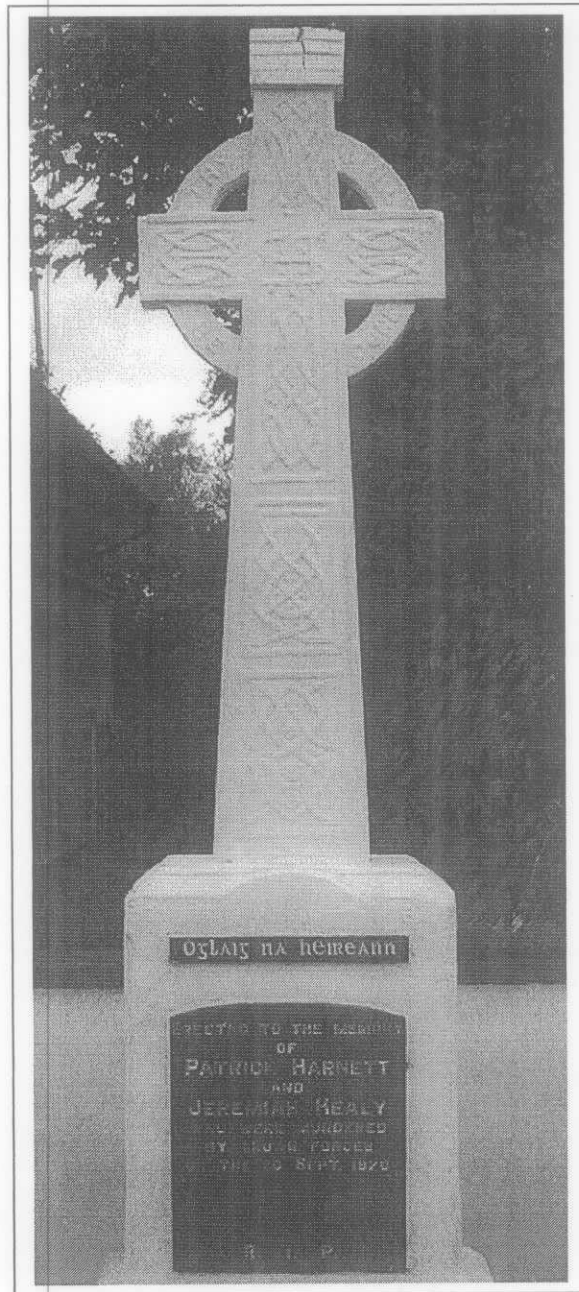


# Patrick Hartnett and Jeremiah Healy.

Murdered in Abbeyfeale by Crown Forces.

20th September 1920.



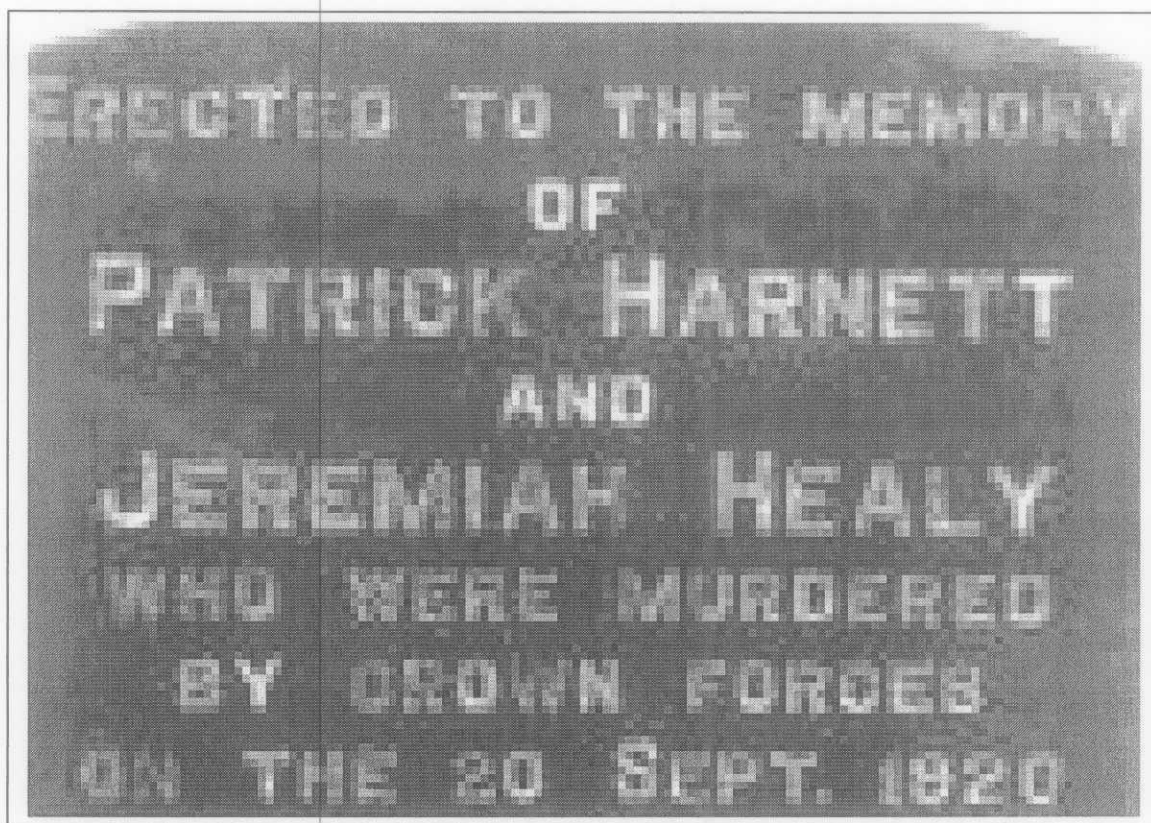
Des Long

Published by West Limerick/North Kerry Memorials Committee.

## Forward.

It is vitally important that the memory of those who were victims of our ongoing fight for freedom be remembered. Therefore the care and upkeep of all memorials to their memory must be maintained and cared for. We in this area are fortunate that such a body of people is prepared to undertake this work. The setting up of the West Limerick/North Kerry Republican Memorials Committee under the chairmanship of Seamus O Suilleabhain is a very important and welcome development.

I hope that this small publication in its own way also help to keep alive the memory of Patrick Hartnett and Jeremiah Healy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank historian Tom Toomey M.A. for his help in researching the booklet. Tom is presently writing the history of the Black and Tan War in Limerick and we all await this publication with huge anticipation



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## Preface

As the Young Ireland crisis of 1848 came to a head, the Republican leadership sent emissaries to the organised areas to evaluate the readiness of the of the Republican Clubs for the coming conflict. Richard O’Gorman, Jnr., a Dublin barrister was sent to County Limerick. He stood as a candidate for the city of Limerick, in opposition to John O’Connell in the 1847 general election and was to prove himself one of the most able leaders of the Young Ireland movement. A reward of three hundred pounds was offered for his arrest. He spent the last week of July going through County Limerick preaching rebellion

Clerical opposition to rebellion was strong throughout the county. On Sunday 30th July, Bishop Ryan addressed the congregation from the alter of St. Johns Chapel and warned then of the horrors of civil war and the futility of opposing the government, to whose laws they were bound to submit as loyal subjects of the Queen, His clergy followed his example. Archdeacon Michael Fitzgerald of Ballingarry, Co. Limerick Pointed out to his flock the criminal folly of joining the wicket movement going on in parts of the country. Richard O’Gorman was then reported in the adjoining parish of Knockaderry urging rebellion. As in 1798 the catholic middle class did not respond to the call to arms.

On Thursday 3rd August O’Gorman addressed a large crowd near Abbeyfeale and urged them to form a camp as they had done during the Rockite rebellion in 1822. Here the seeds of rebellion fell on fertile ground. Men who had come out for the Irish Republic twenty six years earlier did so again and gave leadership to the hundreds of young men who now answered the call to abolish the frightful system which as John Mitchel said: “under the names of law and government, lays waste and beggars and degrades our noble country” The word quickly spread to the surrounding countryside and hundreds came to join the camp in the mountains south of Abbeyfeale. For three days government forces concentrated in the town of Newcastle West awaiting the onslaught of a rebel army 1500 strong. It never came but the local commander, Danny Dan Hartnett with two hundred men kept the flame of freedom alive on the hills of West Limerick for the rest of the year. Despite the best efforts of the British government both himself and O’Gorman made it to America.

## Patrick Hartnett and Jeremiah Healy.

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To study and understand the killings of Patrick Hartnett and Jeremiah Healy it is necessary to go back to the 7th of July 1920, for it was on that day that the principal culprit in the murders of these men entered the story. On that day a batch of new recruits to the R.I.C. or Black and Tans were sent into County Limerick. One of these was 19-year-old Thomas D. Huckerby by name. He was born on the 5th January 1901. He was of exceptional height 6ft 1 inch and spoke with a cultured English accent, was of mixed race and was listed as a clerk before he joined the British Army. It is doubtful if he spent any time fighting in the First World War because of his age.

His first posting in Ireland was to Foynes. On the 26th of August he together with another Constable William Hynes was attending at Doctor Con. Nolan's dispensary in Shanagolden when they were surrounded by 8 armed volunteers and were taken prisoner. They were marched to the bottom of the village and were ordered to take off their jackets, boots, caps and stockings. When their captors found that they were unarmed they burned their uniforms. They then marched them back up through the village and instructed them to carry on to Foynes without their uniforms. This incident did not finish there however, later on that night two lorry load of Black and Tans descended on the village of Shanagolden where they proceeded to burn down the creamery and a shop belonging to Henry Reidy and attempted to burn

area turned and ran for cover. As they ran to the local presbytery they were fired upon and a number of them were wounded including Head Constable Little and Constable James Donoghue who was seriously wounded in the thigh. Constable James Donohue died the following evening in the Military Hospital in Limerick City.

The patrol was accompanied back to the R.I.C. barracks by the two local priests Fathers Fitzgerald and Carr. The body of Constable O'Mahoney was carried back to the R.I.C. barracks on a donkey and cart. Constable Huckerby who was the main target of the ambush had not been rostered that night and therefore was not on patrol. After the ambush the flying column returned to their billets in Athea which was six miles distant.

On Sunday morning the inhabitants of Abbeyfeale were in dread as they knew what to expect and when The Green Howard detachment and a unit of Auxiliaries under the command of Colonel Latimer were rushed into the town from Newcastle West. They expected that there would be raids and reprisals and this soon proved to be the case. Those townspeople who were able to, or those who had transport left the town. Sunday 19th of September was a day of terror that long lived in the memory of all those who had not the means of escape from the area that day. After Mass a full search was carried out on all who attended, and this was a prelude of what was to happen for the rest of the day. In the evening many homes were broken into and searched and as was usual considerable damage done to both houses and contents. One of the houses searched was that of P. J. O'Neill who had shot Constable Mahoney. His sixteen-year-old brother was in the house and some of the raiding party wanted to shoot him. An R.I.C. Sergeant stepped in and prevented this murder. (Had the others known that his older brother had shot Constable Mahony nothing would have saved him.)

The Sergeant who saved the boy was willing to allow the Black and Tans to burn buildings, he was not prepared however to allow them to shoot anyone out of hand. It is supposed that his intention was to allow them to do this as it would let them get rid of their blood lust. It is also said that he later saved the life of a man called Hartnett some time Sunday evening. Some members of the R.I.C. and Black and Tans

experienced members of this patrol were shocked at the casual and callous manner of Constable Huckerby about this killings. It must be remembered that neither of these young men were members of the I.R.A. and had ever come to the attention of the R.I.C. None of the other people killed by Constable Huckerby were members either. In fact Blake and O'Neill murdered at the Cross of Grange were ex-British soldiers.

On Wednesday 22nd September an enquiry was held under Major John T Eastwood who presided. Huckerby in his evidence stated that when he saluted the two men and they ignored him. He formed the opinion that they were up to no good. He followed them up the road and when they looked back he called on them to halt but they ran off. When they would not stop he shot them. Various other witnesses were called including the Head Constable and Colonel Latimer. One of the other witnesses was the R.I.C. Constable to whom Huckerby reported after the killings. When questioned by Mr. J. Woulfe solicitor who represented the families he agreed that no arms were found on the dead men. Mr. Woulfe in a further searching question asked the witness if any thing struck him as extraordinary about the whole story. He replied as follows "the shooting struck me as being rather drastic under the circumstances the man referred to (Huckerby) was perfectly cool and collected. He voluntarily showed the witness his pistol, calling attention to the fact that he had expended only three rounds. He said he climbed through the hedge before he shot them". He the witness further stated that he knew nothing of Huckerbys previous history. Huckerby was never arrested or court-martialled for the killings. It is very significant however that on the death certificates for both men the cause of death is listed as "due to revolver shots fired by T. D. Huckerby," not as usually stated "shot in the course of duty-justifiable homicide." This would indicate that the court must have considered that Huckerby had murdered both men.

After the killings Huckerby was transferred into Limerick City. Referring to this transfer John M. Regan in his memoirs said "after getting into trouble in the country he was brought into the city in order to be under our eye". But was he, I fear not, because while there he continued his reign of terror. It is believed he attempted to drown a man in Limerick because the man had insulted Huckerby's girl friend. He is also suspected of being involved in the murders of James O'Neill and Michael Blake at The Cross of Grange on Saturday 20th November 1920. While those who took part in

paid assassins” and this before their trial. With this kind of talk is it any wonder that Constable Huckerby believed that he could kill at will.

Both Regan and Marrinan have many questions to answer about the reign of terror by Constable Huckerby and the Black and Tans in Abbeyfeale and the rest of Limerick as have their superiors.

**Recommended further reading.#**

Limericks Fighting Story. Col. J. M. McCarthy.(Editor)

Police Casualties in Ireland by Richard Abbott.

The Memoirs of John M. Regan. (Editor Joost Augesteijn)

Blake O'Neill Memorial By Limerick Republican Graves.

Witness Statements in The Bureau of Military History by,  
James Collins.

Dennis McDonnell.

James Roche.

The Last Post Published by National Graves Association.

**Des Long**

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