.

civilians. The county with the highest number of officially-sanctioned executions after Dublin and Kildare is Kerry with seven.¹⁴⁵

Many republicans claimed that the bishops' pastoral had given the government a licence to execute. While the hierarchy of the Catholic Church did not publicly condemn the executions they privately opposed the measures.¹⁴⁶ Archbishop Byrne regarded the executions as unjustifiable from a moral point of view, and in November 1922 privately protested to the government. In reply, Cosgrave used wording from the bishops' pastoral to justify the government's actions.¹⁴⁷ Bishop Foley made no public reference to the Rathbride executions or the execution of Jim Lillis, which happened less than a mile from the bishop's palace in Carlow. According to Patrick Murray, Foley did not seem to have been unduly troubled about the moral aspect of the government's reprisal executions, but was worried that they might have been politically inopportune.¹⁴⁸ Dr Pádraig de Brún, professor of mathematics in Maynooth College from 1914-45 and a future president of University College Galway, while constrained by the bishops' pastoral, found a way of commemorating executed republicans.¹⁴⁹ In late July 1922 Cosgrave complained to Archbishop Byrne, accusing a number of priests in the diocese, including de Brún of treasonable acts. The latter was suspected of visiting republicans and hearing their confessions thereby encouraging them in the early days of the war. Prior to his execution, Childers requested a Catholic priest, naming either de Brún or Capuchin, Fr Albert Bibby. The request was denied.¹⁵⁰ De Brún regarded the quiescence of the bishops during the executions as 'the blackest stain on the Irish priesthood since the coming of St Patrick'.¹⁵¹ Powerless to publicly condemn the executions, he penned poetry to express his views. His elegy, 'In memoriam', a commemoration of O'Connor, Mellows, Barrett and McKelvey, four anti-Treaty prisoners executed on 8 December 1922, was widely circulated as a broadsheet in 1923.¹⁵² During a raid on SF headquarters in Dublin in February 1923, de Brún, was taken into custody, accused of possessing seditious documents, using unpriestly language and being uncooperative. The document in question was a poem he penned which extolled the activities of the five members of the Mullaney Column who were executed in January

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 313.

¹⁴⁶ Murray, *Oracles of God*, p.84.

¹⁴⁷ Morrissey, *Edward J. Byrne*, pp 98-9.

¹⁴⁸ Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence William White, 'De Brún, Pádraig (Browne, Patrick)', *DIB*.

¹⁵⁰ Morrissey, *Edward Byrne*, pp 89, 104; M.P. McCabe, *For God and Ireland: the fight for moral superiority in Ireland, 1922-1932* (Dublin, 2013), p. 154.

¹⁵¹ McCabe, *For God and Ireland*, p. 154.

¹⁵² In memory of Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joseph McKelvey, Richard Barrett, 1922 (NLI, MS 41,987/3); White, 'De Brún, Pádraig'.

1923.¹⁵³ He was released after four days in Mountjoy and cautioned by the embarrassed Maynooth authorities.¹⁵⁴

The Civil War adversely affected the unionist population in Kildare. When the Irish Free State came into existence on 6 December 1922, Seanad Éireann (Senate) was instituted to form with Dáil Éireann the new Oireachtas. Three Kildare men with a unionist background – Lord Mayo, Sir Bryan Mahon and Henry Greer – were appointed by the government to serve for a six-year period.¹⁵⁵ Due to a vacancy in February 1923 William Cummins, a prominent Labour activist in Kildare, was also elected to the Seanad.¹⁵⁶ Kildare's unionist senators were to pay a high price for participation in the new institutions, however, loyalists in general did not suffer the same extent of persecution as in other counties such as Cork.¹⁵⁷ Applications to the IGC reveal that every class of former unionists in society were victimized, with more than forty loyalists from Kildare suffering violence and intimidation at the hands of the ATIRA or those claiming to be republicans.¹⁵⁸ In many areas of Kildare, Protestants were relatively safe, but intimidation was more widespread in south and west Kildare. Rev L.M. Hewson, who lived at Ballinafagh close to Prosperous in west Kildare, gave the following description to the IGC:

Altogether both the English government and the Free State government have shown a totally incapable ability to keep that particular corner quiet: any decent law-abiding man or woman be he a member of the Church of Ireland or Roman Catholic in politics 'Loyalist' (whatever that means) or 'Republican' or Free State' got it in the neck unless they kept their gun handy and used it.¹⁵⁹

A number of families were forced to vacate their farms due to intimidation and boycott during the period. In December 1922 Pim Goodbody from Ballitore, with his wife suffering from depression, sold his 300-acre farm and left Ireland.¹⁶⁰ Charles Bury from Downings House, Prosperous was forced out of his house in early 1922

¹⁵³ Guiomar González Corona, *The Catholic Church in the Irish Civil War* (Cultivalibros, 2008), p. 51.

¹⁵⁴ Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P, digitized collection).

¹⁵⁵ <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates>, *Seanad debates*, vol. 1, no. 1, 11 Dec 1922; vol. 1, no. 2, 13 Dec. 1922 (accessed 1 May 2018); Donal O'Sullivan, *The Irish Free State and its Senate: a study in contemporary politics* (London, 1940), pp 90-1.

¹⁵⁶ <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates>, *Seanad debates*, vol. 1, no. 12, 21 Feb. 1923 (accessed 1 May 2018).

¹⁵⁷ For details of victimization in Cork see Peter Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, pp 273-92; in Cavan see Brian Hughes, 'Loyalists and Loyalism in a southern Irish community, 1921-1922', *Historical Journal*, 59:4 (2016), 1075-1105.

¹⁵⁸ Irish Grants files indicates that a total of forty-eight with county Kildare addresses claimed compensation, although, a small number of claimants had lived outside the county at the time of their distress (TNA, CO 762).

¹⁵⁹ Irish Grants Committee claim of Cecil Johnson, 20 Jan. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/193/21).

¹⁶⁰ Irish Grants Committee claim of Pim Goodbody, 30 Dec. 1926 (TNA, CO 762/85/1).

and was unable to obtain normal rent due to an IRA boycott. Stables and farm implements on his estate of 624 acres were destroyed by fire and the land was used as commonage. Bury moved to Dublin and his daughters emigrated to London. He claimed that in early 1923 between forty to fifty republicans were in the house at one time and he was required to enter the dwelling by way of a republican sentry.¹⁶¹ Although the southern part of the county was the most severely affected, where a number of Protestants were targeted by an IRA boycott, other areas throughout the county suffered violence and theft from groups claiming to be republicans.¹⁶² The general state of lawlessness that prevailed in many areas of the county saw all sections of the civilian population affected with shops, post-offices and even isolated farmhouses targeted. In some districts arson was a problem and land-grabbing was attempted. This may not have been entirely the work of the IRA as general criminality was widespread at the time.¹⁶³

Lord Mayo, regarded as the leader of Kildare unionists, had not been subjected to intimidation or violence until January 1923, when he was targeted as a result of Liam Lynch's order to destroy houses belonging to senators; a total of thirty-seven properties were destroyed, including two in Kildare.¹⁶⁴ The order was accompanied by a categorization of senators. Those on the A list, which included Mayo and Mahon, were earmarked to be shot in retaliation for executed republicans. Those on the B list, such as Henry Greer, were to have their houses burned only.¹⁶⁵ On the night of 29 January a small party of the 7th Brigade ASU burned Mayo's Palmerstown House, and informed the staff that they had come to burn the house as a reprisal for the execution of men on the Curragh. Lady Mayo was specifically asked to verify the fact that her husband was a senator.¹⁶⁶ When Mayo queried whether he would be shot, he was informed that the orders were to burn the house only. Mayo suspected that local men were involved in the operation, a view subsequently confirmed by James Dunne who indicated that members of his column from Kill and Killeel were involved.¹⁶⁷ On 16 February it was the turn of Sir Bryan Mahon whose residence, Mullaboden House in Ballymore-Eustace was burned. Mahon had taken the death threat seriously and had vacated the premises.¹⁶⁸ As at

¹⁶¹ Irish Grants Committee claim of Esme Lascelles and Doreen Buchanan, 15 Jan. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/199/5).

¹⁶² Analysis based on a survey of the entire Irish Grants files for county Kildare.

¹⁶³ *KO*, 23 Sept., 23 Dec. 1922; 28 Apr. 1923; Bielenberg, 'Exodus', p. 208.

¹⁶⁴ Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 195; Terence Dooley, *Decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p. 287.

¹⁶⁵ Order from ATIRA chief of staff, 26 Jan. 1923 (UCDA, Twomey papers, P69/2 pp 18-20); O'Malley & Dolan, *No surrender here*, p. 533.

¹⁶⁶ Irish Grants Commission claim of Countess Mayo, 18 Dec. 1926 (TNA, CO 762/133/1); II, 31 Jan. 1923; *KO*, 3 Feb. 1923.

¹⁶⁷ *KO*, 12 Dec. 1925; James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, p. 15).

¹⁶⁸ Irish Grants Committee claim of General Bryan Mahon, 13 Dec. 1928 (TNA, CO/762/97/15); *KO*, 24 Feb. 1923; O'Malley & Dolan, *No surrender here*, p. 533.

Palmerstown, the building was totally destroyed. One of the raiders mockingly dressed up in General Mahon's British army uniform.¹⁶⁹ The arsonists who belonged to the 2nd Dublin Brigade had come from West Wicklow where members of an ASU known as the Plunkett Column were implicated.¹⁷⁰ Curragh Grange outside Newbridge, the home of Sir Henry Greer, the third Senator from Kildare, was not targeted, and neither were the mansions of two previous senators under the Government of Ireland Act, Lord Cloncurry or Sir William Goulding – Lyons House and Millicent House respectively. The vacant Coolcarrigan House also escaped destruction probably because it was a working farm and provided local employment.¹⁷¹ However, James Johnson, the farm steward, and his family were subjected to intimidation.¹⁷² While the burning of senators' houses in Kildare was in response to the execution policy of the government it was not essentially sectarian. One of the houses targeted belonged to a Protestant while the second belonged to a Catholic. However, in other areas of the country such as Munster, where arson was more widespread, the motivations were more complex. Gemma Clark argues that in addition to the burning of senators' houses due to their support for the IFS government, there was widespread burning of Protestant houses motivated by an attempt to purge religious minorities and force redistribution of land.¹⁷³ The burning of senators' houses in Kildare was the final act of serious militancy carried out by the ATIRA in the county.

The final episodes of the Civil War in Kildare involved the prisons. With a high prison population in the Curragh region and many of the internees having experience of successful escapes in the past, it was inevitable that other jail breaks would be attempted. On Saturday 21 April 1923, seventy-one prisoners tunnelled their way out of the Curragh camp. Although local activists provided assistance, unlike previous mass escapes when very few were located, on this occasion the authorities recaptured several in areas close to the Curragh: at Ballymore-Eustace, at Harristown and at Naas. While the dragnet throughout the county was taking place, James Dunne and his column guarded fifteen men who were from the west and north of Ireland. One batch of ten men were brought to Cardwell's house in Celbridge but were surrounded by a National army column from Naas. Dunne and Tom Kealy of Celbridge, one of the Mullaney Column still at large, who were the only men armed in the house, managed to keep the troops engaged for an hour while some of the ex-prisoners got away. According to an army statement, a patrol of nine troops recaptured six prisoners following a short engagement at Cardwell's house in

¹⁶⁹ KO, 24 Feb. 1923.

¹⁷⁰ KO, 19 May 1923.

¹⁷¹ Interview of John Wilson-Wright by Des O'Leary and Seamus Cullen, April 1993.

¹⁷² Irish Grants Committee claim of Cecil Johnston, 20 Jan. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/193/21).

¹⁷³ Gemma Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 69-85, 96-7.

Celbridge on 25 April. Leo Cardwell, son of the occupant of the house, who was a minor, was also arrested.¹⁷⁴ The issue of his arrest was raised in the Dáil by Hugh Colohan who asked Richard Mulcahy if he aware that Cardwell was only thirteen and a half and was admitted to the military hospital with a neck wound.¹⁷⁵

Although the Civil War officially ended on 23 May 1923, by the following autumn the government had not put in place a definite release programme. Discontent among the prison population increased. By October, with 8,349 still imprisoned, the hunger-strike weapon was again contemplated.¹⁷⁶ The strike began on 14 October in Mountjoy and escalated four days later when 1,858 prisoners at Tintown A in the Curragh camp joined in the protest. The following day the strike spread to nearby Tintown B where the entire 1,346 prisoners on the roll refused food. By 21 October prisoners in the remaining jails in Kildare and throughout the country joined the protest. The official figures suggest that 7,570 went on hunger strike, a figure supported by republican sources.¹⁷⁷ Of that total, 5,221 hunger strikers (sixty-nine per cent) were incarcerated in Kildare, something which has not been adequately acknowledged in the historiography.¹⁷⁸ The government faced a crisis of gigantic proportions.

A number of Kildare men detained in Mountjoy had joined the hunger-strike from the beginning. They included Art O'Connor, the highest profile prisoner from the county, who was moved with a number of other well-known prisoners such as Ernie O'Malley and Austin Stack to Kilmainham on 19 October. Éamon Ó Mordháin, Paddy Mullaney and a number other Kildare prisoners in Mountjoy had also joined the protest from the beginning.¹⁷⁹ By mid-November reports on the health of many of the strikers were causing concern. Ó Mordháin, who was on the thirty-fourth day of his hunger-strike, was described as 'weak'.¹⁸⁰ The large numbers participating was a disadvantage to the success of the hunger-strike and within days many abandoned the protest. On 27 October the government suspended the release of prisoners engaged in the protest and it was made clear there would be no concessions.¹⁸¹ Figures started to dwindle rapidly. By 2 November, 239 prisoners in Newbridge internment camp had abandoned the hunger-strike as well as sixty-six in Tintown

¹⁷⁴ *KO*, 28 Apr. 1923; James Dunne (BMH WS 1571, pp 16-17).

¹⁷⁵ *LL*, 5 May 1923.

¹⁷⁶ Hunger-strike report, 1923, table showing approximate figure in respect of Gaols etc where strikes began, 14-24 Oct. 1923 (NAI, DT S 1369/10); For July figures see *IT*, 21 Nov. 1923; McCabe, *For god and Ireland*, p. 184.

¹⁷⁷ Hunger-strike report, 1923; *Éire: the Irish Nation*, 3 Nov. 1923 put the number at 7,800.

¹⁷⁸ Hunger-strike report 1923; for instance, Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 268-71; James Healy, 'The Civil war hunger strike – October 1923', *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, 71 (1982), 213-26; Macardle, *Irish republic*, p. 876.

¹⁷⁹ *Daily Sheet*, 26 Oct. 1923; *Éire*, 3 Nov. 1923.

¹⁸⁰ *Daily Sheet*, 17, 19 Nov. 1923.

¹⁸¹ Hunger-strike report, 1923.

A.¹⁸² The following day, the overall number had fallen to 5,067.¹⁸³ In Newbridge, some internees decided to sign the undertaking form while a list from Tintown showed that some forty-two had signed during the hunger-strike.¹⁸⁴ The strike finally came to an end with the death of two of the participants. The first was Denis Barry, an inmate of Newbridge who died in the Curragh military hospital on 19 November. Fr Doyle, the prison chaplain, reluctantly administered the last rites, having initially refused the request.¹⁸⁵ Following the inquest, the coroner gave the relatives an order for the burial of the body, but the military authorities refused, and Barry was interred in the Curragh camp. However, following a successful High Court action by the Barry family the remains were exhumed.¹⁸⁶ There was a large attendance at the removal to Newbridge town hall which included members of Cumann na mBan and ATIRA Volunteers.¹⁸⁷ When the remains reached Cork, Bishop Daniel Cohalan refused a religious funeral.¹⁸⁸ With the death of Andy Sullivan in Mountjoy three days after Barry, and with no prospect of concessions from the government, the ATIRA ordered an end to the protests on 23 November.¹⁸⁹ While the strike itself failed in its objective, it did, however, activate a slow process of prisoner release – the state being worried of the political impact of more deaths.

An analysis of militancy in Kildare during the Civil War reveals that the ATIRA were never in a position to rival the pro-Treaty forces, unlike their colleagues in Munster. From the beginning of the conflict the National army held a vastly superior position. It held all the towns and military barracks in the county. ATIRA militancy was nipped in the bud by the arrest of most of the leaders in the early days of the war. The activity of Ernie O'Malley in the Blessington area resulted in a short phase of conventional warfare with barracks at Ballymore Eustace and Rathangan falling briefly to the ATIRA. Republican resistance petered out given the strength of the major garrisons in the county, not to mention the Curragh. Just when it seemed that Kildare was reverting to its noted quiet county status in the early autumn the various escapes of key ATIRA activists led to a resumption of guerrilla activity and two ASUs produced a level of militancy far greater than that witnessed during the War of Independence. Fatalities were low until the Graney ambush which was the only seriously bloody encounter in Kildare. The county was at the centre stage of three significant national events during the Civil War and its immediate aftermath: the great escape from Newbridge in October 1922, the largest mass prison escape in Irish

¹⁸² List of prisoners who are not on strike in Tintown A, 2 Nov. 1923 (IMA, CW/P/02/02/20).

¹⁸³ Hunger strike figures for jails and camps, 3 Nov. 1923 (NAI, DT, S 1369/10).

¹⁸⁴ List of prisoners who signed the Undertaking Form, 5 Nov 1923. (IMA, CW/P/02/02/13).

¹⁸⁵ Denis Barry, *The unknown commandant: the life and times of Denis Barry, 1883-1923* (Cork, 2010), p. 113; Andrews, *Dublin made me*, p. 302.

¹⁸⁶ *IT*, 27 Nov. 1923; Barry, *Unknown commandant*, pp 110-1.

¹⁸⁷ *LL*, 1 Dec. 1923

¹⁸⁸ *Irish Catholic Directory 1924*, p. 600.

¹⁸⁹ Charlotte Fallon, 'Civil War hunger strikers: women and men', *Éire-Ireland*, 22:3 (1987), 88-9; Healy, 'The civil war hunger strike, 221-2; Macardle, *Irish republic*, p. 867.

history, the executions and the mass hunger-strike of October 1923, in which the vast majority of participants were in Kildare jails. Politics during the Civil War in Kildare was marked by a three-way divide. Pro-Treaty SF and anti-Treaty SF were engaged on opposite sides of the conflict while Labour occupied a more neutral position.

9: A return to its Redmondite roots: Kildare in 1923

The general election in August 1923 provided an interesting barometer of public opinion in Kildare after the grim tragedy of fratricidal civil war. Perhaps unexpectedly, former Redmondite nationalists such as George Wolfe and John Conlon were returned. The Kildare electorate rejected members of both SF and the IRA. The election was not fought in normal circumstances with republicans to some degree hampered. Nevertheless, their vote increased slightly, and this reflected a declining degree of support for the government due to the executions and prison policy.

With the principal function of the third Dáil now fulfilled, a general election was necessary. In preparation, constituency revisions were undertaken and the number of Dáil seats increased from 128 to 153. As a result, Kildare county became a three-seat constituency as the unwieldy Kildare-Wicklow constituency was broken up. The franchise was also extended and 35,000 new voters were eligible to vote. For the first time this included both males and females aged twenty-one and over.¹ Although republicans were at a disadvantage, every constituency was contested by a variety of parties and candidates.

In early 1923 the four parties that had contested the 1922 election – Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin, Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin, Labour and the Farmers Party – began preparations. Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin became a distinct party with the launch of Cumann na nGaedheal on 27 April 1923. New branches were established throughout the country and, on 7 June, a Cumann na nGaedheal branch was formed in Naas under the presidency of the local curate, Fr Patrick Doyle. Notably, it was supported by the remnants of the Redmondite nationalists such as D.J. Purcell and Michael Fitzsimons. But the biggest boost to the new branch was support from George Wolfe, the much-respected Protestant nationalist who joined the committee and worked alongside former IRA personnel such as Thomas Lawler and Stephen Garry.²

A public rally in Naas to launch the new party in the county was held on 15 July. Several leading Cumann na nGaedheal politicians addressed the gathering. They included three cabinet ministers: Kevin O'Higgins, vice-president of the executive council; Éamonn Duggan, minister without portfolio; and Ernest Blythe, then minister for local government. Senator Jenny Wyse Power, one of the leading female

¹ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1922>, article 14, consulted 20 Apr. 2018; KO, 25 Aug. 1923.

² KO, 9 June 1923.

politicians in the party, also spoke.³ The new organization was now extended throughout the county and, within two weeks, twenty branches had been formed.⁴

A total of nine candidates from the four parties were nominated to contest the election. Labour, boosted by a rally in Newbridge with Big Jim Larkin as the keynote speaker, was the first to choose candidates, selecting Hugh Colohan, the outgoing TD and Michael Smyth as his running mate.⁵ Cumann na nGaedheal was next in the field on 2 August and put forward three candidates.⁶ Thomas Lawler and Simon Malone were regarded as front runners having stood down on the last occasion due to the pact election. Both represented different levels of opinion in the party with Lawler belonging to the military section of the movement, whereas Malone identified with the political side. To add even greater appeal, George Wolfe was also selected.⁷ As a long-term Redmondite supporter and a prominent member of the Farmers' Union, his addition aimed to influence the Farmers' convention which was due to take place the following evening.⁸ The convention was highly representative with almost 100 delegates from sixteen clubs in attendance.⁹ As the three candidates chosen by Cumann na nGaedheal were farmers, former KCC chairman Stephen J. Browne, proposed that a Farmers' and Ratepayers' candidate should not be nominated as this might split the farmers' vote. However, this motion was overwhelmingly rejected, and former county councillor, John Conlon was selected on behalf of Farmers and Ratepayers.¹⁰ He was a native of Newbridge and a former nationalist councillor. Before taking up farming he had been editor of the *Carlow Nationalist*.¹¹ Conlon's supporters included former Redmondite nationalists and unionists. On the republican side, Domhnall Ua Buachalla, Art O'Connor and Thomas Harris were announced at a rally in Naas on 8 August.¹² Harris, an escaped prisoner, chaired the meeting and at its conclusion was arrested.¹³ Both Ua Buachalla and O'Connor were also in prison. Ua Buachalla, having been on the run earlier, was re-arrested between the ending of hostilities and the election.¹⁴

The election campaign was lacklustre with none of the scenes of violence typical of previous campaigns. The republican campaign was hampered by

³ *KO*, 21 July 1923.

⁴ *KO*, 4 Aug. 1923.

⁵ *KO*, 9 June 1923; *LL*, 9 June 1923; *LL*, 4 Aug. 1923.

⁶ *LL*, 11 Aug 1923.

⁷ *LL*, 11 & 18 Aug. 1923.

⁸ *KO*, 4 Aug. 1923.

⁹ *LL*, 25 Aug. 1923.

¹⁰ *LL*, 11 Aug. 1923.

¹¹ *NLT*, 22 June 1935.

¹² *LL*, 25 Aug 1923.

¹³ *LL*, 11 Aug, 25 Aug. 1923.

¹⁴ Mick O'Neill interview, p. 48 (UCDA, O'Malley notebooks, P17/b/107); Ó Súilleabháin, *Ua Buachalla*, pp 188-9.

censorship and the imprisonment of many of its activists. The prisoner issue was highlighted at meetings by Muriel MacSwiney, widow of Terence MacSwiney; James O'Connor, brother of Art O'Connor; and Michael Smyth, who argued that the prison gates should be thrown open.¹⁵ Unemployment was also a major issue in the Labour Party campaign, especially in Newbridge.¹⁶ Cumann na nGaedheal was not as prominent on the campaign trail as the other parties. Of the three candidates, George Wolfe excelled, and at one meeting was even introduced as a descendant of Wolfe Tone. He made no attempt to deny the family connections and turned the patriot's name to his political advantage, referring to Wolfe Tone as the man who bore the same name as his grandfather.¹⁷ Conlon, the Farmers' and Ratepayers' candidate, undertook a vigorous canvass focusing on farming interests, falling agriculture prices and rates. He had the support and assistance of former Redmondites such as John Healy and unionists such as Bertram Barton.¹⁸

The turnout for the election in Kildare was a disappointing fifty-five percent, a figure reduced further as 4.6 per cent of votes were spoiled.¹⁹ That Hugh Colohan topped the poll as sitting Labour TD was no surprise, but there was no second seat for Labour even though it polled well and obtained three times the national average. The biggest upsets were the return of John Conlon and, in particular, George Wolfe. The number of first preferences for Cumann na nGaedheal was the lowest in any constituency in the country with the exception of the National University. Only Longford-Westmeath, Wexford and Waterford demonstrated lower support for the party.²⁰

Unemployment in Newbridge and the Curragh areas, the base of the two Labour candidates, due to the departure of the British army was the principal reason for the high Labour vote, which achieved 1½ of a quota. The support of former nationalists, particularly farmers, explains the performance of Conlon and Wolfe, who had only been associated with the government party for six weeks. For Conlon, who gained almost eighty per cent of a quota, it was a respectable vote for the Farmers Party which obtained seven per cent more than the national average. Although the result for Cumann na nGaedheal was disappointing, the party could derive some comfort from the fact that seventy-nine per cent of the Kildare

¹⁵ *LL*, 18, 25 Aug. & 1 Sept. 1923; *KO*, 1 Sept. 1923; Anne Dolan, 'MacSwiney, Muriel Frances', *DIB*.

¹⁶ *LL*, 25 Aug. 1923.

¹⁷ *LL*, 18 Aug. 1923. George Wolfe's grandfather was named Theobald Wolfe see, George Wolfe, 'The Wolfe family of County Kildare', *JKAS*, 3:6 (1902), 361-7.

¹⁸ *LL*, 25 Aug. 1923

¹⁹ *KO*, 1 Sept. 1923.

²⁰ John Regan, *The Irish counter revolution, 1921-1936: treatyite politics and settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), p. 205; Brian Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1918-92: Irish elections to parliaments and parliamentary assemblies at Westminster, Belfast, Dublin* (Dublin, 1992), pp 108-15.

electorate supported pro-Treaty candidates. Nationally, republicans achieved twenty-seven per cent, while in Kildare they obtained twenty-one per cent.²¹ Nonetheless, the results in the county clearly showed that despite a crushing defeat in the Civil War, there was still strong republican support in the constituency. Even though large numbers were in prison and could not vote, the republican vote was within six per cent of Cumann na nGaedheal. In fact, it had increased by two per cent since the last election. This reflected a sympathy vote due to the executions. The most striking aspect of the election in Kildare was that in 1923 the successful candidates had never been members of SF or the IRA. The message from the voters was clear: be content with the level of independence obtained and deal with economic issues.

Politics in Kildare between September 1923 and July 1924 continued to be dominated by the political prisoner issue. Rows erupted over the dismissal by Ernest Blythe, minister for local government, of two imprisoned county council employees with suggestions that the dismissals were politically motivated. The county council denounced the dismissal of Patrick Carroll, a junior clerk and son of Mark Carroll, a Labour Party member of the county council.²² A more serious clash between council and minister occurred when the government in October removed Art O'Connor as assistant county surveyor.²³ Councillors from all parties united in condemnation because it seemed that 'any employees of the council who are not Free Staters cannot work'. Referring to O'Connor's role as former minister for agriculture in the second Dáil, Michael Smyth claimed the present ministry was removing a colleague of their own, 'who did one man's part in putting them into the jobs they now hold'.²⁴ The council demanded O'Connor's unconditional release so that he could resume his duties.²⁵ In the event, both Carroll and O'Connor were reinstated in 1924.²⁶

With unrest seemingly at an end in Kildare for the first time in years, in December 1923 another episode connected to the prison system in the county revealed that civil war animosities lay barely below the surface. Colonel Michael Costello, National army director of intelligence, suspected that a mole in the army was in contact with Michael Carolan, the IRA director of intelligence in Dublin. An investigation was carried out by Captain Michael Murray, who suspected Joseph Bergin, a 23-year-old corporal from County Laois serving with the Military Police in

²¹ For election results see, <http://irelandelection.com/elections> (accessed 30 Apr. 2018).

²² *LL*, 4 Aug. 1923; Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P, digitized collection); *LL*, 1 Dec. 1923.

²³ Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 286. The dismissal order was signed by E. Blythe, minister for local government.

²⁴ *LL*, 20 Oct. 1923.

²⁵ *Éire: the Irish Nation*, 3 Nov. 1923; *KO*, 20 Oct. 1923.

²⁶ Nelson, *Through peace and war*, pp 285-9.

the Curragh camp.²⁷ His friendship with Peggie Daly, a known republican, who was released from internment on 28 September, aroused suspicion.²⁸ On 13 December Bergin was abducted on his way to the Curragh camp by three intelligence agents, taken to a hut at Guiderstown, close to Kildare, and subjected to gruesome violence before being shot six times. The following day his badly mutilated body was found in the canal at Milltown close to the Curragh.²⁹ This brutal act, had similarities with the sadistic murder of Noel Lemass, a leading republican, some months previously. Notably, at the Lemass inquest in October 1923 evidence emerged linking Captain Murray with that killing.³⁰ A cover-up in the Bergin case was then attempted. Murray, the chief suspect, initially fled to Argentina, but was arrested following his return home and charged with Bergin's murder. At the trial in 1925, it was suggested that unofficial executions were accepted.³¹ Murray, who claimed he was made a scapegoat for the Bergin killing and accused Costello of masterminding the crime, was convicted. A death sentence was later commuted to a life sentence.³² The trial signified a return to some normality in the rule of law in spite of a common belief that some parties to the crime escaped justice. The Bergin murder was the last violent death connected with the Irish Revolution in Kildare. Despite brutal killings and numerous executions, the conflict was not as ruthless as civil conflicts in other countries such as the Finnish Civil War in 1918 where mass indiscriminate shootings and prison camps were far more severe in terms of brutality.³³

As 1923 drew to a close, the gradual release of internees, continued, Art O'Connor, was freed on 24 December 1923, and Michael O'Kelly on 19 January 1924.³⁴ By the following May 3,000 had been released with W.T. Cosgrave indicating in the Dáil on 21 May, that only 592 prisoners remained.³⁵ By mid-April, only twenty from Kildare remained imprisoned.³⁶ Nonetheless, public bodies in Kildare kept up the pressure on the government, and Kildare County Council, impatient that

²⁷ M. Burke, 'Shooting the messenger: Col. Costello and the Murray case', *Tipperary Historical Journal*, (1997), 46. For Carolan as director of intelligence, IRA see, J. Anthony Gaughan, *Memoirs of Senator Joseph Connolly (1885-1961): a founder of modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1996), p. 84.

²⁸ *IT*, 10 June 1925; Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P, digitized collection); Burke, 'Shooting the messenger', 46-7.

²⁹ *IT*, 10 June 1925; *Sunday Independent*, 16 Dec. 1922; *KO*, 22 Dec. 1922; *LL*, 17, 29 Dec 1922.

³⁰ Anne Dolan, 'Lemass, Noel Denis Joseph', *DIB*; Inquest on death of Noel Lemass, p. 39, Oct. 1923 (NAI, 1B-93-11A).

³¹ *II*, 10-13 June 1925; Burke, 'Shooting the messenger', p. 52.

³² *II*, 10-13 June 1925; *IT*, 13 June 1925; Burke, 'Shooting the messenger', 53.

³³ See Pertti Haapala and Marko Tikka, 'Revolution, civil war and terror in Finland in 1918' in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012).

³⁴ Civil War prisoner ledgers (IMA, CW/P, digitized collection).

³⁵ *Dáil debates*, 21 May 1924, vol.7, no. 11, www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1924-05-21 (accessed 30 Apr. 2018); Campbell, *Emergency law*, p. 241.

³⁶ *KO*, 19 Apr. 1924.

resolutions were getting nowhere, organized a cross-party protest meeting in Newbridge on 4 May. Speakers included Hugh Colohan of Labour, Patrick Phelan of the Farmers Party, and recently released internees such as Éamon Ó Modhráin. A motion calling for the unconditional release of all political prisoners was proposed by Michael Smyth and, notably, seconded by Nicholas Travers, a prominent pro-Treaty supporter. This was adopted.³⁷ When Ua Buachalla returned to a county council meeting a week later he was unanimously offered his old role as chairman but he refused on the grounds of inability to attend meetings.³⁸ On 7 June the remaining imprisoned members of the Mullaney Column were freed. As they were sentenced prisoners, their release was unexpected with local speculation suggesting that differences in government circles in the aftermath of the Army Mutiny may have been a factor.³⁹ On 5 July Patrick Carroll, the last Kildare political prisoner, was freed eleven days before a general prisoner release was announced.⁴⁰ Pressure from Kildare County Council and the unity shown among members on the prisoner issue may have had a bearing on the timing of the government's decision to release the Mullaney Column. That Carroll was the last released sent an unambiguous message of government disapproval of Kildare County Council's stance.

The 1926 census revealed that the population of County Kildare had fallen by 12.9 per cent since 1911. As one would expect the Protestant population accounted for most of the decline. Whereas the Catholic population fell by 0.5 per cent, the Protestant population was reduced by 69.6 per cent. This was a far greater decrease than in any other county. The withdrawal of the British army is the chief explanation for the decline which was especially evident in the garrison towns. Andy Bielenberg regards Kildare and Fermoy as extreme examples with their Protestant populations declining by over 93 per cent between 1911 and 1926, followed by Tipperary and Newbridge which registered a loss of almost 89 percent.⁴¹ Ballysax parish, which includes the Curragh camp, experienced a loss of 96 per cent and Naas, where Protestants constituted 9 per cent of the population in 1911, declined to 5.6 per cent in 1926.⁴²

The Protestant population of Kildare in 1911 totalled 11,900. Of this figure, 5,000 were listed as serving members of the British army temporarily based in the

³⁷ KO, 10 May 1924.

³⁸ KO, 24 May 1924.

³⁹ LL, 14 June 1924; for divisions in Cumann na nGaedheal see, Regan, *Irish counter revolution*, pp 207-8. Details of the army mutiny see, Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Almost a rebellion: the Irish army mutiny of 1924* (Cork, 1985); Duggan, *History of the Irish army*, pp 129-37.

⁴⁰ II, 17 July 1924; II, 18 July 1924; Returns of prisoners in military custody, 2 June to 21 July 1924 (NAI, SI369/4 SPO).

⁴¹ Bielenberg, 'Exodus', 202.

⁴² Irish Free State census, 1926, https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1926results/volume3/C_15_1926_V3_T12.pdf, pp 37-8.

county. In addition, a further unknown number were family members of the servicemen.⁴³ By 1926 the recorded Protestant population was 3,600.⁴⁴ In addition to the departure of British army personnel in 1922 there were a number of other factors behind Protestant decline, including low levels of births and marriages. However, intimidation played a big part.⁴⁵ Violence against Protestants in Kildare continued into the late 1920s. The rented house of Captain Henry Hosie at Castlereban was burned in February 1924. A boycott of this property was still in operation in 1928 with the freeholder, Henry Large, residing in an outhouse adjacent to the burnt-out house and unable to rent a house in the Athy area.⁴⁶ In addition to intimidation, the 1923 Land Act forced many more to sell up as the new Irish government accelerated the process of land reform.⁴⁷ In 1925, Charles Bury's estate at Downings, Prosperous was acquired at a much reduced price by the Irish Land Commission for distribution among smallholders in the area. But favouritism was sometimes practised by the new government as Bury's house and 100 acres was allocated to a retired National army officer.⁴⁸ The same fate awaited many of the remaining demesne estates held by former southern unionists who were forced either by the land acts, rates or high running costs to dispose of their properties. Leonard Wilson-Wright, who left Ireland during the truce period, fared better than most, eventually returning home to manage his extensive farming interests. Protestants were significantly over-represented on larger farms which made them the target of agrarian outrages. In some districts ethno-religious factors also entered into the equation and they suffered reprisals for Catholic expulsions from Belfast.⁴⁹ Despite this, Protestant intimidation in Kildare was not as severe as in other areas and the northern section of the county to some extent became a haven for loyalists fleeing from other counties. Henry Sampey, a substantial land owner who was boycotted and driven from his native Roscommon, moved to the Ballymore Eustace area.⁵⁰ Alexander Cornelius, who had provided accommodation for British troops on

⁴³ Census of Ireland, 1911, province of Leinster, Kildare, religious professions of the people, pp 74-5.

⁴⁴ Irish Free State Census, 1926, https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1926results/volume3/C_12_1926_V3_T9.pdf, p. 13.

⁴⁵ David Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy: Irish Protestant histories since 1795* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 159-240.

⁴⁶ Irish Grants Committee claim of Henry Hosie, 27 Nov. 1927 (TNA, CO 762/153/4) & Henry Large, 28 Jan. 1927 (TNA, CO 762/139/2).

⁴⁷ Bielenberg, 'Exodus', 206.

⁴⁸ *Dáil Éireann debates*, 11 March 1925, vol. 10, no 11; Andrew Rynne, *The vasectomy Doctor: a memoir* (Cork, 2005), p. 24.

⁴⁹ Irish Grants Committee claim of Peter Kidd, 10 Nov. 1926 (TNA, CO 762,112/4); Andy Bielenberg, 'Exodus', pp 204-13; Hart, *The IRA at war*, pp 232-9.

⁵⁰ Irish Grants Committee claim of Henry Sampey, 5 Dec. 1928 (TNA, CO 762/189/2).

his farm in County Laois and as a result was boycotted, relocated thirty miles to a farm close to the Curragh where the family lived without interference.⁵¹

Although the population decline in the garrison towns was considerable they did not become ghost towns. The Curragh camp, the largest urban area in the county in 1911, still maintained a sizeable population of 4,100, although this represented a decline of 41 per cent. Similarly, the populations of Newbridge and Kildare fell by 34 and 11 per cent respectively with Naas falling by 11.6 per cent.⁵² The replacement of British garrisons by National army troops eased the decline to some extent. However, in Naas where the army barracks was the smallest in the county, the population fall was only partially attributable to the departure of British army with economic issues the major reason for the decline.

In the decades following the revolution, four of the Kildare activists successfully carved out political careers at a national level. The best known was Ua Buachalla who returned to the Dáil as a Fianna Fáil TD in 1927 and was appointed governor general by de Valera in 1932.⁵³ Thomas Harris distinguished himself by successfully contesting ten Dáil elections and serving as a TD from 1931 to 1957.⁵⁴ Michael Smyth, who continued his work as a Labour councillor for thirty-five years, briefly served as a senator in the 1950s. His Labour party colleague, Frank Purcell, obtained the post of secretary general of the ITGWU and also served in the Upper House.⁵⁵

Other figures from the revolution did not obtain the same level of success. Art O'Connor continually failed to regain a Dáil seat. Following the split in SF in 1926, he succeeded de Valera as party leader but subsequently departed politics to study law. In his new profession he was called to the bar and eventually appointed a circuit court judge.⁵⁶ Ted O'Kelly qualified as a doctor and emigrated to London where he operated a medical practice until his death in the London blitz in 1941.⁵⁷ Michael O'Kelly, who did much to promote the republican cause at the expense of his career as editor of the *Leinster Leader*, failed to obtain full-time employment following his release from prison. In total he spent more than two years in jail. Although he served briefly as a member of Naas UDC in the 1920s he became disenchanted with politics and moved to Dublin.⁵⁸ Paddy Mullaney, the most successful Kildare militant of the revolution, returned to his native Mayo following his release and spent the

⁵¹ Irish Grants Committee claim of Emmie Cornelius, 5 Apr. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/198/7).

⁵² Data acquired from a study of census of Ireland, 1911, province of Leinster, Kildare, pp 2,4, and https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1926results/volume1/C_1926_V1_T8.pdf. p 16

⁵³ Ó Súilleabháin, *Ua Buachalla*, pp 219, 230, 259.

⁵⁴ *Irish Press*, 20 Feb. 1974.

⁵⁵ For Smyth, see *LL*, 24 Nov. 1973; for Purcell, see *II*, 2 Apr. 1960.

⁵⁶ William Murphy, 'O'Connor, Arthur James Kickham (Art)', *DIB*.

⁵⁷ *LL*, 26 Apr. 1941.

⁵⁸ Sworn statement by Michael O'Kelly, 3 Feb. 1938 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF9986).

remainder of his life working as a primary school teacher and engaged in GAA activity at county board level.⁵⁹ Pro-treaty SF activists from Kildare faded almost completely from the scene playing no meaningful role in the politics in the IFS. Throughout the remainder of the 1920s the chairmanship of KCC was held by Michael Fitzsimons the only Redmondite to retain his county council seat during the entire revolution.⁶⁰ Following George Wolfe's retirement from the Dáil in 1932, his seat was won by Sidney Minch, a former British army captain and son of a Redmondite MP.⁶¹

Politically, in 1923 Kildare was an example of a county that to a large extent returned to its Redmondite roots. This was reflected in the results of the election of August 1923 which saw the rejection at the polls of militant activists who had been prominent during the War of Independence and Civil War. Instead, the electors of Kildare selected non-compromising constitutional politicians. Yet, local politicians of all persuasions demonstrated an unusual unity by acting independently of the government in opposing ministerial interference in local affairs and calling for the early release of prisoners when the conflict had ended. The Irish Revolution had left a legacy of bitterness and recriminations in Kildare as elsewhere in the country. While the conflict was not as intensive as in Dublin or Cork, in many respects it was no different to events in other counties. However, in a comparative context the extent to which the politics of the majority in Kildare reverted to a viewpoint held in the pre-revolutionary period was notable and exceptional.

⁵⁹ *Connaught Telegraph*, 22 Aug. 1974.

⁶⁰ Fitzsimons elected chairman of KCC following the 1925 and 1928 elections, Nelson, *Through peace and war*, p. 306; *KO*, 14 July 1928.

⁶¹ On Minch's election see *II*, 19 Feb. 1932.

Conclusion

This dissertation explores the traumatic revolutionary events that occurred between 1912 and 1923 in Kildare and their impact on a garrison county. Kildare has traditionally been regarded as a quiet county during the Irish Revolution, providing a minimal contribution to the struggle for independence. As a result, the county did not suffer to the same extent as other counties more centrally involved in the militancy of the period. However, by analyzing a number of significant events, this dissertation demonstrates that Kildare had a much greater involvement than suggested in earlier studies. The first important episode was the Curragh Incident in March 1914. This was followed by the involvement of the British army from the Curragh in suppressing the Easter Rising in 1916. Later on, the evacuation of the British army from the Curragh camp in May 1922 had a major impact, both locally and nationally. The great escape from Newbridge barracks in October 1922, the county's strong connection to the Civil War executions, and the mass hunger-strike of October 1923, which took place largely in Kildare jails gave the county an unwelcome prominence at the close of the Irish Revolution.

According to David Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland in 1913 was a country in which a remarkably large part of the people were apparently satisfied with its lot'.¹ Generally, this assessment applied to Kildare, where at this time there was no serious political agitation or unrest. The nationalist expectation of home rule in 1914, which triggered a determined unionist opposition, was manifested in Kildare in a manner very different to other southern counties. As elsewhere, local unionists in the county made clear their opposition to the third home rule bill. But Kildare was also at the centre of a dramatic signal by the army in March 1914 that it would not enforce the government's home rule policy. Though technically not a mutiny, such defiance was unprecedented. In Kildare it spurred nationalists belatedly to embrace the Irish Volunteers. The Curragh Incident stripped the British government of any military initiative to quell the growing militarization of politics in Ireland. Its freedom of movement to implement its Irish policy narrowed dramatically. Without indulging in counterfactual history, had unionist and nationalist paramilitarism been checked in March 1914, Ireland's subsequent history may well have been different.

The First World War was felt in a more immediate and visible way in Kildare than in most other parts of Ireland due to the large army presence. As support for the war waned due to heavy casualties, the first indication of opposition to the almost invincible IPP emerged when the MPs who championed enlistment became the target of anti-war feeling. However, the opposition in Kildare was not as pronounced as in other counties due to the favourable economic benefits accruing

¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 231.

to the Kildare hinterland as a result of the war and in particular the garrison status of the county.

The Easter 1916 Rising has attracted considerable interest from historians and writers. Much of the historiography has focused on the insurgents, an aspect that has been wonderfully enhanced by the availability of the archives in the Bureau of Military History. By contrast, the role of the British army has received far less scholarly attention. While this study has examined the Kildare Volunteer connection to the Rising, it has also redressed the imbalance by revealing the prominence during Easter Week of the military deployments from the Curragh. It is widely claimed that the Rising came as a surprise to the British army, but this dissertation argues otherwise. Two weeks before Easter, amid rumours of militant activity in Dublin during the holiday period, the GOC recalled from Flanders Colonel Bertram Portal and appointed him commander of the special reserve in the Curragh which played a decisive role in containing the outbreak in Dublin. The effectiveness of the troops from the Curragh in suppressing the Rising was acknowledged in the Royal Commission report which also highlighted the significance of the Curragh railway line remaining open. This gives credence to the importance, from a British military perspective, of the failed rebel sabotage plan aimed at disrupting army rail transportation at Sallins which, had it been successful, may have prolonged the Rising.

This dissertation also posits that Kildare does not neatly fit Charles Townshend's three-phase typology of the War of Independence. Nationally, in the early stages of the conflict individual police were intimidated. However, in Kildare, this phase did not occur until December 1919 when the house of the CI outside Naas was targeted.² The second phase, which saw IRA attacks on barracks, did not occur at all within Kildare, but rather in neighbouring counties. In late autumn 1919 IRA attacks on Ballivor and Lismullen in Meath resulted in the evacuation of a number of smaller barracks, including several in north Kildare.³ The assault on Baltinglass RIC Barracks in late January was the final nail in the coffin for the RIC in Kildare.⁴ As a result, practically all the police barracks in rural districts of Kildare had been vacated by mid-March. By dodging heavily garrisoned areas in Kildare, the local IRA, which was severely curtailed through lack of arms, avoided risks, but the task of forcing the withdrawal of the RIC from large sections of the countryside was accomplished. Townshend's third phase again only partly reflects the experience in Kildare where the IRA focused on smaller operations instead of large-scale ambushes. In broad terms, Townshend's three-phase pattern had strong relevance in Kildare, but with notable deviations.

² CI Kildare, Dec. 1919 (TNA, CO 904/110); CI Kildare, Jan. 1920 (TNA, CO 904/111).

³ *LL*, 8 Nov. 1920; Seán Boylan, 'Meath -1920', *Capuchin Annual* (1970), 540.

⁴ *LL*, 31 Jan. 1920; Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions', 570.

The labour movement in Kildare, which had its roots in the lockout strike of 1913, emerged as a significant force during the Conscription Crisis. It played a leading role in the successful general strike which obtained the release of IRA hunger-strikers in Mountjoy in April 1920. This had far-reaching implications for the British army garrison in the county. Unlike Easter 1916, when the military from the Curragh was able to reach Dublin within five hours, on this occasion the army in the county was cut off from the outside world with no trains and all the roads in and out of the various Kildare towns blocked. Army support from Kildare to assist their colleagues in the capital, where thousands of people congregated outside Mountjoy Jail, could not be provided. Kostick suggests that the strike did more to undermine British authority than months of armed struggle and had it continued it could have been the equivalent of the February Revolution in Russia.⁵ General Jeudwine regarded the prisoner release as having a detrimental effect on relations between the army and civilians which up to that point had been good.⁶ The role played by Kildare strikers supporting hunger-strikers, which unintentionally marooned the Kildare garrisons in their barracks, has not until now been adequately addressed by historians or given the recognition it deserves. The importance of intelligence-gathering in the overall success of the IRA during the War of Independence should not be understated. Arguably, the key reason that the War of Independence achieved a tangible result, unlike earlier rebellions in Irish history, was the success of Michael Collins's intelligence network. While the IRA in Kildare was limited in its capacity and ability to engage in militancy to the same extent as carried out in the Munster counties, it nevertheless excelled in the more secretive activity of intelligence-gathering. The single most successful activity by the movement in Kildare during this phase was the espionage masterminded by Jeremiah Maher. This important role in Collins's intelligence system achieving for a quiet county a rare measure of success has largely been overlooked in the historiography.

As argued in chapter seven, the truce, in essence, restricted the RIC and the army while it gave a lifeline to the IRA. Kildare provides an unlikely example of where the growing superiority of the IRA during this period was demonstrated. This study has clearly shown the level of police and army frustration as IRA organizational activity continued unabated and beyond the reach of the Crown forces. While the republican counter state made no headway in Naas, in other areas of the county it functioned with an authority that extended virtually to the gates of the army barracks in Kildare and Newbridge. This was indeed a remarkable transition in a county full of soldiers, where just months previously Crown forces had reigned supreme.

The most iconic event in Kildare during the entire Revolution was the evacuation of the British army. There were two different points of view regarding

⁵ Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 128.

⁶ Jeudwine, '5th Division', p. 143.

the departure. Those of a republican viewpoint were delighted to see the military depart – after seven and a half centuries of a foreign military presence we are ‘rid of them at last’. This view was not shared by those dependent on the army for employment, spin-off business and security. Unlike other counties, the Irish Revolution resulted in extraordinary economic costs for Kildare. The evacuation greatly exacerbated the general post-World War One slump. While other studies have provided extensive detail on this event, the present work has enhanced the existing historiography by including previously unreleased archival material to provide accurate numbers of military personnel stationed across Kildare. This information provides more clarity and also gives a more robust insight into the army’s contribution to the local economy. The vacated barracks were quickly occupied by the National army which in itself was quite revolutionary. It also guaranteed a significant role for Kildare during the Civil War.

The divisions caused by the Treaty saw the emergence of a strongly pro-Treaty lobby in County Kildare. This was not unusual given its political moderation and the relative absence of militancy during the Revolution. However, an unusual circumstance developed in which the two Dáil representatives opposed the Treaty despite the agreement having widespread support from their constituents. This was in contrast to other neighbouring counties such as Laois and Offaly, where all the TDs supported the Treaty. The result of the 1922 general election in the two-county constituency of Kildare-Wicklow gave a resounding approval to the Treaty. However, the defeat of both Kildare based anti-Treaty TDs and the return of Labour’s Hugh Colohan, the only elected TD from the Kildare section of the constituency, supported largely by increasing numbers of unemployed, represents not only a rejection of the anti-Treaty Sinn Féin party, but also a strong economic message from the electorate. Colohan’s performance in Kildare was unusual and in terms of votes resulted in Labour becoming the largest political party in the county.

The plight of Protestants has been described by Peter Hart as ‘easily the single greatest social change of the revolutionary era’. This assessment accurately reflects the circumstances in County Kildare where the consequence were two fold: the loss of the army garrisons which were to some extent an integral part of the loyalist community and a sharp decline of the native Protestant population. Despite this they fared much better than their counterparts in other counties where intimidation and violence of was of a far greater scale.

Kildare was one of the counties most affected by the Civil War with the militancy experienced in the county far greater in scale than at any other period since 1798. The factors contributing to this turmoil included the absence of the British garrisons, the presence of their National army replacement and the availability of vacant army barracks for use as detention facilities. This dissertation argues that the escape from Dundalk and Newbridge of leading anti-Treaty IRA activists just when

the conflict was easing off, led to a re-emergence of militancy which prolonged the war. The Newbridge prison escape, one of the biggest and most successful jail-breaks in modern Irish history, has been well documented in the historiography, but the Kildare aspect has been given a fuller examination in this work.

The execution policy during the Civil War affected Kildare to a greater extent than has been previously appreciated. Kildare matched Dublin in terms of executions with twelve apiece for offences committed in each respective county. The analysis presented in this study elevates the centrality of Kildare in the most controversial aspect of the entire Irish Revolution.

Published works relating to the mass hunger-strike of October 1923 usually focus on the events in Mountjoy Jail where the strike began. This study places the focus on Kildare prisons where 69 per cent of all participants were confined. While James Healy gave estimated numbers in each prison he did not give prominence to the numerically high totals in Kildare prisons in comparison to other jails. Dorothy Macardle briefly referred to the hunger-strike, highlighting the Mountjoy connection, but gave no indication of the important Kildare connection.⁷ While the mass hunger-strike was the largest ever contemplated in Ireland and historically significant in international terms, the prominence of County Kildare in this event has not been adequately emphasized until now.

A surprising political aspect during the Civil War was the strong support given to opinion representing traditional nationalist and the labouring class to the exclusion of the SF wings engaged in the conflict. This opinion fluctuated throughout the revolution. Families of ex-servicemen as well as labourers who were employed by the army or in army related jobs were not likely to vote for SF. Votes given to SF by the Kildare electorate in the general election of 1918 and the local elections of 1920 were largely transitory as the voters subsequently returned largely to a more conservative nationalist base with Labour obtaining support from workers particularly in the garrison towns. Following the election to the 4th Dáil in August 1923, Labour, Cumann na nGaedheal and the Farmers Party each returned one TD. In addition, three former Unionists and one Labour Party member were appointed to the senate. Surprisingly, none of the seven Oireachtas members had previously been members of the IRA or Sinn Féin. However, in national terms, the entire membership of new government at the time who were members of Cumann na nGaedheal had previously been members of SF. This remarkable fact underlines the extent to which Kildare had come full circle politically by the final year of the conflict by rejecting personnel from the revolutionary years and choosing representatives from an earlier period.

⁷ Healy, 'The Civil War hunger strike', 214; Macardle, *Irish republic*, p. 867.

By any standards the Irish Revolution was a conservative one. In 1912 the constitutional settlement desired by most nationalists was a limited form of autonomy under home rule. By 1923 the ruling political class in Westminster had changed and a new partitioned state had emerged, one that was a compromise between the home rule aspiration of the IPP and the 32-county republic of SF. The newly-elected TDs which now sat in a parliament in Dublin had significant powers and the freedom to progress eventually to an independent republic. A new flag and national anthem had replaced God save the King and the Union Jack. The RIC were replaced by An Garda Síochána and the dominance by unionist and gentry of the magistracy had ended. In Kildare the most visible change was in the army barracks where the NA had replaced the British army. While Labour had emerged as a political force, the status of labourers remained the same as before. Surprisingly, conservative and farmer interest continued to dominate local politics. Farmers and their interests held two of the three seats in the Dáil and locally they held the chairmanship of the county council. The council and various local boards continued to operate in the same way as before. The Irish Revolution had both winners and losers. The anti-Treaty SF and unionists were the principal losers. The man in the street was probably worse off financially as a result of the revolution, but satisfied to finally have a parliament and government in Dublin. At the end of 1923 there was a sense of relief that the period of turbulence had come to an end and for most people life continued much as before.

The central theme of this study was the uniqueness of Kildare as a garrison county, a fact that has not previously received a robust examination. This study, which has unearthed a substantial body of material previously not in the public domain, offers a new perspective on Kildare during the Irish Revolution. Conventionally perceived as an inactive county during the period, this dissertation argues for a change of perception and concludes that Kildare's role should be elevated from a lower position to a higher-ranking category in terms of involvement.

Appendices

1 Top-ranking officers of the British army in Ireland, March 1914¹

Position	Name and title
Commander in Chief of the army in Ireland	Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Paget
Head of Administration	Major-General Sir Lovick Bransby Friend
Administrative, technical and departmental staff	Brigadier-General Sir George Townsend Forestier-Walker
The 5th Division	Major-General Sir Charles Fergusson
The 13th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier-General Gerald J. Cuthbert
The 14th Infantry Brigade,	Brigadier-General Stuart P. Rolt
The 15th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier-General Lord Albert E.W. Gleichen
Divisional troops of the Royal Artillery	Brigadier-General John E.W. Headlam
The 6th Division	Major-General William Pulteney
The 16th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier-General Edward Charles Ingouville-Williams
The 17th Infantry Brigade	Brigadier-General W.R.B. Doran
Divisional troops of the Royal Artillery	Brigadier-General W.L.H. Paget
3rd Cavalry Brigade	Brigadier-General Hubert Gough

¹ *Monthly army list for March 1914*, pp 28-30.

2 Details of infantry and cavalry units in County Kildare, March 1914¹

Curragh camp

4th Hussars

16th Lancers

2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment

1st Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

2nd Battalion, Manchester Regiment

Royal Engineers, 4th Field Troop; 3rd Signal Troop; together with the Divisional Engineers

Army Service Corps, Nos. 23, 37, 42, 68, 70, Companies and D supply Company

Royal Army Medical Corps, No. 17 Co. and Dets.

Army Veterinary Corps, Nos. 17 Company and 8 Sections

Army Ordnance Corps, No. 4 Company

Military Mounted Police

Military Foot Police

Newbridge

3rd Brigade Royal Horse Artillery

27th Brigade Royal Field Artillery

Army Service Corps

Royal Army Medical Corps

Army Veterinary Corps

Kildare Town

8th Brigade (Howitzer) Royal Field Artillery

15th Brigade Royal Field Artillery

Royal Army Medical Corps

Army Veterinary Corps

Naas

3rd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Royal Army Medical Corps

¹ 'General monthly return of the regimental strength of the British army for March 1914', pp 93, 94, 96 (TNA, WO 73/96).

3 Composition of Kildare County Council, June 1920

Sinn Féin	Labour	Independent
Domhnaill ua Buachalla, Chairman	Hugh Colohan	Michael Fitzsimons
Éamon Ó Modhráin, Vice-Chairman	James Cregan	
Mark Carroll	Arthur Murphy	
Joseph Cusack	Michael Smyth	
Patrick Dooley	Christopher Supple	
Francis Doran		
Thomas Doran		
Jack Fitzgerald		
Nicholas Hanigan		
Thomas Harris		
Richard McCann		
William Mahon		
William Murray		
James O'Connor		
Patrick Phelan		

4 IRA companies in County Kildare, 11 July 1921

4th Battalion, No. 1 Meath Brigade (9 companies)

- Kilcock, Mainham, Cloncurry, Johnstown Bridge, Broadford, Clogharinka, Carbury, Enfield and Coole. The latter two are in County Meath.
- O/C Michael Flynn.¹

5th Battalion, No 1 Meath Brigade (4 companies)

- Leixlip, Maynooth, Celbridge and Straffan.
- O/C Paddy Mullaney.²

Kildare independent Battalion (15 companies)³

- Naas, Allenwood, Robertstown, Allen, Prosperous, Clane, Clongory, Lewistown, Newbridge, Athgarvan, Two-Mile-House, Kill, Eadestown, Ballymore-Eustace and Hollywood. The latter is in County Wicklow.
- O/C Thomas Lawler.⁴

6th Battalion, Carlow Brigade (8 companies)

- Suncroft, Kildare Rathangan, Monasterevan, Seven Stars & Kildoon, Kilcullen, Kilgowan and Dunlavin. The latter is in County Wicklow.
- The first three were transferred to Kildare Independent Battalion in September 1921.⁵
- O/C William Byrne.

5th Battalion, Carlow Brigade (6 companies)

¹ [MA-MSPC-RO-482.pdf](#) (accessed 7 May 2017).

² [MA-MSPC-RO-510.pdf](#) (accessed 7 May 2017).

³ Brittas & Kilbride, Blessington & Lackan and Valleymount were formally in this battalion but transferred to the South Dublin Brigade.

⁴ [MA-MSPC-RO-482.pdf](#); / [-RO-20.pdf](#) (accessed 7 May 2017); Sworn statement by Cornelius O'Donovan, 11 Feb. 1938 (IMA, MSPC, WMSP34REF52585); Michael Smyth, 'Kildare Battalions'.

⁵ [MA-MSPC-RO-545.pdf](#) (accessed 17 May 2017).

- Athy, The Moat, Moone, Castledermot, Barrowhouse and Ballylinan. The latter two are in County Laois.
- O/C Patrick Kavanagh.⁶

⁶ [MA-MSPC-RO-545.pdf](#) (accessed 17 May 2017).

5 List of republicans executed for offences in Kildare.

Arrested at Rathbride	Arrested at Ballygoran
Patrick Bagnel	Terence Brady
Joseph Johnson	Leo Dowling
Patrick Mangan	Sylvester Heaney
Brian Moore	Anthony O'Reilly
Patrick Nolan	Laurence Sheeky
James O'Connor	
Stephen White	

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