

ECHOES OF GALLOPING HOGAN

BY TIM LEHANE

The outlaw rapparee comes galloping down through the centuries, reins in, and orders us to 'Stand and Deliver'. Obediently we deliver up to this ghostly image our grudging admiration. The rapparee has become a continuing metaphor for some strange unease we experience with the rigidities of law and order. He has our sympathy. This is true of the abiding fascination invested in figures such as Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Jesse James and, in our local mythology, Count Redmond O'Hanlon and Galloping Hogan.

Woods like this have sheltered us for centuries. After each plantation this is where we came, watched the invader renaming our lands, made raids in the night on what had once been our home. Ribbonmen, Michael Dwyer's men, Croppies, Irregulars. Each century gave its own name to those young men ...

Thus muses a character, on the run from the police, in Dermot Bolger's novel *The Journey Home*, set in the Ireland of the 1980s. The character in the novel is from suburban Dublin, and the fact that Bolger ascribes those sentiments to him in a contemporary setting underlines Alice Curtayne's assertion that 'The sympathies of the masses of the native Irish were always with the rapparees ... Their activity is like a thread of light in a long dark tunnel'.

It has been a continuing sympathy. Crofton Croker, writing about life in Munster in the 1820s, remarked:

A History of the Irish Rogues and Rapparees' is at present one of the most popular books among the peasantry and has circulated to an extent that almost seems incredible; nor is it unusual to hear the adventures and escapes of highwaymen and outlaws recited by the lower orders with the greatest minuteness, and dwelt on with a surprising fondness.

In the introduction to his *Irish Tories, Rapparees and Robbers* John J. Marshall said: 'Many Irish historical writers in dealing with the first-hand material relating to the 17th and 18th centuries have been struck by the considerable part played in the social and economic life of the country by outlaws, and those



Another view of the statue of Sarsfield at Sarsfield Barracks.

outside the pale of organised society ...' Or, as Alice Curtayne remarked in her *A Survey of Irish History and Culture*: 'The history of Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries abounds with the exploits of the rapparees, or tories'.

In 'the long dark tunnel' from the end of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century, the names given to 'those young men' were, by turn, 'kernes', 'tories' and 'rapparees'. When did the herne become a tory? When did the kerne become a

rapparee? There's some speculation about the exact chronology of the terms. For example, Crofton Croker in his *Researches in the South of Ireland* wrote:

In the civil wars under Elizabeth the epithet tory is supposed to have originated, and was applied only to the peasantry. Sir Henry Sydney, the Lord Deputy, according to Sir Richard Cox, 'cursed, hated and detested' Ireland above all other countries; not that he had any dislike to the country, but that it was



James Butler, the first Duke of Ormond.

most difficult to do any service there, where a man must struggle with famine and fastnesses, inaccessible bogs and light-footed Tories.

Marshall contends that the earliest written reference to the word 'tory' was in a deposition recorded in 1645/6. It was part of the recorded evidence which appears in *The Calendar of Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ormond*. A soldier, Paul Davis, 'Colonel Bailey's Company', testified: 'Since Christmas several persons travelling to and from Dublin have been murdered or robbed near to the hill of Tara ...' And amongst those suspected he mentioned '... some others of the Irish called Tories'. And Marshall goes on to say: 'From this time onwards it (Tory) was officially applied to masterless men living a life of brigandage, and preying upon all who had anything to lose'.

As yet, the word 'rapparee' had not appeared. In fact, in dispatches and letters of the early 17th century, the

favoured word to describe the native outlaw is the term 'kerne' or 'wood kerne'.

Writing in 1612, the Lord Deputy referred to the fastnesses of the woodlands of Armagh as a place which 'ever bred kernes'. Another term in use at that time was 'swordsman'. A swordsman was regarded as somebody who had experienced military service particularly in the armies of O'Neill and O'Donnell. Following the Flight of the Earls, these houseless homeless men were referred to as 'swordsmen' and regarded with great unease.

Sir Robert Jacob estimated that at that time there were two thousand swordsmen in Connaught without house, land, trade or means, idle gentlemen, 4,000 in Ulster, and 3,000 in Leinster. He was for getting rid of them. The Lord Deputy, Sir Arthur Chichester, was anxious that they should take exiled employment in the Swedish army. Although the proposed scheme failed, three ships did sail from

Derry in 1609 bound for Sweden, with nine hundred of these 'swordsmen' on board.

The term 'swordsman' seems clear enough but kerne, tory and rapparee derive from the Irish. The source-words as defined by Dinneen are as follows;

Ceatharnach: a foot soldier, kern, yeoman; a tyrant; a bully; a hero.

Tóraidhe: a robber, a highwayman, a persecuted person.

Rápaire: a rapier, a short pike. Same as *ropaire*.

Ropaire: a snatcher or seizer; a cut-purse, robber or thief, a rapparee, a treacherous or violent person, a scoundrel.

Alice Curtayne suggests that the word *ropaire* was 'originally given by the native Irish to the English settlers who had taken their land and their homes. The English themselves then adopted the word, anglicized it into rapparee, and used it to describe the disposed Irish and any kind of law-breaker'.

In letters and accounts, the word 'rapparee' begins to appear from about 1689 onwards; for example, in the journal kept (1689-91) by John Stevens, an officer in the army of King James, he remarks on 'The insolence of this sort of people commonly called rapparees ...'

And of course George Story, the chaplain/historian, in his account of the Williamite campaign, makes many references to rapparees. However, the use of the term during the Williamite events is not confined to our traditional image of the rapparee as a galloping, gallant highwayman.

But first: who were the archtypal kernes and tories – the men 'out on their keeping'? One contemporary account from Co. Kildare says they 'are usually the offspring of gentlemen that have either mis-spent or forfeited their estates'. As J.G. Simms has written:

They derived a natural satisfaction from harassing the landowners who had taken their place, and they were regarded as a major threat to law and order. One of the most famous was Redmond O'Hanlon – referred to as Count Hanlon – who terrorised the Armagh countryside until his foster-brother was induced to assassinate him. His name passed into legend as an Irish Robin Hood who robbed the rich and helped the poor. Dudley Costello, the most celebrated of the Connacht tories, was an 'ensignman' whose estate was held by Lord Dillon, against whom he conducted a vigorous private war. Eventually Costello was killed and his head sent to Dublin where it was put up on St. James's Gate, pointing towards Connacht. The 'three Brennans' were dispossessed gentry of Kilkenny who terrorised the county; on one occasion two of them broke into Ormond's Castle and stole some of the plate.

But the tories were not all dispossessed

gentry. Some were deserters or escaped prisoners. As John J. Marshall says: 'The army was another nursery providing a further supply of idle men, and vagabonds to prey upon the industrious portion of the community'.

How did the classic tory operate? He was usually part of a gang or group, or had a number of associates under his command. According to Crofton Croker: 'Men of desperate fortunes united themselves into bodies; and in fact, became formidable gangs of freebooters ...'

Reported sightings of some of these 'formidable gangs' give some idea of the numbers involved. In 1666, Sir George Rowden, writing from Dublin, mentioned Leighlin Bridge in Co. Carlow where there was 'a discovery of about one hundred in one society'. These were led by Anthony Kirwan, the son of a local blacksmith. And in Co. Clare, in 1685, a report mentioned a group consisting of no less than twenty-eight horsemen and twenty foot.

There was safety in numbers but also the danger that, if any member were captured, he would be pressurised into betrayal. In 1666, the Duke of Ormond insisted he would not pardon Dudley Costello: 'unless he will undertake to bring to justice some of his fellows'.

The names of the leaders and most notorious members of tory bands became well known to the authorities, and rewards were offered for their capture. In the 1650s, sums ranging from £5 - £30 were offered for the heads of certain tories 'that hold out in the fastnesses of Wicklow and Wexford'.

An abstract of all the monies received and paid for out of the public purse from July, 1649, to November, 1656, offers the following interesting comparison:

Paid for killing wolves £3,847-5-0

Paid for apprehending notorious rebels and tories £2,149-12-6.

Crofton Croker makes this point:

'Tory hunting' was almost viewed in the light of a pastime. An old rhyme in allusion to this sport is still orally current in the South of Ireland, and a decided favourite in the nursery collection.

Ho! Master Teague - what is your story?

I went to the wood and I killed a Tory.

I went to the wood and I killed another.

Was it the same, or was it his brother?

I hunted him in, and I hunted him out,

Three times through the bog about and about;

When out of a bush I saw his head,

So I fired my gun, and I shot him dead.

The glamour of the 'merrie greenwood' must often have palled, so the individual tory would wander from place to place living off, or 'coshering' on, the native population. Edward MacLysaght draws

attention to this practice:

This 'coshering' on the peasantry was discouraged by Archbishop Oliver Plunkett. One of the statutes of the General Synod of the Irish Church summoned by him in 1670 ordered all priests and preachers to warn their people against giving aid to tories. But the tories were strong and dangerous, while the church was weak and disorganised, and the hospitality continued to be given, whether the guests were welcome or not.

So it was a life where no questions were asked. Bed and board were offered. Black rents could be extracted. Purses could be snatched on the highway. Stock could be driven off estates. Horses could be rustled. Travellers could be preyed on. Lawless freebooters they may have been, but the romance of the lone rapparee persisted. The dashing, debonair Redmond O'Hanlon became a legend. A daring gallantry excited the mythology which surrounded many of these named figures. A Protestant bishop, writing in 1685, said of Richard Power (born in Kilbolane, west of Charleville):

He carries in no place long enough to be taken. He is sometimes in the County of Waterford and sometimes in Kilkenny, and immediately after that we hear of his pranks in the County of Limerick and in Kerry and in Cork.

One of the 'pranks' attributed to Power occurred in Newcastle, Co. Limerick in 1685. He became aware that the daughter of a 'substantial resident' was to be married. On the morning of the wedding-day, he rode up to the house, dismounted, knocked, requested to speak in private to the parents of the bride, then produced a pistol, demanded the dowry (£60), remounted his horse, then demanded liquor, and before riding off raised a toast to the bride. Power was executed in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary in November, 1685. Sir John Meade wrote of his execution: 'He died very magnanimously by the help of three bottles of sack, which he took that morning for his morning's draught ...'

Capture was usually followed by execution. Pardons were rare but not unknown. Sentence was commuted, in a few instances, to transportation to the West Indies. Pleas for mercy fell on deaf ears. Orrery, the Lord President of Munster, wrote in May, 1667, to the Lord Lieutenant urging no clemency in the case of John Connell, alias Sallagh, 'a notorious rogue and Tory', pointing out that in Co. Limerick he had 'committed many robberies and crimes'.

In an age where, as MacLysaght says, all letters of the time were 'full of nervous references to their dangerous activities all over the country', the authorities did all in their power to suppress the tories. Although, it must be said that when the Earl of Essex became Lord Lieutenant in 1672, he objected to the system of offering rewards because he suspected that in some cases it led to

'the avenging of private feuds in the name of law and order'.

However, in 1677, when the Duke of Ormond again became Lord Lieutenant, he issued a proclamation which ordered that the 'kindred and nearest relations of such persons as were known as tories and out upon their keeping in any county of the kingdom should forthwith be seized upon and committed to close prison in the county gaol until such tory should be either killed or taken ...'

King James, having arrived from France in March, 1689, commenced a royal progress from Kinsale to Dublin. The occasion brought the rapparees, literally, out of the undergrowth. As Patrick MacRory says: 'Rapparees with skeans and half-pikes lined the roads, the pipers played in front, frieze mantles were spread Raleigh-fashion in the king's path ...'

It should be noted that the word rapparee as used by writers of this period seems to have widened in definition to mean the native volunteers who joined up with or assisted the officially provisioned army. As George Story wrote: 'They were such of the Irish as are not of the Army, but the country-people, armed in a kind of hostile manner with half-pikes and skeans, and some with scythes, or musquets'. And he then goes on to make this oft-quoted remark: 'For the priests the last three or four years past would not allow an Irishman to come to Mass without he brought at least his rapparee along, that they say in Irish signifies a half-stick, or a broken-beam, being like a half-pike; from thence the men themselves have got that name ...'

John Dunton, another Englishman who visited the country in the 1690s, wrote of the rapparees: 'They were some loose and undisciplined people who were not subject to command, but like freebooters made everything that belonged to the English a prey if they could come at it'.

Following the arrival of King James, the Protestant community was extremely vulnerable. Two cases that are quoted are those of Brown, a magistrate in Co. Cork, and Maxwell, a landowner of Queen's County, who were both charged and hanged for having dared resist with force the rapparees who came to rob them.

In August, 1690, the now most celebrated rapparee of that period, rides onto the scene - Galloping Hogan (or O'Hogan). A Tipperaryman, by name and by tradition, he typifies Story's assertion that 'These men knew the country, nay, all the secret corners, woods and bogs ...'. Not surprisingly, he was Sarsfield's chosen guide on the sortie to intercept and blow up the Williamite siege-train on its way to Limerick. That flash of light was, in every sense, one of the few bright Jacobite moments in the Williamite war. The ambush was a piece of tactical daring and, as J.G. Simms has



James Butler, second Duke of Ormond.
Attributed to M. Dahl, 1714.

noted, 'It caused an international sensation at the time ...' O'Hogan became a folk hero and, since then, gallops to the metre of ballad and rhyme. According to Robert Dwyer Joyce:

*You'd search from the grey rock
of Cashel each side to the blue ocean's rim,
Through green dale and hamlet and city,
but you'd ne'er find a horseman like him.*

If we consider what MacLysaght says of the horse in 17th century Ireland: 'Then to be able to ride a horse was as much a matter of course as it is to be able to ride a bicycle to-day. Not only men, but women also, except those in the lowest station of life who seldom if ever had occasion to leave their own cabins, were more or less at home in the saddle' - then we can rightly assume that to earn the soubriquet 'Gallopings', O'Hogan's expertise as a horseman must have been exceptional.

In the period between the first and second siege of Limerick, the rapparees were officially encouraged to harass any straggling or outlying Williamite forces. Galloping Hogan is associated with three such engagements. Firstly with the taking in June, 1691, of Camgart Castle, near Birr, Co. Offaly, which had been garrisoned during winter by a party of Williamite militia. During an unsuccessful Williamite attempt to retake the castle, Ensign Story - a brother of the historian, George - was killed. Then, in September, 1691, O'Hogan intercepted, near Cullen, Co. Tipperary, a supply party on its way to the Williamite camp and made off with a large herd of horses. On the same month, O'Hogan is also said to have led an attack, near Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, on a struggling group of

dragoons, seven of whom were killed.

The hit-and-run tactics of the rapparees were severely felt by the Williamites. As George Story said: 'If they could have held out another year, the rapparees would have continued still very prejudicial to our army, as well by killing our men privately, as stealing our horses, and intercepting our provisions ...'

Alice Curtayne in her *Life of Patrick Sarsfield* drew attention to a passage in a letter by Lauzun to the French Minister of War. In translation it reads: 'If Limerick is not taken, I believe Sarsfield means to uphold his country, and carry on the war as best he can in the towns and countryside without having a regular army'. This remark she interprets as follows: 'In other words, Sarsfield's disgust at the Boyne had led him to think seriously of throwing in his lot with the rapparees, with whom he was on the friendliest terms'.

John Todhunter, another biographer of Sarsfield, also recognised the potential of the rapparees: 'Properly organised, the cunning, bravery, and endurance of these men might have been used for definitely planned military operations. As it was, their lives were wasted by hundreds in mere marauding'.

The Treaty of Limerick, signed on 3 October, 1691, was followed by a proclamation: 'promising pardon and protection to all robbers, thieves and rapparees who before the 5th of November, following, should surrender their arms to any Justice of the Peace and take the Oath of Fidelity to their Majesties ...'

The subsequent fate of Galloping Hogan has been the subject of much speculation. According to George Story, he availed of the amnesty but was killed near Roscrea soon afterwards by other rapparees who had not submitted. Another suggestion is that he was hanged near Portroe, Co. Tipperary, by fellow-rapparees. Yet another version has it that, with most of his followers, he took advantage of the Proclamation of Pardon and came in at Roscrea. After being allowed a company of twenty-four men to suppress the unrelenting rapparees, he was killed by those he was appointed to suppress, prior to 19 October, 1691.

A 20th century namesake of his - Matthew J. Culligan-Hogan, in his *The Quest for the Galloping Hogan* - attempted to show that O'Hogan could possibly have taken flight with 'The Wild Geese'. His search for the surnames Hogan and O'Hogan in the military archives of France, Spain and Portugal, while interesting, offered speculation but no conclusive evidence. In 1849, the scholar John O'Daly was told by a good authority that Hogan's first name was Daniel (Dónal Ó hÓgáin). The Treaty of Limerick, the Amnesty and the Flight of the Wild Geese effectively ended the

Jacobite cause, if not the dream that would linger into the 18th century.

As for the danger posed by rapparees, it was said that by the end of October, 1691: 'A man might have travelled all thro' the kingdom with as great safety as thro' any part of England ...' Nevertheless the 'out on his keeping' tradition continued. For example, Eamonn 'a' Chnoic (Ned of the Hill) is said to have survived until 1724, when it is believed he was murdered for the reward on offer for him.

England was now about to sow 'her laws like dragon's teeth'. The harvest would eventually be a renewal of lawless activities. As John J. Marshall said: 'From this period onwards the more daring spirits found vent for their activities in political and agrarian reform through the agency of secret societies such as the Whiteboys, Hearts of Oak, Hearts of Steel and the United Irishmen'.

Eventually, the Dublin parliament in 1797 would enact a law with an old refrain: 'An act for the better suppressing tories, robbers, and rapparees; and for preventing robberies, burglaries and other heinous crimes ...'

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