

The Fenian Attack on Kilmallock Police Barracks

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The origins of Fenianism in the Kilmallock district—as in every other district in Ireland where the movement took root—can most likely be found in the long-accumulating grievances of the people, and in their unwillingness to accept the status and disabilities of a subject race. Whiteboyism was one of the signs of that unwillingness, and we have it on Canon Begley's authority that Whiteboyism in fact originated in Kilmallock in 1760. It was the first real sign of revolt the people had shown, "after sixty years' dumb submission" (*DL*)*.

Memories of the blows struck by the Whiteboys against landlordism, memories too of the hanging of Staker Wallis in Kilfinane in 1798, must surely have predisposed the people of the Kilmallock countryside towards Fenianism. But the immediate nursery of Fenianism in Kilmallock was a branch of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick which had been established in the town about 1860. The Brotherhood was an open, unsworn organisation. Ostensibly, it was concerned only with literary and cultural matters, but it was to become one of the chief recruiting grounds for Fenianism in its early days, a fact which did not escape the notice of Dean O'Brien of Newcastle West, founder of the Catholic Young Men's Society, who denounced the Brotherhood bitterly in the newspapers. It was because of Dean O'Brien's long-continuing campaign against it that James Stephens finally ordered all Fenians to withdraw from the Brotherhood, after which it dwindled to very small proportions (*RIR*).

The Secretary of the Kilmallock branch of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick was Stephen Barry Walsh. There were about fifty members in the branch, and when it became obvious that the interest of the majority of the members lay not so much in books and literature as in guns and revolution, the more timid members resigned. Out of those who remained, the Kilmallock Fenian Circle was born. In his survey of the strength of the Fenian organisation in Ireland, John Devoy, in that part of the survey that deals with Limerick, has this to say: "Except for Kilmallock the rest of the County was poorly organised" (*RIR*).

The growth of Fenianism in Kilmallock was due in a large measure to the support which the organisation got from William Henry O'Sullivan, owner of a hotel, shop, and public car establishment in the town. O'Sullivan had some 40 men employed, and very many of them were Fenians. As well, his premises became a meeting place for the Fenian leaders. According to the Attorney General, when he was stating the case for the Crown at the Fenian trials, "there was not a greater nest of Fenianism in the neighbourhood than that hotel; and . . . there was not a more active person engaged in the movement than the proprietor, William Henry O'Sullivan" (*SC*).

* For list of abbreviations used when citing references, see page 168.

Condon's public house was another popular Fenian meeting place.

Patrick Walsh, a farmer's son from the Kilmallock district who was employed as a shop assistant in O'Sullivan's, did much useful work in building up the organisation in the town and surrounding countryside. In this he was ably assisted by Daniel Bradley, a native of Kilfinane, employed in Grant's drapery. Plans for Kilmallock's part in the projected Rising were discussed and an arms depot was established at Dick Walsh's carpenter's workshop in Tankardstown, in the western part of the parish, in the direction of Bruree.

Patrick Walsh, who was described at his trial as a man of superior ability, education and attainments, left Kilmallock at the beginning of 1865 and would appear to have gone to the United States on Fenian business (SC). He re-appeared in Kilmallock at the end of that year with Captain John Dunne, a native of Ráthluirc, who had fought in the American Civil War; both stayed at O'Sullivan's Hotel, a fact duly noted by the police. During January and February, 1866, Walsh was very busy swearing in new members. The police continued to keep a close eye on his movements. On 28th January they noted in their report book that Captain Dunne had returned to O'Sullivan's and that he had been visited by Patrick Walsh, Stephen Barry Walsh and William Wall (SC).

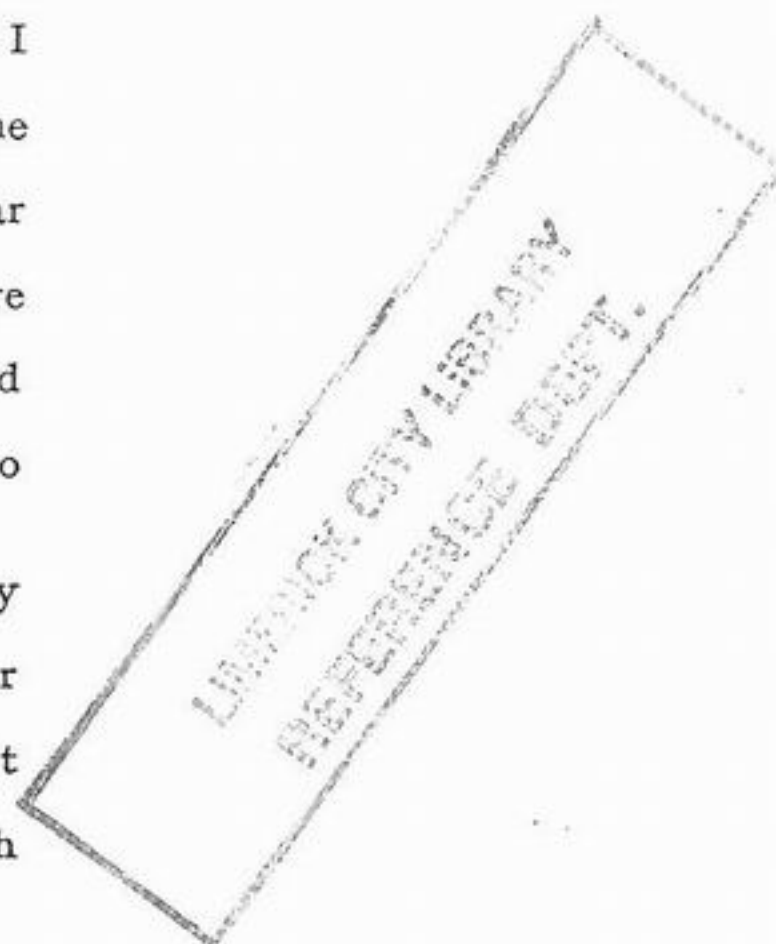
On the night of the 26th of February, O'Sullivan's was raided by the police, but the wanted men had flown. Next morning Stephen Barry Walsh was arrested at his home and was, in due course, lodged in Mountjoy Jail. Another prominent Fenian, Nicholas Gaffney—whose grandfather had been a United Irishman and whose son, Joseph, would one day be an active I.R.A. man—eluded the police and got to the United States, via Glasgow.

William Wall of Ballygibba, a teacher in Kilmallock Workhouse, and local Fenian Centre, was arrested and ordered to leave the country and go to the United States. Before leaving Kilmallock Railway Station, under an escort of police, he slipped unobserved into his sister Ellen's hand a poem of farewell he had written. The contents of the poem give some idea of the thoughts that were at that time uppermost in the minds of many of the men who had joined the Fenian Brotherhood.

WILLIAM WALL'S FAREWELL

Farewell to dear old Ireland, for America I
am bound ;
In this isle for another while no peace for me
is found.
And though I must roam from my own dear
home, across the stormy sea,
I've hopes in store I'll come back once more
and help make Ireland free.
So now with a sigh I must bid you all good
bye and make no more delay,
The ship's sails are spread before the gale, no
longer can I stay.

I thought before this in the battlefield for my
country I could stand,
But now instead I must earn my bread far
away from my own dear land.
And who've I to blame but the man I won't
name who would not give us the word,
Our country to free from Saxon tyranny with
the rifle, pike and sword.



It makes me quite lonesome to think of the
 past and of my childhood days,
 And how at the cross when we came home
 from Mass we would meet and join in
 play ;
 But almost every one of those friends are gone
 and scattered all over the earth.
 In grief and woe they were forced to go from
 the land that gave them birth.

Under the sun there is not another one to
 equal our own green isle—
 Yet, what is the reason so many of her sons
 are living in exile ?
 I'll tell you the cause, 'tis the Saxon laws that
 won't give them room to live,
 But I hope that day is not far away when
 this room to us they must give.

Ó ! Éire, mo chroí, must we always be exiles
 all over the earth,
 To return no more to you, a stór, the land
 that gave us birth ?
 Oh, no ! oh no ! 'tis a burning shame, and
 this cruel thing shall not be,
 For we'll come back in ships with vengeance
 on our lips from the wilds of Americay.

But William Wall never came back. He joined the American Army and died at a comparatively early age in Dakota.

Captain Dunne was arrested in Ráthluirc and lodged in Cork Jail, but was released on his giving an undertaking to return to the United States. Patrick Walsh, having succeeded in eluding the police net cast for him, also travelled to the United States, where he and Dunne busied themselves in making preparations for the coming fight in Ireland.

The Fenians of the Kilmallock district were also preparing for the fight, meeting in secret in such places as Leenane's ditch near Ash Hill, in the field called Gort-pishane close by Clogher Hill, near the rail line at Garrienderk, in the remoteness of the Lios Ollium, west of Bruree ; meeting in secret, and drilling and marching in secret, and contributing a small weekly levy for the purchase of arms. By the end of 1866, Patrick Walsh was back again in Kilmallock, and became closely associated with Richard Bermingham, the Fenian leader in the western half of the parish.

Eventually, the Rising was fixed for the night of 5th/6th March, 1867, and a considerable number of Irish-American officers arrived to take charge in the different areas. The prospects of success were very definitely not now as good as they would have been had there been a Rising in 1865, when Fenianism was a truly formidable organisation with immense potentialities. But all had changed since then, due to various reasons—the activities of spies, the arrest of the leaders at home, the dissensions and divisions among the American Fenians who had been looked upon to supply men, arms and money, and the drafting overseas of those regiments of the British Army stationed in Ireland which contained hundreds of men who had taken the Fenian oath.

Captain Dunne returned to Kilmallock to take command in the Kilmallock, Bruff

and Charleville (Ráthluirc) areas. His plan of operations for the Fenians under his command was that they were to assemble in bodies in the different districts, massing themselves together by degrees and so increasing in numbers as they went. They were to take arms by force, supplying themselves in that way with whatever weapons they could secure. They were to disrupt communications by taking possession of the railways and by pulling up the rails and cutting the telegraph wires. The outlying police barracks at Bruff and Ráthluirc, which would have only small garrisons, were to be surprised and taken, and the policemen's arms seized. That task accomplished, the Fenians from these and other outlying areas were to march on Kilmallock and link up with the local Fenians there, after which a combined attack would be made on the Kilmallock police barracks (SC), one of the strongest in the south of Ireland. It was a bold plan, ably drawn up, but when the test came the Fenians were to find that they had neither the training nor the arms that the carrying out of the plan called for.

At about 8 o'clock on Shrove Tuesday night, 5th March, the Bruree Fenians, to the number of about 20, assembled on the Railway Bridge, which is situated at the Kilmallock side of the village, and Patrick Ward distributed pikes among them. Richard Bermingham was present and he took a party of 8 men with him to the home of William Conway, a miller employed at Ryan's Mills, Bruree. They demanded Conway's gun, which Conway utterly refused to hand up even though advised to do so by his family. The Fenians did not press the demand any further (SC).

On his return to the main group with his raiding party, Bermingham reported that they did not have time to pull up the railway lines or cut the telegraph wires. He then put the whole force into military order and marched them off in the direction of Kilmallock (SC). Two girls accompanied them, bringing supplies of bread. One of the girls was named Alice Harris, either she or the other girl had a brother among the marching men.

At Ballygibba crossroads, some two miles east of Bruree, the Fenian group turned right and continued for about 300 yards to Dick Walsh's workshop at Tankardstown, a Fenian arms depot. The Tankardstown Fenians were assembled there, and pikes were being brought out of the workshop and distributed. Patrick Walsh, the Kilmallock leader, was present and he took command of both the Tankardstown and Bruree Fenians, Bermingham and a man named Lyons being in command of detachments. A small party was sent off on an outside car to meet the Ráthluirc Fenians who, by then, were expected to be on their way to Kilmallock (SC). The main body then set off by a roundabout route to Kilmallock.

The Bruff Fenians, whose leader was Martin Hogan, do not appear to have made any attempt to capture their local police barracks before they started off for Kilmallock. The Kilmallock police were obviously expecting an attack, for at 10.30 on the night of the 5th they despatched a mounted orderly named Michael O'Connor to get certain instructions from a Mr. Franks, a magistrate who lived at Uregare, on the Bruff Road(SC). Earlier in the day they had arrested William Henry O'Sullivan, the hotel proprietor, who had later been conveyed to Limerick Jail.

On his return journey to Kilmallock, the police orderly, O'Connor, was captured by the Bruff Fenians, they also being then on their way to Kilmallock. They promptly read his despatches by the light of his lantern(SC). They brought the orderly along with them to Kilmallock, as a prisoner, and also brought his horse. Near the town

they left the road and continued through the fields to the rendezvous, which was in Gabbett's Field, near Ash Hill.

While the main body of the Fenians waited in Gabbett's Field a small group were spending the night in Hawthorne's house beside the river bridge at the end of what is now Wolfe Tone Street. These, very likely, were the men who had been detailed to hold the river bridge under Christopher Hawthorne. The bridge covered the approaches from two roads. The Hawthorne family had come to Kilmallock from the North of Ireland at the beginning of the 18th century to help establish a linen industry in the town. Originally Presbyterians, they became Catholics, held strong nationalist views, spoke Irish, and were in the United Irishmen. It was in their house—the same in which the Fenians waited on the night of the 5th of March—that the poet, Aindrias Mac Craith ("An Mangaire Sógach"), died in 1795, and it is in the Hawthorne grave in Kilmallock that he is buried.

In Gabbett's Field the news passed round that all of Ireland was rising that night and that next day would see the country free. Hope ran high as Captain Dunne arrived in the field, wearing a green uniform, and took the supreme command. Dunne and Bradley had spent the previous night at Clery's of Gibbingstown. According to an oft-told story, when Captain Dunne heard the sound of the mail train approaching Kilmallock, some time about 3 a.m., he realised that the plans had gone awry as otherwise the railway lines would have been torn up, and he said to the men: "The pass is sold, boys", and advised them to go home. But the Fenians would not hear of doing so and taunted Dunne with cowardice. Dunne then agreed to lead a forlorn hope (*DJR*).

The Fenian scouts continued to report that the lights had not yet gone out in the barracks. In fact the police who, of course, were at that time a semi-military force, were expecting an assault on the barracks and remained up all night, their rifles loaded and capped (*LC*, 7/3/1867). There were fourteen of them in the barracks: Head Constable Richard Adams, Constables Gormley and Callaghan, and Sub-Constables Eakins, Bushell, Dalton, Verdon, Davis, Carbery, MacSherry, Healy, Dwyer, Reilly, Masters (*LC*, 7/3/1867). As well, there were four policemen's wives and eleven children in the living quarters.

Eventually the police must have concluded that there would be no attack that night, and at about 6 o'clock on the morning of Ash Wednesday, 6th March, all but three of them retired, and the lights went out in the barracks. The going out of the lights was the signal for the Fenians to advance. Falling in four deep, they marched towards the barracks which was about a quarter of a mile distant. At their head were Captain Dunne, Patrick Walsh, Daniel Bradley, Patrick Riordan (the Driver) and William O'Sullivan, the eighteen years old son of the proprietor of the hotel. Some had firearms but the majority were armed with pikes.

The barracks, a strong stone building, stood on its own, a few yards back from the side of the street now known as Lord Edward Street. Before it there was a wall about 3 ft. high. Some of the Fenians took up their position on the street side of this wall; others took up positions at the rear of the barracks. Patrick Walsh advanced to the barrack door, poured some paraffin oil on it and then attempted to set it alight. Returning to his comrades he fired the signal shot which set off the Kilmallock barrack attack, an attack that would later be described by the Attorney General as "this outbreak, which was the most obstinately conducted of all these engagements, the most wickedly persevered in and the most seriously planned"—and about which

the ballad-maker would sing :—

“ I was down then in Kilmallock—
’Twas the hottest fight of all—
And you see ”—he bared his arm—
“ There’s the mark still of a ball.
I hope the young lads growing now
Will hold the ground we won,
And not disgrace the cause in which
I held that Fenian gun.”

Patrick Walsh, as stated, was the man who opened the actual assault on the barracks. Judging from all accounts, he seems to have been elated when the fight was joined, and kept on assuring his comrades that Ireland’s freedom was on its way to being won by the Fenians. He received a rather serious thigh wound early in the fight, but continued at his post after the wound had been dressed by Dr. Clery.

Volley after volley was exchanged between the police and their attackers. Before long it became apparent to the latter that if they were to take the barracks they would have to blow a hole in the wall of the building or burn down the door. Two quarrymen named Holmes, employees of William Henry O’Sullivan, were brought up and put to work drilling holes in one of the side walls of the barracks, with the object of blowing it up. This attempt was later abandoned, and a barrel of tar and straw was brought from Conba’s yard, placed against the barrack door and set on fire, but without producing the desired effect of setting the door alight.

Meantime raids for arms were being carried out in the town. Mr. Bourne, a bank manager, was approached by Dunne, Bradley and Patrick Riordan (the driver), and asked to hand up his revolver. According to P. N. Kennedy’s account, Mr. Bourne drew his revolver to fire at Dunne, whereupon Dunne drew his gun and fired at Bourne, wounding him severely in the neck, after which he picked up the wounded man’s gun and departed (GA).

Daylight came, bringing with it for the Fenians the added danger of recognition by the police. But still the fight continued, the desultory fire of the Fenians being answered by the regular military-style volleys of the police. The turning point, however, was soon to come. At 6.30 that morning Mr. Milling, Sub-Inspector of Police at Kilfinane, had set out by public car for Kilmallock in the company of three policemen. They had almost reached Kilmallock when they heard the sound of gunfire and, learning what was afoot, they returned to Kilfinane for reinforcements. When Milling started out again for Kilmallock he had ten policemen with him.

P. N. Kennedy states that a force of 30 Fenians had been detailed to occupy a position in the Workhouse grounds which would give them control of the road coming from Kilfinane. Some time before the arrival of the Kilfinane police the leader of this Fenian party and his men deserted their post, leaving their comrades exposed to the deadly cross-fire which Milling and his men suddenly opened on them sometime between 9 and 10 o’clock in the morning (GA).

Already, many of the pikemen, all too aware at this juncture of the inadequacy of their equipment in the kind of fight that had developed, had dumped their weapons and had disappeared in the darkness of the early morning (GA). But the men who had guns still held their positions and were still fighting. Now, however, under pressure

of the cross-fire, those firing from the front of the barracks had to evacuate their position, crawling in single file on hands and knees to a place of comparative safety. They held their new position for a short while, then retreated slowly, the final phase of the battle being fought down the length of Lord Edward Street between some dozen determined Fenian riflemen and 25 welltrained policemen. At the 'cross' in the centre of the town, where the Kilfinane-Limerick and Ráthluirc-Tipperary roads intersect, and where the buildings to some extent gave them shelter, the Fenians made their last stand(GA).

When a courier reached them with the information that Massy, the district commander, had been arrested at Limerick Junction, they felt that the game was lost. Defeat, and after that perhaps death for High Treason to the British Crown, stared them in the face. A brief Council of War was held. Some were for fighting it out to a finish, but on the advice of Captain Dunne it was agreed that further resistance would be worse than useless. The Fenians decided to scatter in various directions. Captain Dunne shook hands with them, bade them farewell, mounted the policeman's horse—which had been taken the previous night when the orderly, O'Connor, was captured by the Bruff Fenians—and rode off towards Ráthluirc(GA). He succeeded in escaping out of the country and getting to the United States.

The Fenians had lost at Kilmallock, but in the words of the Irish proverb, they could say, "*Beidh lá eile ag an bPaorach*", Yes, there would be another day, for the grandsons and grandnephews of the Fenians would come back on a May night in 1920 and attack and destroy that police barracks of Kilmallock, and some of the old Fenians would still be alive to rejoice in their successors' victory.

But that was all still in the future that 6th March, 1867 when the defeated Fenians fired their last shots and took to the fields, men now with a price upon their heads.

Three of their comrades lay dead at the scene of the fighting. Daniel Blake, a 20 year old shoemaker from Bruree, had fallen in the fight. Twenty-five year old Dr. Michael Clery was a Fenian, although he had not participated in the actual attack on the barracks that morning, but he was standing by in case his professional services were required. And at the subsequent trials a policeman stated that during the fight he had seen the Fenian leader, Patrick Walsh, confer a number of times with Dr. Clery.

It was Ash Wednesday morning, and when Dr. Clery's sister and fiancée, who were at Mass, were due to return from the church, Dr. Clery set off to warn them not to come up the town as the streets were now being swept by police fire. He had only gone a short distance when he was shot down by a police bullet, and he died in a few minutes. Two of Dr. Clery's brothers were among the Fenians who made the last stand at the 'cross' of Kilmallock.(GA).

The third Fenian who died in the fight at Kilmallock has never been satisfactorily identified, and the local people have ever since referred to him as 'The Unknown Fenian'. He is buried in Kilmallock churchyard, where his grave is marked by an Irish cross erected by William Henry O'Sullivan. Michael Hogan, the Bard of Thomond, wrote a fine poem about this Unknown Soldier of Irish freedom. It begins:

Who was he at Kilmallock, that brave-hearted stranger,
Who daringly breasted the fire of the foe?
Like a veteran inured to the battle's grim danger
He fought 'till the red hail of death laid him low.

Different theories have been advanced as to the identity of 'The Unknown Fenian', but the majority of the Fenian generation in the Kilmallock area believed he was Patrick Hassett, whose father owned a public house in Bulgaden, a couple of miles east of Kilmallock. Patrick Hassett was missing on Ash Wednesday morning when his sister went to call him. His bed had not been slept in. His father remembered having heard a whistle, that could have been a signal, outside the house some time during the night. Many of the Fenians didn't return to their homes after the Kilmallock fight, but headed for the ports in order to escape out of the country. But Patrick Hassett was never seen again by his family, nor was any word ever heard from him.

That Patrick Hassett's father did not go to the barracks to view the body of the dead man may have been due to the fact that his publican's licence would almost certainly have been taken from him if it transpired that he had a son in the Fenians. William Costelloe of Rathkeale had his publican's licence taken from him at that time when the authorities discovered that his son, Captain Thomas Meagher Costelloe, had returned from the United States to take part in the Rising.

Reinforcements for the Kilmallock police continued to arrive after the fight had ended. First to arrive were ten policemen from Elton; at noon, County Inspector Hill arrived with the men under his command. Later a long car arrived from Limerick with a force of 30 police under Head Constable Robinson (LC, 7/3/1867).

On the other hand, a body of students who were studying in Limerick, set out to aid the Fenians, but when they reached Bruree they learned that the Rising was over (DL).

A *Limerick Chronicle* reporter, who visited Kilmallock on the 6th, in his paper of March 7th told of the bullet marks on the walls of the barracks, the shattered windows without a pane of glass left in them, the bullet-pierced doors and window-shutters. As the dutiful employee of what was then a Unionist paper, he reported that the "respectable classes" in the town were glad to see all the police reinforcements arrive but that the "lower classes" greeted them with scowls. But some days later another paper, giving the Kilmallock story, stated that "during the attack the townspeople fraternised with the insurgents almost to a man" (WN, 16/3/1867) and that is the general impression one gets on reading the evidence given at the trials of the Fenians.

By the afternoon of 6th March, almost 100 armed police were busy searching and making arrests in Kilmallock. They made 20 arrests that first day and among those taken were Patrick Walsh, Daniel Bradley, Patrick Riordan (the driver) and William O'Sullivan, jnr. (Pl. VI)

By nightfall all were lodged in the County Jail in Limerick.

But many of the Kilmallock fighters had not waited to be arrested. Some went into hiding; others headed for the ports and succeeded in getting away to America. Fr. Edward Clifford, C.C. of Loughill, and a native of Effin, gave shelter to many of them and helped them to get aboard ships at Foynes and elsewhere along the Shannon (DL). After a few days escape through the ports became almost an impossibility. On 12th March the *Cork Constitution* reported that five young men had been arrested in Queenstown the previous day on a charge of attacking the Kilmallock police station, and it added that since the Rising constables from Kilmallock had been sent to keep watch at the different sea ports from which vessels start for America.

All the time the arrests of the Kilmallock Fenians went on. The *Limerick Chronicle* of 14th March gave the names of a further 17 who had been taken. All kinds of strange reports, some true, some wildly exaggerated, some purely imaginary, continued to fill the newspapers in the days after the Rising. Thousands of Fenians had been seen on the Galtees; hundreds had been seen near Mount Russell, in the Ballahouras, south of Kilmallock; another Rising was being planned for St. Patrick's Day.

On 9th March the *Limerick Chronicle* reported that "a bald-headed man, with a flowing beard, strongly resembling Stephens, was arrested last night by a Dragoon at Kilmallock". The same issue of the *Chronicle* told how "Several of the gentry are barricading their residences, while others have come to Limerick". The *Chronicle* of 12th March reported the arrest of Michael Stephen Walsh, Shopkeeper, Kilmallock, for having supplied paraffin to the Fenians to burn the police barracks. Thomas Conba and his wife were arrested on a similar charge.

It was being rumoured that the Fenian losses at Kilmallock must have been far heavier than was thought—what else could explain all those funerals in recent days to the local churchyards? It was reported that a body had been seen near Knock-souna Hill, two miles west of Kilmallock. The police went to investigate but could find nothing; "the peasantry showed a strong reluctance to giving them any facility" (LC, 12/3/1867).

On 6th May, 1867, at the Special Commission set up to try the Kilmallock Fenians, the County Grand Jury handed down true bills for High Treason against the following 25 prisoners: Patrick Walsh, Daniel Bradley, Patrick Riordan (the Driver), William O'Sullivan, Maurice Fitzgibbon, Denis Hennessy, Christopher Hawthorne, Michael Riordan, Michael Foley, John Sheehan (a militiaman), Michael Noonan, Patrick Ward, Patrick Riordan (the Smith), William Turner, Robert Cantillon, John MacCarthy, Thomas Ahearn, Patrick Maguire, Patrick Pigott, Thomas Daly, Thomas O'Donnell, Patrick Barrett, Thomas Meehan, Denis Connors, John Walsh. The charge of High Treason was later reduced to one of Treason Felony. The judge who tried the Kilmallock Fenians was the notorious Judge Keogh, but what a contrast there is between the typically Irish names of the Fenians and the names of the members of the Grand Jury—Croker, Ellis, Cooper-Cooper, Fosberry, Maunsell, Blennerhasset, Howley, etc.

For the part he played in the Kilmallock barrack attack, Patrick Walsh was sentenced to 15 years penal servitude; Daniel Bradley was sentenced to 10 years; Denis Hennessy, Patrick Riordan, John Sheehan, each to 7 years; Thomas Daly, Michael Noonan (Pl. VII: 1) William O'Sullivan, Maurice Fitzgibbon (Pl. VII: 2), each to 5 years. The charge against the rest of the prisoners was further reduced to one of Whiteboyism and they received lesser sentences.

Daniel Bradley, Patrick Riordan and Michael Noonan evidently availed themselves of an offer made while in prison to certain sentenced men to permit them to go to Australia (JH).

Among the items displayed in the exhibition of Fenian memorials arranged for the centenary year of the Rising in the Cork City Museum was the original pardon granted to Michael Noonan of Kilmallock. It is dated 14th May, 1869, is signed by John Bruce, Governor and Commander in Chief of the territories of Western Australia, and states that "Michael Noonan is at liberty to leave the Colony of Western Australia".

The remaining prisoners were released at the general amnesty in 1871 but were forbidden to return to Ireland for the period of the prison sentence that remained unserved. Despite this ban, Patrick Walsh came back, seriously ill, in 1875 but was arrested in July of that year and sentenced to six years' imprisonment, the unexpired portion of his original sentence (JH). Daniel Bradley died while a ticket-of-leave man and his bones lie in far away Freemantle in Australia. When Patrick Riordan (the Driver) returned home he was completely broken in health as a result of the rigours of prison life, and he died shortly afterwards.

The *Limerick Chronicle* of May 24th, 1870, carried the following news item: "A Fenian demonstration took place at Kilmallock on Sunday, on the occasion of the death of an amnestied Fenian named Riordan. About 100 young men walked in military order wearing crepes trimmed with green ribbons."

A monument erected over Riordan's grave was unveiled in 1911 by Seán Mac Diarmada, one of a new generation who had been "re-baptised in the Fenian faith", and who would die for that faith before a British firing squad five years later.

Out of the scores of Fenians who participated in the Kilmallock barrack attack we know the names of only a handful, apart from those who were tried and sentenced. Batt Raleigh was official despatch carrier to Captain Dunne, the Fenian leader, and was very active before and during the attack. In the weeks leading up to the Rising he spent many weary hours on foot or on horseback travelling around the district making the necessary contacts. Batt's brother, Edward Raleigh, was a grandfather of the late Seán Moylan, T.D. Both brothers had enlisted in the Fenians in the old Workhouse at Kilmallock, where they were employed as shoemakers. With some others, Batt got a chance of escaping to America after the Rising, but he chose to remain in Ireland, hoping to get another opportunity of striking a blow for his country. He stayed in hiding for a short time in Tankardstown, then went on to the historic Glen of Aherlow. When conditions allowed he came home and returned to his old employment, and lived to see the Kilmallock police barracks attacked and burned by the I.R.A. in 1920. Batt and Edward Raleigh are buried in Ballingaddy churchyard, near Kilmallock.

Edmond Houlihan of Darnstown lost his sight in a gun explosion either before or during the Kilmallock fight. A native Irish speaker, he was a fine musician, and for more than 50 years after Kilmallock earned his living tramping the roads of central Ireland, playing Irish airs and singing rebel songs, violin and voice his weapons in Ireland's cause. Everywhere he went he was highly respected for his saintliness, his sturdy independence, and his unchanging devotion to the Fenian ideals of his youth. He tramped across half of Ireland to be present at O'Donovan Rossa's funeral, and was immensely proud of the fact that he had heard Pearse speak the famous funeral oration. Towards the end of his long life he returned home to his native Darnstown, where he died on December 27th, 1931, at the age of 92. He is buried in Kilbreedy churchyard, in the parish of Martinstown, about four miles from Kilmallock. A very fine article on him, by Patrick Fanning, was published in the *Offaly Independent*, January 10th, 1953.

Among others mentioned during the trials as having been present at the Kilmallock barrack attack were: "a son of Paddy Peter Clery's (who "wore a Glengarry cap with ribbons and had a gun"); "a son of Mark Clery of Gibbingstown"; "Paul Slattery's youngest son"; "a son of Jack Kennedy's"; "David Treacy's youngest son"; and John Clery, Cornelius Murphy, Patrick Barrett, James Leahy, John

Cashel and James Lyons.

The men arrested in Kilmallock after the Rising, apart from those already mentioned, included John Osborne, John Maguire, James Joyce, Daniel Lynch, John Cummins, Thomas Mac Donnell, Simon Daly, John Nixon, James Wall, Daniel Murphy, John Mac Ginn, James Healy, George Ryan.

I myself as a child remember seeing still another of the Kilmallock fighters, then a very old man. He was Michael Wall, a brother of the deported Fenian Centre, William Wall. At the time I knew him, Michael Wall resided with a nephew, Michael O'Rourke, at Ballynaught, on the road between Bruree and Kilmallock.

Young Tom Pat Clery of Ballycullane wanted to take part in the barrack attack, but because of his youth his parents locked him in his room. During the night he kicked his way to freedom through a panel in the door, and took his place beside his brother, Mark Pat, in the fight, a fight in which another brother, Dr. Michael Clery, would lose his life. After the fight Tom Pat went on the run with a young man named Slattery—probably that youngest son of Paul Slattery mentioned earlier—and succeeded in getting on a ship bound for America at Foynes.

Years afterwards, Tom Pat returned home. Mr. T. F. Clery (of Sheehan and Clery, Limerick), a kinsman of Tom Pat's, and a man who in later times was to carry on the Clery nationalist tradition by joining the I.R.B. and the I.R.A., told me recently that he remembers Tom Pat as an old man having a troublesome toe which needed occasional attention. He had injured it many years before when he had kicked his way through the door to fight for Ireland at Kilmallock, and he used to refer to it jokingly as his "Fenian toe"!

The Clerys who travelled in such numbers to fight for Irish freedom at Kilmallock in '67 came from well-to-do farming families who had been settled in the area for many generations, the family tradition being that they had come from Donegal shortly after the 'Flight of the Earls', travelling leisurely southward with their herds of cattle and finally settling in East Limerick.

So has the story of the fight at Kilmallock on March 6th, 1867, passed into history and folklore. As I write these lines I can see out of the window, a few hundred yards away, Dick Walsh's workshop in Tankardstown, which was a Fenian arms depot in '67. Dick himself died in 1907, aged 92.

A few weeks ago I had a letter from a man named Bernard O'Shea, a native of Tankardstown, who has been living in the United States for many years. He had read about the celebrations that had been held in Kilmallock to commemorate the centenary of the Rising.

"I read the accounts," he wrote, "with a certain pride of belonging to a glorious little community in Tankardstown. I often heard my father speak of '67 and the arrests made during that time. You know, he was married the night before the Rising, Shrove Tuesday. Your grandfather was his best man; and a few who attended the wedding were arrested the following week for their part in the Rising."

Kilmallock, of course, was not the only place in Limerick where the Fenians were active in 1867. In Ardagh they opened fire on the local police barracks, but did not press home the attack; and in Kiltelly they occupied the police barracks which had been evacuated some short time previously. As well, the Kiltelly Fenians raided for arms. Their leaders were John Carroll and Michael Grogan, and they were "out" from the night of Tuesday, March 5th to Friday, March 8th. On the 8th they were on their way to join the Tipperary Fenians who were "out" at Ballyhurst when they

learned that the Rising there was over. Carroll and Grogan were each sentenced to two years imprisonment for their Fenian activities.

There was a very strong feeling in favour of Fenianism in the Kilteely district, and the Attorney General when stating the case against the Fenians who assembled there for the Rising said: "I state with considerable regret . . . that in the case now under investigation appears one of the very few instances in which strong and respectable farmers are found to have taken part and joined this mischievous outbreak" (SC).

A few days after the Rising the *Cork Constitution* reported that "At Limerick, Edward Daly was arrested but John Daly his brother is still on the run." Forty-nine years later Edward Daly's son, Commandant Ned Daly, would prove himself one of the ablest and most courageous leaders of the Easter Week Rising.

Limerick had still further links with the Rising than those so far mentioned. John O'Mahony, one of the three founding fathers of Fenianism, was a Co. Limerick man, a native of the parish of Kilbehenny. An Irish scholar, he it was who decided that the members of the new organisation should be called Fenians. Michael Scanlan, 'The Poet Laureate of Fenianism', and author of that stirring song, "The Bold Fenian Men", also, was a Limerick man, hailing from Castlemahon. And so, too, was Robert Dwyer Joyce, who was born in Glenosheen. Joyce became a contributor to the Fenian paper, *The Irish People*, and later in America was friend and colleague of Devoy, Rossa and John Boyle O'Reilly.

Finally, it might be mentioned that Peter O'Neill Crowley and his devoted band spent several days in the hilly country of southeast Limerick, in the neighbourhood of Ballinacourty and Darragh, prior to that fatal morning of March 31st, 1867, when Crowley was killed in action at Kilclooney Wood, half a mile at the Cork side of the Cork-Limerick border, where the snow of the recent great snowstorm still lay heavily upon the hills.

Ardagh, Kilteely and Kilclooney are all still well remembered. But it would be true to say that when one thinks of Co. Limerick and the Fenians one thinks, first of all, of Kilmallock, where, on March 6th, 1867, was fought "the hottest fight of all".

* * * * *

SOURCES

The following abbreviations have been used to denote the principal sources consulted when preparing this article—other sources are acknowledged in the body of the article:

- DL : *Diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the Present Time*—Begley.
RIR : *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*—Devoy.
SC : Report of the Special Commission which tried the Limerick and Cork Fenians in 1867.
DJR : Letter from D. J. Ryan in *Limerick Leader*, 3rd April, 1948.
GA : Article by P. N. Kennedy in *Gaelic American*, 1906, quoted by Devoy in his *Recollections*.
LC : *Limerick Chronicle*.
JH : Unpublished paper on "Fenianism in Cork and Limerick" prepared by the late Jim Hurley, Registrar of U.C.C.
WN : *Weekly News*, Dublin.

PLATE VI.



1. Patrick Walsh, sentenced to 15 years penal servitude.



2. Daniel Bradley, sentenced to 10 years penal servitude.



3. Patrick Riordan, (the Driver), sentenced to 7 years penal servitude.



4. William O'Sullivan, jnr., sentenced to 5 years imprisonment.

KILMALLOCK FENIANS (Photo's: Copyright, Marcus Bourke, Dublin).



1. Michael Noonan, sentenced to 5 years imprisonment.



2. Maurice FitzGibbon, sentenced to 5 years imprisonment.

KILMALLOCK FENIANS (Photo's: Copyright, Marcus Bourke, Dublin).