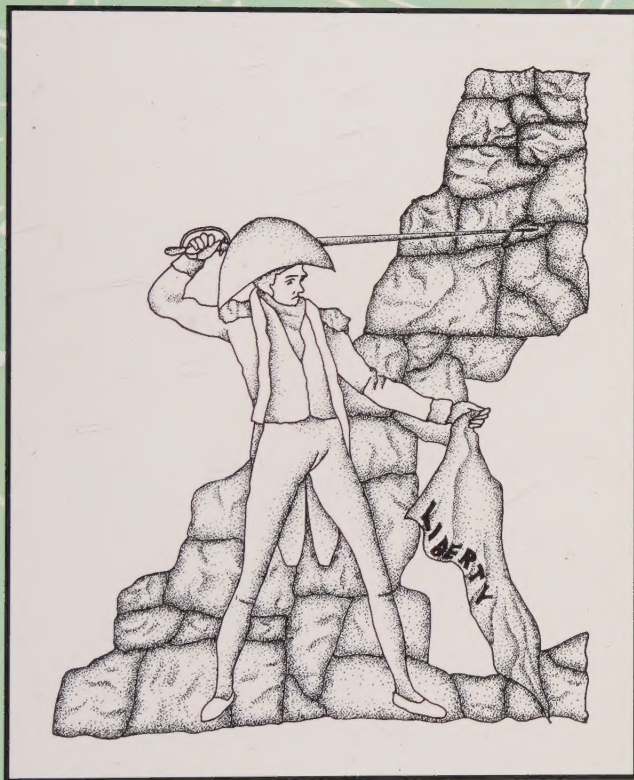



WESTMEATH 1798

A KILBEGGAN REBELLION



KATHLEEN FLYNN & STAN McCORMACK

KILBEGGAN



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&

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Acknowledgements

This book is not intended as a complete history of events in Westmeath in 1798 but in order to explain some of the events it was necessary to place it in the context of Westmeath and Ireland especially in the 1790's when the county was very active. We hope that you will enjoy it and that it will represent in some way Kilbeggan and Westmeath's contribution to 1798.

It is never easy to produce a book and without the help of so many people it would be impossible. We would like to acknowledge the support and backing of our families and the Lockes Distillery Committee in particular. Others who have helped along the way include Dr. D.O'Sullivan; Brendan O'Sullivan; Janet Wallace; Lil O'Gorman; Hugh Daly ; Kathleen Pigeon; and Tom Ward in Kilbeggan. We also received great assistance from Gearoid O'Brien and the staff of the Athlone Library; Tony Cox and the staff of the Westmeath County Library; Offaly Historical Society; John Roe, RTE who provided the stills from "The Year of the French", Micheal O'Conlain, Baile na gCros; Daisy Flynn, Kathleen Wright, Milltownpass; Teresa Dillon, Rathangan; Paddy Heaney, Cadamstown; Declan Bray, Tullamore; Sean Magee , Pat Daly, Marie Coffey and Mary Savage , Ballymore. We are also grateful for financial support from the Westmeath Leader fund and Cooley Distillers.

Special thanks must also go to the Westmeath Examiner for printing the book and to Helen Tully, Rossin, Slane who designed the cover. Finally we would like to give particular recognition to two people. In 1979 Liam Kelliher interviewed Paddy Phylan RIP covering all aspects of his life and Kilbeggan's history and the tapes he produced played a major part in ensuring that this book had a life. We are very grateful to both of them for their help.



The book is dedicated to John McManus, Michael McDonagh and all the other men in 1798 who in their own small way tried to influence the course of Irish history.

*Kathleen Flynn
Stan McCormack*

Locke's Distillery Museum Ltd.

Kilbeggan

Locke's Distillery was licensed in 1757 , produced whiskey for 200 years and later closed in 1957. The closure was due to a number of reasons such as high taxation and economic depression leading to an increase in the demand for beer, the closure of the American market due to prohibition, and also the increased competition of the blended Scotch Whiskey.

Then in 1982 the local people in Kilbeggan joined together and formed a community group whose aim was to restore the building which was steeped in history. A lot of voluntary work was put into this project and in 1987 a F.A.S. Community Development Scheme commenced.

With the help of the F.A.S. Scheme, Leader Grant Aid, Westmeath County Council and the Heritage Council, continuous restoration has taken place since 1982. The Waterwheel is now in working order, a large part of the museum has been re-roofed, the chimney was restored, the Lockes Pantry Restaurant has been renovated into the theme of an old Victorian office space and an exhibition area to display old artefacts of the Museum is now being developed. Locke's Distillery Museum is now known as Westmeath's premier tourist attraction, receiving 32,000 visitors annually.

All proceeds from this book will go towards the development of the Museum.

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Chapter 1

Ireland in the 18th Century

The Revolutionary War of 1689-91 ended in a complete victory not just for William of Orange but for the Protestant community. Many Protestants were critical of William's administration because it was too tolerant. The prime objective of Irish Protestants having just escaped destruction was to secure their position for the future. The confiscations which followed the Revolutionary War meant that Catholics only held about 1/15th of all the land but this was not enough to quell their fears. It was an unpalatable fact that Protestants constituted a minority of the Irish population and many felt that the only way to secure their future was to destroy the power of the Catholic Church, confiscate Catholic land and deny Catholics all social and political authority. In their eyes Ireland was a Protestant Nation and much of what happened between 1691 and 1801 was based on that premise and the fears that went with it.

The Penal Laws are much embedded in Irish tradition and folklore. A series of laws were passed not just against Catholics but against all Dissenters including Protestant minority groups such as the Presbyterians in the north. It was felt that in a time of crisis Dissenters would still rally around because of their common fear of Catholics. The main purpose of the various Acts was to deprive Roman Catholics of all political influence. They were excluded from parliament, the army and militia, the civil service, the municipal corporations and the legal profession. They were forbidden to send their children abroad for education. The Penal Laws were really against the Catholic gentry and to lesser extent the Church. Land was the key to power and wealth and for this reason the Catholics were forbidden to acquire land by purchase, inheritance or gift etc. A Catholic had no power to leave land but if a member in the family became a Protestant he would inherit it all. It was successful in that many landowners conformed in order to save their estates and political position. The Penal Law restrictions did not have any major effect on the majority of people because they were not considered as dangerous as the gentry.

Penal Laws and the Church

Religious persecution certainly was not uncommon in Europe and was

mainly perpetrated by Catholic rulers in France and Spain but what was unusual in Ireland is that it was directed against the majority. The Penal Laws were intended to give security and power to the Protestant minority but enforcement depended on political circumstances at any given time. In a sense the Protestant community had every reason to fear the Catholic threat. The House of Stuart which did no favours for the majority of Irish Catholics, may have been defeated at the battle of the Boyne but the Pope continued to recognise their descendants as legitimate heirs to the English throne up to 1766. For this reason the Catholic clergy were considered disloyal to the Protestant king.

An Act of 1703 provided for the registration of all "popish priests" under pain of banishment and arising from this 1,089 priests were registered. It had the one positive effect only and that was it recognised the legal status of all registered priests. They had the right to say mass, administer the sacraments and perform the normal duties of the priest. The theory of it was that all Bishops were banished from the country under the Banishment Act 1697, therefore when the registered priests died off, there would be no more Catholic priests and without clergy all the Catholic people would turn to the Established Church.

In reality this did not occur and in truth there was no great political will to convert Catholics to the Established Church. What would the Gentry have done if millions of Catholics converted to Protestantism with all that entailed regarding property, political freedom, etc.? However as many paid lip service to the conversion of Catholics, efforts were made by some to promote the Protestant interest e.g. through the Charter Schools. Many of the children were orphans or foundlings as Catholic parents would not give up their own. Around 50 schools were set up across the country but an Education report in 1825 showed that since the 1730's only about 12,745 were apprenticed in the schools and only 1,155 had received the £5 given to those who married Protestants. To put it in context the estimates of the population of Ireland in the 18th century vary from 2-2.5 million in 1700 rising to 4-5 million by 1800, so the impact of the schools like many other schemes was quite small.

International Politics

The attitude of the Government towards Catholics was determined much of the time by the international political situation. From 1702 - 1713 the War of the Spanish Succession took place and England was at war with Catholic France but on the other hand the Austrian Emperor was their ally and he was also Catholic, therefore the Government had to strike a balance. The Stuart Rebellion in Scotland in 1715 and the war with Spain in 1718 brought back the dreadful twin Protestant fears of the Jacobites and Papists and

LIST OF PRINCIPAL OFFICE HOLDERS IN IRELAND 1781 - 1800

Date	Lord Lieutenant	Chief Secretary	Under Secretaries
1781	Frederick, Earl of Carlisle	William Eden	John Lees (2nd Sec)
1782	William, Duke of Portland George, Earl of Temple	Richard Fitzpatrick W.W. Grenville	C.F. Sheridan
1783	Robert, Earl of Northington	William Wyndham Thomas Pelham	
1784	Charles, Duke of Rutland	Thomas Orde	
1787	George, Marquis of Buckingham	Alleyn Fitzherbert	
1789		George Hobart	Edward Cooke (2nd Sec)
1790	John, Earl of Westmorland		
1793		Sylvester Douglas	
1795	William, Earl of Fitzwilliam William, Earl of Camden	George Damer Thomas Pelham	
1796		Edward Cooke	
1797		Robert Stewart (Lord Castlereagh)	
1798	Charles, Marquis of Cornwallis		

therefore severe implementation of the laws (other wars in the 1740's and 1750's had the same effect). In 1701 an Act was passed which denied the rights of James II's son to the English throne. It was called the ***Oath of Abjuration*** and in 1708 following the sighting of the French fleet off the coast of Ireland, proclamations were issued to commit all popish priests to jail. Many had to go on the run and in 1709 the 1,089 registered priests were compelled to take the oath but only 33 did so and the Government found it impossible to impose. Thirteen priests were presented by the Grand Jury in Mullingar in 1711 for saying mass without taking the oath. Of the priests who had taken the oath, 9 were from Westmeath and the Grand Jury were

trying to get the others to also comply with it.

The great image of the 18th century is of bishops and priests on the run and saying mass in fields, sheds and at rocks. While this was obviously true at various times, it was mainly confined to the first half of the century. There is also a traditional image of the priest hunters pursuing the clergy relentlessly but in many cases public opinion was against them on both the Catholic and Protestant side. They were in constant danger of losing their lives and there was a stigma attached which gained few friends. Arguably, a bigger threat to many bishops came from degraded clerics who switched to the other side and for a fee would provide the authorities with information.

Because in a sense the Catholic Church was totally independent of all Government and secular authority and operated on the run it grew strong and close to the ordinary people, unlike other countries where Catholicism was the state religion and the rulers constantly intervened in church matters. While the bishops were in exile, dioceses were administered by vicar generals who could carry out the functions of the bishops except for confirmation and ordination. A constant influx of priests from Catholic Colleges all over Europe ensured that the number of priests were maintained. Collections were taken up for the priests and the traditional offerings at funerals began at this time, although ordinary people had few resources especially as they had to pay tithes to the Church of Ireland.

The second half of the century saw the gradual easing of the laws and when the Pope no longer recognised the Stuarts in 1766 the Hanovers and Protestants generally felt less threatened by an invasion. Prayers were said for the King and Government in Catholic Chapels and bishops constantly reminded their flock to obey the laws of the Government. However the Penal Laws did teach ordinary people the need to defy the law to maintain their faith and by the 1790's many of them were ready to defy their own church leaders when the need arose.

Affairs Of State

The Irish Parliament in the 18th century consisted of a House of Lords and a House of Commons. The House of Lords consisted of 22 spiritual peers (Church of Ireland) and the rest were lay peers. The House of Commons was composed of 300 members - two were returned by each of the 32 counties, two by 117 boroughs and by Trinity College, Dublin. The county franchise gave votes to 40/= freeholders - those who had land either leased on certain terms or owned outright worth at least 40/= . Many landlords tried to create freeholds falsely in order to control the votes but most centres had less than 4,000 votes. In the 57 corporation boroughs the franchise was confined to members of the corporation (mostly 13 in number). Some of the County boroughs like Dublin and Cork had larger numbers and on occasions there was

some doubt as to who would be elected. However the basic point is that the Irish Parliament of the 18th century was not in any sense democratic or representative of the people. It was the preserve of a Protestant Ascendancy class and based on the exclusion of papists. The boroughs were totally rotten and controlled by the gentry e.g. Bannow in Wexford had no house and nothing but a pile of sea sand and in Harristown in Co.Kildare there was "not one house and but one tree inhabiting". Westmeath County (Electorate 1,120) in 1783 had Athlone Corporation consisting of burgesses and 400-500 freemen (Patrons Sir Richard St George and Dean Handcock); Fore Corporation with 13 burgesses (Patron the Earl of Westmeath); Kilbeggan Corporation with 13 burgesses (Patron Charles Lambart); and Mullingar Manor with freeholders of which 12 voted in 1783 (Patron Earl of Granard).

Between 1725 and 1793 Catholics and those married to Catholics could not vote. Elections were rare as one parliament lasted for the whole of George I's reign and its successor went on for 33 years. The buying and selling of seats was very common. The main problem in running the country was that the executive and the legislature were separate. The Lord Lieutenant and his officials in Dublin Castle received their instructions from the English ministry. In the first half of the century he was an absentee who nominally came over at two year intervals to conduct parliamentary sessions but he was not dependent on parliament to approve policy. His job was to ensure that the policy which the English Administration wanted was pushed through and in order to win votes the Lord Lieutenant often pandered to the selfishness of the members of the Irish Parliament. Votes were gained by the granting of titles, places and pensions to the members and civil, military and ecclesiastical appointments to their relatives. By its nature trying to maintain a majority in such circumstances was extremely difficult for the Lord Lieutenant. As one Lord Lieutenant said "*Most Irish gentlemen enter my closet with a P in their mouths - Place, Pension, Peerage, or Privy Council*". This in one sense made many Irish MP's both independent and irresponsible as patriotism and the Irish interest were often used to gain further advantage from Dublin Castle. The situation only gradually improved from the Castle point of view when the Lord Lieutenants began to reside in Ireland from the time of Lord Townsend in the 1770's, which encouraged a system of more direct patronage by each Viceroy up to the Act of Union.

Economic Situation

One of the main features of the 18th century was that prior to the Rebellion of 1798 there was no real threat to the existing order for over a century but visitors to Ireland commented mainly on the poverty and poor living conditions. Part of the problem was the restriction on trade and Irish manufacture by the English Government following the Revolutionary War e.g. an

Act in 1699 prohibited the export of wool to any country except England where there were heavy duties on Irish wool. One positive side of this was the gradual development of the Linen Industry which was encouraged by the English Administration. By the end of the 1720's around 1/4 of all exports were in the linen trade, however it was mainly confined to the north.

With a rapidly increasing population Ireland was still dependent on agriculture and beef was the only important agriculture export to grow in the early part of the century up to the 1730's. Ireland suffered from the periodic famines (e.g. 1740-41) and failed harvests common to all countries. The real problem was the inefficiency of the agriculture system with absentee landlords who drew valuable resources from the land and put back very little in return and on the other hand tenant farmers had little security with poverty the normal condition of life. Tenants could get long leases up to 31 years but then it was often sublet again in order to get the rent to pay the landlord and there was little incentive to improve the land. The growth of the population with the encroachment of pasture on arable meant the sub-division of farms. Most families lived on potatoes and buttermilk in mud cabins and on a knife edge of threatened famine and fever as sanitary conditions were poor.

The 1730-50's was a great period of road building which helped to increase the internal trade. They were built and maintained by Trustees and most were Turnpikes. The Trustees put up the capital and then took the tolls on the traffic. From the 1760's they were built mainly by the Grand Jury in each county (the equivalent of the County Councils) The development of the canals towards the end of the 18th century also assisted in the expansion of flour milling, distilling and brewing on a larger scale and towns increased in size and importance. The problem was that most of the wealth went to the landlords and merchants. Agrarian crime became more widespread and serious in the latter part of the 18th century, most of it localised. The Whiteboy movement which originally arose due to land closures spread from Munster into Leinster and became the focus of many peasant grievances and the precursor of the 19th century movements.

Political Situation from 1780's

One of the problems for the Irish Parliament in the 18th century was that the English Parliament held the power to legislate for Ireland. Legislative bills could originate in the Irish Parliament as 'heads of bills' but then had to be sent to the King's Representative, the Lord Lieutenant for transmission to England for approval. It meant that 'Irish interests' (i.e. Protestant Ascendancy class interests) were totally dependent and subservient to English interests. The rise of Protestant leaders like Henry Grattan and Henry Flood as part of the 'patriot' movement seeking the right of the Irish Parliament to legislate for itself coincided with the formation of the Volunteer Movement.

The American War of Independence in the 1770's with a major involvement by the French brought back the usual fears of invasion. Most troops had been withdrawn from Ireland and the Volunteers originated as a defence against foreign enemies and to secure domestic peace as there was no police force. They were first formed in Belfast in 1778 and all volunteers were Protestant, mainly well off merchants, tradesmen, and well off farmers led by officers from the nobility and gentry. Neither the Parliament nor the Volunteers were interested in the rights of Catholics as Grattan said on one occasion (when addressing Protestants!). "I love the Roman Catholic. I am a friend to his liberty but it is only inasmuch as his liberty is entirely consistent with your ascendancy". When no French invasion came, the Volunteers turned towards politics and in 1779 helped to win concessions with the removal of restrictions on Irish trade and by 1782 the delegates from the Volunteer Corps met in Dungannon and passed political resolutions drawn up by Flood and Grattan with the main assertion being the right of the Irish Parliament to legislate for itself. The same year the concession was won from the British Administration and from 1782-1800 the country was ruled by the so-called 'Grattan's Parliament'.

There was no desire to break the link with England and the independence of the Irish Parliament was more imaginary than real. The Rebellion of 1798 helped to seal its fate, leading to the legislative union of the two countries again in 1801. The Volunteers who had helped to support the Irish Parliament in their clashes with the English Authorities disintegrated on the issue of electoral reform (which did not include Catholics) as many Ulster Presbyterians who were part of the Volunteers received few benefits for their efforts and support. From a peak in 1782 the Volunteer Movement went gradually into decline and by 1786 even Dublin Castle considered then harmless. In a return made for the whole country in 1784 there were only about 18,500 members (some of them Catholics). Some of the ideas manifested themselves and partly led to the rise of a new movement - the United Irishmen. The Protestant Dissenters began to realise that future reform had to enlist the help of the Catholic majority.

United Irishmen

The impact of the American and French Revolutions cannot be underestimated as the latter in particular produced a wave of interest in reform especially amongst Presbyterians in the north. However now the reformers were no longer interested in working within the system they wanted a more democratic state. The founding of the Society of United Irishmen in Belfast and Dublin in 1791 by Wolfe Tone was Protestant in origin and thought but ultimately its real importance was the alliance for the first time with Catholics in order to gain political rights for all. The alliance certainly brought alarm to the authorities leading to the Volunteers being suppressed and the United

Irishmen harassed.

To ease the pressure the Catholic Relief Bill was passed in 1793 allowing Catholics to vote. However without the right to sit in parliament it was a false dawn. As attitudes on both sides hardened with the United Irishmen driven underground and the rise of the Orange Societies in the 1790's, rebellion became the only means by which the reformers could change the system. The reformers were prepared to use violence at home and ally themselves with France or any other allies. The United Irishmen were formed by a group of the middle class with the objectives of Parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation but after being driven underground in 1794 changed into a secret revolutionary organisation. The alliance between the mainly Presbyterian leaders of the United Irishmen and the Catholic led Defenders gave it a mass popularity that could appeal to visionaries and to those with less lofty aims.

Defenders

The Defenders originated in Co. Armagh in 1784 arising out of fierce competition for land in a densely populated area. They were organised as a defence against attacks by the Protestant Peep O'Day Boys who plundered Catholic houses in search of illegal arms. It was an organisation which used local grievances as part of an anti-Protestant, anti-State, and anti-English agenda but it was also a link between the less violent earlier movements and other more subversive organisations like the Whiteboys and Ribbonmen of the 19th century.

The exact nature and appeal of the organisation is difficult to define. Entry was by oath with pass words and signs of recognition. The movement blended traditional grievances over land rents, tithes, and taxes which appealed very much to the poorer Catholics classes with their anti-State ethos which was subversive and sectarian. There were also elements of the traditional Gaelic culture of deliverance from foreign rule and a gradual move towards seeking support from abroad in the shape of France. The authorities were never quite sure of their aims as the Freeman's Journal printed in January 1793 demonstrates

"In all other risings of the populace there was some avowed object or some general grievance to complain of. The Defenders and other tumultuary confederacies that derive from them on the contrary can or do allege none. One talks of paying no hearth tax, another of paying no tithes, a third of paying no rent for potato ground and some others shout out Liberty and Equality".

What started as a secret defence organisation for Catholics spread through Cavan, Monaghan, and Louth, into Leinster. One major factor in the spread of the Defenders was the passing of the Militia Act in 1793. The militia was

intended to be a domestic defence and peace keeping force who would replace the defiant Volunteer Organisation. It was organised by the local Protestant Gentry in each county and conscripts were mainly poorer class Catholics. The proposed compulsory service and a belief that they would be sent abroad led to a fierce and popular resistance. Riots took place all over the country and hundreds died. It only helped to entrench the widening gap between the Protestant Ascendancy class and the lower class Catholics. One effect was that many members of the Defenders were balloted into the various county militia forces and because they invariably did not operate in their own county were able to spread the movement into new areas.

As the state massed its resources and developed a tougher stance to stamp out the terrorism of the Defenders the organisation came to see the Protestant Ascendancy class as their enemy to be removed. The British Government policy of conciliation of the Catholics up to 1793 gave way to a tougher policy, under the Lord Lieutenant Camden, of no concessions and the development of a strong military force to enforce the law. The situation was aggravated even further by the founding of the Orange Order in September 1795 following the Battle of the Diamond in Co Armagh. Class hatred, sectarianism and religious discrimination were common long before this date but the specific formation of the Orange Lodges drove many Catholics into the arms of the Defenders and United Irishmen. The Defenders unlike the United Irishmen did not have a particular set of policies but they had a sophisticated network of lodges and unlike the United Irishmen it is practically impossible to recognise major leaders of the Defender Movement. Leaders of the United Irishmen like Henry Joy McCracken, James Hope, and William Putnam McCabe travelled far and wide from 1795 in order to bring about an alliance with the Defenders and have as many as possible sworn as United Irishmen.

It was not just a peasant movement and included teachers, weavers, blacksmiths, and other craftsmen. The gradual and ultimately logical orientation of the Defenders towards the United Irishmen gave both organisations a wider appeal and conviction that a rising with French aid was the only solution to their respective problems. What started out as a defence organisation had quickly gone on the attack with many raids on the gentry and magistrates between 1795-1798 in an attempt to gain arms. Now they were preparing for an armed Insurrection.

1798 Rebellion in Ireland

The United Irishmen struck terror into the heart of the authorities but by early 1798 the movement was collapsing as the authorities through spies collected much information on the leaders and their plans. The Government repression, lack of French aid and finally the arrest of many of its leaders prior to the Rebellion guaranteed failure. On the eve of the Rebellion the

Leinster Executive was arrested and also Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the Sheares brothers etc. while Wolfe Tone was in France trying to raise an expedition. The Rebellion began on the night of 23-24th May 1798 and was over in 4 months.

The insurgents had two great disadvantages going into battle. They were badly armed and discipline and training was not great without proper leadership. The

United Irishmen were organised on a military basis by Lord Edward Fitzgerald. They were formed into companies for a district and a larger group or corps made up of companies over a wider area. The normal title of the officer was Captain and they were appointed by popular election. John McManus was the leader in the Kilbeggan area covering other places like Castletown, Streamstown, Horseleap etc. The force which assembled in Kilbeggan (without McManus) was divided into bands of 60-100 men headed by an officer and moving in regular order. The problem was that in the heat of battle it was difficult to maintain discipline against trained troops.

The military force in Ireland at the outbreak of the rising was over 76,000 - consisting of regulars, militia, and yeomanry. Fencibles were regular soldiers not used for overseas service and only for the duration of hostilities and they had been raised since 1794. Their discipline was poor at times. The militia were first raised in 1793 and it was an infantry force consisting mainly of Catholics but with a Protestant officer. There were around 24,000 in the militia and the authorities feared that they would desert to the United Irishmen but on the balance of evidence this did not happen and they fought well for the authorities. There was no doubt about the loyalty of the yeomen because the majority of them were Protestant. They had a great interest in defending their own position, often local and personal, coloured with a mixture of fear and dislike of the threat of the Catholics. They were in many ways a partisan police force and not soldiers. While they played a major role in defending the Administration, without the regular army they would not have been able to put down the rebellion. The critical factor in the war was that the government forces had artillery which proved crucial on a number of occasions and obviously their discipline and training was better than that of the rebels.

Still from "The Year of the French".



Towards the end of May the rebellion broke out in counties close to Dublin i.e. Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, and Carlow. The insurgents had some success with the capture of Kildare, Prosperous, and Rathangan but defeats at the Hill of Tara on 26th May and the retaking of Rathangan by the use of artillery ended any real prospect of success for the rebels in Kildare although the county remained disturbed up to and after the conflict at Ovidstown on 19th June. Between the months of May and September approximately 50 battles or skirmishes took place stretching from Antrim & Down to Wexford. In the north the Rebellion was mainly carried out by Presbyterians carrying pikes and muskets but it was put down within a week. Westmeath in spite of being one of the more active and agitated counties the year before the rebellion did not rise except for Kilbeggan on 18th June and later in the year at Wilson's Hospital (6th September). When 1798 is spoken of only one county Wexford, immediately comes to mind as the songs and folklore commemorate Vinegar Hill, brave Fr. Murphy etc. Within a comparatively short time successes at Oulart, Enniscorthy, and Wexford gave the insurgents control of the county but unfortunately they could not break out of the county to link up with others .

The gradual concentration of superior forces and artillery on Wexford led to the crucial conflict at Vinegar Hill on 21st June when the rebels were defeated. The conflict in Leinster continued in a series of skirmishes in Wexford, Wicklow, and later Longford into September. Why was the conflict in Wexford on such a large scale compared to the rest of the country? Contemporaries were shocked at the furious eruption of war and blind sectarianism of the time. However the explanation of poor peasants being led by priests in a religious rising fuelled by a resentment of Protestant military rule without any of the principles of the United Irishmen is not satisfactory. The same could equally apply to other areas of Ireland. There is evidence that many parts of Wexford were politicised and well organised before the rebellion and it is more likely that a mixture of this and local issues that made the scale of the conflict greater in Wexford than elsewhere. In late August 1798 the French arrived in the west of Ireland and initially General Humbert defeated the government forces at Castlebar but Cornwallis who was Viceroy organised a force against them and by 8th September they had surrendered at Ballinamuck, Co Longford.

The significance of the 1798 Rebellion was that on the one hand the Protestant Ascendancy and the British Government were alarmed and it helped to confirm the belief that a legislative union with Britain was the best solution from a security and police point of view. On the other hand it was the start of a revolutionary and nationalist tradition in Irish politics which lasts up to this day in various forms. The 1798 Rebellion brought about the Act of Union with Britain in 1801 but it also laid the groundwork for a tradition that was to break that union in the 20th century.

Battles of 1798

Battles.	County.	Date.
Baltinglass,	Wicklow,	24th May, 1798.
Ballymore Eustace,	Wicklow,	24th May, "
Prosperous,	Kildare,	24th May, "
Clane,	Kildare,	24th May, "
Kilcullen (Old),	Kildare,	24th May, "
Naas,	Kildare,	24th May, "
Monasterevan,	Kildare,	24th May, "
Carlow,	Carlow,	24th May, "
Dunboyne,	Meath,	24th May, "
Narraghmore and Red Gap Hill,	Kildare,	25th May, "
Dunlavin,	Kildare,	25th May, "
Tara,	Kildare,	26th May, "
Killthomas,	Mayo,	27th May, "
Oulart,	Wexford,	27th May, "
Enniscorthy,	Wexford,	28th May, "
Rathangan,	Kildare,	29th May, "
The Three Rock Mountain,	Wexford,	29th May, "
Curragh of Kildare (Gibbet Rath),	Kildare,	31st May, "
Newtownmountkennedy,	Wicklow,	31st May, "
Newtownbarry,	Wexford,	1st June, "
Timahoe,	Kildare,	3rd June, "
Tubberncering, near Gorey,	Wexford,	4th June, "
New Ross,	Wexford,	5th June, "
Antrim,	Antrim,	7th June, "
Saintfield,	Down,	9th June, "
Arklow,	Wicklow,	9th June, "
Portaferry,	Down,	11th June, "
Ballinahinch,	Down,	12th June, "
Kilbeggan,	Westmeath,	18th June, "
Kilcavan,	Wexford,	18th June, "
Ballynascarty,	Cork,	19th June, "
Ovistown,	Kildare,	19th June, "
Goff's Bridge,	Wexford,	20th June, "
Vinegar Hill,	Wexford,	21st June, "
Newbridge,	Kildare,	23rd June, "
Coolbawn, near Castlecomer, .	Kilkenny,	24th June, "
Hacketstown,	Carlow,	25th June, "
Kilcomny Hill,	Carlow,	26th June, "
Fox's Hill,	Meath,	29th June, "
Carnew,	Wic. & Wex.	1st July, "
Ballyrahine Hill,	Wexford,	2nd July, "
Clonard,	Meath,	11th July, "
Killala (capture—1st),	Mayo,	22nd August, "
Castlebar (1st),	Mayo,	27th August, "
Coloony,	Sligo,	5th Sept., "
Granard,	Longford,	5th Sept., "
Wilson's Hospital,	Westmeath,	6th Sept., "
Ballinamuck,	Longford,	8th Sept., "
Castlebar (2nd)	Mayo,	12th Sept., "
Killala (2nd engagement, retaken)	Mayo,	23rd Sept., "

Chapter 2

Kilbeggan in the 18th Century

An Act of Parliament in 1542 created the county of Westmeath and within the county the Barony of Moycashel was effectively created in 1571 by the appointment of Ross McGeoghegan to the seneschal of Ceneal Fhiachrach or McGeoghegan country which was to be named the Barony of Moycashel. The barony takes in many surrounding areas from Horseleap, Streamstown, Castletown, Ballinagore, to Rahugh, Durrow etc. In the context of events in Kilbeggan up to 1798 it is necessary to take in the general area of the barony and also the parts of the barony of Fertullagh close to the Kilbeggan Parish. The men who marched into Kilbeggan in June 1798 came from many of the surrounding areas and not just the immediate vicinity of the town.

Penal Laws and the Kilbeggan Area

During the period 1690-1779 six parish priests ministered in the parish. It is difficult to get good records of this period but the Protestant Bishop Dopping during his visitations between 1682/85 mentioned that there was a Popish schoolmaster Garrett O'Reilly in Kilbeggan. There is some information regarding the landowners in the census of 1659 and occupiers of houses and lands in 1682 (**Appendix A**). The population in 1824 was about 1,800 (**Appendix B**) also shows main traders at the time). A century later there were six schools and he mentioned about 40-50 Protestants in the town. John Daly was Abbot and Parish Priest of Kilbeggan in 1690 and in 1704 Anthony Mitchell (aged 48) was registered in Mullingar as Popish Priest of Kilbeggan. He was ordained at Valentia in Spain by John Salizares, Bishop of Valentia. He had for sureties in accordance with penal statutes Hugh Flanagan of Horseleap, Merchant and Denis Brown of Hopestown, Gent. In the same year Anthony Coghlan was registered as Parish Priest of Castlelost and Rahugh now part of the Kilbeggan parish. Of the priests who refused to take the Oath of Abjuration the Westmeath priests seemed to have achieved the greatest notoriety. Anthony Coghlan was one of those who took the oath and with so many refusing to take it those that did were held in contempt by their parishioners. It is probable that they only agreed to do so in order to attend their pastoral duties in peace but unfortunately for them it misfired.

James Dillon was another priest from the Barony of Moycashel (he represented Ardnorgher & Killbride when registered in 1704 and had as sure

ties John Herald, Kilbeggan, Gent and Aghery Shile of Ballykilroe, gent) who had proceedings taken against him in 1714 because although he had registered he had not taken the oath. In the same year in near-by Fertullagh, William Warren an unregistered priest had a warrant issued against him by Mr Rochfort, Mr Birtles, and Mr Handcock. It is clear that life was difficult for clergy in all areas during the first half of the century in particular. Even as late as 1742 Luke Tyrell was convicted at Mullingar Assizes of being an unregistered priest and ordered for transportation (31st August 1742). His main offence was that he was said to have carried away and seduced to the Popish religion a Protestant woman Jane Morley. Included amongst the bill of costs was an item "a man and two horses to Dublin in pursuit of Tyrell". He was convicted and transported. The situation gradually changed over the century and when Thomas Dunne P.P.died a monument was erected with an inscription which included "In testimony of the respect and esteem which the Roman Catholics and Protestant inhabitants had for Rev.Thomas Dunne". He had studied in Salamanca and was parish priest from 1779 to the early 1800's, earning the respect of all. Strangely Westmeath county aside from Dublin city had the highest number of people outlawed for high treason arising out of the Williamite Confiscations i.e. 304 people including land-owners, their sons, tenants, traders etc.

According to tradition mass was celebrated in the 18th century at Balrath cross-roads where great numbers attended and some had to keep a vigil during ceremonies, also at Cruckanvara, Comagh Hill, Barley Hill on the banks of the Brosna, Ballinderry and many more. One priest captured at Comagh was executed at a place called the "Murdering Boreen". There is also a tradition of an old underground passage from the Cistercian Monastery (near the graveyard) to St Columcilles Abbey in Durrow which was in the past used as a hiding place by hundreds of priests. There are many stories about priest hunters in the area including the notorious Barry Low and the Fionules. The Lows are said to have persecuted, imprisoned and hanged a number of priests. One extract from a song includes the lines

*"Barry Lowe you all do know,
He was very ill inclined,
He dirtied on the altar,
And the devil knocked him blind"*

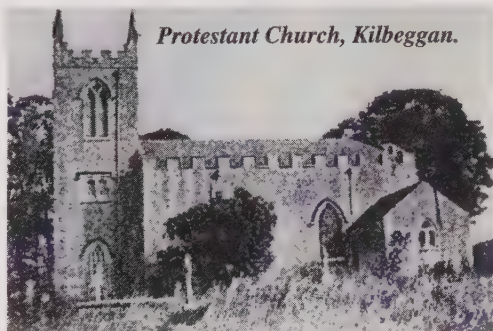
This supposedly arose out of an incident involving Fr. Dillon, who was captured by the Lows at Shureen near Kilbeggan. He had him cuffed and brought to Newtown the home of the Lows and then tied to his horse and dragged to Mullingar Jail. The folklore has it that he was asked to liberate the priest and he answered "May the devil blind me if I do". With that he was apparently struck blind for a short time. A common phrase in Westmeath for many years was "You are as blind as Barry Low".

Kilbeggan was once described as a town of battles and raids in the past and churches and chapels always seemed to suffer. The Cistercian Abbey founded in 1150 was the subject of many attacks and raids until its dissolution in 1539 when all its “goods and chattels” were taken by the King’s cohorts. In the 1640’s an internal dispute within the Irish forces camped in Kilbeggan almost ended in the Catholic church being blown apart as Owen Roe O’Neill ordered the artillery to draw up and fire on the church but happily it was saved. During the 1798 rebellion the yeomanry on several occasions seemed likely to set fire to the chapel with the congregation in it.

Protestant Church

A Protestant report of 1733 states with regard to Kilbeggan that there were 34 church families, 1 Presbyterian, 1 Anabaptist, and 130 popish. There was also a parish priest and a mass house. The Protestant Church was built in 1764 and part of it still remains. The church grounds consisted of a relic bawn of 2 roods and 2 perches, churchyard 2 roods 25 perches, and around 2/3rds of the church lane was tilled. The number of Protestant households seemed to increase into the 19th century. In 1808 there were 40 households which increased to 49 in 1813 (102 male and 103 female) and by 1818 it was 54 households. In 1834 there were 5,104 Catholics, 155 Protestants, and 14 Dissenters in the parish. It is interesting looking at some of the expenses of the Protestant Church on 7th April 1765 - the shopkeeper, innkeeper, and ale seller got 1d each; the shoemaker, wigmaker, butcher, clothier got 6d each; and the smith, tailor, cooper, hatter, and hucksters 3d each. It showed the wide variety of activities in a self contained town. They benefited from gifts from the Lambart family including the church silver. John Elrington who was minister from 1764 - 1801 was called as a character witness for John McManus at his trial in 1798 probably at the instigation of Matthias McManus (father of John) who was a prominent Distiller at the time. It was an indication of the generally good relationship between the Protestants and the Catholics in the Kilbeggan area. In the 1790’s Dr Plunkett the Catholic Bishop spoke out very strongly against United Irishmen and Defenders on his confirmation visits to the town.

One factor that did create some tension between the various religious and social groups prior to the 1798 rebellion was that arising out of the Williamite Confiscations the Protestant Ascendancy was dominant in the near-by



Newtown- Tyrellspass region (even in the time of O'Connell, Tyrellspass was described as a Protestant town) with families like the Lowes, Rochforts, and Pilkingtons, whereas Kilbeggan aside from the Lambarts did not have big landowners. It was a trading and market town more open to outside influences than most towns in the midlands and less restricted by powerful Protestant landlords.

John Wesley

He founded the religious movement Methodism with his brother Charles and between 1747-1789 he visited Ireland on many occasions. There is no account of a meeting in Kilbeggan town but he spent much of his time with Samuel Handy of Coolalough House near Kilbeggan. He preached there on a regular basis and the house became a centre of Methodist influence in Ireland. There was a large congregation in Kilbeggan when a preacher visited in 1794 and even in 1837 there was a community in the town. The Handys and members of the Methodist community were to play some role in the events of 1798 as part of the yeomanry.

Parliamentary Representatives

One of the most notable of the Elizabethan Protestant settlers was Sir Oliver Lambart who was the son of a goldsmith. He was an officer in the army of Essex and is mentioned in a decree of Elizabeth I as a gentleman of good credit and a nephew of Sir Henry Wallop, Her Majesty's Vice-Treasurer in Ireland. He was one of Mountjoy's leading officers in the war against the Earl of Tyrone. On 19th July 1601 he was made Governor of Connaught and after much success was granted huge tracts of lands in the Kilbeggan area including the monastery grounds. He received about 700 acres of land, 60 houses and gardens and the rents and church tithes of 26 townlands. Kilbeggan was made a borough town by charter of James I in 1612. Lambart also obtained a weekly market for the town in 1606. The corporation according to the charter was styled "The portreeve, free burgesses, and commonalty of the borough of Kilbeggan, and consists of one portreeve who was a magistrate, 12 burgesses and an unlimited number of freemen". (Robert Tent, Burgermaster or Provost; Sir Oliver Lambart, Edward Warren, James Large, Thomas Alford, Richard Daniell, John Addys, Robert Lambart, John Mason, John Jones, Henry Dixon, John Smith, and John Boucher). The freedom was obtained by the favour of the portreeve and burgesses. A Borough Court of Record for the recovery of debts not exceeding 5 marks was still held in the 19th century and also a Court of Petty sessions every Saturday in which the Portreeve occasionally presided with the Magistrate. The position of the corporation remained the same down the years but the main power was in the

hands of the Lambarts. Oliver Lambart represented Cavan in 1614 and he was elevated to the peerage as Lord Lambart, Baron of Cavan in 1617 before his death in 1618.

He was an able officer not particularly liked or trusted by the Irish as he was over zealous. At an election in Cavan he cracked the head of a hostile voter who had no hat on at the time! The Lambarts either represented or controlled representatives for Kilbeggan right up to the Act of Union when Gustavus Lambart sold his vote. His heir Charles was advanced to Earl of Cavan and Viscount of Kilcoursey in 1647. The family had mortgaged much of their property in Cavan and Westmeath even prior to the 1641 rebellion. Events in the rebellion did not help as in 1642 he was robbed of his cattle, sheep, corn and equipment in Kilbeggan. His house, the church and mills were all damaged or burned. In the Cromwellian War he raised an army of 1,000 foot on his own account. The second Earl of Cavan was declared insane in 1679 and died deeply in debt. In 1695 the Lords drew up a petition to the Crown requesting that the third earl Charles be given a pension 'in compassion for an ancient noble family' until steps could be taken to get money from the estate. Simultaneously, the Lords passed a private bill which gave him, the widow and remaining children each a third portion of the estate. The family were always part of the establishment e.g. another Oliver Lambart is found in an address to King Charles II in 1683 and Charles and Oliver Lambart were commissioners in 1695, 1697 and 1698 for Meath and Westmeath for raising a supply for William of Orange against James II.

In the "Patriot Parliament" summoned by James II in 1689 the borough was represented by Brian and Charles Geoghegan but the success of William of Orange was to see the downfall of this great family in terms of representing Kilbeggan and in many other ways

The list of Parliamentary representatives in the 18th century were :-

Charles Lambart and Patrick Fox 1703-1713

Brabazon Newcomen and John Preston in 1713 (Preston was also a knight of the shire for Co Meath and put in a writ for a replacement for the Kilbeggan borough in 1713. He was replaced by G.Fitzherbert)

Charles Lambart and Brabazon Newcomen 1715-1727

Charles Lambart Sn. 1727-52

Charles Lambart Jn. 1727-41

Gustavus Lambart 1727-75

Hamilton Lambart 1752-61

Thomas Tipping 1761-69

Charles Lambart 1769-84

Sir Robert Johnston 1776-84

John Philpott Curran)
) 1784-91

Henry Flood)

Thomas Burgh)
) 1791-98

William Sherlock)

Gustavus Lambart)
) 1798-1800

Sir Francis Hopkins)

The contribution of the Lambarts in parliament was highly questionable. In 1746 Lord Chesterfield described three peers including the 5th Earl of Cavan as having "nothing of their own.....and part of the furniture of this House of Lords, which, if his majesty thinks proper to put in a little better repair, he will at the same time do a real act of compassion". References to the Lambarts within Parliament were few and far between. Richard, Earl of Cavan was receiving a pension of £800 in 1780 and Elizabeth, wife of Charles was receiving a military pension of £300 in 1777. One of the more unusual references was on 23rd November 1753 when a complaint was made that "Doctor Francis Andrews did in a violent manner insult Gustavus Lambart Esq this morning at the door of the house". Four days later Dr Andrews in the custody of the sergeant at arms expressed his sorrow for his offence and begged the pardon of the house and prayed to be discharged. Gustavus Lambart received leave on several occasions to go to the country e.g. in 1756 "upon extraordinary occasions" and in 1759 he was granted "leave at his own request to waive his privilege in a suit between him and Richard Hamilton (a burgess)". In July 1743 the Earl of Cavan had put the great and small tithes of the parish of Kilbeggan up to be sold to the highest bidder. The Earls of Cavan were much of the time resident in Dublin and even in January 1759 when lands were being let at Forduras (tenants John Berney and John Harris) and Augheraminagh (tenant Councillor Low), Kilbeggan,

application had to be made to His Lordship's home in Dublin. The Lambarts generally voted for Government with the reward of pensions and certain posts as compensation.

In June 1772 Charles Lambart was appointed Collector of Excise for Sir Edward Newenham from whom the appointment had been withdrawn. However in March 1785 "in the accounts of all debts due to his majesty by officers of his majesty's revenue who have died or being dismissed from his majesty's revenue between 25th March 1782-25th March 1783" the name of Charles Lambart appears as follows:-



Coat of Arms -
Lambart, Earl of
Cavan.

<u>District</u>	<u>Officers Name</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Balance</u>	<u>Sureties</u>
Dublin Co.	Charles Lambart	Collector	£1,422	Gustavus Lambart George Rochfort

Because of their position they were always welcomed by the gentry in the area e.g. in July 1754 when two new burgesses Richard Hamilton and William Midgeig were elected Gustavus Lambart was present. It was his first appearance in the corporation of Kilbeggan since the rising of Parliament. It was said that he was "paid all the compliments due to him by the gentlemen of the county and the night concluded with drinking loyal toasts, bonfires, illuminations, and ringing of bells". It is not often that we get a hint of how the gentry entertained themselves in the midlands in the 18th century aside from hunting and shooting. Many years later in 1786 Sir James Nugent constructed a balloon at Donore with the intention of sending a cat, a dog, and other animals up in it. I am sure the launch was attended by local gentry like the Lambarts but there was no explanation as to how the poor unfortunate animals were to get down again!

When Lord Townsend became Viceroy he took every opportunity to win over supporters by flattering, obliging, or threatening them. Every connection would be strained and stretched to influence doubtful members and improve the castles numbers. (The Lambarts were always likely candidates for this type of pressure!). On 14th February 1771 he wrote to his mother

"There was a Mr Charles Lambart, a son of a very worthy gentleman Mr Gustavus Lambart of Beauparc who is on the point of marrying a relation of

yours, Miss Dutton. It may be difficult at such a time to persuade a young lady to part with her lover but if your ladyship pleases to hint how much it may coincide with my wishes to Mr Lambart's family as well as for the Kings Service here at so critical a time in the first day of session, it may be of use".

It is a good indication of the workings of the Irish Parliament in the 18th century. Not even true love could stand in the way of political needs!

Like many other land-owning families through the 18th century the Lambarts for financial reasons had to associate with many of those who founded their fortune on trade e.g. Sir Michael Cromie MP for Ballyshannon was the son of a Dublin wine merchant and he married Lady Gertrude Lambart daughter and heiress of the Earl of Cavan. Cromie was made a baronet in 1776. Finance was always a problem for the Lambarts and in March 1796 we find a letter addressed to Arthur O'Connor (a key figure in 1798) from C.J.Fox, Fitzroy Square.

"Sir, -I received some days ago an answer to Mr Lambart who says it is his intention to re-negotiate only for one seat and that in respect to that one he is at present in Treaty with two persons but if he should not close with them he is willing that you should have it if the terms suit you. There are £3,000 Irish to be paid down and he is to pay the interest till the day of the return. I suppose he means until the return is made secure against a Petition.."

The ultimate price for the seat was paid with the passing of the Act of Union in 1801. Gustavus Lambart sold his vote for £15,000. The family were typical of the Protestant gentry of the 18th century - protective of themselves and their own class before any other considerations e.g. Gustavus Lambart was one of the Grand Jury members who generously voted a service of plate to the Wicklow Militia led by the murderous Hempenstall "The Walking Gallows" and all at the expense of the taxpayers.

Contribution to Kilbeggan

The Earls of Cavan never lived at Beauparc House which was in their ownership from the mid-18th century up to 1986 when Lord Henry Mountcharles , Slane Castle took it over. Gustavus William Lambart married Lady Francis Caroline Maria Conygham in 1847. She was the daughter of the 2nd Marquess Conygham. As usual the Lambarts were in financial difficulties at the that time and the 2nd Marquess gave the house to her daughter and son-in-law. The house was the home of many of the Lambart's but they did live in Kilbeggan for generations. They had a house on the Tullamore Road on the hill of the grove near the water tower and there were two gate houses around the first house on St James Terrace. The entrance was said to be beside Clavin's on Main Street where the archway stands with a gate lodge on one side and a bit back from the street.

The impression given of the Lambarts up to this point would infer that

they contributed little to the Kilbeggan District but in fact that would be unfair. On the one hand the Protestant community were well supported by the family as the parish and church benefited from their gifts. They contributed to the building of the last Protestant Church in 1764 and to much of the church silver even prior to that e.g. a flagon was given by Charles Lambart to the Church in 1754 and he gave an alms dish in 1768. Of more practical benefit to the general population was the development of the roads and the weekly market which was one of the largest in the midlands and also the annual fair. Gustavus Lambart paid much of the costs of the Market House built in 1828 by Patrick Phylan and still one of the most striking buildings in the town. They also gave strong support to the suggestion of a branch of the Grand Canal coming to Kilbeggan, first explored in 1796 and ultimately achieved in the 1830's.

There is no real tradition of antipathy towards the Lambarts as there would be towards some other families in Westmeath like the Rochforts, partly because they moved out of the area and worked through agents. There is a tradition that on one occasion some of the people decided to burn out Gustavus Lambart. They went up to the house and set it alight. A loyal servant of the family got him out in a feather tick. He was described as a small wizened man. Paddy Phylan in his recollections of his grandfather's time (1766-1859 *Appendix C*) mentions in connection with the Lambarts that there was an election and as his grandfather was a 40/= freeholder he had a vote. Lambarts wanted him to vote for a Protestant landlord connected with the family who were living in Kilbeggan at the time. His grandfather had a plural vote and intended it for the nationalist candidate. Lambart asked him to "Split your vote and I'll forgive you" but he refused and Lambart said "Paddy, you are the only tenant on the estate that a Lambart stopped with" (that would have been his great grandfather Mattie). He refused and Lambart said "If you don't split your vote, I won't leave you two rafters on my estate to cover you". His grandfather managed to survive the threat.

Even though Gustavus Lambart represented the borough of Kilbeggan in 1798 there is no record of any comments by him regarding events at the time. Presumably he had little enough contact with Kilbeggan during this period. Like many Protestants in the area their general feelings outside the heat of a rebellion were expressed some years later at the setting up of the Tyrellspass Brunswick Constitutional Club on 27th October 1828. The purpose of the Club was to protect the integrity of the Protestant Constitution. Gustavus Lambart was in the Chair and said the motto of the Club was not "Blood much blood" as was attributed to them but "Peace and good will to all". He wished that "every Roman Catholic enjoy the comforts of his own fireside with his religion and his property protected from loss and insult and that he should enjoy every privilege that would not endanger the safety of the Protestant religion and our free constitution". He added that we should hesitate to give further concessions to Catholics but "however irritating their

conduct has been we profess to conduct ourselves with kindness towards them and avoid all reasonable cause of offence". While the Brunswick club of Tyrellspass represented something totally different from the Catholics of the area the sentiments were probably fairly close to the general attitude of the Lambart family in 18th century Kilbeggan

The same could not be said of another member of the family as the Rev. George Lambart of Beauparc contributed much valuable information to the authorities in Co. Meath regarding the Defenders and United Irishmen. (*Appendix D*)

Other Kilbeggan Representatives

We know little about some of the other parliamentary representatives as the Lambarts controlled the borough e.g. Oliver Lambart who represented Kilbeggan in 1661 was married four times and one of his daughters Arabella married into the Newcomen family which explains Brabazon Newcomen's position as an M.P. The Lambart connection was maintained with John Preston. His father, also called John, was married to Anne daughter of Richard Tighe. On his fathers, death Anne married Oliver Lambart third son of Charles the first Earl of Cavan. John Preston of Bellfong, Co Meath was born in 1687 and represented that county in 1711, 1713, 1715 etc. aside from Kilbeggan in 1713.

William Sherlock of Sherlockstown and Thomas Burgh of Chapelizod were both from Kildare families and connections with Kilbeggan were tenuous. Burgh represented Kilbeggan for seven years. He was a man of great ability (he even invented cooking stoves used in the Militia Camp at Loughlinstown in Dublin). He was Joint Weigh Master of Cork. Treasurer of the Ordinance and Comptroller General but he had an arrogant and overbearing manner and in 1780 the following lines were found posted up in Parliament House.

***"To put an end to all dissention,
Let needy Grattan have a pension,
Buck's Usher on the Bench be seated,
And Bushe a baronet created,
Aspiring Burgh be made a lord,
And Napper Tandy have a cord"***

In 1799 Burgh, who lived in Sackville Street, was removed from his position in the Treasury to one in the Board of Accounts. Burgh when representing Kilbeggan and acting as Accountant General appeared in the house on 8th February 1791 to set forth a petition that he had been at great expense and trouble in preparing national accounts laid before the house and "pray

ing reward". He was brought into parliament through the Duke of Leinster's influence but opposed his patrons, wishes by constantly voting for Government. He did not seek re-election after the Union but continued as Commissioner of Accounts until 1804 and in 1807 he was made Commissioner of Revenue. He died in 1810.

Thomas Tipping from Louth was an interesting representative. The election in Louth in 1761 was most unusual in that the selling of boroughs was long practised. Messrs Fortescue, Foster and Thomas Tipping came to an agreement to deposit £400 each and agreed that Fortescue would be one member and that Foster and Tipping should toss up to see which of them would get the other. The loser was to get the £1,200 to purchase a seat in another borough. The toss was made and Foster won it. The whole arrangement caused controversy but ultimately Foster and Fortescue were returned unopposed. They failed to keep their side of the bargain and feelings in Louth ran so high that for a few years no sheriffs or grand jurymen were elected. Shortly after his withdrawal from the election in 1761 Tipping was returned for the borough of Kilbeggan, presumably by purchase but who provided the money is not known. Tipping had lands at Gneevebeg, Moycashel formerly held by Kedagh McGeoghegan. The mill and dwelling house were destroyed by fire in 1753 and a reward of £50 was put up for the culprit.

Sir Francis Hopkins was another parliamentary representative of note and at one point he had pretensions to liberalism. In 1792-93 a Society was found in Dublin called Friends of the Constitution, Liberty, and Peace. They had Whig sympathies and a radical programme of reform of Parliament and Catholic Emancipation. There was a branch formed in Trim in January 1793 which included well known figures like Sir Benjamin Chapman, Joseph McVeigh, and former sheriff Sir James Somerville, in addition to Hopkins. The appearance of the Defenders in the county and the outrages stunted the growth of this liberal organisation. At around the same time another organisation called the Meath Association had also arisen under the influence of John Foster, a major political figure and landowner in Meath who was anti-Catholic. Foster had advocated in 1793 that regulations which forbade Catholics to carry arms should be rigorously enforced. Hopkins, Chapman and the others all contributed to the Meath Association. His brief flirtation with liberalism over Hopkins represented the Kilbeggan area in the years before the Rebellion and Act of Union but he made no impression in Parliament. Eventually, he was prevailed upon to take money and let in a Unionist. He was no worse than some other local representatives e.g. William Handcock of Athlone of whom Jonah Barrington said that he made and sang songs against the Union in 1799 at a public dinner of the opposition. Then in 1800 he made and sang songs in favour of the Union, all for a title and money. In 1812 he took the title Baron Castlemaine. The extremes from limited ambition to corruption came home to roost by the end of the 18th century.

Henry Flood

The two most notable representatives of Kilbeggan in the 18th century were John Phillpott Curran and Henry Flood, two of the most important figures to bestride the century.

Flood was one of the most eminent and talented members of the House of Commons and with Henry Grattan played a major part in winning legislative independence for Ireland in 1782. He was born in 1732 in Kilkenny and studied in Trinity College and Oxford. He first represented Kilkenny in 1759 and was a vigorous speaker and antagonist against the Government. In 1775 to the surprise of many he took a position in Government as Vice Treasurer of Ireland apparently in the belief that he could achieve more in Government than outside, while Grattan lead the “patriots” in opposition. Flood discovered that he was expected to support Government in all votes and after about six years he joined Grattan and the others to gain the great success of 1783.

In 1783 he drew up a scheme of parliamentary reform and still dressed in his uniform led a Volunteer Convention to the House of Commons but this time they were faced down and the bill was refused (It is recorded that the Motion for more equal distribution of the people in Parliament was made in the House of Commons on Saturday, 29th November 1783 by the Rt. Hon. Henry Flood M.P. for Kilbeggan and seconded by the RT. Hon. William Brownlow M.P. for Co Armagh). He opposed any proposals to allow Catholics to share in the political life of the country. Subsequent to this a personal dispute arose between him and Grattan regarding a national grant made to Grattan for his service and it turned into a bitter dispute. The Speaker had to interfere and take both into custody and have them bound over to keep the peace. He represented Kilbeggan from 1784 until the year preceding his death. He made several visits to the area but little is known about them. His lack of contact could be explained at the time as he was also a member of the British House of Commons representing the borough of Winchester. He had little further success as much of his eloquence and influence was gone. It was said of him that “by his exertions and repeated discussion of questions, seldom if ever approached before, first taught Ireland that she had a Parliament”. From a Catholic and Nationalist point of view his achievements might be considered limited when he died in 1791 at his seat in Farmly, Co Kilkenny in his 60th year and he has been overshadowed in history by the more famous and effective figure of Grattan.



John Philpott Curran

The 'incorruptible' John Philpott Curran also represented the borough of Kilbeggan from 1784-91. This celebrated advocate and parliamentary orator was born at Newmarket, Co Cork on 24th July 1750. His father was seneschal of the manor court of the town and his mother was said to be witty and eloquent (her maiden name was Philpott). He originally intended to enter the Church when he entered Trinity College in 1769 but soon changed to law and went to London to study and in 1775 was called to the bar. For a time he attended the sessions in Cork. His first fee of any consequence was received from Arthur Wolfe (later Lord Kilwarden) who was murdered during the Rebellion of 1803 in Dublin. From that start he grew within his profession to become the most popular advocate of his Time. He joined the opposition in Parliament in 1784.



It was said that Lord Longueville, who was a wholesale dealer in the trade of parliament was eager to get a desirable recruit like Curran and he helped return him for a seat under the mistaken belief, that a young barrister with a growing family and dependent on his profession for subsistence would not allow principles to interfere with personal interest. However he voted against his patron on the very first question and persevered subsequently in his independence. He also purchased a seat which he insisted on transferring as an equivalent for that of Kilbeggan. Curran in parliament was in the ranks of the opposition and acted with many of the great patriots and statesmen of the time. However he always acted within the law and was friendly with many of the establishment through his career.

Curran was especially noted for his sharp wit and many stories have been told of his ability to produce the quick retort. The Beresford family were a great power in 18th century Ireland and John Fitzgibbon (later Lord Clare) was related to them by marriage. He was Attorney General in 1783 and Lord Chancellor in 1789, and also a great supporter of the Union. There was a mutual antipathy between Curran and Fitzgibbon, both in political life and within the court of law. On one occasion when Fitzgibbon was on the bench and Curran was presenting a case, the former had a dog beside him in court and continued to pet it even as Curran spoke. Curran's patience eventually broke and he lapsed into silence. When the judge asked him to continue Curran replied "*I thought your Lordships were in consultation*".

He was also quite friendly with John Toler who was elevated to the peer

age as Lord Norbury, better known as "The Hanging Judge". He was a judge for 27 years in spite of having little knowledge of the law and a harsh unyielding attitude which caused the death of many young men. Curran visited him on occasions at his residence in Durrow just a few miles outside Kilbeggan. One day they were out riding to a hunt near Tullamore when they passed the jail and Norbury looking over at the gallows remarked to Curran "***If the gallows was doing its duty, where would you be?***". "***Riding alone my Lord***" was the ready reply. On another occasion when at a dinner with Norbury the latter was asked if he would care for some meat and he asked "***Is it hung?***" and Curran quickly said "***Oh, you have only to try it and it is sure to be hung***".

Curran is best remembered for defending many of the United Irishmen from Hamilton Rowan to John and Henry Sheares. Even though he did not succeed in having them freed his impassionate speech in defence of the rebels could not have been bettered, but in the political climate of the time he had little hope of success. His last speech in the House of Commons was in May 1797 when he spoke on Parliamentary Reform gives some idea of the man.

"You have tried to force the people; the rage of your penal laws was a storm that only drove them in groups to shelter. Your convention law gave them that organisation which is justly the object of such alarm; and the very proclamation seems to given them arms. Before it is too late therefore, try the better force of reason and conciliate them by justice and humanity.....As to the system of peace now proposed you must take it on principles - there are simply two, the abolition of religious disabilities and the representation of the people. I am confident the effects would be everything to be wished. The present alarming discontent will vanish, the good will be separated from the evil intentioned.....every sensible man must see that it gives all the enjoyment of rational liberty if the people have their due place in the state".

Unfortunately for Curran he was speaking to irrational people and had little chance of success. Curran is remembered in a less favourable light in his relationship with his daughter Sarah because of her involvement with Robert Emmet. The murder of Lord Kilwarden, who was friendly with Curran, in Emmet's abortive rebellion of 1803, certainly put a huge strain on the relationship. He felt compromised and assured the Government that he disapproved of the whole matter. That was understandable but his harsh treatment of his daughter was much less so. He died in 1817 an unhappy man on both a political and personal level. In his time there is little evidence of him achieving much for Kilbeggan in spite of his local visits but to expect it would be a misinterpretation of how politics worked at the time. It was the large landowners and business people who influenced the development of an area and not barristers!

Kilbeggan Town and Trade

Ireland in the first half of the 18th century was predominantly a rural country and even larger towns in Westmeath like Athlone and Mullingar had a small population. In 1682 Sir Henry Piers visited the county and many towns including Kilbeggan and he gave a general description of the area (which is naturally not without prejudice). When speaking of the manners and customs of the county he describes them as “rude and barbarous” and stated that it will take many years to civilise them. He is critical of the gentry for being lazy and useless but claimed the people had a love of learning and were hospitable to all. The landlords were described as oppressors of the tenants. He describes the principal commodities as corn, hides, tallows, flax, hemp, cheese, butter and wool.

Because of the relative peace for the first three quarters of the 18th. century, agriculture and trade flourished in the Kilbeggan area in spite of Acts of Parliament which benefited English farmers at the expense of the Irish. Competition for land only became a real issue with the clearances towards the end of the century. This was due to the development of the great estates with woodlands and gardens but this also required money and plenty of space, therefore tenants were cleared off and had to compete for other land. The remaining tenants had to pay higher rents. Because there were few large estates in the vicinity of Kilbeggan it was less effected than other towns and regions. After the mid-century more fields were enclosed by ditches because of the more intensive use of land as the population grew.

Arthur Young in his travels in the 1770's pointed out the increase in the number of potatoes being planted as it gradually became the staple food. They also had some milk and a little butter but meat was only occasionally eaten. Other writers more than a century after Piers described the living conditions of the people. Brewer said the people lived in cabins composed of mud with smoke escaping through a hole in the roof with perhaps a hay band stretched across the fire

Taylor & Skinners Road Map of Ireland (surveyed 1777)



place for hanging linen to dry in spite of the thick smoke. A few animals like cats and dogs would be common, an iron pot, 2 or 3 stools, a table, a dresser with some cutlery. Shoes and stockings in many cases were a luxury. A sack of meal might be placed in the corner but many tenants were bound by their lease to carry oats to their landlord's mill.

Cromwell writing about Westmeath early in the 19th century indicated that in spite of the fertility of the soil and the good returns to occupiers "the condition of the labourers bear little affinity to either; extreme privation and poverty are still the characteristics of their pitiable situation". The gap between rich and poor was at least as great as most areas in the country. Westmeath from the late 18th century through the 19th century especially around the Kilbeggan area was very much an area of violence and brutality. This was at a time when improvements in farming methods and production took place as prosperity for some developed side by side with others slipping gradually into destitution.

The Parliamentary Gazetteer later in the 19th century gives some idea of the conditions in which people lived which obviously in most cases would have been worse a century earlier. Kilbeggan is described "Though containing a full compliment of squalid cabins and hovels presents a tolerably well built appearance and has a fair proportion of slated houses". However being on the route from Dublin to the West, Kilbeggan in the 18th century would have had a number of small thatched houses with two rooms at most and some two storied thatched houses for the better class.

Our knowledge of the town at the time is limited but the Square contained a few houses on the southside and a large pond on the northside for ducks and geese. The Courthouse and Market House were not yet built but two dilapidated hovels were in their place. Several lanes and side streets existed with a few hovels. There was only one main street and all the other by-streets were called lanes, roads, alleys, etc.

Some of the names were Creevy's Lane, Puddle Lane, Mill Lane, Taylor's Lane, Sailor's Row and Water Street. The Coola and Mullingar road did not exist as we know them nor did the present Dublin Road. The Harbour Road was the Dublin Road because there was no canal as yet. Coola Mills did not exist but there was an old mill there and an extensive milling business. There was a small mill in the town with a lane that ran from Mill Lane to Coola via the River Brosna. Aside from being a borough and garrison town Kilbeggan was also a postal town because of the coaches. In 1768 it was listed as having post twice weekly with a 4d charge. The principal route to Galway was not through Kilbeggan at the time. The town had two hotels, a livery stable, and it was a coach stop with coach agents and yards and there was a carman's stage outside the town.

had two horses and drayed from Dublin. The carmen went to Dublin to supply goods for the district. In the summer they would do two journeys per week with about 20-30 of them coming from Dublin to Kilcock and maybe as many coming from other parts. Kilbeggan was one of the main stages. They often started at midnight with nosebags on the horses and arrived in Dublin before the heavy traffic and out again quickly. He had just two Irish draught horses with two drays and each horse carried a ton weight. The roads were full of carmen and drays and many going west would stop in Kilbeggan. The arrival of the canal in the 1830's ended the need for carmen.

Agriculture and Trade

Kilbeggan was one of the most important market towns in the midlands with products like butter and eggs in particular but also potatoes, turnips etc. Its importance increased into the 19th century after the Market House was built in 1818 by the Lambarts and a section of the Grand Canal opened in 1835. They came from Daingean, Drumraney, Mount Temple, Loughnavalley and all around. It was said that anything would be sold in Kilbeggan which brought the wool buyers, the corn merchants, green grocers, butter buyers, and even onion buyers. In addition four fairs were held in March, June, August and October. It was not a coincidence that the rebellion took place on the fair day in June.

The making of linen and linen manufactures was one of the great industries of the 18th century. A Board of Trustees for linen manufactures had been set up by the Government in 1711 to establish places to deal with all stages from growing flax to the finished article. The Economic Depression of the 1770's and a shortage of skilled weavers brought a rapid decline in the linen trade in the Kilbeggan area. It was reckoned in 1773 that the linen trade had declined by 2/3 in the Athlone and Kilbeggan area and about 1/2 the looms were idle in the Clara district. In November 1773 a meeting was held in Moate of linen manufacturers from Clara, Kilbeggan, Tullamore, Athlone, and Moate. Those in attendance were asked to bring the number of looms employed by them at that time or within the previous two years and

Kilbeggan Mart



also the number who had left the trade in that time; unfortunately the figures are not available.

In 1809 a figure of 1,448 acres under flax was given for Westmeath but it would have been much greater in the 18th century. It was grown in abundance in

the Kilbeggan area from Coola to Moycashel. The process involved pulling , bounding the sheaves and immersing in water , preferably bog water. It was taken up and spread out to dry and then bound and stacked. The scutchers removed the rotten outer layer etc. leaving the strands of fibre used for making the linen. A lot of the tow produced by scutching was sold to the local Distilleries for insulating pumps. On the south side of the River Brosna close to the Distillery there was a site called 'the bleachyard', which was rented to Messrs Fleetwood and Hill for the bleaching and finishing of the linen. Fleetwood built a pressing and dye mill on the site but unfortunately he became bankrupt early in the 19th century.

The Fleetwoods were also involved in another industry which was especially successful in Kilbeggan in the last 20 years of the century, which was flour milling. The two main flour mills in the area were Coola and Ballinagore. The Fitzpatricks had the mill in Coola up to 1781 when it was taken over by Mr R. Connolly and the Fleetwoods owned the Ballinagore Mill. A comparison of flour sent by road to Dublin at that time shows that between 1777-88 Ballinagore Mill went from 3,158 cwts. to 6,772 cwts. (**Appendix E**) The Coola Mill in Kilbeggan was very small scale when run by the Fitzpatricks and from 1778-81 the amount sent to Dublin went from 644 cwts to 126 cwts. However the Connolly family obviously improved and expanded the mill and in 1781/82 around 2,936 cwts were sent by road to Dublin and 1,034 by canal. In 1789/90 Coola was sending more flour by road to Dublin than any of the other mills in Westmeath i.e. 4,693 cwts, Fleetwoods 3,262 cwts, R. Garrett, Athlone 3,603 etc. (In 1762/63 Westmeath was one of the few counties from which flour was consigned to Dublin).

Brewing and Distilling

Trade and agriculture depended on good quality roads and this also helped the development of Kilbeggan's famous distilling industry in the mid-18th century. The most outstanding and striking feature as you drive through Kilbeggan is Lockes Distillery which has had an new injection of life in recent years. All along the River Brosna for many years prior to the 18th century corn mills were common because it was a suitable area for barley and other cereals. Kilbeggan had the necessary components for development of a distillery i.e. water, barley, and fuel from the nearby bogs. Illicit distilling along the river was common from early times but the first distillery was said to be established in 1757 (even in 1775 George Darcy ,Surveyor reported 26 illicit stills were taken in Westmeath in 7 months). It was probably established under the influence of Gustavus Lambart who was a collector of taxes for the Trim Excise District aside from being an M.P. and on the Grand Jury of Westmeath.

By 1782 there were three distilleries operating in the town. Matthias McManus father of John was operating a distillery partly on the site of the

present one and his still had a capacity of 232 gallons, with an output of about 1,500 gallons per annum. By 1796 McManus was the only distiller still operating, as many small distilleries went out of business. The size of his still rose to 278 gallons so his trade probably increased. The family connection with stilling was over by the end of the century. The loss of his two sons John and James during the events of 1798 and a probable switch to brewing, presumably were the main factors in this development. At the same time the Cods were setting up a distillery on the opposite side of the road which was to be the base for the great and historic Lockes Distillery of the future in spite of many trials and tribulations.

Volunteer Inn

The most famous place in Kilbeggan was the Volunteer Inn. It was a stopping off point for travellers heading west and catered for them by providing food and drink, comfortable beds and another service was the provision of horses, sidecars, long cars and coaches with all the necessary facilities. Later in the 19th century the novelist Charles Lever in his book *"The Knight of Gwynne"* described a stop off to change horses at an Inn in Kilbeggan and it was very likely the Volunteer Inn. It was owned by Thomas Cuffe and his wife who are said to have employed a housekeeper named Mrs Browne and her daughter Sally, a boy named Able, and three men in the yard who looked after the horses, drove the vehicles, sowed the garden and assisted travellers in general. The Inn became famous at the end of the 18th century arising out of an incident when the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Townsend knighted the owners Sir Thomas and Lady Cuffe. The coach had broken down and he spent the night in the Inn. After a wonderful meal and some of the local whiskey he was so impressed that he knighted the proprietor and his wife. The next day he tried to pass off the incident as a joke carried too far. Cuffe said that he had no objection to foregoing the title "for a proper consideration" but the problem was "what will my Lady Cuffe say?" (see **Appendix F** for a full account of the event). They held the title for the rest of their lives and the Inn was visited by many just to meet the noble innkeepers. It was said that Cuffe became something of a snob after receiving his title and when a neighbour greeted him familiarly "Hello, Cuffe" he responded "Do you know I am Sir Thomas Cuffe, knight baronet and knight of the garter". The man quickly replied "If you're Sir Thomas Cuffe, knight baronet and knight of the garter, you can go to hell, tonight, tomorrow, and the night after"

In 1806 Sir Richard Colt-Hoare visited the Inn and at that time it had re



Volunteer Inn - with painting of Thomas Cuffe.

ceived a new shopfront but the old painting of Sir Thomas being knighted was still on the front wall of the premises. He mentions "that the Inn though kept by a Knight and his lady bears a melancholy appearance". In 1791 Charles Etienne de Montbret lodged at the Inn from 24-25th May but he makes little comment on it except that that he paid 5/= to the driver Baker. In fact he was not generally complimentary on Westmeath saying that other areas were humming with industrial activity but that there were no winds of change blowing over the bogs of Westmeath. He mentions "that coarse linens or sheetings are made in the direction of Kilbeggan". When Rev. Daniel Beaufort visited the Inn in 1787 he was more impressed as they provided a complete and ample meal for 13d. A choice of veal, bacon, greens, roast beef, tart and cheese.

Terence O'Toole (Rev. Caesar Otway) in his book "***A Tour of Connaught***" visited Kilbeggan in the summer of 1799 a year after the rebellion and he gives a full account of the knighthood. Sir Thomas Cuffe had died by this time but Lady Cuffe was still alive. Kilbeggan was a garrison town at this time. when he dropped into the Inn It was full of soldiers reclining and smoking " gigantic looking fellows with terrible moustaches and other marks denoting them to be foreigners". He was under 20 at the time and he was told they were Germans or Hessians to be exact. He went to the stables to check the horses. At that time it was a token of loyalty to carry a tail pennant from the back of your neck and those who did not were considered Croppies. He was suddenly grabbed from behind and his arms pinioned by a 6 foot 6 inch Hessian and he was searched for the deficient tail pennant to no avail. It was presumed he was a rebel and in consequence "*he kicked me in the stable, and he kicked me in the yard and he kicked me in the streets, and he kicked me up the front steps of the Inn*". The toe of the jackboot did terrible damage to his body . It was pointless complaining and he had not sufficient money to stay in the Inn. Instead he called for a chaise and "*putting plenty of straw under me, for air cushions were not yet invented , proceeded in a very delicate state to the end of my journey, my only consolation being that though a kicked man the disgrace and pain were not inflicted by a countryman - by a rale O or a true Mac but by a brutal Hessian*".

The Inn was often a meeting place for the Trustees of the Turnpike Road or landlords. Lady Cuffe provided a wide variety of services as she advertised coaches from Phillipstown to Kilbeggan, Moate, & Athlone for the accommodation of passengers travelling in the Grand Canal Passage boats between Dublin and Phillipstown. The coach stopped each night at Kilbeggan and left the next morning for Athlone and Phillipstown at 6 o'clock, Rates were Phillipstown to Kilbeggan 3s 3d ; Moate 6s 6d ; Athlone 9s 9d ; and the boat Dublin - Phillipstown 8s 8d. A note on one of the more interesting meetings held in Cuffe's gives an accurate reflection of the times i.e. the paranoia and selfishness of the ascendancy class and also a certain touch of irony. In November 1779 Captain Henry Goddard as Chairman of the Protestant

Moycashel Association called the meeting “It was resolved that persons who do not at this crisis join the Moycashel Association unless prevented by constitutional disability and do not contribute to defray the expense, do not deserve the protection of the Association. That they should only buy native manufacture and not drink French wine except what is present in their cellars”. Then again it could be described as an early Buy Irish campaign!

The Inn obviously received its name from the Volunteers formed after the American War of Independence to defend the country against possible invasion from France in particular. In the fevered passion of the 1770's and 1780's the Volunteers took control in Ireland and meetings were held by local members in the Inn. It is said that at one of the meetings a fever broke out resulting in the death of one of the members. Because it was the fever he was laid out in a room at the Inn and a notice was placed on the door “Na bac leis” (do not disturb). As Henry Flood represented the borough for a number of years and was closely involved with the Volunteers it is likely that he stayed in or visited the Inn on a number of occasions. Interestingly Flood was a Freemason and it is not clear what impact it had on events at this time. Freemasonry has had a considerable influence on political events across Europe since the middle ages and organisations from the Volunteers to the United Irishmen recruited large numbers from various Masonic Lodges (even the Westmeath Militia had its own lodge). The Hon. George Augustus Rochfort, second Earl of Belvedere formed the first Volunteer Corps. in the county at Mullingar in 1777 and he was also the first Worshipful Master of the Mullingar Lodge of Masons in December 1765. A lodge was set up in Kilbeggan on 4th October 1759 with William Begley, Worshipful Master, Francis White, Senior Warden and Matthew Donoghue Junior Warden. It was present in the town all through the events of the late 18th and early 19th century. There is no real evidence that it had any affect on developments in Kilbeggan at this time.

Being a market town and on the coach routes the Inns in Kilbeggan seemed to do a good business. The Red Lyon Inn was let in October 1767 by proprietor Thomas Falkiner including a house, office, and lands 20-30 acres. By May 1768 Pat McDermott of the Red Lyon Inn opened another house of entertainment at the White Hart Inn. He was obviously doing well and “requested the continuance of his friends and the public and by his endeavour to please hopes to merit their favour. He had furnished himself with every article fit for the reception of the genteel company”.

One of the more interesting visitors to the town in the 18th century was Oliver Goldsmith . It was said that when staying with the Tobin family he entertained the locals with his famous flute and the story goes that on his last visit he exchanged the flute for a bottle of the local whiskey.

Chapter 3

Westmeath In The Late Eighteenth Century

The Volunteers

'The Wool Fair of Mullingar has come to an end and there were only four bags of wool sold and that at no higher price than nine shillings a stone. The poor demand and low price of wool is a proof of how necessary are associations for the wear of Irish Manufactories at this time'. From a contemporary newspaper report.

Within a few days of this disastrous wool fair in July 1779 there were two events in Mullingar which would organise public opinion behind the Volunteer movement, then sweeping the country, and which turned around the fortunes of Irish industry, including the woollen trade, so important at the time to towns like Ballinsloe and Mullingar. The Volunteers sprung up spontaneously during 1778 when France and Spain entered the American War and Ireland, with thousands of its regular troops sent for service in America, was threatened with invasion. They were an unofficial Militia whose numbers within two years reached one hundred thousand armed men lead by Lord Charlemont, the Earl of Clanricard, Henry Flood and other public figures. The threatened invasion did not take place but the Volunteers became very powerful in spite of the Government's misgivings about them and the distrust and suspicions they aroused as an unofficial irregular force; they soon began flexing their muscles and threw their support behind the campaign of the patriot party in parliament for legislative independence and for free trade.

At the Summer Assizes in Mullingar in 1779 the Grand Jury demanded government action for the removal of the trade restrictions which had so weakened the economy and caused such hardship to Irish Manufacturers. In their declaration the Grand Jurors followed advice given earlier by Swift and took their cue from the American colonists who successfully conducted their own non-importation campaign against English goods during the War of Independence. The associations referred to in the newspaper article were the non-importation associations set up to promote goods manufactured in Ireland at the expense of imported items; the high sheriffs, grand juries and civic magistrates who were mainly responsible for organising them were

closely linked with the Volunteer movement.

'We, the High Sheriff and Grand Jury and principal gentlemen of County Westmeath having taken into consideration the very depressed state of the county think it incumbent upon us to take some immediate steps for its relief as we look upon the melancholy decay of our trade to be the principal source of it. We have unanimously come to the resolution that we will not, until the next Summer Assize, purchase any goods whatever that are not of the manufacture of this country.'

It was the same group of 'principal gentlemen' led by Robert Rochfort who met a few days later at Mullingar Courthouse to institute corps of Volunteers within the county. Mullingar was the principal town in Westmeath and it owed this status to its strategic position, from Norman times along the fortified zone which went from the east coast of Ireland to Lough Ree between the native territories of Offaly to the South and Annaly on the North. Sir Henry Piers noted in 1682 that the town was 'a great thorough fare from Dublin to Connaught'. The most profitable commodities sold in Mullingar were cattle, sheep and horses. There was a large area of common grazing land near the town which was taken over by Arthur Forbes, later Lord Granard, who became landlord of Mullingar, through his loyalty to King Charles 11. The Granards were absentees living in County Longford and were not at all influenced by Enlightenment ideas such as making improvements in architecture or planning. They did not turn Mullingar into an estate town and seem to have been mainly interested in collecting rents from the farms they had carved out of the commons. The fair green was left intact and there were two small market places near the main street where they collected tolls. The fairs thrived in Mullingar and were second only to Ballinsloe bringing dealers from all over Ireland, Britain and the Continent.

Although there were some Catholics among them, the Volunteers were a Protestant body and volunteering was in their blood. They were well accustomed to forming associations for their own protection and for guarding their property in a hostile environment. Many of them were descendants of Cromwellian soldiers and 'the whiff of grapeshot continued to hang around their armorial bearings'. Whether the country was unsettled by agrarian disorder or threatened by foreigners the Protestant gentry easily assumed the leadership role they regarded as their birthright. Long before the threat of invasion from the French led to the emergence of the Volunteer movement from 1778 onwards there were other, earlier volunteer groups set up for the protection of interests and property and the volunteers of 1778 were inheritors of this tradition just as many of the officers of the later Irish militia and Irish Yeomanry represented the continuity of this volunteer ideal. In County Westmeath many of the names which crop up in the years leading up to the rebellion in 1798 are already familiar from the accounts of the Volunteers from 1778 to 1784 notably George Clibborn, Moate, Robert Rochfort,

Mullingar, Samuel Low, New Park and George Nugent, Delvin.

As early as 1760 a group of local landlords went to the assistance of the garrison when the French privateer, Francois Thurot tried to seize Carrickfergus and from 1760 onwards during the Whiteboy disturbances in Country Tipperary the landlords let their tenants out to pursue them. The Kilkenny Rangers were formed in January 1770 to protect the area from the rapparees and the tories while in King's County a man named John Lloyd formed a corps with thirty-six men to 'check the further progress of those riotous miscreants the Whiteboys or any other tumultuous or riotous assembly infesting his neighbourhood!' The threat from France and Spain during the American War of Independence provided landlords and gentry with a golden opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism and they embraced it willingly.

People were well informed about the happenings around the coast of Ireland at the time and not alone from the accounts in the newspapers but from the movements of arms and men through the county towns like Athlone and Mullingar. In August 1779 four expresses passed through Mullingar from Galway and Sligo where they had been on guard after another sighting of a French and Spanish fleet off the west coast. It came as no surprise then, that on 1 September, Robert Rochfort chaired a meeting in Mullingar which decided to raise five hundred men immediately - three hundred light infantry and two hundred cavalry. Their uniforms would be scarlet faced with blue and white waistcoats and breeches and all would be paid for through a levy on each barony in the county. It was to be an armed force for 'the protection of the country'. As they were not an officially recognised body of men they were able to spread their self appointed duties over a wide area of both civic and military life but there were three main aspects which characterised the Volunteer movement not alone in Westmeath but throughout the entire country: policework, advocacy and ceremony.

Policing was the most important part of Volunteer duties and there were numerous incidents in County Westmeath of making arrests, guarding witnesses at trials, preventing abductions and conducting suspected criminals to gaol. Abductions were a common feature of eighteenth century life in Ireland and when Catherine McKiernan from Kildare was abducted by two men who forced her into a post-chaise to run away with her, the Volunteer drum beat to arms in Mullingar and the men were arrested on the spot and brought to gaol. The Kilbeggan Volunteers conducted a man charged with murder near Athlone to gaol in Mullingar and when James McKane and James Gibbons were caught after breaking into the shop of Patrick Fallon Kilbeggan and stealing £4 worth of goods the local Volunteers escorted them to Mullingar. George Clibborn and John Loftus Cuppaidge from Moate brought two brothers, who were alleged to have been involved in houghing cattle, to Mullingar gaol and William Judge of the Mullingar Volunteers escorted a witness to Trim Assizes where he was going to give evidence against

a man from Kinnegad charged with stealing a horse and few pieces of linen. The Athlone Association went to Ballinasloe Fair in August 1779 to deal with rioters known as the Lusmuck Carriers. Francis Carleton led the Athlones into the crowd where they took forty prisoners who were then handed over to the Eyre Court Association. The Kilbeggan Volunteers got a letter in September of 1780 from Richard Odium of Dublin thanking them for their help in arresting Patrick Mowlan and getting back money that was owed to him; 'Such exertions in the civil power, must give pleasure to every lover of the laws and make him revere the day when the Volunteers associated for the defence thereof'.

Between 1779 and 1784 the Volunteers had remarkable success as advocates for free trade and for legislative reform through their support for the patriot party in parliament and by their own campaigns in the country. On 4 November 1779 on the birthday of King William III they paraded at King William's statue outside parliament and as they celebrated the 'Glorious Revolution' they had a cannon trained on the Parliament Houses and a placard attached to it 'Free Trade Or This', leaving the government in no doubt about the strength of feeling in the country on the vexed question of Irish Trade. Many industries were severely affected by the restrictive laws imposed by the English Parliament during the previous decades but none had been more damaged than the woollen industry which was largely in the hands of Protestants. The greatest blow to the trade was the Act of 1699 which forbade the export of woollen goods from Ireland to any other country except England, a place already as good as closed because of high duties imposed on them. Irish Protestants suffered most from this act forced on them at the instigation of their jealous counterparts in England and their resentment of their inferior position in the woollen business and in other industries was one of the causes of the Protestant nationalism which surfaced in the late eighteenth century. The Volunteers practised what they preached by having their uniforms made of Irish cloth and with the high sheriffs and grand juries they set in motion the non-importation policy, pledging to wear and use only goods manufactured in Ireland. At a meeting in Mrs. Cuffe's Inn, Kilbeggan Captain Henry Goddard and his fellow Volunteers in the Moycashel Association pledged to buy Irish made goods only and to stop drinking French wines though carefully adding that those already in their cellars were all right to drink! Within a matter of weeks of the demonstration of the Volunteers at College Green a number of Acts were rushed through Parliament in London restoring Ireland's right to trade; the embargoes were lifted on the export of woollens and glass and Ireland was allowed to trade with British settlements in Africa and America on an equal footing with Britain and the country was allowed to become a member of the Turkey Company giving it direct trade to the Levant. A fulsome address to the King and the Lord Lieutenant was sent from the Mullingar Assizes in January 1780 expressing the gratitude of the grand jurors for the concessions; it was signed by

Richard Malone, Robert Rochfort, Benjamin Chapman, James Nugent, S.R. Hume, John Lyons, Handcock Temple, Robert Moore, William Smyth, Robert Hodson, George Clibborn, Robert Cooke, Alex Murraray, John Meares, Cuthbert Fetherstone, William Judge, O Fitzgerald, Peter Delamere, Anthony Nugent, Alex Swift, Francis Digby, Samuel Wilkinson, William Fetherston. Another letter was sent by the Mullingar Volunteers to the M.P. Walter Burgh who had been a staunch advocate in Parliament of the Free Trade Campaign.

It is interesting that the report of the Wool Fair in July 1780 was in stark contrast to the one of twelve months before: 'Great demand for wool at Mullingar Fair ... later prices were at twelve shillings per stone. We hope that the effects of our free state will operate in the most interior parts of the Kingdom and that our Irish woollen cloths will be brought to as great perfection as they are in any other country and sought after with as great avidity as are those of England'. The lifting of the restrictions on the export of woollen goods brought some relief to the manufacturers even though the domination of British goods in the home market remained. The rise in the export of woollen goods from 1780 brought considerable benefit to Mullingar through the wool fair and the national economy was helped by an expanding home market through the growth in population and a rise in the standard of living. The woollen industry shared in the new prosperity and the clothiers of small woollen towns such as Doneraile, Mitchelstown, Mallow, Kanturk and Newmarket bought up all the raw wool at the great fairs of Ballinsloe and Mullingar and then gave it out to country families to be combed and spun.

The ceremonial activities of the Volunteers were a familiar sight throughout the country. They were like peacocks and loved dressing up in their splendid uniforms before the public, staging mock battles and practising complicated exercises with their muskets. They had thirteen different orders for firing and reloading muskets and a well trained unit was expected to carry out the various motions in perfect unison and even in the thick of a mock fight the sergeants were quick to reproach any raggedness of action. A great crowd looked on when the Mullingar Infantry commanded by Colonel Smith met on the Green along with the Moycashel Horse, The Fertullagh Rangers and the Rathconrath Association on New Year's Day 1780. A newspaper report stated that they all went through their manoeuvres and firing with great exactness. Social life for the privileged classes had taken on a distinctly orange hue during the eighteenth century and the anniversary of the Boyne and King William's birthday on 4 November were celebrated with parades, festivals and loyal toasts to the Glorious Memory. There is a flavour of this love of ritual and display among members of a Mullingar lodge, possibly a Masonic lodge, who were called to a meeting in June 1767: 'The Right Honourable and Worshipful members of No ___ are hereby desired to meet at the George Inn Mullingar on Tuesday 23rd to elect Major Richard Rogers Rochfort Mervyn Grand Master for the coming year in room of the

Honourable and Worshipful Lord Belfield late Grand Master and also Grand and Junior officers; it is expected that all members who are not beyond sea will appear at the next races in Kinnegad in their uniforms and jewels'. Signed O Fitzgerald.

King George's birthday in June 1780 provided another opportunity for the Mullingar Volunteers to impress the public with their patriotic displays. After firing a couple of volleys in the King's honour they were presented with their new colours by Colonel William Judge - the motto was 'Pro Aris Et Focis' and the device was a harp and crown encircled with Shamrocks. They all met up afterwards to drink the loyal toasts at the George Inn. There was yet another county review the following month and it was reported that the corps were all elegantly dressed and each man wore an orange ribbon in honour of the day:-

Mullingar - William Judge; Tyrellspass - Robert Moore; Kilbeggan - Captain Henry Goddard; Moygoish - Captain Low; Corkaree - Sir J. Nugent; Castletown Delvin - Tom Smyth; Rathconrath - Captain Meares; New Park - Samuel Low; Clonlonan Light Infantry - George Clibborn; Moyashel Light Horse - Robert Rochfort; Fartullagh Rangers - Rochfort Hume; Moycashel Light Horse - John Lyon. In August it was the turn of the Athlone Rangers to mount a similar display in honour of the Earl of Clanrickard. Spectators and the Barony cohorts lined the streets as they passed through the town earning the Earl's highest praise for the 'regularity of their movements and the exactness of their fire'.

The heyday of the Volunteers lasted up to 1784; the success of the Free Trade campaign was followed by legislative reforms in 1782 and 1783 during which time they consolidated their position in the country through provincial conventions, the most famous being the Dungannon Convention in February 1782, the resolutions for this convention which were drawn up by the Volunteer general, Lord Charlemont, assisted by Henry Grattan and Henry Flood constituted an ambitious programme for the Volunteers although they were split on the contentious issue of Catholic admission to the parliamentary franchise. Among the proposals was the assertion on the legislative independence of Ireland and the declaration that the powers exercised under Poyning's Law were unconstitutional. There was another proposal expressing a limited approval of religious equality and rejoicing in the relaxation of the penal laws against Catholic fellow subjects.

George Clibborn of Moate was appointed a delegate to the convention at Dungannon but he did not attend because of illness. On 16 April that year there was a Volunteer meeting in Moate which passed unanimously a number of resolutions which included one on the 'repeal of these penal statutes that oppress our brethren, the Roman Catholics'. This meeting was chaired by George Clibborn with John Adamson acting as secretary and the Corps expressed its thanks to Clibborn 'for his unwearied attention to us, and his truly patriotic and upright conduct in the chair'.

During the months of April and May 1782, the parliament in Britain conceded parliamentary independence and in the following year it renounced its claim to legislate for Ireland. Constitutional reforms did not correspond with political reality; the King was represented by a Lord Lieutenant nominated by the government in Britain and he had effective control of the executive in Dublin through the system of patronage for handing out peerages, jobs and pensions. In County Westmeath two members of parliament for the county were recipients of such patronage; Sir Benjamin Chapman was made a baronet for his support for Lord Carlisle who became Lord Lieutenant in 1781 and Robert Rochfort was a surveyor of crown lands for life at five hundred pounds a year and supervisor and valuer of His Majesty's honours at one hundred pounds a year. The members for the borough of Kilbeggan at this period were Charles Lambart and Sir Richard Johnson. Lambart was a collector for Dublin county at five hundred pounds a year, a position which he said he wanted to exchange for 'another of equal value compatible with his residence in England, as his wife, a Miss Dutton, would not live in Ireland'. Richard Johnson had a pension of four hundred pounds a year and, because he supported Lord Carlisle, he was made a trustee of the Linen Manufacturers.

The proposals to reform parliament were backed by the Volunteers whose rank and file was now composed of middle class Protestants; at their provincial conventions made up of delegates from the various corps they agreed that the House of Commons should be more representative of the people. They held a national convention at the Rotunda in Dublin on 10 November 1783 under the chairmanship of Lord Charlemont and addressed by, among others Henry Flood. He was the principal author of the plan of reform which the convention agreed on after deliberating on it for three weeks. Wearing his Volunteer uniform he walked over to the House of Commons carrying this plan and presented it to the house asking for leave to bring in a bill 'for the more equal representation of the people in parliament'. The members rejected it; one of them commented that they were not there 'to receive propositions at the point of the bayonet'. One of the members was John Fitzgibbon, later Lord Clare, who was bitterly opposed to reform and in a speech denouncing Flood he said 'I do not think life worth holding at the will of an armed demagogue'. He became a very powerful man in government whose chief aim was to maintain the Protestant ascendancy and uphold British power in Ireland. The same principles on which he opposed the plan of reform proposed by Henry Flood in 1783 were employed by him many years later to suppress the United Irishmen and bring about the Union with Great Britain.

The parliamentary reforms being sought were themselves of a limited nature and there was always the matter of the admission of Catholics to the vote and the political life of the country. Henry Grattan, more perceptive and far-seeing than the rest said that Irish Protestants would be locked into

an artificial political systems if they did not accept Catholics on an equal footing but there were not enough people among the reformers willing to take that. Instead the country settled into the barren sectarianism from which Wolfe Tone would attempt to rescue it by breaking up the old political moulds when he established the non-sectarian United Irishmen in 1791.

The Volunteer Movement began to lose its momentum after 1783 and many of the Corps were quietly disbanded. Once the War in America ended and the regular troops were no longer needed there the reason for their existence was gone; there was also a falling off in their enthusiasm for drills, reviews and parades and their reforming zeal was diluted. However, many of the Volunteers remained active in agrarian disputes especially in the Rightboy/Whiteboy disturbances during 1786. George Clibborn commanded the Moate Volunteers along with Edmond Armstrong of Gallen with his Garrycastle Rangers when they dispersed a crowd of around a thousand Rightboys at Ballever between Cloghan and Banagher in August 1786 when, it was claimed, unlawful oaths were being administered. Confrontations between George Clibborn's Volunteers and Rightboys and Whiteboys were portents of the later clashes between Clibborn's Moate Yeomanry and the Defenders.

The impact of the Volunteers on Anglo-Irish relations was notable from their first stand in the face of a French invasion to their keen support for free trade and constitutional reform which ushered in a now era of prosperity for the country. The wealth of the time was reflected in the magnificent new buildings erected in Dublin. The 1780's saw the establishment of the Royal Irish Academy, the College of Surgeons, the Bank of Ireland, a separate Irish post office, the Custom House and the Four Courts. In the country Irish roads were surveyed, work carried out on the two major canals and there was optimism for the economic future with the encouragement of such industries as textiles and brewing and the improvement in agriculture. Arthur Young the English traveller, noted the improvements when he toured the country though by the standards of English agriculture there was room for improvement. Landlords, middlemen, tenant farms and the growing Catholic middle class shared in this prosperity. But there was another group of people to whom the improvements in the national economy meant hardly anything. This was the great underclass of the rural poor for whose grievances nobody seemed to have an answer. The contrast between wealth and poverty was a fact of life in most European countries at this period but in Ireland it was more noticeable than in other parts of the Kingdom. For the cottiers and labourers the increase in their rents and the rise in the cost of living was not matched by their wages and their hardships only intensified. Nobody spoke for them and their only way of trying to better themselves was through their secret societies. So concerned were landlords, merchants and middlemen with reforms, expanding trade and new industries that they barely heard the rumblings from below. Indifference engendered its own response and agrarian unrest cast its long shadows across the years to 1798.

Defenders and United Irishmen

‘..... From the best account I can collect the centre of the country is perfectly quiet and the borders only are infected. I found the jail full of Defenders, however. Of those, seven were capitally convicted and are to suffer on Thursday being the usual Market Day’.

Lord Yelverton - Proceedings of Assizes, Mullingar, 9 August 1795

The agrarian problems of the years leading up to the Rising of 1798 developed into many different forms of protest but for a long time the disaffected peasantry had no serious political aim. That would come later but, in the meantime, their chief concern lay in improving their miserable conditions. The efforts of the government to control the outbreaks of rural despair met with mixed success which is not surprising given the wooden headed way it tackled the problem by prescribing the bitter pill of coercion, increasing the power of the magistrates and by turning a blind eye when the landlords took the law into their own hands. Every remedy was tried except the one of applying the scalpel to the root cause of the disturbances. The English writer, Arthur Young who travelled through Ireland during the latter part of the century noted the worsening conditions of the cottier population and had this to say about the Irish landlords.

‘Gentlemen of Ireland never thought of a radical cure, from overlooking the real cause of the disease, which in fact lay in themselves, and not in the wretches they doomed to the gallows.’ There were numerous, sporadic outbreaks of disorders in the midlands from the mid-1780’s onwards some of which were put down by the army, others were tackled by the magistrates or by locally raised units and remnants of Volunteer Corps. The army sent a detachment from Athlone in December 1784 to put down disturbances by the Whiteboys — so called for wearing white shirts over their heads — in the district around Kilkenny. The area around Moate and even places in neighbouring King’s County were kept in check by the vigilance of George Clibborn and the Moate Light Infantry.

A week after George Clibborn had helped Edmond Armstrong to arrest seven Rightboys and bring them to Philipstown gaol another large crowd arrived in Banagher for the purpose of swearing people to their secret organisation. The men, who arrived on horseback, were estimated to number around six hundred and wore green boughs in their hats and may have been influenced by the Oakboy movement which flourished for a period in Armagh and Derry; the peasants there wore sprigs of oak in their hats as badges. Soldiers from the local barracks at Banagher went out with fixed bayonets to confront them while the resident magistrate read out the proclamation of

the lord lieutenant and, also, some extracts from the Whiteboy Act. Some of the men left the scene but those who remained kept on swearing people. The following day there was a lot of confusion as the labourers of the district refused to work for those farmers who did not take the oath.

The Whiteboys began to fade from the rural scene during the 1790's, largely due to the repressive measures taken to control them which included making participation in Whiteboy activities a capital offence. The grievances that had given rise to such movements, however, remained and the secret societies which followed such as the Defenders were of a different cast. The disturbances of the Whiteboys stemmed from traditional rural grievances and were not generally violent. The Defenders drew on these traditional grievances and, like the Whiteboys and the Rightboys, they sought to regulate tithes, improve labourer's wages and bring down the price of conacre land. But Defenderism as it had developed by 1795 was subversive and sectarian and their extreme violence marked them off from the Whiteboys. Defenderism has its origins in County Armagh during the 1780's, born out of the bitter sectarian battles between Protestants and Catholics over fiercely contested land. It spread dramatically to other counties notably Louth, Monaghan and Cavan and by 1795 it had spread to thirteen other counties including County Westmeath where it was denounced by the Catholic bishop of Meath Dr. Plunkett. The bishop used the occasion of his confirmation visits to condemn the prevailing disturbances and spoke of the dangers of Defenderism in many parishes including Clonmellon, Castletown, Delvin, Collinstown, Castlepollard, Taghmon, Kilbixy, Moyvore, Kilmanaghan, (Rosemount and Tubber near Moate), Kilkenny West, Fartullagh, Kinnegad, Mullingar and Kilbeggan. All of these places were disturbed according to the bishop with the exception of Mullingar. He stated a few days later that a man from Mullingar named Reeves, acting on behalf of the Protestant inhabitants, 'Came to me to request a copy of my exhortation concerning the Defenders with a view to having it printed'.

Two events, in particular, are credited with the spread of Defenderism. The first was the establishment of the Irish Militia in 1793 and the vehement opposition which accompanied it. It was established on a county basis with a rank and file comprised mostly of the Catholic rural poor, the very people whom the Defenders claimed to represent. Many regiments had Defenders in their ranks and as the militia did not serve in the counties where the regiments were raised they provided a means for the spread of Defenderism as they moved around the country. The second cause of its spread, and one which injected it with a violent dimension that was absent from the earlier agrarian movements, were the ominous events during 1795-6 in Ulster when several thousand Catholics were driven from their homes by the recently formed Orange Order. 'Go to Hell or to Connaught' they were told and many of them did migrate to Connaught where, according to Camden, the lord lieutenant, 'they related their sufferings and I fear have excited a

spirit of revenge among their Catholic brethren'. In the highly charged political atmosphere of the time the injustices of these expulsions acted like a magnet in bringing together the Defenders and the Society of United Irishmen which was founded in 1791. The introduction of politics and social radicalism into the rivalry between Defenders and Orangemen was looked upon with alarm by the landed classes and explains the ferocity of the attempts to crush both Defenders and United Irishmen during the following years.

The Irish Militia was established out of the need to provide the country with a solid defence during the war with France which commenced in February 1793. Once again the threat of invasion hung over the country and the government needed to act to prevent the Volunteers from stepping in again as they had done in 1778 with their irregular force and, perhaps, to begin dabbling in politics once more. Already there were some signals coming from that quarter; when the French revolution broke there was a resurgence of political volunteering and when the United Irishmen appeared on the scene there were plans for a national guard made up of volunteers and radicals with the objective of seeking parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. The government believed that the establishment of a militia and a ban on the volunteers was essential for the peace of the country. The army was under immense strain to provide more regiments for the service abroad, particularly in the Low Countries and the West Indies and, as the country was being emptied of its troops, it became clear that the gap would have to be filled by a second force. The Irish Militia established in 1793 was the replacement for the regular units; the British Prime Minister, William Pitt over-ruled the Dublin government by insisting that Catholics were to be enlisted in the militia thus changing around the previous policy of excluding Catholic soldiers from taking part in the defence of Ireland.

The Militia Bill was passed in 1793 and, within days of the militia being established the reports started to arrive in Dublin of the widespread opposition to it. Each county and borough had to provide men on a quota basis; lists were drawn up of those who were eligible to serve and a ballot was held until the quota was filled. The fear of being sent abroad and the compulsory nature of the ballot were some of the reasons for this widespread opposition. The riots during the ballots were harshly put down and, in the course of eight weeks two hundred and thirty people were killed in the violent protests against the embodiment of the militia; this was nearly five times the number of agrarian disturbances. The Northern Star newspaper reported that County Westmeath and King's County were two of the places where the riots were taking place. In Athlone the offices of Thomas Harrison were set on fire and, in another incident near Athlone a priest was strung up by his own flock and almost hung to death for preaching on the necessity of submission to the Militia Act. Not all the opposition was to be laid at the door of the ordinary people according to the Westmeath Journal in May 1795; it stated that the troubles were due to jealousy among the gentry over the holding of

commissions.

After a royal assent for the act in early April 1793 work began on setting up the militias although trouble continued at the annual ballots up to 1795. By the end of April men were being recruited for the Westmeath Militia under its Colonel, J. George Nugent, Lord Westmeath, who appointed a Catholic as his second in command. This may have been Sir Hugh O'Reilly who commanded a party of the regiment at Bandon, County Cork in June 1798. In July 1798 O'Reilly was promoted a commissioner of barracks in place of Major General Craddock whose names appears later in the story. George Nugent lived at Clonyn, Delvin where other local landlords were given commissions in the regiment; Robert Tighe of Mitchellstown, Robert Ogle of Dysert and Philip Batty of Ballyhealy. The regiment was stationed in Wexford in 1794 and at the Loughlinstown Camp near Dublin in 1794.

George Nugent was described by a fellow officer as 'a martinet in military tactics, having early made it his study and being an expert officer during the time the Volunteers of Ireland were under arms'. Addressing his men one Sunday after a church parade he read over the articles of war making pointed remarks explaining particular articles and when he came to those regarding profane cursing and swearing 'he exhorted them against so heinous a crime, adding that such of his men as were detected in the commission of that abominable vice should be punished'. Clothing for the men was the responsibility of the colonels and 16,000 sets of uniforms for all the regiments were made in the Liberties in Dublin; at the end of May 1793 the woollen manufacturers were looking forward to plenty of orders for the future. This increase in the wool trade meant more business for the wool fairs at Ballinasloe and Mullingar. The catering arrangements were not always of a high standard and the men were often hungry. When the Westmeath regiment was at Loughlinstown George Nugent went to the Dublin market where he bought carcasses of meat for the men. He bought a number of sheep and had them killed; mutton was costing 6d. a pound in the market and he sold it to the soldiers for 3d. a pound. The new cooking stoves used at the Loughlinstown camp were designed by Thomas Burgh the member of parliament for Kilbeggan from 1791 to 1797.

The formation of the militia caused enormous social problems as the act of 1793 contained no allowances for wives although a families' bill was introduced later. The army of women and children who travelled around Ireland with the militia was almost as numerous as the militia themselves. The first posting to which Lord Westmeath marched his regiment from Mullingar was at Bray, County Wicklow which was crowded in September 1793 with the wives and children of Westmeath soldiers. 'What a picture', a commentator observed in a newspaper, 'of distress of war in disturbing from their humble homes so many helpless husbands'. It is not known if Mullingar experienced similar problems when the Galway militia arrived. While they were quartered there they celebrated a victory of allies over the French by throw

ing a party in Mullingar which they illuminated with bonfires; several barrels were passed around among the spectators. While they were quartered in Mullingar under Colonel Trench between 1793 and 1794 they were called on to put a fire at a Mullingar brewery the property of Francis Delaney.

Francis Delaney from Mullingar was one of the first men from County Westmeath to join the United Irishmen; he took the test at a meeting of the Dublin Society on 4 February, 1793. He was a business man and owned a brewery in Mullingar. In October, 1794, he was married to a Miss McAuley from High Baskin near Ballymore, County Westmeath. Whether he took an active part in the insurgent events later on is not clear as his name did not appear in any of the surviving records. However, Francis Delaney, James Delaney and Rev. L. Fitzgerald were among those who signed an address to the members of Parliament for the manor of Mullingar for their support in parliament for the catholic cause. That was in March, 1793 not long after the passing of the Catholic Relief Act which removed many of the penalties formerly imposed on Catholics but which still excluded them from parliament. Mullingar may have had a branch of the Catholic Committee founded some years earlier to forward Catholic political interests and which has as its



first paid secretary, a young Protestant barrister named Theobald Wolfe Tone. At first, the Catholics were profuse in their gratitude to the government for the concessions they got under this latest act but their sentiments quickly dried up when they realised that it did not add much to their political power. Many Catholics were now drifting towards the United Irishmen and the combination of this increase in their strength and the growing unrest in the Countryside filled the authorities with dread; in 1794, a year after the French War started the government moved against the United Irishmen and it suppressed the Dublin Society on 4 May 1794. The movement was driven underground and the influence of the revolutionaries in its ranks grew stronger; when it was reconstituted eighteen months later it was secret and oath bound and dedicated to the aims of a Republic. The alliance between them and the Defenders was inevitable and it came about some time early in 1796. According to a letter from Lord Camden written in January 1796, he said that the Defenders had sworn not only to be true to one another but to unite and correspond with the society of United Irishmen. The Defenders set out to

arm themselves for rebellion by raids on private houses which were well stocked with weapons. Hugh Bowen of Taghmon, County Westmeath had been robbed for arms by Defenders as early as December 1794 and this was one of the first incidents in what became a familiar pattern of raids over the next few years. They also prepared by nightly drilling, by making pikes and by demonstrations against the militia. George Clibborn of Moate was called out to disperse the crowds at two of the biggest clashes against the militia that took place during 1795. The first was at Ferbane in King's County when a crowd of unarmed peasants gathered near the town to protest against the enlistments for the militia and demanded the ballot bag to burn it, calling out 'No tithes, no militia'. George Clibborn and his party of around seventy unofficial volunteers fired into the crowd killing four of them instantly. A newspaper reported that "many others were supposed to have been seriously wounded from the tracks of blood which marked their flight in the course of which they were met by troops of light horse and two companies of Donegal militia. Twenty five were later taken prisoner several of whom are in a deplorable state". There was further trouble in April during the militia ballots at Kilkenny West. The place it occurred was Five Mile House between Moate and Glasson where a large crowd had assembled and tried to seize the ballot bag. George Clibborn was accompanied by fifty armed men who attacked the crowd and made a number of arrests. The arrested men were tried the next year (1796) at the Spring assizes in Mullingar and were found guilty and sentenced for their part in the disturbances. By this time the sentences being handed down by panic stricken gentry and magistrates had become extremely harsh with many Defenders being sentenced to floggings, transportation or even worse fates. When the well-known Defender, Lawrence O'Connor was executed at Naas, County Kildare in 1795, he was hanged, disembowelled and his body quartered, his head was cut off and stuck on a spike on top of the gaol. For having fired a shot at George Clibborn, a man named James Doonican who may have been a native of Moate was sentenced to be hanged on 17 March 1796. The men sentenced at the Spring assizes for rioting at Five Mile House in 1795 were Pat Nolan, William Donnellan, Simon Clarke, James McDonnell, Patrick McDonnell, James Hedigan, James Reilly and Matthew Harford.

George Clibborn was a descendant of a Cromwellian soldier who came to Ireland in 1649 and like many others of similar class and descent was prominent in both the Volunteers and the Irish Yeomanry. The Clibborns became Quakers and, with other Quaker families in the town, by their thrift and industry contributed to the expansion of Moate as a centre of industry during the eighteenth century. They were noted linen manufacturers in Moate and succeeded in setting up branches in Clara, King's County and at Meath Street in Dublin. George Clibborn, however, did not remain a Quaker; as when his father died he left the Society of Friends and began to take an interest in politics. He served on the Westmeath grand jury from 1774 to

1803 and was appointed a magistrate in 1776 a few years before the formation of the Volunteers. The law and order ethos of the Cromwellian settler found full expression for many of them within the movement and it was inevitable that a despot such as George Clibborn would become a colonel of the local Volunteer Corps, the Clonlonan Light Infantry. Throughout his active life he upheld law and order in many parts of South Westmeath and in the adjoining parts of King's County. So grateful were the gentry in the King's County that, at the Summer assizes held in Phillipstown in 1793, he received the special thanks of the High Sheriff and Grand jury for his assistance in 'quelling a tumultuous mob at Clara on 28 May last and for apprehending two robbers'. The comparatively peaceful state of the neighbourhood of Moate during 1798 has been attributed to the measures taken by George Clibborn and the local Yeomanry corps. According to tradition the Moate yeomen had three meeting houses in Moate - Boston, Farnagh and Moneen; they also had paddocks where they carded people whom they arrested. This carding consisted of scraping the skin from a prisoners back with rows of nails attached to a piece of board and then sopping the skin with a sponge soaked in brine. The paddocks were beside Aghanarget House which became part of the grounds of the Convent of Mercy.

Maria Edgeworth, the novelist, who was an acute observer of the local political and social scene, was very scornful of the gentry's role in the establishment of the militia. 'Lord Granards carriage was pelted in Athlone she wrote in a letter of 11 April, 1795 and in a second letter of 20 April she commented'; 'There is a whirlwind in our County and no angel to direct it, though many booted and spurred desire no better than to ride it'. Another village which witnessed disturbances during April 1795 was Ballinalack where a crowd of about seven hundred gathered on the day appointed for the militia ballot and threatened destruction if they proceeded in their business. The Limerick militia who were quartered in Mullingar were called in by the magistrates to disperse the crowd and the balloting was then gone through. There were persistent rumours at this time of an alliance between the Defenders and the United Irishmen and throughout the rest of the year trouble flared up all over County Westmeath. Dr. Plunkett, the Catholic bishop of Meath, who had denounced Defenderism at his confirmation visitations throughout the diocese had pressing reasons for trying to engage the loyalty of his flock and to wean them from the ideals of the United Irishmen and from what Archbishop Troy of Dublin called 'This rotten tree of French Liberty whose fruit is fair to the eye but deadly to those who tasted it'. The bishops had been campaigning for some time for a Catholic College to educate the clergy. Candidates for the priesthood had previously been sent to continental seminaries but the French Revolution and the Revolutionary wars had almost put an end to this practice. In an effort to conciliate the Catholics whom it had disappointed on Catholic emancipation and admission to parliament the government agreed to the foundation of a college. Dr.

Plunkett was elected a trustee of the new establishment and on 28 July he and the other trustees went to the rooms of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords where it was decided Maynooth should be the place for the college. The endowment of Maynooth was regarded by the government as one of the ways of reducing continental influences on education and of keeping the Catholic Church on its side during the war with France. On the Catholic side the bishops returned the favour by expressions of loyalty and by exhorting their congregations to peaceful behaviour linking government support for the college with Catholic loyalty and allegiance. The first visitation Dr. Plunkett undertook after the announcement on Maynooth was to Clonmellon, County Westmeath on 9 August where he spoke both on the Catholic Seminary and on the enormity of the disturbances that prevailed. Another parish where the bishop had spoken during his confirmation visit about the dangers of Defenderism was Castlepollard.

Among the reports sent to Dublin Castle during 1795 about the Defenders in Westmeath were three accounts from Castlepollard and Athlone. Mr. Donnelly, Athlone stated that 'By the exertions of the military, the Defenders offer in many places to give up their arms. Captain Stout (a nickname), leader of the Defenders and some others taken, with their colours and a tree of liberty'. General Crosbie writing from Castlepollard on 4 May said 'Tho the Defenders have of late made a show of bringing in their arms, yet their disposition to mischief seems by no means to have lost ground'. And on 11 May, Captain Browne reported that the 9th and 17th Dragoons had an action with Defenders eight or ten miles from Castlepollard and killed seventy or eighty of them; several were wounded and made prisoners. At the Spring assizes that year in Mullingar, before Judge Cruikshank, Brian Mulkearn, William Fox, Thomas Coyle, James Rice and Thomas Maguire were all convicted as Defenders and were sentenced to be hanged. James Rooney, another Defender, was found guilty of administering unlawful oaths. Thomas Byrne and Owen Fagan were convicted of trying to seduce Thomas Ebsen, a soldier, into joining the Defenders and were given two years in prison and thirty marks on their backs. That the United Irishmen took a special interest in the Defenders who were being brought for trial in Mullingar seems likely from a report stating: "it is well known that a certain attorney went from Dublin to Mullingar with a special subscription purse to defray the expenses of the Defenders tried at the assizes. This makes us believe that these people are stimulated by persons above their station". The northern districts of County Westmeath seem to have been the worse hit by the Defender raids for arms. A newspaper reported on 24 February, "The gaols of Westmeath and Navan are now full of those hardened and deluded miscreants called Defenders who, in defiance of the law and in derision of former example and in open violation of all civil law have dared to spread terror and alarm and plunder everything in the country". "Lord Yelverton reporting on the Mullingar assizes in August wrote: "from the best account I can collect,

the centre of the County is perfectly quiet and the borders only are infected. I found the gaol full of Defenders however. Of those seven were capitally convicted and are to suffer on Thursday being the usual Market Day. A few put off their trial to the next assizes by affidavit and many escaped for want of an effectual prosecution & of these, one had prevaricated so shamefully that I had ordered a bill of indictment against him for perjury of which he was convicted and received sentence to be pilloried and transported for seven years". As some of these Defenders he referred to were being arrested several stands of arms were taken from them and the arms were then dispatched by Councillor Whitney to Mullingar gaol and placed in the care of the keeper of the gaol which during August 1795 housed sixty five prisoners, most of them Defenders.

Sowing the seeds of disaffection among the military and the efforts to seduce soldiers into taking secret oaths were punished not alone by the civil authorities but by the army itself, especially for very serious breaches such as desertion. In Athlone, a soldier named Lynch was court martialled for desertion and sentenced to a thousand lashes. He got the first six hundred in the presence of spectators and when he got four hundred more he was to be drummed out of the regiment. A newspaper report said he bore his punishment with hardened resolution but, at intervals, he begged to be shot. He did not receive all the strokes on his back; some were given where he appeared to have more feeling! The report concluded that for all his sufferings there appeared to be no pity amongst those who watched the castigation. The Commander-in-chief of the Army, the Earl of Carhampton was in Athlone during this time to take personal command of the troops in the vicinity of Athlone and to restore peace and tranquillity in that part of the country. Mullingar got an extra regiment of soldiers to bolster its defences in 1795; these were fencibles raised on estates in England and Scotland for service within the Kingdom. The York Fencibles in Mullingar were British soldiers but this did not stop the Defenders from trying to infiltrate them. Thomas Maguire was sent to gaol in September for attempting to administer oaths to members of the regiment to become Defenders. The Defenders may have had some success with them; in the same month two soldiers deserted from the regiment which sent out a party to search for them. Both were caught, one was killed while being captured and the other man was gaoled. The Defenders were becoming more numerous towards the end of 1795 particularly after their battle with the Peep o days boy at the Diamond in County Armagh in September. The Catholics believing that the Orangemen were out to exterminate them flocked to join the Defenders who, in turn were being brought over to the revolutionary cause by the United Irishmen.

Wolfe Tone was in Paris in January 1796 seeking French help and an expedition to Ireland while at home the United Irishmen continued with their plans for a rising. There was very little secrecy about Tone's visit or about the United Irishmen's preparations and in the face of such threats the

government adopted a policy of repression. It passed an Insurrection Act in February 1796 under which administering unlawful oaths became a capital offence and very wide powers were given to magistrates in searching for arms and for sending suspected traitors, without trial, to serve in the fleet.

Fenton Aylmer, Donadea Castle, Kilcock longed to be made such a magistrate for County Westmeath: "The desperate state of the Country and my duty to society, he pleaded in a letter to Dublin Castle," induce me to wish to be appointed magistrate for County Kildare as well as the surrounding counties of Meath and Westmeath from where most of the Defenders come down, to us and whither we have so frequently in the last Summer pursued them.

At the end of January 1796 the Chief Constables for the baronies of Moyashel and Moygoish, George Graham and Thomas Graham arrested a group of Defenders and found twelve guns concealed in a bog which had recently been stolen from neighbouring houses. The police had news of these from an informer and the men were caught near the village of Bunbrosna. When they were brought for trial before Judge Tankerville Chamberlaine at the Spring assizes in Mullingar four of them turned approvers and swore against the others; five prisoners were hanged and two were transported. Among those hanged at Bunbrosna were two brothers named Kelly who lived with their widowed mother near Lough Iron. The hangings had such an effect on her that she lost her reason and spent the rest of her life haunting the police constables. The strong measures being taken for keeping law and order in Westmeath got Matthew Byrne a whipping at Mullingar for assaulting a policeman and in March Edward Bennett, Edward Maguire, Patrick Maguirin and James Brady were convicted as Defenders and sentenced to be transported. At the annual ballot for the militia there was another demonstration against it, this time in Ballymahon where, once again, George Clibborn turned up with a fellow grand jury member Cuthbert Fetherston to quell the troublemakers. Daniel Kelly was caught in the act of cutting the harness and damaging the carriage of Lord Granard, the colonel of the Longford militia. Daniel Kelly was arrested by Clibborn and Fetherston and brought to Mullingar where he was put in gaol. On 20 April 1796 the lord lieutenant, Earl Camden, laid the foundation stone of the seminary of St. Patrick at Maynooth. Dr. Plunkett was at the ceremony with Dr. O'Reilly of Armagh, Dr. Troy of Dublin and Dr. Hussey of Waterford and they were then brought to Dublin in the viceroy's carriage. It was a splendid occasion described in full by Dr. Plunkett in a letter to his agent in Rome Rev. John Connolly who replied:

"Your Lordship's account of the ceremony of laying the first stone of the College of St. Patrick, and the many circumstances attending it, is by far the most satisfactory that has been sent to Rome. Who could imagine, when I left Ireland nearly thirty years ago, that some of our Catholic prelates were to go, in 1796, in state through Dublin and dine at the Castle?"

Dr. Plunkett was confident that the threat of the Defenders was over as, in the same letter, Fr. Connolly referred to his account of the total suppression of Defenderism. In a letter to Dr. Troy on 4 August Dr. Plunkett wrote: "I have the pleasure to inform you that I have not discovered in any parish of this diocese a single symptom of Defenderism. The disturbers of the peace are either converted or subdued". North Westmeath, however, was not so subdued and especially the baronies of Delvin and Farbill; here the landlords of Drumcree, Bracklyn, Reynella and Killua decided to take care of their own defences. William Smith of Drumcree reported on 4 September 1796 that the local landlords would provide thirty mounts of horse and armed troops to defend the districts and the Government would get every assistance from the gentry in the surrounding baronies. He also informed Dublin Castle that he knew someone who would discover the identities of the men behind the disturbances and who was prepared to act as an informer.

In circumstances in which their every move was being closely watched nobody could be more skilful than the United Irishmen in using all aspects of popular culture to their own advantage and as a cloak for their secret meetings. They were able to meet under the cover of sporting events and communal festivities - horse races, patterns, bonfires, wakes, turf cuttings, dances, clubs and religious confraternities. All such gatherings brought in the crowds which were ripe for the picking by the emissaries from Dublin and the North. Confraternities were regarded with deep suspicion and a clergyman wrote of the Carmelite confraternity and its promotion of the scapular: "I have no doubt this institution was resorted to as a political engine & designed for the mere purpose of organising the people, now rendered difficult by the laws prohibiting all popular assemblies". The clergyman was writing from County Mayo but a letter similar to his was sent to Thomas Pelham, the Chief Secretary on 20 November 1796 by Edward Purdon, Chief Constable of Delvin and Farbill who wrote: "The public peace of the district remains undisturbed since my last returns to you but a circumstance has lately occurred that I think it my duty to acquaint you with".

Since the military were removed from Killucan, the popish chapels in this neighbourhood have been frequented at night by a number of people who call themselves Carmelites, and under religious pretences, stay up whole nights. On hearing of it at first, I did not think it of any consequence, but, their numbers have so much increased that their meetings are rather alarming. I could not as yet find out what the tendency of these meetings are but am apprehensive at this particular time that they may have some other motive besides religion, as I never heard of such meetings before. I am informed that they have certain signs and tokens to know each other by, and call themselves Brother and Sister and are encouraged by their priests in this business. Sunday and Holyday nights they are always assembled and it is very alarming on these nights to see such crowds of people going back and forward at such unreasonable hours to their chapels.

September 1796 found the county buzzing with rumours of a French landing. The Chief Constable of Athlone reported to Dublin: "there is great confusion in my district & nothing but the French landing is talked about, but there are no strange emissaries here." A letter from him followed a few days later informing on a butcher in Galway who was supplying meat to the French Army. The panic being spread over the threat of a French landing always fuelled suspicion about the loyalty of the militia who were long targeted as likely recruits by the United Irishmen. The Westmeath Militia offered a reward of £20 for a conviction of any person attempting to seduce soldiers from their duty but the agents of both the Defenders and the United Irishmen still managed to persuade some of the soldiers to defect. A list of names of men from the Westmeath militia who were sworn from their allegiance from August 1796 onwards included the following who were sworn to secrecy as United Irishmen: Matthias Bullen, Lawrence Reilly, Daniel Cooney, Francis Morrison, Patrick Devine, William Garvey, Thomas MacDermott and Patrick Fury. John Conaughty was sworn as a Defender before he enlisted. Garret Masters and Thomas Dalton were tendered oaths but refused. The United Irish emissaries and agents moved freely about the country adopting all manner of different disguises and trades to keep ahead of the law. William Putman McCabe, a most resourceful agent was, by turns, a preacher, a peddler, a yeoman, and a travelling schoolmaster as the occasion demanded.

Two of the most active agents in Meath and Westmeath were James Murphy and a man named Carey who was travelling back and forth to France in the Autumn of 1796. A man entrusted with such a mission to the French is likely to have been a high ranking member of the United Irishmen and this Carey may have been one of the Carey brothers who launched a radical newspaper in Dublin on 10 November 1791, the day after the founding of the Dublin United Irish Society. James Murphy, who was a friend of the Teelings, the Defender leaders, organised Carey's trips to France. Both of them were in contact with the local leaders in Westmeath and gave them their instructions. They were very closely watched and Murphy found it expedient to move on to Mayo. At the time the information of his movements was being sent to Dublin it was claimed that the Defenders in Meath and Westmeath were panic stricken and afraid that the business was all over.

Before the year 1796 ended there was yet another strong measure introduced for keeping law and order; this was the establishment of a yeomanry force which had been repeatedly demanded by the frightened gentry and local magistrates as the only way of controlling the lawlessness of the insurgents. When the government first considered the idea of a yeomanry, the Viceroy, Lord Fitzwilliam, who was a reformist by inclination, agreed it should be an armed constabulary composed of the better orders of people both Catholic and Protestant and that it would be part of a measure to include Catholic Emancipation. This view found few supporters among the Protestant population who had become deeply suspicious of the mainly catholic militia and

were very critical of the policy of rotating the regiments away from their home counties which meant that Catholic units were often billeted in Protestant areas. When Lord Camden, who replaced Fitzwilliam, arrived in Dublin the character of the proposed yeomanry was being fiercely debated and he took a harder line than his predecessor and came down on the side of the Protestants. When Camden agreed to the establishment of a mainly Protestant yeomanry he was merely responding to the marked sectarianism of Irish political life in the mid 1790s which had taken on a new dimension with the establishment of the Orange Order in 1795.

Unlike the militia which was raised partly by conscription with a large number of Catholics, this new force would be recruited by landlords among their own tenants and would be mainly, but not exclusively, Protestant. Camden had his reservations about the force and wailed: "I shall be construed as arming Protestants against the Catholics". Nevertheless he pressed ahead and played the Orange card.

The Irish Yeomanry Act was approved on 7 October 1796 and within three months there were 18,000 recruits. The numbers soared again after the attempted French landing at Bantry Bay and by 1798 they stood at over 43,000. While the force was being established there were none of the riots that had accompanied the ballots for the militia; the orderly recruitment was due partly to the force providing a rallying-point for loyalists who were desperate for ways to defend the social and political order on which their privileges depended but also because the yeomanry was grafted on to that old paramilitary tradition which gave rise to the Volunteers. One need look no further than Moate where George Clibborn was able to muster his volunteers to quell the crowds in Clara in May 1793 and to put down the anti-militia riots in Ferbane and Kilkenny West in April 1795. Many of the yeomen became tainted with the sectarianism of the Orange order with its emphasis on King William, the Glorious Revolution, its anti-popery and the public wearing of Orange insignia to counter the United Irish wearing of the green. Maria Edgeworth wrote of them that

"the magistracy and the yeomanry were peopled by men without education, experience or hereditary respectability& in their new characters, they bustled and bravadoed, and sometimes in certainty of party support and in public indemnity, they overleaped the bounds of law".

Near Kilbeggan the districts of Moycashel and Fartullagh were policed by the Fartullagh Cavalry under Captain Robert Rochfort; the first lieutenants were James M. Berry and Thomas Gerrard. George Clibborn was captain of the Moate Cavalry. The Kilcoursey Cavalry across the border in King's County was captained by Andrew Armstrong with John Judge and Anthony Fox. Abraham Fuller was captain of the Kilcoursey Infantry and John Armstrong was first lieutenant. The name of Armstrong of King's County is never far away in accounts of this period of history. There was Edmund Armstrong of Gallen, a colonel of the Ferbane Light Troop of Volunteers who remained

active as a volunteer after the movement was disbanded and acted with George Clibborn during the Rightboy disturbances near Banagher in 1786. John Warneford Armstrong, a companion of John Clibborn, George's son, is remembered now as Sheares Armstrong for betraying the brothers John and Henry Sheares at their trial in July 1798. By a strange twist of fate a yeoman from the Kilcoursey Cavalry headed by Andrew Armstrong was the companion of the Kilbeggan United Irish leader, John McManus, on their doomed journey through Cavan, Meath and Westmeath in June 1798 which ended in Mullingar gaol.

Among the officers of the Fartullagh Yeoman Cavalry were two brothers Hugh and Edward Shiel who lived at Cottage, Gortumly near Rochfortbridge. It was a strange calling for the Shiels given their Jacobite lineage. The O Shiels came from County Antrim and many of them settled in King's County where they were hereditary physicians to the Mac Coghlan's and in County Westmeath. Ballykilroe is a townland near Kilbeggan but in the parish of Castletown and was the home of Donagh O'Shiel who died in 1628 and of Aghery Shiel who was living there 1696. The descendants of Donagh O'Shiel had lands in Ballybrickogue, now Rosemount which were forfeited in 1641 and a smaller holding which was forfeited in 1690. Robert Rochfort, the attorney general bought this land, known as Dillons Grange, in 1703 but the Shiels remained at Grange and Ballinderry. Luke and Niall Shiel were supporters of the Jacobite cause. Luke was a captain in Colonel Henry Dillons regiment and he fought at the Battle of Ballymore in 1691 where he was taken prisoner by Ginkle. At the end of the war he went to Nantes and was outlawed by the English in 1696 for high treason in parts beyond the seas. Niall Shiel was in Colonel Arthur Dillon's regiment and left Limerick with the Mountcashel Brigade in 1690 and settled in Nantes. Anne Shiel, who was a descendant of Niall was murdered by the revolutionaries in 1793.

Marie Shiel married Anthony Vincent Walsh in Nantes in 1741; her husband organised the Jacobite expedition to Scotland in 1745 and brought Prince Charles Edward to the Scottish coast to begin his ill-fated attempt to gain the British crown.

Aghery Shiel, who lost his property by Bill of Discovery, married a daughter or a sister of James Wyer, then living at Benalbit, who is described as a "gentleman, at that period of extensive property who had been a Sheriff of this County". James Wyer erected a chapel in the churchyard of Castletown with the following inscription on a flag in the wall.

*This chappel was erected for
James Wyer Esqr.
In Remembrance of His son Daniel
Wyer in the year 1671*

It appears to have been erected for Daniel Wyer who had to leave the

country due to the affair of 1641. He escaped to Germany and entered the Austrian service in which he died. Aghery Shiel and Connor Wyer of Derryroe were sureties for Rev. Hugh O'Donnell who was registered at Mullingar in 1704 as Popish Priest of Newtown and Castletown. Hugh Shiel, a son of Aghery Shiel was married around 1730 to a daughter of MacGeoghegan of Donore; their son John went to live in Gortumly, barony of Fartullagh, where he purchased an estate when the penal laws regarding property were relaxed. He was married about 1767 and Hugh and Edward were his eldest sons. Gortumly is beside Gallstown, otherwise Gaulstone, in the barony of Fartullagh where the Rochforts settled. They came to Ireland during the thirteenth century and had property in various parts of the country. Prime Iron Rochfort was a Cromwellian officer who was executed in 1651 for fighting a duel with a fellow officer.

His son Robert, who settled in Gaulstown, represented Westmeath in 1695 and was appointed Attorney General and became Baron of the Exchequer in 1707. His sons George and John moved in an exclusive circle which included Jonathan Swift who first visited Gaulstown in May 1715. George who died in 1730 was succeeded by his eldest son Robert who became in 1757 the first Earl of Belvedere. Robert Rochfort, third son of the first Earl of Belvedere was a Volunteer and he became Captain of the Fartullagh Yeomanry in 1796. It may have been through the Rochforts that Hugh and Edward Shield came to be members of the yeomanry corps or, perhaps out of self-interest to protect their property as their house had been attacked by the Defenders in 1795 in their pursuit of arms. Whatever prompted them to join the yeomanry, they do not seem to have taken their duties too seriously. Samuel Handy, second lieutenant of Fartullagh Cavalry informed on them in a letter to Dublin Castle claiming that they were to be seen constantly in Lord Edward Fitzgerald's company, walking arm in arm. And a year after the rebellion he reported that John Murray who commanded the rebels in Kilbeggan was armed with a doubled barrelled gun belonging to Hugh Shiel of the Fartullagh Yeomanry. Edward Shiel once fought a duel with Captain Berry, another yeoman. A few shots were fired before Hugh Shiel, M. Connolly, Coola, Kilbeggan and some others of the Corps galloped up and put an end to the fight. Shiel and Berry had met on the road between Horseleap and Kilbeggan and a quarrel broke out between them when Berry reprimanded Shiel over his flippant answer when he was asked for the password. Berry called Shiel a rascally papist and they started to fight.

"The password that day was *General Craddock*.
What's the password, Shiel?
'Fresh haddock.'" said Shiel, laughing".

Kilbeggan seems to have been something of a byword among the yeomanry at this time according to a story about the sentry at Athlone barracks and

the Kings Messenger from Dublin Castle. The Athlone Yeomanry supplied a quota of men for guard duty at the barracks and no one could either enter or leave without giving the password. The guard was mounted, the sentries posted and the password given out was **Kilbeggan**.

One night, Daniel Daly, a printer from Athlone was on duty when there was a loud knocking at the barrack gate.

Who goes there?

A friend

What is the password?

The man outside did not know the password but explained he was a Kings Messenger from the Castle with dispatches he had to deliver immediately to the General in Command. He then offered to put his distinctive identification - the greyhound - under the gate for the sentry. Now, it is possible that the sentry had never heard of the greyhound being the mark of authority which was always carried by a Kings Messenger. He refused to open the gate saying,

Tatter my soul, messenger or no messenger, if you come in here tonight til you give the password.

The messengers duty was so confidential and urgent that he had to keep on trying to get in and so kept up the knocking and knocking. At last the sentry called out to him.

See here, my tight fellow, messenger or no messenger, its no use your knocking and shouting that way, and disturbing the garrison, for tatter my soul, if you come in here tonight till you say **Kilbeggan!**

The poor Kings messenger at last realised what he must do to get inside, deliver his despatches and save his country. He gasped, **Kilbeggan!**

Official anxiety of a possible invasion intensified in September and when parliament assembled on 13 October the lord lieutenant said the enemy intended making a descent upon Great Britain and Ireland. The Militia were got ready for contra-invasion duties. Contracts were made to supply the garrisons with three weeks provisions; ovens were to be constructed at Athlone and Birr, and depots of biscuits and oats to be formed at Athlone and other places. The most likely place for the invasion was Cork to where militia were being already being sent since March.

The Westmeath Regiment moved from Limerick to Mallow to prepare for the feared landing by the French and the Armagh militia were despatched from Mullingar. According to Alex Murray who wrote from Mount Murray, Mullingar on 27th November, the Armagh militia were quartered nearby at Ballycarthy where a Defender named William O'Neil was under guard but who managed to escape. O'Neil was a native of Armagh and was apprehended in Mullingar along with Bartle Butterly when they were distributing seditious literature on the street in Mullingar. O'Neill arrived in Mullingar from Armagh by way of Dublin, while he stayed at the house of Merrit Coffey at Bolton Street and bought the papers from a ballad singer but refused to

say in what street and how much he had paid for them. Butterly said he was a native of Thomas Street Dublin, where he lived with his mother and stated he was on his way to Strokestown, County Roscommon for his health.

The ballads they sold seemed very harmless and here are just a few verses from *The Exiled Irishmans Lamentation*.

Green were the fields where my forefathers dwelt,
Altho our farm it was small, yet comforts we felt,
At length came the day when our lease did expire,
And fain would I live where before lived my fire;
But, ah! Well-a-day! I was forced to retire.

Tho the laws I obeyd, no protection I found,
With my eyes I beheld my hut levelld to the ground,
Thus forcd from my home; yea, from where I was born,
To range the wide world-poor, helpless, forlorn;
I look back with regret and my heart strings are torn,

Such was the nervousness of landlords and magistrates at that time when the French invasion was expected, that people were arrested for such a trivial offence as selling ballad sheets. When Butterly was in Mullingar gaol, he appealed to Gustavus Rochfort to go to Mr. Hamilton of Dominick Street on his behalf and get a character reference for him. Mr. Hamilton, however, gave him a bad one. Harry Ledwith was also a prisoner at the time, he was a Defender who turned approver causing three others to be prosecuted and convicted. Ledwith confessed to working with others to undermine Derry by blowing it up when the French fleet appeared.

On 27 December there were ten units of militia on the March between Cork and Bantry including the Westmeath militia in one of the coldest winters in memory. A newspaper report said every cottage shared its last potatoes with the troops and every hand was busy in erecting cabins for protecting them against the most violent rain and storms we ever remember. The threatened invasion was defeated largely by the elements the news that the French fleet had been successful in breaking through the British naval blockades and reaching the coast of Ireland even though it had to sail away again was greeted with joy by the United Irishmen. But the near miss at Bantry Bay in December 1796 with Wolfe Tone on board one of the French ships thoroughly frightened the government which now began to follow an even tougher law and order policy to combat the freedom of movement of the insurgents and to search for arms.

COUNTER TERROR

'No mischief has been done in my district by the Defenders.... they are now in terror of the army burning houses and shooting their men

the Wicklow Militia burned seven houses of the Defenders....

This kind of business will soon stop the Defenders'.

John Low, Chief Constable, Gayville, Ballinagore

4th June 1797

During 1797, troubles and disturbances flared up all over County Westmeath and they reached a crescendo in the Defender triangle of Ballymore, Moyvore and Multyfarnham. The brutal conduct of the troops in that troubled area was a continuation of the policy of military repression applied by the government in the aftermath of Bantry Bay and which was aimed at striking terror in Ulster throughout the heartlands of United Irishmen and Defenders. General Lake was sent north to dragoon Ulster into submission with both militia and yeomanry who were allowed to act almost without restraint. The Monaghan militia terrorised Belfast and, while they were at it, they smashed the printing press of the Northern Star, the most radical and most feared newspaper of the day. Thousands of arms were captured and the United Irishmen's hold on the population greatly weakened and the

first flush of enthusiasm for revolution began to pass away. The success of the Ulster repression needed to be repeated in Westmeath which was regarded as one of the best organised counties for rebellion. The arms raids of the Defenders, in particular, needed to be stopped.

A newspaper report dated 25 May stated: 'To enumerate the number of farmhouses that have been broken into and robbed of their arms and several of their money would make a long list even since last week. Wherever even these banditties of United Irishmen or Defenders (synonymous terms) were most opposed they generally set

NOTICE

At a meeting of the Moyashel Yeomanry on parade, Friday the 5th of May 1797. In consequence of the many depredations committed in said Barony, it was thought necessary, that a meeting of the Gentlemen and Landholders of said Barony should be convened; It is therefore requested that all Gentleman and Landholders in said Barony do meet at the George Inn, in Mullingar, on Sunday the 7th day of May inst. at the hour of twelve o'Clock in the forenoon, in order to adopt such measures as may seem most expedient to them, to stop in future such outrages.

Signed by order,

GUSTAVUS ROCHFORD, Captain.

MULLINGAR: PRINTED BY WILLIAM KIDD. 1797

*Notice for a meeting of Moyashel Yeomanry on 5th
May 1797*

fire to the out offices and where possible to the dwelling houses of those who resisted them ...”

By the vigilance and activity of the yeomen twelve or fourteen have been taken and lodged in jail and some guns have also been found concealed in a bog... Several men were taken on suspicion last night by the Wicklow Militia’. Gustavus Rochfort, in his reports from Mullingar on the activities of the Defenders, said he had noted fifty of them drilling in a field but that the military force was too small to tackle them.

‘County Westmeath is most distracted’, he said. Edward Purdon, Chief Constable, Delvin wrote to Castle to say that thirteen or fourteen Defenders broke into houses there where they took arms and demanded money for powder and balls.

Writing from Cushinstown, near Kinnegad on 14 May 1797, Edward Purdon, reported: ‘I am sorry to inform you that the outrages committed by the Defenders still continue without interruption, not a single night passes without an attack on some person. Patrols are kept up by both yeomanry and police but we are not able to come up with the wretches. In short nothing but military aid will be able to suppress those villainous practices’. The military aid called for by Edward Purdon would have been the presence in the area of the Wicklow militia then quartered in Mullingar. On 22 May, the High Sheriff called a meeting ‘to take into consideration the present disturbed state of Westmeath’. It was decided to use all legal means for the ‘suppression of the wicked and infamous set of people calling themselves Defenders or United Irishmen. ..’

The thanks of the people at that meeting were sent to Major Radcliffe and the officers and privates of the Wicklow Militia for their ‘spirited exertions when called upon for the defence of their country’.

John Fetherston, William Smyth and Richard Reynell were among the signatories to plea to Lord Carhampton, the army commander-in-chief for a military force to be quartered in Killucan because of the distracted state of Farbill. It was similar to the letter sent by Edward Purdon and reflects the mounting tension in the area. Richard Reynell continued along the same lines when he wrote, ‘Not a night passes without some depredation being committed... last week eighteen houses belonging to gentlemen and farmers were attacked and arms taken... Our yeomanry corps is out almost every night but the plans of the miscreants are so well said and their information so good that the most we can do is to keep the part of the country under our control quiet... I have promised high awards to those who give me information of intended attacks on houses so that we may come at them in the very act. 20 gns. where the attack is on a farmer’s house and 50 gns. on a gentleman’s house... I have also promised them a comfortable cottage and garden, rent free for life for any useful information’. William Smyth of Drumcree warned Edward Cooke, the under Secretary that a general insurrection would break out unless troops were sent quickly.

In the aftermath of Bantry Bay when the threat of invasion had receded, and all the drama and tension had fizzled out, the country's militiamen, who had not been blooded in any major campaign, found themselves back in their old military routine. Excitement gave way to boredom and the barracks was fertile ground for the spread of Defenderism and of sowing unrest among the militia. The soldiers were also targeted by a new publication, the 'Press' first published in Dublin in 1797 which fired questions at them such as 'Did you enter into the service of government for the purpose of murdering your countrymen?'. One cannot say if the 'Press' was widely read or not among the militiamen but one of them, writing in the paper under the pseudonym 'non-commissioned officer' stated that having a copy of it meant 'very little short of a thousand lashes'. The spread of seditious handbills in the barracks was countered by numerous expressions of loyalty. In Athlone a reward of £20 was offered by N.C.O.S. and drummers to anybody who could present a person trying to give oaths to the regiments or circulating seditious writing. In June the Westmeath Militia who were still in County Cork offered £20 reward for a conviction of any person attempting to seduce soldiers from their duty.

On 5 May 1797 Thomas Shea, the post master in Mullingar wrote to his superior, John Lees in the General Post Office in Dublin about the attacks on houses near Mullingar. He cited two such attacks in Ballinagore where the raiders got blunderbusses, guns and pistols from the miller, Thomas Fleetwood. Another house attacked was that of Henry Robinson where according to the postmaster 'they demanded arms and, on being refused and some shots fired at them they set fire to the house and burnt it with four cows and some horses'. Subsequently, eight men were taken in for the attack on Robinsons but, according to Gustavus Rochfort they were bailed out by Mr. Pilkington as Robinson had sworn only to the best of his ability. The Westmeath Journal of 6 May, 1797 published details of further attacks on houses for arms. Mr. Cooper and Mr. Lenon, both of the Downs and in the yeoman cavalry of the Barony had their arms taken. Shots were fired through Cooper's window causing considerable damage. Christopher Hafford of Walshetown, another yeoman, was also shot at through the window of his bedroom. Hafford's boots were hanging on the wall of his room and one of the shots went through his boot and probably saved him but his arms were not stolen. Another member of the yeoman cavalry, Mr. Hagarty of Grange along with Colonel John L'Estrange of Keoltown and Francis Adams of Rathconrath were robbed of arms. The house of Sir Robert Hodson of Greenpark was raided and his arms were taken; Hodson was away with the militia at the time.

None of the perpetrators for those arms raids were found although 'Captain Rochfort and a corps of yeoman cavalry were indefatigable in their search for them'.

According to Gustavus Rochfort 'Westmeath was seriously disturbed and

in the very town of Mullingar he has information that the Romanish inhabitants are swearing by dozens every night yet no violent acts have yet appeared about the town... It is a known fact that no Protestant family is safe if they have a Roman servant. His house is open in consequence to pillage and perhaps murder ... he becomes a sworn Defender and betrays his master and family to the plundering banditti'. On 15 May Rochfort reported that several men in the area had been jailed; they were Nicholas Martin, labourer, Robert Corbet and Edward Farrell a schoolmaster. On 25 May, Thomas Graham, Chief Constable of Moyashel reported to Thomas Pelham that a man was shot in Ballinea and a number of people who were drinking with him were arrested and taken to Mullingar gaol; they were Brennan, Bryan, Gaynor, W. Woods, Bartle Seery and one other.

James Murphy was in County Westmeath during the earlier part of 1797 and had formed eighty units of the United Irishmen there. Unfortunately for Murphy he was indiscreet enough to boast about his work to a man named Cooley whom he met in Maynooth in April. This man Cooley then informed on Murphy and his arrest was ordered by a Kildare magistrate named Thomas Connolly. Cooley gave this description of Murphy: 'gross and stout about 5ft. 8 ins. Visage of pale complexion, fair, hair about 31 years, dressed like a labourer with a grey outside coat; conversable and spoke good English. Murphy sometimes wears a powder blue cloth and differed in two points with a labourer. His hands are soft not like a labourer. He has a brother working as a clerk for Mr. Blair at Lucan'.

Some form of United Irish

NOTICE

Whereas many Arms have been taken from several of his Majesty's Loyal Subjects in the Parishes of Kilbeggan.

I do hereby call upon the Inhabitants of the same to deliver up to me, or the Officer Commanding at Kilbeggan, on or before the twenty-fifth day of June, 1797, all Pikes, Pike-heads, Pike-handles, or concealed Guns, Swords, Bayonets, or offensive Weapons, or Ammunition of any kind whatsoever, according to the injunctions and directions of the Lord Lieutenant and Council, in their Proclamation fo the 17th May, or they shall answer to the contrary of their peril. And I do further give notice, that upon receiving Information from and after the twenty-fifth day of June, 1797, of any Arms, Pikes, or Ammunition, being concealed within the Parishes of Kilbeggan.

I shall employ the Force under my command to search for the same, and the Persons in whose houses or premises any Arms of Ammunition shall be discovered, will be answerable for the consequences.

Mullingar, June 16, 1797.
CHARLES EUSTACE, Maj. Gen.

MULLINGAR: PRINTED BY WILLAIM KIDD. 1797.

Notice to deliver up all arms at Kilbeggan by 26th June, 1797.

men's military command was in operation around Castletown according to a letter from James or Samuel Austin in May 1797. The code word for a United Irishmen's military organisation, borrowed from the northern yeomanry, was 'Up' while 'Up and Up' signified the alliance between the United men and the Defenders. Austin wrote '... all the Castletown boys and from that I suppose to Loughnavally are to be out this night or tomorrow night... Our friend was out at the funeral yesterday, he says they all spoke openly that 'Up' was the word... the eastern party sent in to Mullingar late yesterday for a command. Their head man, I suppose, is there but they expect in the course of a week to show and push on without disguise'.

Kinnegad was another area to be infiltrated by the United Irishmen and was the subject of a report sent to Dublin Castle by Thomas Purdon and other landlords. Laurence Purcell, a slater of the town admitted being sworn a United Irishman on 2 January 1797 by John Daly, a shoemaker of Kinnegad at the house of Darby Cashell. Then in the company of Andrew Farrell, Patrick Cully, a tailor, Martin Cain and Laurence Cain he was sworn to obey signs and 'not betray a brother'. His finishing oath was administered by Joseph Heaney of the Kinnegad yeomanry which bears out the suspicions of Gustavus Rochfort about the Mullingar yeomanry: 'Many Romans are in the Corps and I doubt their steadfastness in case of emergency'. Purcell went on to tell of being sent to rob the house of James Darcy, Hyde Park; those with him were James Best, John Kiernan, Thos. Lappin, Andrew Farrell, James Geraghty, alias Straight Eye, Laurence Dunn and Patrick Bennett who had a policeman's gun and Edward Purdon's blunderbuss. James Wheatley was brought to Hardwood by Christopher Griffin and sworn a United Irishman in McGill's cornfield. Michael Geraghty had a gun belonging to a policeman named John Wiley. The statement was witnessed by Thomas Purdon, William Smith, John Fetherstone and Richard Reynell.

More information on the defections within the Westmeath militia came from Ballybay, King's County where a man named Bernard wrote to the Chief Secretary, Thomas Pelham on 28 June 1797 giving names of Defenders who were enlisted in the regiment by Sergeant Saunders. They were William Cooke, Streamstown parish of Horseleap, William Fagan, a brogue maker from Mullingar, Daniel Guill, carpenter in Mullingar and Thomas Gar.(?) Killeenbrien, a labourer. Bernard had taken five people into custody, one of whom turned and lodged information against the others. The four were in the Westmeath militia and he was told how many Defenders had enlisted in it and in other regiments also. They were brought to the county gaol and the informer sent to a house of correction in Phillipstown. Bernard also gave information on Patrick Dalton, Rathconrath who had sworn a number of men as Defenders; they were Richard Dillon, Killare, Thomas Neill and Thomas Gaughan Killeenbrack who were sworn at the house of Pat Kelly, Ballylugg, Ballymore and witnessed by Thomas Naughton Castletown. The name of Thomas Holton, Horseleap also appeared in the report.

There was a man named Lattin Fitzgerald of Soho, parish of Multyfarnham, in Mullingar gaol, where he was confined on suspicion of high treason; an account of a conversation between him and James Hilliard, Ballingarvey when the two met at Multyfarnham Fair was sent to Dublin on 10 June by an eavesdropper, Thomas Whitney. According to him Fitzgerald was advising Hilliard not to join the Orangemen but to join the Edgeworthstown Yeomanry instead as they were honest fellows and almost all 'Up': he added that there were five or six United Irishmen in his Corps. Fitzgerald and a fellow prisoner named Dardis were to be set free if the evidence against them could not be substantiated.

Conflicting reports on the state of Westmeath were being sent to Dublin Castle at this time. Richard Reynell from Killucan was predicting that the Insurrection was at an end and numbers were coming in every day to demand the King's pardon; Gustavus Rochfort complained that Mullingar was being kept in check only by the excellent conduct of the Wicklow militia and he asked for more military for Knockerville, Multyfarnham, Ballymore, Miltown and Ballinea. John Low, the Chief Constable of Fartullagh who lived at Gayville, Ballinagore reported on 4 June that 'no mischief had been done in my district by the Defenders ... they are now in terror of the army burning houses and shooting their men..' According to Low the Wicklow militia burned seven houses of the Defenders in the area. 'This kind of business will soon stop the Defenders' he added.

The Wicklow militia were ruthless in the search for arms throughout June 1797 in the villages of Multyfarnham, Ballymore and Moyvore. Twenty eight stands of arms, pistols, bayonets, a sword and a blunderbuss were retrieved by George Bell and his men in Multyfarnham after they threatened to burn the town. According to Bell the inhabitants were all 'struck with consternation, many coming in to take the oath of allegiance and enlisting in the Westmeath militia'. Four men in the village were overheard plotting against the military and two of their houses were set on fire; two men named Spence and Lovely, both Defenders, were shot. A distiller named Dodd was suspected of being a United Irishmen and his house and offices were burned. General Ormsby sent a party of Wicklow militia under Lieutenant Hempenstall to Moyvore to search for arms and six men were killed in the operation.

The Commander-in-chief of the Army Lord Carhampton sent his own emissary to Rathconrath; he was Charles Sheridan who seems to have been despatched there because of his knowledge of the area through his connections as a descendant of Andrew Wilson the founder of Wilson's Hospital near Bunbrosna. Writing from Charleville on 22 June he told of his foray into Moyvore of whose inhabitants he noted that 'nothing could exceed their insolence of the better class of people... but the burning of the houses at Multyfarnham had made some impression on them'. He decided to speak directly to the parishioners at Sunday Mass: 'I bid the parish priest give notice that I would attend at Moyvore Chapel and as soon as the priest had

TO THE SOLDIERS OF IRELAND.

Fellow Citizens and Fellow Soldiers,

PERMIT a countryman to address you in a few words upon a few plain facts, and if any of you feel with me the positions I shall lay down, I entreat you by all that can be dear to man, forward its influence amongst your brethren in arms: but in doing so let the cautious conduct you pursue lull suspicion to rest in those tyrants who now under the colour of commanding dare enslave such brave men, as I trust none of you will fail proving himself when the day shall arrive.

First—Let me ask you, is there one amongst you (particularly those who have been reared in the country) whose dearest relations and most intimate friends do not reside in your respective counties? I answer, none; and you must feel if they are exposed to danger.

Secondly—Which of you that has not formed in his mind a hope of one day (when the period of military service is expired) revisiting his dear friends, and spending an honoured age in the bosom of his parents in peace and tranquillity, re-animating by the scenes his boyish days played truant in, looking with fond remembrance on the village that gave him birth, and cheering a lonely Winter in the companionable society of perhaps a loving wife and rising offspring—You all expect to do so; not a man of you but must have formed the most languine hopes of doing so.

But, my countrymen, what must your feelings be, how check your indignant manly rage, when every day adds peril to their existence; when each day gives a melancholy sad account, (which I do not hesitate to say is concealed from you) of their being murdered by those Orange-men in power—hunted by those paid to defend them in your absence, and with shame I must add, by some of our own countrymen, debased and degenerated by becoming dupes to the murderous Orange faction now lording it through the land; Irish blood freezes at the scenes of persecution carried on against our countrymen, against your families and friends; not an Irish heart but beats with redoubled ardour to face such blood-hounds, and not an Irish hand but would wield a sabre to have revenge!

said Mass I took his place... I entered on the subject of the present circumstances in the style best suited to their capacities... when I quitted the chapel the greater part of the congregation surrounded me and cursed aloud all United Irishmen, the rest of them, I suppose the United part of it shrunk away... you may easily judge of the majority of the inhabitants of Moyvore by their conduct to their priest who is a very worthy man. They threatened him with death if he ever presumed to interfere with them. He was cautioned by friends not even to attend a dying person after nightfall. Charles Sheriden visited the chapel again with Mr. Isdell who administered the oath of allegiance and he concluded his report by stating that six people were shot and thirty five houses in Moyvore were burned down.

The name of Lieutenant Hemenstall of the Wicklow militia has remained in the folk memory of the people of Ballymore and Moyvore, since that Summer of 1797. This account of the behaviour of Hemenstall, afterwards known as 'The Walking Gallows', and the Wicklow militia was written by Liam Cox in the Irish Sword.

"Gardenstown which as a placename has been long obsolete, was in 1797 near the cross roads of Moyvore adjoining Templepatrick. Edward Carroll and his three sons John, Thomas and Edward lived there at that time. They were blacksmiths and members of the United Irish Society for which they had made scores of pikes.

My countrymen, what can you say when you hear of scenes of blood acting on the spot where your native hamlets once stood, but now no more: Their owners (your friends) either sent to seek repose in the grave by the hands of these villainous orange murderers, or immured in the damp and dreary dungeons of the habitacles of this country, pining in chill dependency, waiting for a trial seldom obtained, and when obtained, acquitted, after years of dreary solitary confinement! Some hurried on board prison ships, some actually transported to the settlements on the Coast of Africa, others sent to serve in the West Indies, certain victims to the climate; or left to rot, chained in the hold of a filthy enslaving vessel! Your wives deplored to gratify the insatiable lust of these ravishers! and these scenes, my countrymen, suffered to go unpunished by those in power, whom you protect; to whose frowns your array adds terror; to whom you give your support, or unless you please they vanish; without your protection these Despoils fall, these desolators that each day refine on such bloody deeds would perish, and your country be free. My brave countrymen do not let the world call us dastards: No, let us shew the world we are men, and above all that we are Irishmen. Let every man among you feel the injuries your country, yourselves have suffered; the infants you have received, the stripes that have been dealt with an unmerciful hand on those brave contraries who dared think and feel for their country.—If you do, the glorious work will be complete, and in the union of the citizen and his brave fellow soldier, the world (hitherto thought to look down upon us with contempt) will see that we can emancipate our country; we will convince surrounding nations that Irish foldiers have avowed and adopted a maxim they will maintain, or perish—namely, *that every man should be a Soldier in defence of his Liberty*, but *not to take away the Liberty of others.*

Wexmeath, 27th March, 1798.

SHAMROG.

DUBLIN

In the same locality a band of robbers was operating at that time. One of their leaders was W____, son of Pat W____, a young man of dissolute habits. They decided to rob the night coach on its way from Mullingar to Athlone. On the appointed night which was dark, wet and windy they crossed from their meeting place near Mount Dalton to the main road at Uisneagh.

At the village of Killare one of the band was missed. It transpired afterwards that he had deserted as he had reported the intended holdup to an officer of the Athlone yeomanry. The latter made arrangements to prevent the outrage.

When W____ on whom the lot had fallen to stop the coach, appeared with his companions on the road they were met with a sudden volley from the 'passengers' who in fact were yeomen. Three of the attackers were shot dead. W____ and three others were captured and brought prisoners to Mullingar. Some others managed to escape in the darkness.

To save his life W____ turned informer, swore against his companions who were hanged, and offered to betray the secrets of the local United Irishmen. Two or three days after his arrest he was brought to Moyvore where he accused Edward Carroll and his sons and afterwards showed the militia where a number of pikes were hidden in Templepatrick graveyard.

Hempenstal who was in command of the militia offered Carroll and his family pardon and protection if they surrendered any guns they had. They produced three which was all they had. Immediately Hempenstal cut the old man down with his sword while the Wicklow militia shot his three sons dead on the spot.

Next the Carrolls' house, forge and few belongings were burned. One soldier more humane than the rest dragged the wife and child of one of the sons from the burning house, otherwise they would have been consumed. This outrage occurred about two o'clock in the afternoon of Monday 19 June 1797.

Hempenstal then ordered a farm/cart to be seized and on it the bodies of the victims were taken to Moyvore. Here three others Henry Smyth, John Smyth and Michael Murray, were arrested and charged with being United Irishmen. They were tied to the cart containing the bodies of the Carrolls and brought under heavy escort to the Fair Green at Ballymore.

This awesome display was intended to impress the people of the countryside as it was fair day in Ballymore. On reaching the fairgreen the Smyths and Murray were tortured to extract information. Finally on Hempenstal's orders the three were put down on their knees and shot to death.

Lord Oxmanstown who was present made an effort to have the prisoners at least put on trial before being shot. Hempenstal however, made known that he was in command and ordered his soldiers to carry out the executions.

The bodies were afterwards taken back to Moyvore and waked in the Chapel there. They were buried in Templepatrick graveyard by a few relatives as the neighbours were afraid to have any part in the wake or funeral.

The same day a young man named Hynes who had no political associations of any kind was cut down on the street of Ballymore by Hemenstal and shot dead by three of the Wicklow militia.

In all sixteen persons including an agent of Mr. Dillon of Ballymahon were dangerously wounded the same day in Ballymore by the same parties. Lastly on the orders of General Ormsby and Lieutenant Hemenstal the village of Moyvore was burned to the ground with the exception of five or six houses."

Nothing could more clearly illustrate the chaotic state of the country than the almost total indifference of a large section of the population to the general election held in the Summer of 1797; the moderates were in despair and the extremists regarded parliament as irrelevant. It was to be the last election before the Union of 1800 and the following were returned for Westmeath: Robert Rochfort and William Smyth for the County, Sir R.B. St. George and William Handcock for Athlone, Robert Ross and Richard Annesley for Fore, Francis Hardy and Colonel John Doyle for Mullingar and Francis Hopkins and Gustavus Lambart for Kilbeggan. Gustavus Lambart was a member of the Westmeath Grand Jury which voted its gratitude to the Wicklow militia for restoring peace and order to the county recently the 'scene of outrage and distress'. They gave a service of plate worth fifty guineas to the officers' mess and gave two hundred guineas to the N.C.O.S. and soldiers. The men asked that the money be distributed as medals with a suitable inscription.

The medals were struck in gold for the N.C.O.S. and in silver for the pri

DISCOVERING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM



Silver medal presented to Wicklow Militia by the Westmeath Grand Jury (by William Mossop, Dublin 1797).

vates by William Mossop; one of these silver medals is in the collection of the National Museum. The inscription is:

**WESTMEATH GRAND JURY TO THE WICKLOW REG T/
SEPTEMBER/1797.**

The reverse side reads: **REWARD OF LOYALTY.**

The story of Michael Broghan, a shopkeeper from Mullingar nicely counterpoints the flowery address sent by the Grand Jury to the Wicklow militia. Broghan was brought before the Mullingar Assizes on 6 September, 1797 charged with uttering seditious words. A sergeant in the Wicklow regiment arrived in Mullingar on 12 July; he met Broghan there, and probably to celebrate the 'twelfth', they went to Graham's Inn, known as The George and they started to drink and propose toasts:

Sergeant Mathew Bryan: "I give you the Glorious Memory".

Michael Broghan: "I give you Oliver Bond".

Bryan: "Why won't you drink to the Glorious Memory?"

Broghan: "Why don't you kiss my a _ _ _ ?"

There were two other men drinking with them and between them they drank two bottles of wine. The militia sergeant said he believed Broghan to be a Defender. Broghan said he was a true born United Irishman, an honest republican and a real Defender and he drank 'the fate of Louis XVI to all the crowned heads of Europe'.

Matthew Bryan then gave Broghan into Graham's custody and sent for a guard. At the assizes Sergeant Manifold of the Wicklow Militia said he brought the prisoner to the guardhouse where he complained of not being allowed to give Oliver Bond's toast. Thomas Graham gave evidence that the prisoner had a green handkerchief and sold some of his shop; he had never seen him sell scarlet handkerchiefs. Michael Broghan was found guilty and sentenced to one year's imprisonment and £30 security for seven years.

In November 1797 Lord Carhampton the Commander-in-chief of the army was succeeded by Sir Ralph Abercromby. He was a good general and a humane man and was horrified by the state of military affairs in Ireland where the army was in the control of the political establishment. Outrages had been committed by the soldiers on the ordinary people whom the administration looked upon as enemies and the perpetrators of these outrages were shielded by politicians both inside and outside the ranks. Abercromby was

determined to change this by restoring the discipline of the troops and by ending the indiscriminate use of the troops by the civil authorities. Many of the Protestant gentry were critical of the repression which General Lake had applied in Ulster and which was extended to Leinster but there was very little support in parliament for their views and the members were fully behind the government. General Abercromby aroused a storm of indignation for his efforts to reform the army and, only a few months later he felt compelled to resign because of the opposition of those in the Castle.

Years later he wrote: 'Although the French Revolution and Jacobin principles may be the immediate cause of the events which have lately taken place in Ireland, yet the remote and ultimate cause must be derived from its true origin, the oppression of centuries'.

CHAPTER 4

1798 - McManus and Carey

Wolfe Tone, who was in France with some colleagues negotiating another expedition sent instructions to the United Irish leaders in Dublin that nothing was to be done that might even hint at a plan for a rising; houses must not be robbed for arms or trees cut down for pike handles and, above all, the movement was to remain underground. However, there was a strong, vocal group within the United Irishmen which did not want to wait for any French help and favoured an immediate rising. They were confident that their views would prevail and that they would win the argument at the next meeting of the Directory due for 12 March. By 10 March, the Government had heard all about the meeting set to take place in the house of Oliver Bond. The United Irishmen were then delivered with a mortal blow when Major Sirr, the Dublin Chief of Police, swooped down on the delegates as they sat at their meeting... Sirr seized ten provincial delegates, two members of the Supreme Executive and their papers. This coup stunned the United Irishmen and a general proclamation of martial law at the end of March threatened to paralyse the movement throughout the country. Lord Edward Fitzgerald and a few of the leaders who managed to remain free then formed a new directory but their situation was hopeless. They took a huge gamble, decided not to wait for the French but to go ahead with the rising. They fixed the outbreak for 23 May.

The news of the arrests in Dublin had a profound effect on the organisation in Westmeath where, according to an informer named Charles Brennan of Mabutt Street, Dublin, several houses had been attacked and robbed for arms which were being held in readiness for the French landing. The United movement was in such disarray that only one barony could send its returns of men and arms to the Executive in Dublin. This was Moycashel whose leader was John McManus of Kilbeggan. The Defenders had been active in Kilbeggan since 1795 when the Catholic Bishop of Meath, Dr. Patrick Plunkett had condemned them on his confirmation visit; by the Autumn of 1796 the United Irishmen's organisation was sending its emissaries through County Westmeath, notably James Murphy and his friend Carey. Some time after these agents had left there was an alliance between the United Irishmen and the agrarian movements and the man who emerged as the leader in Moycashel was John McManus. He was the second son of Matthias McManus who owned the Kilbeggan Distillery.

Matthias McManus came from Mayo where the McManuses, a Catholic family living at Barley Hill, Bohola, were prominent in the political, social and sporting life of the County. His brother Captain Christopher McManus was a commissioned British officer and a member of the Grand Jury of County Mayo. A story was related about Captain McManus and a Mayo rebel who was captured after the rout of the Irish and French at Ballinamuck in September 1798. The rebel, who happened to be a son of one of Christopher McManus' tenants was promised his liberty if the landlord would vouch for him. McManus failed to do so and the man was hanged; his mother was supposed to have cursed him afterwards for not saving her son's life. It was claimed, on McManus' behalf, that he was also under suspicion at the time as his own nephew had been hanged only a few weeks before in Mullingar. His sons, Bernard and Charles remained on the family estate and had pleasant privileged lives before running into some severe financial troubles. They were 'living high, prominent in local society, hunting and racing; today hunting with the South Mayos, tomorrow with the North Mayo Harriers at Ballyskeery, racing the rest of the week at events from Mountpleasant to Ballylahan; presenting cups value 100 sovs., betting, entertainment, balls, banquets and political escapades kept them fully engaged'. When they were running short of money and their creditors were pursuing them through the Court of Chancery, the estate was leased to the Deans of Foxford. The Deans were a prominent family like the McManuses; one of the Dean girls was the mother of John Dillon, the last leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Dean's home at Foxford became part of the Providence Woollen Mills. Edward Dean rented the McManus estate in 1840 when the grazing system was attracting the wrath of members of the secret agrarian societies, the heirs of the Whiteboy movement of the previous century. Local societies made trouble for Dean on his grazing land by fleecing some of his sheep and killing more of them. After the Famine both Bernard and Charles McManus tried their hands at everything in order to hold on to their lands. Charles acted as a land agent for the powerful Mayo family, the Moores of Moore Hall. Bernard, who was active in Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Movement, did not see eye to eye on politics with the Moores and when he campaigned against George Henry Moore during a parliamentary election in East Mayo; the family took its revenge on him. It seems

NOTICE.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LAKE having received Information that several Persons not belonging to the Navy, Army, Militia, or Yeomanry, appear dressed in Uniform, Notice is hereby given, that any Person so found shall be considered as a Spy, and tried accordingly.

GEO. HEWETT,
Adjutant-General.

*Adjutant General's Office,
Dublin, 30th May, 1798.*

*Notice from General Lake dated 30th
May 1798.*

he owed them some money and they had him put in prison for the debt.

It was hard for someone of McManus' social standing to get suitable employment and it became common practice for members of the Grand Jury to act as road contractors. Bernard McManus also worked for the Guardians of the Poor Law Unions and, at one stage, even went as far as County Antrim where he worked for the Union of Ballycastle. Despite all the set-backs Bernard and his brother maintained their social position in the county taking part in all the racing, hunting and social events. But they were unable to hold on to their estate when their creditors, mostly money lending firms with English addresses, forced a sale of the property in 1851. There were about one thousand acres in the estate which included a tastefully planted demesne and a handsome three-storey mansion house. After the sale, Bernard McManus and his wife lived at various places in Mayo including Mountpleasant and Brownstown House in Kiltimagh, the residence of George Brown M.P. who was a member of Isaac's Butt's Home Rule Party. One of Bernard's last jobs was his appointment as Clerk of the Swinford Board of Guardians, being clerk of the Swinford Workhouse in 1872. According to local tradition the McManuses established a Secondary School at Bohola where Bishop MacNicholas of Achonry and Bishop McHale of Tuam received their early education.

Matthias McManus came from Bohola to Kilbeggan, County Westmeath about the year 1775 and became a distiller. The Brosna Distillery in Kilbeggan was established in 1757 and it was on this site that McManus was working a small still in 1782. The income from such a small operation would not have been enough for him to specialise in distilling so he also rented land around Kilbeggan to supplement his earnings. He stopped distilling before the end of the century and, instead, went into brewing which was a more profitable business. He and his sons established the brewery on the site of the distillery and the family continued running it until 1846 when John Locke bought it and it became a part of the famous Locke's Distillery, Kilbeggan. It is possible that his sons John and James were involved in the running of the distillery up to 1798. His son Andrew lived in Kilbeggan all his life and became a Guardian of the Poor Law Union of Tullamore of which Kilbeggan was a district. Both Andrew and his brother Bernard were on the list of Westmeath voters in 1832 who were given the vote following the reform bill of that year. Bernard moved from Kilbeggan to Derryhall, Rosemount where he bought the farm of a wealthy man



The house of Matthias McManus. Currently the residence of Dr. D. O'Sullivan.

named Crosbie. According to tradition Crosbie made a fortune in the slave trade only to lose it breeding and training horses at Derryhall. Two or three young members of this Crosbie family were out at Kilbeggan in the Rising in 1798. Bernard McManus, Mrs. McManus and their children, Mary Ann, Matthias and Jane are listed in the 1825 Census where Bernard is described as a gentleman farmer of Derryhall, Rosemount.

John McManus's main contact with the Dublin executive of the United Irishmen was Patrick Gallagher, one of the body guards of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. He wrote to Gallagher, at his address in Thomas Street on 2 May 1798 that there were 3,400 men ready and waiting for the signal to rise. The forces they would confront in the coming battle were seventy Northumberland Fencibles quartered in Kilbeggan, forty yeomen infantry in Tyrellspass and thirty five yeomen cavalry in Moate. He was supremely confident, convinced that they could put them down or even ten times their number if necessary. The Tyrellspass yeomen referred to were part of the Fartullagh Yeomanry which had a number of Catholics in it including two maverick members Hugh and Edward Shiel who have been mentioned before.

As the United Irishmen had long targeted both yeomen and militia it is likely that John McManus was on good terms with both Hugh and Edward Shiel; speaking to Gustavus Rochfort after his trial he was able to name four regiments that he had infiltrated. There was one man, in particular, who was fated to play a crucial role in his downfall; he was Owen Carey, a member of the Kilcoursey Yeoman Cavalry just across the border from Kilbeggan in King's County. It was a strange friendship which took them through Westmeath, Cavan and Meath and from which John McManus would not return. According to Carey he went to Cavan to visit his sick father-in-law and brought McManus along for the company although it was put to both of them, later on, that they fled from Kilbeggan out of fear of being arrested as United Irishmen. They left Kilbeggan in the first week of June 1798 and the journey passed without incident until they reached Fore where they stopped for refreshment and to fodder their horses. It was during this break at Fore that they heard from the landlord of the house about the disturbed state of County Cavan; they could not go through the county, he advised, it being in a state of insurrection. Owen Carey wrote out a pass for himself and John McManus and signed it in the name of Andrew Armstrong, Captain of Kilcoursey Yeomanry, Clara Lodge, King's County.

Pass the Bearer, Owen Carey of the Kilcoursey Cavalry to Bryan Farrelly of Cavan and also John McManus to said place on their lawful occasions. This to be in force ten days. Given under my hand this 2nd Day of June 1798.

Andw. Armstrong

Capt. Of Kilcoursey Cavalry, Clara Lodge
To all whom it may concern.

They travelled on then to Cavan to visit the sick father-in-law and, as there was no danger of his dying, they left almost immediately for Crossakiel, County Meath where they planned to stay the night at the house of Edmund Reilly. There was a funeral that day, 8 June, in Crossakiel and while they were waiting for Reilly to come back from the funeral they both went to Phillip Ginty's, a whiskey-house in the village. Whether Edmund Reilly ever turned up to meet them afterwards is debatable but they met most of the other mourners when they adjourned to Ginty's after the funeral. The heady atmosphere in the house, the mourners all milling around drinking and making noise loosening poor John McManus' tongue according to the witnesses at his trial. One of the witnesses was James Gilsean from Old Castle who said he was drinking in Ginty's with both Carey and McManus; he was asked a lot of questions about pikes and arms and on whether the people were ready to rise or not. All the questions were put by McManus who was able to tell him that his own part of the country would soon be in a blaze. He admitted that they were both 'a little hearty' from drink at the time and that Carey had reprimanded McManus for talking so foolishly. Someone else taking a keen interest in all of this seditious talk about guns and pikes was the servant girl in Ginty's, a busybody named Mary Stevens. When Mary had heard enough to arouse her suspicions she went with her story to her mistress who promptly sent her off to fetch Thomas Robinson, the Chief Constable of Demifore Barony. By the time Robinson arrived at Ginty's, McManus and Carey had left and were a mile and a half down the road before being overtaken. Lieutenant Henry Daniel of the Meath Demifore cavalry then arrived on the scene along with Robinson who helped him arrest the two men and take them into custody. It was at this stage that the forged pass came to light, Daniel questioned Carey about the journey to Cavan and the sick father-in-law and wanted to know why McManus was with him. He examined the pass signed in Captain Armstrong's name and by dint of questioning found out it was forged. He brought John McManus and Owen Carey back to Westmeath but not to Kilbeggan. They were imprisoned in Mullingar gaol and confined on the order of General Barnett to await a General Court Martial.

*Pass the name Owen Carey of the Militia
 Cavalry to Major General of Cavan, is also taken to
 name to take place on their business occasions etc
 to be in force for 20 days from 1st January 1798
 this 2^d day of June 1798 P. G. P.*

*John Robinson
 Chief of Militia Cavalry
 Westmeath*

*Took whom I
 May command*

Copy of Pass forged by Owen Carey in the name of Andrew Armstrong.

The Trial of John McManus and Owen Carey

‘...If the United men in Dublin had not broken their words on 23 May last, there would have been a general rising throughout the Kingdom but as they did not rise in Dublin according to promise, the Delegates in the country were afraid to show themselves’..

From a conversation with John McManus before his execution.

A few days before the date fixed for the insurrection, 23 May, the United Irishmen got the heaviest blow of all with the capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald in Dublin. The original plan to seize the capital and paralyse the government was never attempted and there were only isolated risings throughout Leinster which were quickly contained by the government forces. The only place where the rebels made any headway was County Wexford where for three weeks the United Irishmen had held the county in the name of the Irish Republic. By the time John McManus’ court martial in Mullingar began on 29 June the main stronghold of the Wexford rebels, Vinegar Hill had been captured and after that the rebellion petered out.

Colonel Francis Blake, the Northumberland Fencibles presided at the Court martial. Five officers of the Regiment made up the jury along with Gustavus Rochfort of the Moyashel Cavalry. In a year famous for its treason trials, notably that of the Sheares brothers and the Leinster delegates arrested at Bond’s house in Dublin on 12 March, the court martial of John McManus stands out as one of the most dramatic and even bizarre trials of the rebellion. The great difference being that while John and Henry Sheares, John McCann, William Bryan and Oliver Bond were all defended by the brilliant barrister, John Philpot Curran, the one time member of parliament for Kilbeggan, John McManus conducted his own defence and gave a great account of himself.

The prisoners were faced with three charges throughout the trial the first being ‘For having Acted, Aided and Assisted by Words or otherwise in the Rebellion now existing in this Kingdom’. Both of them pleaded not guilty to the charge. Six witnesses were there to testify against them including a man named Edward Dennis of Phillipstown, King’s County who claimed he knew McManus and related a conversation he had with him in his shop in Phillipstown the previous Spring. According to Dennis, McManus told him that there were societies of upwards 2,000 men in the parish of Castletown and societies of United Irishmen in the neighbourhood of Kilbeggan but conceded that McManus did not say whether he was in command or not. Lieutenant Henry Daniel of the Meath Demifore Cavalry told how he had taken the pair into custody at Kil___ and had been shown a pass by Carey. When he questioned them he was told that Captain Armstrong, who was Carey’s Captain had given him the Pass, that they had both been to Cavan to visit his father-in-law who had got a partial stroke and that McManus was with

him for Company. When he asked if the pass was in Armstrong's handwriting Carey told him it was but then later admitted that it was not. Thomas Robinson, the High Constable, told the Court about the girl from Philip Ginty's who has gone to see him about the two men. The mistress of the house had sent Mary Stevens to Robinson with a request to take both McManus and Carey; it seems that their conversation was having a bad effect on the other customers who had gathered there after the funeral and some of them were actually leaving because of 'improper expressions being used by the two gentlemen!'

He sent for two of his men but before they arrived the two prisoners had left and had gone a mile and a quarter before he overtook them. He then helped Lieutenant Daniel to take them into custody. Robinson's part in the story of McManus and Carey while they were in Meath remains a bit obscure; according to McManus they sent word to Robinson by Mary Stevens on two occasions that they wanted to see him. Mary Stevens agreed that they had sent her once for the Constable but that he was at the funeral. Robinson claimed to know nothing of this and said he was not at the funeral. And then there was the incident at Kilskyre where Carey and Robinson spent some time firing at marks for a wager. This happened outside what was probably another whiskey house as McManus was inside asleep on a table while the other two were firing at a mark for a jug of punch.

James Gilsenan had been one of the funeral party in Ginty's while McManus and Carey were there on 8 June. Yes, he had been asked by McManus whether the county was quiet or if the people were ready to rise; on answering that the people were quiet McManus told him that was not the case in his country which would shortly be in a blaze and that County Meath ought to be the same. During this conversation Carey was sitting at the same table while McManus was putting questions to him about arms and pikes and he reprimanded him for such foolish talk. According to Gilsenan both he and McManus were 'a little hearty' at this stage. No blame should be attached to the unfortunate Gilsenan, however as he was later flogged at Oldcastle on the orders of Lieutenant Daniel for being in the prisoners' company that day in Crossakiel and then threatened with 400 more lashes to get information from him. Upon being recalled to the witness stand Daniel said he knew that McManus asked Gilsenan if the people were ready to rise before he had him flogged and afterwards he confessed that he was asked about the arms and pikes. When the Judge asked if Gilsenan had given his sworn statement to Francis Battersby because he was afraid, Daniel gave the classic answer,

'I do not know, I was not in Town.'

He was followed by Mary Stevens who brought a feminine perspective to the proceedings by describing the prisoners in terms of the colour of their clothes and outlining some of the domestic arrangements in Ginty's of Crossakiel. Mary was upstairs making beds when she heard McManus talk

ing to Gilsenan and, according to what she told the Court, she stooped down and listened to them through a hole in the floor which she was able to see through as well. She heard the questions to Gilsenan and what McManus said about the people in his own country who were going to have a battle 'some of these days'; when Carey warned him to be careful about what he was saying he called him an Orangeman and told him to hold his tongue. On hearing all of this talk about people being ready to rise and having hooks that would knock a horseman's head off, Mary went to tell her mistress who then sent her to fetch Constable Robinson. She admitted, when questioned by the prisoners during the Court that they had sent her to Robinson, on one occasion, to tell him that they wanted to see him. When all of the prosecution witnesses had been heard the court then adjourned until Friday 6 July.

Matthias McManus from Kilbeggan, John's father who was the first defence witness, had travelled to County Meath earlier in the week to find out for himself exactly what happened. His first call was to Ginty's where he asked to be shown the room where his son had the conversation with James Gilsenan. It was only with reluctance that he was allowed in and Mary Stevens pointed out the corner of the room where they sat at a small table. After that he asked here to show him the hole in the loft as he could not see anything except a few chinks in the boards. There was a small opening a few feet away, and when he told her that there was no hole in the ceiling over where they were sitting she changed her mind and said that they sat on a settle bed. The hole was somewhat 'blocked with dirt and cobwebs' and was only large enough to put his little finger in. He did not fare much better in Oldcastle where he went to enquire about Gilsenan's being flogged when making his declaration. He was prevented from making those enquiries by Captain O'Reilly of the Meath Demifore Cavalry, the same regiment of the man who arrested his son, Lieutenant Henry Daniel. O'Reilly also found fault with his pass which Matthias McManus produced for the Court and which must have been in order as there was nothing said about it.

Owen Carey's brother-in-law, Matthias Farrelly, recalled meeting the prisoners in County Cavan but when asked if he heard that they had gone there for fear of being arrested at home as United Irishmen he said he heard that only after they were arrested. The Protestant Clergyman in Kilbeggan, Rev. James Elrington, said he knew John McManus for the last two years and he appeared to be a sober, well conducted man. He agreed that he was regarded in Kilbeggan as the leader of the United Irishmen and that he knew of the reports that he fled from Kilbeggan for fear of being arrested.

Michael Seery of the Moycashel Cavalry came before the court to speak up for Owen Carey. He said he had known him for a long time, that he was a man of good character and he had never heard a word against him until he was arrested.

The court ended and the prisoners were given until ten o'clock the following morning to prepare a written defence.

John McManus turned out to be an eloquent and passionate advocate for his own defence and also for that of his companion Owen Carey. If he were to have any chance at all he had to demolish the charges made by Lieutenant Daniel who could only get his evidence by flogging James Gilsenan and he must completely discredit the girl in Ginty's, Mary Stevens. Owen Carey had informed Daniels straight away that he was a member of the Clara yeomanry even if he did give him a forged pass. Carey's brother-in-law proved the truth of their story that they were in Cavan to visit a sick man; at no time had they made any attempt either to hide or change their names; they did not act at any time like men fleeing from justice. He was very scornful that the court should rely on the evidence given by Mary Stevens calling it 'the most improbable, inconsistent and unlikely tale that was even laid before a court of justice.' He went on, 'That a servant maid in a common whiskey house upstairs over a room where there were several companies drinking, should put her ear to a hole in one of the boards and give an accurate account of a conversation between McManus and James Gilsenan wherein McManus asked about pikes and arms and were they up and that they ought to be in a blaze in that country. Is this story likely or probable?'

He went on to ask why Carey should have cautioned him about speaking to Gilsenan and why he should have called Carey an Orangeman if they were either encouraging or inciting a rebellion. And he repeated the claim that they had themselves sent for Constable Robinson when they were in Crossakiel, an unlikely request if they had anything to hide.

He was very sarcastic about the testimony of Edward Dennis from Phillipstown who claimed that McManus had told him that there were 2,300 United Irishmen in the parish of Castletown. In rebutting this charge McManus said there were not 500 men in Castletown who were fit to carry arms and that this fact was well known to at least one member of the court; he probably was referring to Gustavus Rochfort. He hoped the court would regard the story about them from the whiskey house as being highly improbable and that it would disregard the testimony of James Gilsenan which was obtained 'in a manner too shocking to observe further'. The prisoners must have planned to have another witness speak in their defence as towards the end of their statement they observed, 'we humbly hope this honourable court will also take into consideration the fatality by which we have been deprived of bringing forward evidence from the neighbourhood of Crossakiel and Oldcastle'. They concluded their defence by repeating the three main points on which it based, the improbability of Mary Stevens' story, the way that Gilsenan's evidence was obtained and the reaction of Carey to any conversation about rebellion.

The verdict was favourable to Owen Carey who was found not guilty. John McManus was found guilty and was sentenced to transportation for life.

There was even worse to come, however. On 9 July, John McManus faced a second charge of having written a treasonable letter for the 'purpose of

overturning his Majesty's crown and dignity in this realm of Ireland and for the purpose of stirring up and promoting the Rebellion that now exists in the Kingdom'. When he wrote in his letter to Patrick Gallagher on 2 May that he could bring 3,400 men to the field ready to stand or fall in the cause of their country he was signing his own death warrant. The letter must have been in the hands of the authorities very soon afterwards but, how it reached them or who betrayed him is not known. Being faced with the incriminating letter at the Court in Mullingar must have come as a terrible blow to him; why would he have defended himself so vigorously at his first trial or why would his father have gone to Crossakiel and Oldcastle to find out what happened if either of them knew it would all be hopeless no matter what they did. The letter was produced and three people William Moore, John Lillys and Christopher Hartford were called to testify on John McManus' handwriting. Moore was positive about it, 'I have seen the prisoner write. It is his handwriting'. The other two said it was his writing to the best of their knowledge. The letter to Patrick Gallagher was then read out for all in the Court.

Kilbeggan 2nd May 1798

Dear Citizen,

Conformable to the Information I received when I last had the pleasure of seeing you, Immediately on my return to the country, I sent Instructions to the Respective Barony's to have their Numbers properly returned, their Collections made. And Appointed a Day for the County meeting accordingly (which was last Saturday), when to my great Mortification I was totally Disappointed they not having come according to appointment. I cannot pretend to account in any manner for this timid Conduct on the part of the Delegates but surely there is nothing in my opinion that can Justify it. I was prepared to go up on Sunday as requested but considered it totally as I was destitute of any Returns, saving those of this Barony. I am certain that there must be a very curious Idea formed of this county from such unpardonable neglect but I also flatter myself that were Matters really known to our Friends no blame would be attached to me. From our first moment of receiving the System of Organisation in this Barony, we lost not a Moments time. The People are all well Prepared and in four hours we can bring to the field 3,400 men determined to Stand or fall in the Cause of their Country, all they want is a Knowledge of the Moment. I am Certain the good sense of our Friends (thro' the neglect and intimidation of the other Barony's) would not suffer such a Number of Brave Men to be Sacrificed and I hope still for the necessary Information.

people who spoke to John McManus before his execution and he gave an account of their meeting in a letter which he sent to Dublin Castle on 10 August, 1798. He referred to the letter of John McManus to Patrick Gallagher and enclosed 'some matter he mentioned before his execution, nearly in his words, that you may see how determined his party was'. McManus told him that if the United men in Dublin had not broken their word on 23rd May there would have been a general rising throughout the Kingdom but as they did not rise in Dublin the delegates in the country were afraid to show themselves. As for the attack on Kilbeggan, he was of the opinion it was a foolish business with not the smallest hope of success and he would not have allowed it if he had been out. He went on to tell Rochfort of four regiments which he had infiltrated but although pressed to do so, he refused to give the names of other United delegates, saying he would never bring other families into the same distressful situation that his own family was in.

He asked to see Owen Carey, saying he might do him some service, but did not give any reason for this. He was allowed to see Carey, but after he had seen him, he became very close and refused to say any more.

He spoke of the magistrates whose lives were in danger, such as Captain William Moore and Mr. Clibborn. His last words were that the people were determined to be patient and to persevere. The tone of his conversation with Rochfort suggests a man completely at ease with himself and his interrogator who was a prominent magistrate and a member of a powerful Westmeath family. Reading between the lines, one detects Rochfort's respect for the man and his calm demeanour.

His refusal to betray his fellow delegates, his concern for Carey, his tactical judgement on the rising in Kilbeggan and his coolness during those final days in Mullingar, all combine to paint a vivid picture for us of John McManus. He was another lost leader of 1798.

On 10 July, Owen Carey was charged with forging a pass in the name of Andrew Armstrong to enable him to escape arrest which he was 'apprehensive of on account of his being charged with being a United Irishman and by such evading the Justice of his country and for uttering said pass knowing it to be forged'. He pleaded guilty to the charge but repeated his reasons for forging the pass, he wanted to visit his sick father-in-law in Cavan and intended to give the pass to Captain Armstrong when he returned. The pass was then produced for everyone to examine. As Owen Carey had already pleaded guilty the seriousness of the crime was considered by the Court and he was sentenced 'to serve His Majesty for life as a soldier beyond the seas'.

This is not the last word on Carey, however, as on 24 September, 1798, he sent a petition from Mullingar gaol to Lord Cornwallis, the Lord Lieutenant, who had replaced Camden the previous June. Carey recounted the story of travelling to Cavan to see his father-in-law and of stopping off at Fore to get refreshments and being told there of the danger of going any further without a pass as Cavan was in a state of insurrection. Having gone so far he did

not want the additional hardship of returning home without accomplishing his mission, so he took the risk of drawing a pass to which he put Captain Armstrong's authorisation. He did not mention the name of his companion John McManus in this petition to Lord Cornwallis or that he had put McManus' name on the pass in addition to his own.

He went to recall his arrest by Lieutenant Daniel at Crossakiel and his immediate confession about the pass. His trial by courtmartial resulted in his conviction and the sentence to serve in the Crown Forces beyond the seas for an unlimited time. He pleaded for mercy for himself, his 'poor distressed wife and four helpless children whose existence depends on his industry.....'

He continued, 'Petitioner further begs to observe to your Excellency's wisdom, justice and humanity that he had taken trial for this offence at a time when the country was in a firmament which caused, as he conceives, the Judge Advocate and jury to use more coercive measures than they would at a time when peace and tranquillity rested in the neighbourhood. Petitioner from all these circumstances, humbly hopes Your Excellency will suffer him to be once more restored to his farm, his wife and his poor helpless children and giving any security that may be required for his thereafter good behaviour....'

He was still languishing in Mullingar gaol the following Spring but on 3 March 1799, a powerful voice was added in support of his petition. General Charles Barnett wrote from Mullingar to Colonel Littlelake recommending Carey to the Lord Lieutenant's mercy. He wrote, 'some very favourable circumstances arising came to my knowledge respecting Owen Carey now under sentence of a courtmartial to be transported for life....I beg leave in conjunction with several of the magistrates of the County Westmeath particularly to recommend him And that he may be discharged upon giving security for his future conduct.'

Barnett went on to say that his case was not connected with the civil jurisdiction except that his name had been returned to Lord Castlereagh and clerk of the Crown in order to prevent his return into the King's Army had the sentence of transportation been carried out.

It is not known if Carey's petition was successful. However, about ten years later, a man named Owen Carey is listed in the Westmeath Grand Jury Presentments in connection with road improvements in the Castletown-Geoghan and Streamstown area and he may have been the former member of the Kilcoursey Yeoman Cavalry.

Patrick Gallagher

There is hardly a more courageous and daring figure among the leaders of the United Irishmen than Patrick Gallagher, the faithful bodyguard to Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the chief link between John McManus of Kilbeggan and the Directory in Dublin. He was a shopman to Mrs. Moore of Thomas Street whose house was one of the hiding places for Lord Edward before his final arrest on 19 May. Although Patrick Gallagher is always mentioned in history books as being one of the bodyguards, it is likely that he took over some of the work of the provincial secretary John McCann after his arrest at Oliver Bond's house on 12 March and the house in Thomas Street, Cormick's the feather merchants of number 22, where James McManus called to see Gallagher was one of the chief meeting places of the Directory and it was another of Lord Edward's safe houses. The men who formed his guard were Surgeon Lawless, Major Plunkett, Colonel Lumm, Samuel Neilson, John Hughes, James Davock, William Cole, Richard Keane, Palmer, Edward Rattigan, William Putman McCabe, Walter Cox and Patrick Gallagher. The night when Major Sirr made one of the most celebrated attempts to capture him he was attended by McCabe, Palmer, Rattigan and Gallagher. This was on the 17 May, only five days before the time fixed for the rising and Fitzgerald was about to travel from Murphy's in Thomas Street in the direction of Ushers Island to meet Francis Magan one of the newest members of the Directory. Four of his bodyguards accompanied him on his way to meet Magan who, unbeknown to him, was a government spy and had already sent word to the Castle via the editor of the Freeman's Journal that Lord Edward would be at Ushers Island that evening; the bodyguards were Putman McCabe, Edward Rattigan, Palmer and Patrick Gallagher. They had just reached the edge of the Liberties when the police chief, Major Sirr and several of his men appeared out of nowhere on the street ahead. The usual practice for protecting Lord Edward was to place one of his guards thirty or forty yards in advance and then two men on the opposite side of the road. Major Sirr recognised Lord Edward immediately but did not notice the men who were protecting him and when he tried to seize him two men came from either side and grabbed the chief of police. One of them held a pistol to him while Patrick Gallagher stabbed him with his dagger but did not inflict a serious wound. McCabe who was at the bottom of Bridgefoot Street, close to Ushers Island, was grabbed by some of Sirr's police assistants and was arrested. Meanwhile Lord Edward managed to make his escape and arrived safely back at Murphy's in Thomas Street while Palmer and Gallagher having knocked Major Sirr to the ground were next to leave. The following day Lord Edward stayed in his backroom at Murphy's having a heavy cold and sore throat while his friends were making preparations to move him to a safer place; someone called with his revolutionary uniform - a bottle green braided suit with crimson cape and his cap of liberty. Murphy went to his room to tell

him he had a drink of whey ready for him when two men suddenly appeared at the door - the police chief Major Swan and Captain Ryan of the Yeomanry. Lord Edward sprang up like a tiger and stabbed Swan three times; Swan broke away and then ran downstairs to where Major Sirr and his party of eight soldiers were keeping off the crowds. Then Ryan and Lord Edward were locked together in a life and death struggle which ended when they went crashing through the door and headlong down the flight of stairs. Major Sirr rescued Captain Ryan who got fourteen stab wounds from the stiletto of Lord Edward who was only slightly wounded. He was put into a sedan chair to be taken to the Castle and no sooner had Major Sirr and his captive started to move from Murphy's door than a desperate attempt was made to rescue him. Edward Rattigan and Patrick Gallagher heard the news in nearby Queen's Street and Rattigan, who was a director of the watchhouse of St. Catherine's seized all the arms there and with a crowd of followers they went as quickly as they could to Murphy's but they were too late. Lord Edward was taken away in the open sedan chair and lodged in the Castle while behind him the soldiers carried his uniform and the green and crimson cap of liberty in triumph, the crowning victory for the Castle's network of informers. Gallagher and Rattigan were being carefully watched during all of this time as they attacked the supporters of Major Sirr by a spectator who happened to be passing by. He was a man named Cusack working in the Revenue Corps and after the struggle they both went to Cusack and threatened him with death if he did not promise to remain silent on what he had witnessed and on the men who took part in the affair. Cusack went to Sirr the following day but Rattigan made his escape before Sirr's men raided his mother's house searching for pikes after which the place was pillaged, the furniture thrown into the street and the timber in the yard set on fire.

Patrick Gallagher who was in command of the insurgents in James Street and Thomas Street and had been active with the Kildare rebels at their camp at Blackmore Hill was later arrested. His courtmartial commenced on 13 July at the Royal Barracks where he was charged for having risen in arms on the night Lord Edward Fitzgerald was arrested with the intention of rescuing him. He was also charged with inviting William Cusack of the Revenue Corps to join him in the action on 19 May.

Cusack was the chief witness against him and he testified that he was in Vicar's street where he saw some men coming in and going out of the watch house there loading carbines and saw a musket ball being passed between Gallagher and Edward Rattigan. Sir Richard Musgrave links both Patrick Gallagher and Edward Rattigan as Rebel Colonels. When Cusack asked them what was going on Gallagher told him that Lord Edward had been taken and that they were going 'to fight for the people' and asked him to join them; he refused.

Gallagher took hold of the cape of his coat and asked 'who are you?'. He replied he was a yeoman and Gallagher told him to inform the government about what was going on but he did not do so. When he went into the watch house Gallagher held a pistol to him. When asked to describe the prisoner's dress, Cusack said he wore a light blue coat and was covered in Iron dust leading him to believe he must be a gun-smith but in fact, he was employed by Moore, an iron-monger in Thomas street. Mark Magrith, another witness, said he was sent by Alderman James to apprehend him and to take a party of armed men along with him. When he approached Gallagher in the house, he jumped up and put his hand under his large great coat but Margrith seized him and took his pistol from him.

Edward Lawler of 1, Cannon street, said he knew Gallagher who had stated after the Battle of Blackmore Hill, that his comrades were all scoundrels because they ran away. It would appear that Gallagher had escaped from custody to Wicklow and joined this camp of the United Irishmen later. Sir James Duff Lawler said Gallagher was armed with a pistol and sword and one of the weapons belonged to Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

Gallagher then questioned him about being intimidated into relating actions which had not taken place. But he denied this adding that he was sworn as an United Irishman by Gallagher. James Elliot was in his shop on Thomas Street opposite Vicar Street from 8pm but the premises were closed early by orders of an officer. George Derham, John Fagan, Thomas Portis were there and also a porter and a nailer. He said Gallagher was not in the shop when he heard of a riot at seven o'clock and could not remember if the prisoner had said anything about the riot when he arrived. He said Gallagher's arm was bandaged when he came and that he was wearing a brown coat with a black coat underneath. Cusack testified earlier that Gallagher had a light blue coat.

The next witness was Thomas Caffrey whom Gallagher questioned closely. He said Gallagher arrived at Elliot's shop at seven thirty p.m. and he left about nine thirty p.m. He, Caffrey, had arrived before Lord Edward's release and had heard of the riot as soon as Elliot had and that was at seven o'clock and at that time he had been 'reckoning nails' and the other men in the ship were Matthew and John Kearney, Michael Gibney, Tom Portis and George Derham. The shop closed at 10 o'clock after being shut during the riot. He had seen Gallagher with Elliot who made a jug of punch when he arrived. He described Gallagher as a 'large lusty man' and added that Edward Rattigan was also in the house that night. It is interesting to note that the witness, Lawler, was still at 1, Cannon Street one year later as on 4th June, 1799, he wrote that he had known Gallagher very well as he was courting Lawler's sister and taking violin lessons from his Father.

The most damning evidence at the trial was that of Cusack and Gallagher

had no witness to counter it. The verdict of the courtmartial was that he was guilty and he sentenced to be hanged.

There then followed one of those strange occurrences that seemed to mark the life of this most unusual man. A young woman, claiming to be his wife and accompanied by two small children arrived the next day at the house of a gentleman for whose family she had previously worked as a governess. The man was master in chancery and had considerable influence at the Castle. Passing herself as Gallagher's wife she begged him to intercede on his behalf. Although he did not agree with Gallagher's political aims, he went immediately to the Castle where he got the prisoner's pardon. Gallagher was then taken from the Provost and delivered to a ship in Dublin bay to be sent out of the country. What happened next is even more bizarre and there are two versions of the story.

The first account is of Gallagher being conveyed to the prison ship in heavy irons; the irons were taken off while he was saying goodbye to his wife who was allowed on board to see him for the last time. She remained with him until nightfall but, before leaving, managed to pass him one end of a coil of rope she had concealed under her cloak. The other end of the rope was carried by her as she rowed back to the shore. After she had gone the irons were about to be put back on Gallagher but he pleaded so eloquently for just 'one minute more' that it was granted to him. He then leaped into the water and was towed ashore by his wife.

The other version of Gallagher's adventure has it that several days went by before the vessel was ready for the long voyage overseas and during that time he was allowed to see his friends on board and even to have a farewell dance on deck the evening before setting sail. During the bustle of the party Gallagher escaped out through the cabin window, swimming the short distance to where a waiting boat picked him up and brought him to Howth. By a remarkable coincidence he was seen in the boat by Major Sirr who was on his way to the prison ship with more prisoners; Sirr hesitated as he was not sufficiently sure of the evidence of his own eyes and so did not chase the boat with Gallagher on board. Disguised as a groom he reached Dublin and succeeded in leaving the country, making his own way to France.

There were hundreds of United Irishmen on the continent after the Risings of both 1798 and 1803. Among them were Surgeon Lawless, Malachy Delany, Patrick Gallagher and James J. MacDonnell from Mayo who, with a thousand men, had rallied to the side of Humbert when he landed in Killala.

Gallagher returned to Ireland secretly and acted as a emissary between Robert Emmet and his brother Thomas Addis on at least one occasion. In May, 1803 Emmet sent a confidential report to his brother Tom in Paris. It was delivered to him by Gallagher on 30 May and he told him he had been instructed to communicate it to no one else but that Tom was to use his discretion as to how much the others should know. The message was about the most secret plans of the United Irishmen and their depots of arms and

pikes in Dublin.

Patrick Gallagher then went to Bordeaux where he became a wealthy ship-broker. Miles Byrne, the United Irish leader from Wexford knew Patrick Gallagher very well and recalled meeting Mrs. Gallagher at the house of Mrs. Thomas Addis Emmet when he called there in 1803 before leaving to join his regiment. He found Mrs. Gallagher 'handsome and highly accomplished and worthy of her patriotic husband'. Some years later, in 1812, he met them again in Bordeaux, when he was returning from Spain. Their business was very successful and their family were all growing up but Patrick's health was beginning to fail. He died at Bordeaux the following year and in the words of Miles Byrne 'to his last moment, he spoke of Lord Edward Fitzgerald with the greatest veneration'.

Some inmates of Mullingar Gaol

A French visitor, Charles Coquebret de Montbret who travelled through Ireland in 1791 turned up during the month of May in Mullingar, a town which left an unfavourable impression on him. 'It is a becoque (hovel)', he wrote of it, 'like all the county capitals of Ireland. There was a passable hotel in the town, Gunning's, where he could get tea for 1/1d; Mullingar published its own gazette but, although the town had a cavalry barracks and an infirmary, he declared that the only buildings worth looking at were two new ones, the Court of Assizes and the Prison. This new gaol was one of a succession of gaols provided by the authorities in the County over the centuries, one of the first being the Dominican Priory Gaol of Mullingar. The Dominicans, who came to Mullingar in 1237, had a monastery established by the Nugent family which survived until 1539 when the prior and community abandoned it before the suppressions of the monasteries began in 1539. Some time later the Dominican Convent was granted by Queen Elizabeth to Walter Hope, Constable of Mullingar 'for a Gaole for the safe keeping of the prisoners and malefactors within the county'. A new gaol was built some time around 1682 on the site now occupied by the Greville Arms Hotel; Piers, in his history of Westmeath speaks of this prison as being lately built at the expense of the county - 'the old one being very weak'. Sometime after 1682 the Sessions House was built and was used until 1829 when the new Court-house was opened at the Spring Assizes of 1829. The former Sessions House of Mullingar stood on the site of Weir's Medical Hall in Pearse Street and at one time communicated with the old 1682 prison. One hundred years later it was decided to build a new prison for according to a newspaper report published in November 1783 a standing committee was appointed at the assizes to adopt a plan for a new gaol and to superintend and direct the building of it; The gentlemen and landowners of the county being asked to send their contributions for the building to Garret Tyrell who had charge of the plans for the gaol.

Droves of Defenders and United Irishmen from all over the county and beyond passed through the gates of Mullingar gaol in the years before the Rising and afterwards; there were twelve state prisoners there after Robert Emmet's Rising of 1803. Most of those prisoners are nameless or their surnames only are known and there is nothing known about their families or their native townlands. There are two prisoners, however whose cases are well documented and a brief account of them is given here. One of them, Edward Reddy was a business man in Mullingar and the second was John Doorly from Kildare whose memory was deeply imbedded in the family memory of the Phylans of Kilbeggan, County Westmeath for nearly two hundred years.

John Doorly was born in 1771 in Lullymore, County Kildare, the son of Thady Doorly who had at least three sons; John who became a Captain of

the United Irishmen, Michael who took part in Emmet's Rising in 1803 and a younger brother named Thady. There was another Doorly family also, that of Tom Doorly who was probably a brother or a cousin of Thady. He had a son, Patrick who was hanged for robbery around 1801 and who seems to have been mistaken, at times for his cousin John. John Doorly became, in turn, a Defender, a yeoman and, last of all, a United Irishman. His sweetheart was Anne Donagher of Puncher's Grange and they were separated during the tumultuous months of the Summer of 1798 but he called his rifle 'Nancy' in memory of her. On 26 May County Kildare had been opened to the rebels and an army of about thirty thousand United men had occupied the towns of Kildare, Prosperous and Kilcullen and the villages of Rathangan, Newbridge and Ballitore. A party described as 'five thousand Defenders attacked the town of Rathangan killing both of the yeomanry officers and twenty six of the privates'. The insurgents were commanded by Captain John Doorly. The yeomanry was owned by the Duke of Leinster and commanded by his agent, a kindly old man called Thomas Spenser. It turned out that most of the yeomen had gone over to the rebels and when the attack began Spenser was surrounded in a house where he had barricaded himself. There was half a company of the North Cork militia which retreated to Philipstown where the Black-horse was quartered and these were then ordered to proceed to Rathangan and drive out the rebels who had planted a tree of liberty in the street and were preparing to repel the attack. The rebels had to be dislodged as they were now perceived to be a real threat to the poorly defended garrison towns of neighbouring King's county. A squadron of eighty of the Seventh Dragoons were despatched from Tullamore to fight them without success. The rebels commanded by John Doorly, countered with a most skilful defence. They cut down the cavalry, massed in the narrow streets with their concentrated musket fire and the fallen horses were used as barricades. According to a loyalist story, some of them shouted, 'Take that, Protestant'. After that a new column marched into the town which was firmly barricaded with chains drawn across the street. This column, however, had very heavy weaponry: a pair of battalion guns. After a couple of discharges of the cannon, Rathangan was re-captured: the rebel leaders were dispersed and innocent people assumed to be rebels were shot out of hand. Before that happened the people had seized the old gentleman, Captain Spenser who offered his surrender, and put him to death. John Doorly was absent from Spenser's house when it was attacked and the captain piked on his own stairs. He regretted Captain Spenser's death and would have restrained the men from such cruelty if he had been there. He was in command on the forenoon of the 28 May when the first attack was repulsed and again in the afternoon when the troops attacked and recaptured the town. After that he and his men went to the United camp at Timahoe which was commanded by Willie Aylmer of Rathcoffey. On 20 June, John Doorly with Colonel Aylmer, Captain George Luby, Captain Hugh Ware and 2,000 United men took part in the engage

ment at Ovedstown near Kilcock, moving on to Meath in early July. According to tradition Doorly took part in the engagement at Clonard, the site of a strategic bridge over the Boyne. On July 10, the rebels from Wicklow and Wexford had suddenly appeared in the scene led by Father Mogue Kearns, Anthony Perry, Fitzgerald and Garrett Byrne and their arrival brought the size of the United Army to four thousand. Such numbers brought the usual problems as they had to forage through the surrounding countryside. Some went up into Meath and crossed the Boyne into Louth while another party of Wexford and Kildare United men attempted to cross the Boyne and to move on to Athlone. The ballad 'John Doorly on the Boyne' refers to Doorly's capture as he was crossing the Boyne. But this capture may have occurred at a later date in the year. In a letter sent to Castlereagh on 14 July there was an extract enclosed by Colonel Vereker of the Limerick City Regiment which noted: 'I hear they retreated to near Trim and were that day commanded by Colonel Aylmer, Captain Doorly, Kearns, a priest, Luby and Fitzgerald'.

John Doorly was spotted near Stradbally, Laois in September. James Critchley wrote from Wicklow on 11 September enclosing a note about Doorly which said:-

'... His name is Doorly, a Captain in the United Services ... He was near Stradbally on the private road from this town. He is of middle size, between 20 and 30 years of age with a dark complexion marked with a small pox and black or dark brown short hair inclined to curl... face rather round and pale. He wore a round hat, black silk kerchief about his neck, an outside grey cloth surtout coat and large black cape ... He walked with his hands in his pockets, singing Irish rebel songs. He rode out of the country on a small sorrel horse'.

It is difficult to separate fact from fiction in the story of John Doorly and there is an element of mystery about him in that some people believe he fought at Clonard on 12 July and that he was captured as he was crossing the Boyne. The general belief, however, is that this occurred later in the year. According to Paddy Phylan, he was in Mullingar at the same time as John McManus which would tie in with the aftermath of Clonard. The historian P. O'Kelly believed that Doorly was captured later while others are of the opinion that it was his nephew William who was in Mullingar and that John was in Dublin at the time. B. Senior the informer, said that at that time John was staying in Doorly's in Meath Street or with Dunn, a meal man, in Thomas Street. He said that William was executed in Mullingar but he was not as important as John. Other sources such as Maxwell assert that Doorly was in Longford gaol three years after the rebellion, using various aliases such as Doris, Dalton and other names and that he was hanged there, but the man himself claimed that he only used the name to enhance his reputation among the locals. On the balance of evidence it would seem that it was not John Doorly who was in gaol with John McManus but possibly his nephew William.

If O'Kelly's account is correct, John Doorly was captured in the Boyne towards the end of 1798 and he was driven to Mullingar tied to a cart. According to tradition, water from the river was dripping off him. After he was hanged his mother walked from Lullymore to Mullingar and asked for his body but she was refused.

Patrick Phylan's remarkable memory stretched back through his father to his grandfather who lived in Kilbeggan through these terrible months of the rebellion in Kilbeggan. Paddy was born in January 1899 and his father was born in 1841. The grandfather Patrick Phylan was born in 1766 and he was 75 years of age

when his son, also Patrick, was born and he died in 1859. Paddy Phylan's recollection of the rebellion was almost at first hand and he remembered clearly not only John McManus and the Kilbeggan insurgents but also the story of the legendary John Doorly. Why this should be so is not clear; was it because Doorly shared the same fate in Mullingar as John McManus of Kilbeggan or was it because of Doorly's mother who may have passed through the town, creating her own legend, on her journey to Mullingar to claim the body of her son?

Before he died he spent many hours reminiscing about Kilbeggan and its history to his neighbour Liam Kelleher who recorded his recollections. He talked of the rising of 1798 as if it had happened only yesterday and recited some verses of a ballad which his father used to sing called Doorly of the Boyne:

*Prosperous town we then did take, Kilcock and famed Maynooth,
We tattered all their cavalry with bold undaunted youth;
Their yeomanry and infantry and men of high renown
Came in search of Captain Doorly from sweet Rathangan town;*

~~

*Severely I was wounded by a cursed musket ball;
My left arm it was broken by that unlucky fall;
Three hours I lay bleeding with my 'Nancy' by my side,
And at early dawn next morning I shot Greene of Malahide.*

~~

*I turned around and tore my hair, like a man quite out of mind,
As horse and foot came dashing on 'Young Doorly' for to find;
When cursed Needley saw me, a trumpet he did sound,
But 'Nancy' sought his wicked heart and brought him to the ground.*



Jack Lynch with Paddy Phylan.

~~~  
*Once more I am for Rathangan town with not a man but nine  
The horsemen followed after and chased me to the Boyne  
With my shoulders in the water it was there I suffered sore  
And at four o'clock next morning I was taken by the corps.*

~~~  
*Then they persecuted me and tied me to a car
And drove me off before them to the jail at Mullingar.
Now had I men that would stand by and with my laws agree
I never would surrender until old Ireland would be free.*

EDWARD REDDY

Edward Reddy was the odd man out amongst the other prisoners in Mullingar gaol, one who did not fit into any of the familiar rebel moulds. Yet he was arrested in June 1798 and tried by court martial for taking part in the rebellion by conspiring to poison soldiers who were quartered in Mullingar. He was the owner of an inn or public house which was frequented by the soldiers of the Northumberland Regiment and seems to have been compromised in the conspiracy against the soldiers through his friendship with another Mullingar man, Andrew Shaughnessy. It is not clear from the account of Reddy's trial what exactly Shaughnessy was up to or what was the nature of the antagonism between him and Doctor Edward Naghtan, the chief witness for the crown at the Court Martial of Edward Reddy.

That some enmity existed between them can be gauged from a conversation between the two men that took place on 8 June and which the doctor recalled during his evidence.

He said that he had been standing in Mrs. Browne's shop on that Friday when Andrew Shaughnessy appeared on the scene and called out to him:

'Doctor Naghtan, take care of yourself.'

'Why? Am I going to be murdered?'

'No Sir!'

'Well, Sir, I dont care for any man in Ireland.'

'Who was the person that mentioned my name?'

'I heard Mr. Rochfort and some others mention your name in the Churchyard.'

Doctor Naghtan informed the Court that he then told Shaughnessy not to try to make his mind uneasy and sent him about his business. The following morning Edward Reddy called to see him and the thrust of their conversation centred on this meeting in the Churchyard and the doctor tried to find out who else was there other than Mr. Rochfort. All Reddy would say was that he could not tell him then but would do so at another time.

On the evening of the 9 June Doctor Naghtan recalled being in his shop

when Edward Reddy arrived and asked to speak to him in private. When they were inside in the parlour a very strange conversation took place:

Doctor, I want to ask you a question?

What is that?

What effect would laudanum have if boiled in liquor or mixt with spirits if given, or taken by the soldiers?

You rascal! Who was the diabolical villain sent you with such a message to me?

Andrew Shaughnessy.

Do you know that villain has planned the taking of my life, and that I have a rope about your neck at present?

He saw Reddy again the following day and told him he would tell Doctor Carey about the laudanum and would have to put the regiment upon their guard to take care of the men.

O dear Doctor, said Reddy If you tell this I'll be hanged!

By God, I cant help that. Ill tell Doctor Carey.

Subsequently, Colonel Blake of the Northumberland Regiment and a party of officers went to Reddys house; he was out at the time but, on returning home and hearing that the officers were looking for him he followed them down to the lower part of the town and gave himself up. He was then confined by Colonel Blake and brought before the Court Martial on 5 July by the orders of General Charles Barnett. Doctor Naghtan was the principal witness against him and told the court of his conversation with both Edward Reddy and Andrew Shaughnessy and of his suspicions of a plot in which Shaughnessy was involved to poison the soldiers. Shaughnessy did not appear at all during the trial but two other Mullingar men turned up to testify on behalf of Edward Reddy. Thomas Browne said he had known him for five to six years and had always had a good opinion of him. James ODonnell had known him for nine or ten years and had never heard of anything against him.

In his written defence, Edward Reddy painted a picture of a life that had been ruined through his association with Andrew Shaughnessy, a man, as he called him, that was the least of my acquaintance in the town of Mullingar. He had given himself up immediately and admitted his part in delivering the message to Doctor Naghtan. It hardly seems credible, that Reddy, who had so many of the soldiers of the Regiment as his customers, would conspire to poison them. According to his testimony he went out of his way to oblige them by changing their notes and he believed they would be willing to come forward to defend his character. And, if only he had known the nature of the message he had taken from Andrew Shaughnessy to Doctor Naghtan, he would be one of the first to disclose it.

Edward Reddy was found guilty of the conspiracy and sentenced to death. However, because the witnesses who appeared for him had given him such a good character this sentence was commuted to transportation for life.

Chapter 5

Rebellion in Kilbeggan

‘A traitorous body has for some time raged amongst us under the guise of the United Irishmen , who have reduced all crimes in the black catalogue of human depravity to a perfect system.....Before it existed no part of the county was more distinguished for its love of order and reverence for the law than County Westmeath ...alas, the virtuous and happy days are now no more. Infernal emissaries , the busy agents of sedition and treason have mingled amongst our infatuated peasantry...To perfect the tremendously deep-laid treason they bind their followers with blasphemous oaths , by oaths of fealty and allegiance to France , and to the familiar perpetration of the most revolting atrocities’

Judge Robert Day at Westmeath Assizes
12 April 1798

In order to understand the attitudes prevailing in 1798 and subsequent to the rebellion it should be remembered that it has been described as the most concentrated episode of sectarian violence in Irish History. Atrocities were perpetrated by both sides out of fear and confusion. On 14th November 1798 Bishop Plunkett stated in his diary “ I returned home this evening after having finished the most laborious visitation I made since the start of my administration . I was more or less exposed during my excursion through the diocese. The rebellion broke out last summer in different parts of the kingdom . In four different parts of the diocese of Meath the King’s soldiers engaged and defeated them at Tara Hill, Williamstown , Kilbeggan and Wilson’s Hospital”.(**Appendix K**) This sums up events in the area in 1798 but the bishop came from a certain perspective as summed up when he visited Kilbeggan on 15th September 1793 when he warned against “ rioting and quarrelling” and cautioned them against Defenderism. Many others felt that a rebellion was the only solution to their problems.

As we have seen the episodes of violence were common in Westmeath especially in 1797 when it seemed more likely that a rebellion would take place in Westmeath. The outrages were less common early in 1798 as groups of Protestant loyalists supported by yeomen and militia officers committed a series of outrages against Catholics in Westmeath. It is not clear if it was a deliberate plan to stay low in early 1798 and not commit as many acts against landlords and gentry. At the Spring assizes in Westmeath it was mentioned

'the most satisfactory accounts from the judges , of the behaviour of the juries '. In near-by Moate a warrant was issued on 3rd February 1798 to arrest two United Irishmen named Coffie and Carbery who were supposed to assassinate the infamous George Clibborn , Captain of the Moate cavalry. The men were arrested and lodged in Mullingar jail. It was alleged that they were bribed by the Dublin Society to assassinate him. Both Coffie and Carbery would have appeared before Judge Robert Day at the April assizes in Mullingar where he condemned the United Irishmen :

' By envoys and correspondence they have maintained a regular intercourse with France and invited the enemies of the human race into this once tranquil, thriving country, who carry rapine, burglary and assassination and massacre thro' our several provinces with as little remorse as if we were already a conquered country. We track the disastrous progress of this execrable plot thro' every county of our circuit by the streams of blood that everywhere flow from it.....It has brutalised the natural spirit , tarnished the national character and the name of Irishmen once a word of everything generous, gallant and humane is now as approbious as Frenchman.....In the course of this stubborn struggle between Poverty and Property you have sustained an irreparable loss of the death of your late ever to be lamented and most honourable representative. Your past exertions have kept down this malignant and contagious frenzy in your County. The Rebellion is yielding fast and giving way to the superior mettle and virtue of the Country....Persevere and we shall triumph'

William Smyth a member of parliament for Westmeath wrote to Pelham on 4th March 1798 that while " great enormities ...were practised by the soldiery at the other side of the county " which he could not defend but there were extenuating circumstances and in relation to the rebels he mentions " the recent fact of attacking twenty four houses in one night and almost on the same hour , which seemed to indicate a general rising ".

Informers gave information to authorities that several blacksmiths in the Barony of Moycashel were making pikes and Thomas Medcalf in a letter to Lord Castlereagh on 22nd April 1798 specifically mentions the blacksmith Kinahan. On 15th April 1798 it was said that " the county was in a state of perfect peace except for the Athlone conspiracy ". In April 1798 Nangle, Doyle and Murray were found guilty at the Assizes of being United Irishmen and were carried in full procession from Mullingar Jail by detachments of Militia and yeomanry, through the rebellious village of Ballymore, to the strand near the old Abbey of Athlone where they were hanged at a temporary gallows erected for the purpose. Tradition has it that a group of United Irishmen were very active in the Barony of Kilkenny West near Athlone under the leadership of a young man called Harte from the townland of Muckanagh at Lough Ree who got some muskets from the soldiers in Athlone. On one occasion he disarmed a sentry in his box where he was on duty on the Ballymahon road . A company of soldiers who were stationed at Littletown

near Muckanagh searched the locality after this incident but found nothing and there is no tradition of any burnings. Harte's descendents made the bayonet of his musket into a bolt for the door of their house and it was still there in quite recent times.

Information was being provided on a on-going basis by informers about the oaths being administered by the United Irishmen or Defenders. In the Barony of Fertullagh the sergeants were known by the informers but they would not come forward publicly. It was said that 130 men were raised in the barony i.e. 13 by each 10 sergeants. It was also said that they were getting directions from the Commission in Dublin and that they make a return of the men enlisted. The position as given by one informer in a note dated 24th February was that the Commission would give orders to use the signal to murder all Protestants and that the order would only be received a few days before executing it. In early April 1798 Faulkner's Journal reported that 200 young trees, ash, elm, and larch belonging to Westmeath gentlemen were cut down and it is supposed that they are intended for pike handles.

Because of the pressure, McManus was one of the few who made his return to Patrick Gallagher at Thomas Street in May 1798. He was an important figure in Westmeath and his arrest on 8th June just over a week prior to the Kilbeggan Rebellion was obviously a major motivating factor in the events that followed. However the organisation was more complex than that and there were other influences even in the Westmeath area.

Dublin was the capital and operational headquarters for the United Irishmen from 1796 and many people from the country had reason to travel to Dublin (e.g. the McManus being in the distilling business would have to go for a number of reasons) it was comparatively easy to make contact with headquarters etc. Charles Teeling had spread the doctrine of the Defenders by travelling widely through Ireland including Westmeath in 1795 and his brother Bartolemew had spread the doctrine of the United Irishmen at the same time. Two of the great organisers of the United Irishmen, James Hope and William Putnam McCabe had travelled regularly across the midlands and even in 1798 McCabe was organising in Westmeath. He posed as everything from a farmer to a peddler. Carmen and peddlers were often used to spread handbills because they travelled easily from the country to Dublin and back again. All of this indicates that it was not just through McManus that many people were organised and sworn in the Kilbeggan district.

Fair Day

It was fair day in Kilbeggan which allowed large numbers to come into the town from near and far because as we have seen Kilbeggan was a well established market town used by travellers, traders, and farmers passing through. It seems likely that in the week after McManus's arrest some of the

local leaders spread the word to meet in Kilbeggan at the fair and bring their weapons which could easily have been hidden in carts. It was probably the sheer numbers that alerted the authorities to the possibility of something happening. The trial of McDonagh indicates that they were aware of some of the events that day and there is also evidence of drink been taken which might have loosened a few tongues.

The original plan of rising on 23rd May had been completely disrupted by the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald , the Sheares brothers etc. and on top of that the United Irishmen who assembled at Tara on 26th May if they were successful intended to join in with the insurgents in Cavan , Westmeath , and other counties to cordon off the capital from the north and west. McManus had been preparing the units in the Kilbeggan area for the rebellion on 23rd May. The arrests and the failure at Tara presumably led to a postponement. McManus's trip to Cavan with Carey may have been for the purpose of re-organising and uniting with the Cavan forces. Even prior to his arrest it is mentioned in correspondence that some of the Westmeath leaders were already taken.

One other event which might have contributed to the Kilbeggan Rising was the death of three men in Ballycumber on 13th June . Murty Daly , Edward Feeney, and Michael Conway were all hanged after being convicted as United Irishmen (It was close to the home of John Warneford Armstrong who was known as ' Sheares' Armstrong because of his betrayal of the Sheares Brothers- *Appendix L*) . They were all natives of the locality . During the course of the trial the authorities guarded all the surrounding roads leading to Clara, Moate, and Fermoy because they feared trouble. They even had artillery covering each road. They were hanged by a local magistrate Richard Holmes - there is a tradition that it was arranged that the valet would kill Holmes while shaving him by cutting his throat but the plan came to light before the fatal occurrence. The news of the hangings would have been relayed to the leaders in the Kilbeggan District and possibly have convinced them that it was time to make a move or they could all be arrested and convicted. There is evidence that United Irishmen from Offaly participated in the Kilbeggan rebellion as you would expect with the town so close to the county border.

Attack On Kilbeggan

At about 11 o'clock on Saturday 16th June a recruit of Captain Clark's gave information that the town would be attacked on the next day. As many similar claims had been circulated before it was not much regarded. Nonetheless, a number of mounted guards were placed around the town with instructions to report anything suspicious . At break of dawn a large number of insurgents (reports at the time said 3-4,000) were seen at the top of a hill (the Hill of Doon on the Comagh Road per Paddy Phylan) on the west side of

town. Immediate notice was given to the commanding officer who directed that the horse guard should continue to observe the movements of the rebels and if the numbers increased retreat slowly about 200 yards in front of the town and let him know the position. According to McManus the number of troops in the Barony of Moycashel was 70 Northumberland Fencibles (they had first come to Ireland

Still from "The Year of the French".



on 26th May 1797 and were discontinued on 25th August 1802- they had a full strength of 589), 40 Grange yeomen infantry, Tyrellspass and 30 Grange yeomen cavalry in Moate. On this particular night the best information indicates that Kilbeggan was in the hands of 60 Northumberland Fencibles led by Captain Thatcher, a company of 30 Fertullagh yeomen cavalry, and a large number of Protestants either local or some who had taken refuge in the town. The yeomen were led by Captain Berry and it has also been mentioned that Col. Blake was in Kilbeggan at the head of his Northumberland militia. Estimates of about 120 men against 3-400 were probably wrong on both counts

What was agreed was that the rebels were divided into bands from 60-100 in regular order with different kinds of arms from 5-10 feet long pitchforks. Each band moved separately and were led by an officer who was distinguished by a green sash or cockade. Most of the men had white paper bands around their hats (*). They generally had clean shirts on and they each had a piece of oat bread in their pockets and some were intoxicated. On the first appearance of the rebels about three hours before an attack commenced an express message was sent to Tullamore (7 miles away) where the principal part of the 7th Dragoons were stationed under the command of General Dunn. He forwarded a troop of about 80 men in number.

The actual sequence of events subsequent to this gets various interpretations e.g. one official account says that the rebels attacked "our party in the mountains" outside the town and obliged the Fencibles to retreat back to the town. No fighting took place until the rebels reached the outskirts of the town. Seward in his account states that 'the loyalists cleared the streets which had been full of rebels without the loss of a man' while Lewis in his "Topographical Dictionary" says the insurgents were defeated "near the town after an obstinate engagement".

Paddy Phylan's account from his grandfather is probably the most accurate. He said that the rebels marched into town from the Hill of Doon past

McManus's house , the Distillery, up the hill past the Volunteer Inn and were met by barricades set up on the west side of the Square (i.e. around the Black Kettle / John Whelan's shop).

When the rebels came between the current Garda Barracks and the barricades soldiers opened fire. They all had muskets and the rebels only had pikes . A number of them were wounded or killed in the first volley . It was the first time most of them went into combat and came under fire. It was obviously a terrifying experience. They hesitated and as one of the leaders tried to rally them they came under a withering volley of fire again which made them retreat and started the rout as the cavalry went in pursuit of them . One man alone a Sergeant Price was said to have killed 14 pikemen. The cavalry were aided by a dismounted party of loyalists who had rushed from Tyrellspass on hearing the gunfire and arrived just before the Black Horse. Opinions vary as to the number killed from 400 to a more official figure of 120 men which would seem more accurate.

A report from Dublin Castle dated 19th June stated

“An account was received this day from Brigadier General Barnett stating that on 17th inst. a considerable body of rebels attacked Kilbeggan but were repulsed by a detachment of 50 of the Northumberland Fusiliers under the command of Captain Thatcher. One hundred and twenty of the rebels were killed according to most accounts”.

(* White Paper was used as a distinguishing mark for troops in battle and white cockades were favourites of the Jacobites. White Paper hat bands were worn by a number of rebels in different parts of the country from Westmeath to Wexford. It is likely that they had an association with the Stuarts).

A letter from Athlone dated 20th June indicates that the rebels attacked four times and in different quarters

“On Sunday last at 4 in the morning the town of Kilbeggan was most impetuously attacked four times successively in different quarters and were as often repulsed by the loyal inhabitants, the yeomanry, and by a detach-

ment of the Black Horse who afterwards pursued the fugitives in all directions with incredible slaughter. Considerable numbers of prisoners were taken among whom is a man supposed to be their leader.....An imperfect account of the above action reached Athlone on Sunday evening . A detachment of the Loyal Athlone cavalry , Roxborough Dragoons and Northampton foot with several pieces

The Hill of Doon where the Rebellion began.



of ordnance were dispatched to re-inforce the troops at Kilbeggan under the command of Brig. Gen. Barnett. They were joined on the march by the Moate cavalry under Captain Clibborn. They arrived in Kilbeggan at a very early hour and found tranquillity perfectly restored and the inhabitants engaged in removing the mangled bodies of the insurgents who had fallen in the contest and exhibited a most shocking spectacle of blood and carnage “

The arrival of General Barnett and the other forces was to re-inforce the town but when he saw that peace was restored he returned to Athlone and issued a proclamation promising every well disposed person would receive protection from the soldiers and by keeping in their houses after 9 o'clock at night they would have nothing to fear. Anyone found in arms or disturbing the peace would receive no mercy. The Churches were almost deserted on Sunday but the General promised to protect all places of worship . Having said that there is evidence that Captain Berry asked permission from Captain Thatcher to set fire to the chapel while the people were at mass . Its stated that they rode up to the chapel with drawn swords for that purpose but Thatcher would not consent until the congregation had left. It was a mudwall chapel (replaced in 1806) and tradition states that when the yeomen came to burn the chapel a terrible storm of hail, rain, thunder and lightning came and the soldiers had to shelter. By the time they got to the chapel the people had left and Captain Thatcher is supposed to have said “



The view from the top of the hill towards the barricades (at Whelan's shop / Black Kettle).



The Rebels entered the town by the Comagh Road (McManus's House is the last on the left).



They marched up the hill towards their fate at the barricades.

There is no use going up now, the birds have flown". In any case the chapel was ultimately spared.

Personal Accounts of Events

There are a few accounts of events from eyewitnesses at the time which reflect both the genuine fear and triumphalism which is still part of all sectarianism.

A letter from Kilbeggan dated 17th June stated

"I am so alarmed that I know scarcely what to do having no arms or servants. I am obliged this night to go to Redmondstown to sleep. The rebels attacked Kilbeggan this morning and were beaten off with great loss. They went about in parties and forced many with them. None of my people were thank God taken. I do all in my power to keep them loyal. If I go away I fear my people will suffer and I am afraid to remain, there being no servants or army near this place. I request most earnestly for your advice to let me know by return of post what should I do or whether I should apply for some of the army".

A further letter from Kilbeggan on 18th June (Dublin Evening Post)

" 'Tis about 8 o'clock on Sunday morning. We are all safe and well. We were attacked between 4 and 5 o'clock by the rebels. We have completely defeated them and no person of ours hurt but Mr Nowlan. He received two thrusts of a pike but is not hurt much (see McDonagh trial below). I judge there were about three or four hundred. They will not I think try experiments on Kilbeggan in a hurry again. A party of the Black Horse came to our assistance too late to take share in the total rout of them and the Clara yeomen too late also so that the credit is all our own. Mr G— is killed. Mrs — — shot one man breaking her window and I had so good aim I settled another which dispersed that group. I cannot say too much but practise to make them cool. I judge not less than 40 - 50 of the rebels fell. Some prisoners were brought in and shot or hanged directly. Numbers of pikes or long pitchforks were taken. Yesterday was a fair day. We had very good intelligence. I doubt not more prisoners will be brought in, who will instantly suffer "

It was continued the same day at 12 o'clock

"This has been a glorious day for our town. We were attacked by rebels who numbered about 2,000. I took one of their advance men going to reconnoitre. We fought well and killed upwards of 150. The Black Horse joined in an hour after the battle. I killed and took nine and took the Captain. This

moment I retain after totalling defeating them. We have fought well and have justly acquired the name of one of the First Corp”

Another reference to the event states that “At Kilbeggan a small party of yeomanry many of whom were Methodists met a rebel army approaching to burn the town. The Volunteers were led by Mr Handy of Bracklagh Castle who with his sons fought in the bravest manner and having repulsed the insurgents with considerable loss, gained a complete victory” (A History of Methodism 1791-1806 - see Handy **Appendix M**).

Whatever about the quality of leadership or the possible areas of conflict in the town it was strange that no attempt was made to strategically place men around the town to prevent the arrival of re-inforcements. It does add some credence to the belief that it was more intended as a military parade of strength rather than an actual attack or rebellion. As McManus stated while in prison it was a “foolish business” with not the slightest chance of success. As commander he would not have consented to it.

The numbers involved in the attack is difficult to judge. A figure of 3-4,000 was mentioned in dispatches but this would seem to be wildly speculative. Gustavus Rochfort in a letter looking for troops for Mullingar mentioned a figure of 1,500 and at the trial of Michael McDonagh on 10th July 1798” a figure of at least 1,000 “was entered in the Court records. It would seem that the estimate of around 1,000- 1,500 was more correct”.

Trial of McDonagh

The Trial of Michael McDonagh was held in Mullingar on Tuesday, 10th July 1798 (**Appendix N**- full transcript). Given the nature of the evidence it was strange that McDonagh pleaded not guilty to the accusation of participating in the armed rebellion.

The first witness was Darby Spelman who was asked if he saw the prisoner in company with “Mulhalls son” on the morning of 17th June (We know little about Mulhall’s involvement in events). Apparently McDonagh had a stick in his hand and Mulhall using a pistol tried to force Spelman to join the rebels. The next witness was Timothy Nowlan who was at the barricades between 5-6 o’clock that morning when they beat off the rebels to the far side of the bridge over the River Brosna. He was assaulted with a pike by Tim Galvin near his own house. Nowlan said he aimed his gun at him and Galvin bid him “Fire, you dog” - which he did, killing him instantly. Michael McDonagh who lived in The Square then came up behind him with a pike and knocked him down. McDonagh tried stabbing him several times in the belly and injured him on the wrist and groin. He was only rescued by John Fuller and Henry Graham firing at McDonagh. Fuller confirmed that he was about 150 yards from the attack but he advanced to Mr Cuffes (which was towards the top of the hill) and fired at McDonagh. He identified the prisoner as the attacker.

McDonagh had no evidence or witnesses and submitted himself to the mercy of the court. He was found guilty and received the death sentence. He was buried in the old graveyard in Kilbeggan.

There is a tradition in Kilbeggan that McDonagh escaped down Puddle Lane (now St Mary's Avenue) and headed for Tullamore where he hid for some time. Two soldiers arrested him for acting suspiciously. No one recognised him in jail until one day an old slater came over from Kilbeggan and was fixing the jail roof when he spotted McDonagh in the jail and he said "Ah, sweet McDonagh from Kilbeggan that ran his pike through a yeoman the morning of the rising". He was supposedly taken out and marched through Kilbeggan to Mullingar gail. It is an unlikely story in view of the time scale between the rebellion and his trial , which suggest he was arrested fairly quickly.

This tomb is erected by Matthias McManus in memory of his son James McManus, who departed this life August 1798, aged 22 years. Also his wife Jane McManus who departed this life, October 28, 1818, aged 67 years.

Noitce in Ardnurcher Graveyard in memory of James McManus.

The Rebels

Aside from McManus and McDonagh we have very little information on the men involved in the rebellion. On 15th May 1799 Samuel W. Handy of the Fertullagh Cavalry sent a letter to headquarters giving the names of some of the possible leaders. According to him John Murray a cousin of John McManus was the leader. He was armed with a double barrellled gun and had pistols . According to Handy the gun had been supplied by Hugh Shiel a member of the Fertullagh yeomanry commanded by Captain Berry (He may have had his own motives for saying that as he clearly did not like the Shiels). Other commanders mentioned were Lawrence Creevy otherwise Lord Creevy, a few young Whites from Loughnagore and 2 or 3 Crosbies of Derry Hall near Moate. There is no reference to James McManus' John's brother who according to the records died in August 1798 aged 22 years and is buried at Ardnurcher graveyard in Horseleap. It is not clear if his death was due to any participation in the rebellion. He was an United Irishman' based on John's letter to Gallagher and he made contact with the leaders in Thomas Street. This was obviously known to the authorities, so presumably he died because of his participation in events.

Barney Hiney and his brother from Ballinagreena and a Whelan from Ballinlig . After the rebellion they were kept with other prisoners in a field around which the River Brosna flowed while the soldiers guarded the only

gate. Barney Hiney managed to swim across the river bringing his brother and Whelan with him on his back. The Whelan's house was subsequently burnt by yeomen and the family had to leave their holding and for many years lived in a hovel near a bridge which became known as "Whelan's Bridge". A Kinahan from Laragh was wounded at Kilbeggan. He was brought back and left in a field of oats at the farm of George Bell who looked after him until he died. Bell was a huge man known as "Big George" and he is said to have carried young Kinahan across the fields and buried him in Kill Graveyard. It was very difficult for Bell as he had a barracks at his gate and neighbours were involved in the rising.

Reprisals

As in any conflict and especially in one where sectarianism played a major role there is a heavy price for failure and unfortunately many innocent people suffer. Immediately after the rebellion a number of insurgents were captured and executed in The Square. Many others were to be pursued and executed in the weeks following.

On the Sunday afternoon when the town was quiet six Orangemen who were privates in the yeomanry set off without orders and took with them two young men by the name of Marshall from Ballinagore and marched them up to Grehan's where they took out two of his sons. In the presence of their families they were ordered to kneel down and they were then murdered. In Ballinagore at least ten men were murdered including the above. They included two Sheridans, Edward Maxwell, John Goodwin, Thomas Claffey, Richard Dunne, and a man named Tiernan. The following day seven others



Still from "The Year of the French".

were said to have been bayoneted in the area including the man who the previous day had warned the garrison. One of the Orangemen involved in the murders was said to be Tom Belton. In the Spring of 1799 an "honourable baronet" who had witnessed some of the deeds supported Marshall in a prosecution for the loss of his sons. The information and bills of indictment were sent up to the Grand Jury. Even though the case was proven, the Grand Jury ignored the Bills.

The story concerning the informer is that he was working in the field spreading manure with a horse and cart. He considered that he was safe because of the information provided. However after failing to find any victims on their trip they decided to hang him out of the shaft of a cart as they returned to Kilbeggan. The prime plotters in the Ballinagore murders were Samuel Robinson, (Robinson himself was murdered many years later) his brother, and some of his cousins. It was said that Robinson had only a short time before been paying his addresses to Miss Tiernan a sister of one of the murdered men and that the brother had disapproved of the approaches. One man J— C —boasted that he shot nine men and a fiendish woman T—G— shot a poor peasant on his way to Kilbeggan for a mid wife to attend his wife.

One of the most unfortunate people was Michael Fox of Ballyoban, Kilbeggan. He was a farmer on his way to the forge when he was dragged into The Square and hanged from a crane used to lift sacks of corn and from a weighing machine. In the old mill house at Coola then owned by the Connollys an insurgent named Reilly from Meldrum was executed by one of the "yeos". In the room where the bloody deed took place the blood was pointed out for years afterwards. The particular room was demolished some years ago when a tree fell on it.

Father John Duffy P.P., Castletown also had his life threatened at this time as his house was raided but luckily he was not home, which saved his life. The house was plundered and burned down. Many years later he was having breakfast in the house of one of his parishioners when he found that he was using his own spoons. They had been taken by one of the Orangemen in 1798 and by chance had been loaned to their catholic neighbours at this time!

"The Orchard Man"

It would seem that if approximately 120 men were killed in the period of and just after the rebellion that many of them would have been buried as a group locally. There is a tradition that a hole was dug by the yeomanry in the present Relic on the outskirts of the town called the "Croppies Grave". In relation to this there is a story in material supplied to the Irish Folklore Commission in 1938 by a woman named Mrs Caffrey as related to her by her own grandfather who was alive in 1798. Her great uncle a Mr Tormey owned an orchard and sold fruit all round the country using a horse and cart. On one occasion he was ordered to use them for to bring luggage to Athlone for

an officer of the yeomanry. After the rebellion he was on the run as a rebel when he was captured by the yeomanry. He was brought to the edge of the large hole for execution when the officer recognised him as the "orchard man" and ordered his release. The story goes that Tormey escaped to the Black Bog and was pursued by a few men who were angry about his release. He escaped and hid in a house in Clongowly. The old woman who lived there had a lot of chickens and hens roosting in the shed. She hid him underneath and covered him with dirty smelly straw. When his pursuers came to the shed the 'fowl' stench put them off and they gave up the search. It maybe an embellished story but with a fair amount of truth. In O'Donovan's Ordinance Survey letters of 1838 he spoke to 82 year old John Daly who mentioned that no part of the Kilbeggan monastery remained except for the walls of a comparatively modern dwellinghouse which fell into ruin after the 1798 rebellion. According to Daly "The last who dwelt in this house was the Rev. Mr Elrington whose son has now a situation in the Tower of London". The Rev. Elrington had been a character witness for John McManus in his trial and in view of the subsequent rebellion he may have suffered for it.

Within a matter of weeks Kilbeggan was quiet again and on 3rd July 1798 a full meeting of the Fertullagh Cavalry was held at headquarters in Kilbeggan. The following letter from Brigadier Charles Barnett to James Middleton Berry was read

"Sir, - I was yesterday honoured with a letter from General Lake. He asked that I will now make his acknowledgement of the highest appropriation and thanks to yourself and the officers and men of the Fertullagh Cavalry under your command for their gallantry and brilliant defeat of a large body of rebels with so small a force on the morning of 17th. I have already expressed through Colonel Thatcher how much my feelings were gratified by such distinguished conduct. Therefore you will do me the justice to believe that I have particular satisfaction in transmitting to yourself and your corps the highest approbation and thanks of the Commander in Chief

Charles Barnett "

Panic in Mullingar

Aside from the reprisals in the immediate area around Kilbeggan one other major effect was the panic it created in the surrounding areas like Multyfarnham and Mullingar. One example of the panic is illustrated in an anonymous letter from Mullingar to Lord Castlereagh. The writer gives out about Barnett taking troops to Kilbeggan and not replacing them thus leaving the army in Mullingar too small. The reason for the panic was that there was a fair in Mullingar on 4th July and the belief by some was that it would be used to instigate a rebellion. The writer indicates that there was a "dreadful conspiracy" against the Protestants in the town which apparently involved a publican in the town who had just been released on bail. The plan was to poison the whiskey and kill all the soldiers. The writer points out that thou-

sands would attend the fair and with hundreds who live in the town ready to join them the danger to Protestants was great. He requested that the fair be postponed. He also makes the interesting point that Col. Blake did not want to have the fair but that General Barnett would not give him the power to stop it.

On 22nd June Col Blake, Northumberland Fencibles wrote to Lord Castlereagh requesting that the fair be cancelled because the Kilbeggan rebellion had been instigated at the fair in that town.

June 22 , 1798

My Lord,

With the concurrence of several magistrates of the county I beg leave to suggest to Government the propriety of putting a stop to a fair that is to be held in this town on 4th July as a very large concourse of people appear on that day , some various disturbances may take place within this precaution , particularly as the present force in Mullingar comprising horse and foot scarcely exceeds one hundred and sixty men . It is an undeniable fact that the late disturbances in Kilbeggan which terminated so honourably in the King's Troops was planned at a fair on the day preceding the attack. Being unwilling to put a stop to the Fair without the sanction of Government I request your Lordship's answer and have the honour to be

My Lord

Your most obedient humble servant

*Francis Blake
Col. North. Fencibles "*

He must have convinced the Government of the danger because the fair was postponed. Fairs were suspended in other towns in Westmeath during June to the detriment of farmers in the area but as the Dublin Evening Post stated on 14th June the rural community had much more to worry about than having no fairs

" The miseries brought on the families of these in rebellion is scarcely to be imagined ...women and children clustering together in the ruins of their cabins, which are with the hedges their only place of residence and in almost a famishing condition".

Tullamore took no part in the rebellion but like other places close to Kilbeggan suffered the intimidation of yeomen. Three Offaly men were tried and executed in the town (a Coffey and two brothers named Dempsey) and as Musgrave states " the inhabitants of the town to testify their concern for the fate of their fellow , closed down their doors and windows and observed a dead silence during their execution". It is more likely that the Kilbeggan rebellion frightened both the Protestant and Catholic communities in the town because of the possible consequence for themselves.

Chapter 6

Aftermath of 1798

Kilbeggan's participation in events subsequent to June 1798 was almost negligible although on Sunday, 26th August, 1798 Lord Cornwallis, Commander in Chief of the English army set out from Dublin with a large body of troops. He had just got news of the French landing in the west (On the same day the French Commander General Humbert was marching across the mountain road to Castlebar). He arrived in Phillipstown on 26th August with the 100th Regiment, the first and second battalions of light infantry and also the Bucks and Warwick Militia. After covering around 60 miles in 24 hours Cornwallis stopped in Kilbeggan on 27th. It was at this camp he heard about the English defeat at Castlebar.

“ Lord Cornwallis to the Duke of Portland

Kilbeggan, Aug.28, 1798

My Lord - I have the honour to transmit to your Grace the copy of a letter from Lieut- General Lake reporting to me the unfortunate result of an at



tack made by the French on the corps which Major - General Hutchinson had assembled at Castlebar.

I need not point out to your Grace the impression which this event will make upon the country in general , and have only most strongly to press the very urgent necessity of immediately sending from Great Britain as great a re-inforcement as possible either to Dublin, Waterford, or Belfast.

I shall proceed this morning to Athlone and hope to collect such a body of troops as will enable us to act offensively - I have etc.

Cornwallis”

Kilbeggan was strategically well placed to cover most eventualities in the west. On 6th September Lord Cornwallis wrote to Viscount Castlereagh from Frenchpark.

“ My dear Lord - I have directed General Lake in the event of the enemy marching to Manorhamilton to follow them as closely as possible taking with him Major -General Moore’s brigade but if the enemy should march down the Shannon to the westward of Lough Allen I have desired him to fall back towards General Moore and take the best means of preventing their return to Connaught. I shall myself proceed to-morrow to Carrick -on- Shannon and afterwards regulate my movements according to those of the enemy. The guards are ordered to Kilbeggan and they will be at hand to assist any of our operations and from whence, in case of any serious alarm, they might either by land or water in the course of a few hours reach the Capital. I have without assigning any reasons ordered boats to be held in readiness at Phillipstown.....”

When Cornwallis was in Kilbeggan the chapel was taken over by his men who burned the pews and a large plastic figure of The Redeemer was found with a deep cut (as if by a sabre) across the throat. It remained in that condition until the old chapel was removed to make place for one built in 1806. From secret information and informers the authorities were notified that the midland counties were rife for revolt and that they were only waiting for the French. From Meath, Longford, Leitrim, Westmeath, Roscommon, Carlow, and Monaghan they were organised to some extent for the outbreak. By 5th September reports had reached the authorities that people were rising in Ballymore, ‘the islands of Rathaspic’, Mullingar, Kilbeggan, and other places. As we shall see it was partly true but Kilbeggan was not one of the places. Gustavus Rochfort writing on 31st August 1798 states that they were much incensed in Kildare at the loyalty that was shown in Kilbeggan, Tyrellspass, and Beggarsbridge. He mentions that the county was quiet but some people were active at the Fair in Mullingar.

Wilson's Hospital

On 5th September 1798 a large body of United Irishmen assembled at Skeagh Hill near the village of Rathconrath led by a young man called James Maloney. At that time a Protestant family named Turner lived in the vicinity and it was known that he hated rebels and papists and many wanted to burn them out. However a council of war was held and fortunately for them a local farmer named Edward O'Neill who was influential, dissuaded them by pointing out that it would be a cowardly act. Some rebels left in protest but a number marched to Ballynacaragy and on to Baronstown House where Richard Malone, Baron Sunderlin resided. The house was surrounded but as he was not considered a bad landlord they did not attack. The intention of the group was to link up with other insurgents at Crookedwood about six miles north of Mullingar to create a diversion for the French contingent in the west.

At this time it was believed that the arms, ammunition, etc. belonging to the yeomen of Ballinalack and Bunbrosna were stored at Wilson's Hospital which was nearby. The hospital was a large building founded by Andrew Wilson of Piercefield for the education of about 160 Protestant boys and also for aged Protestants. The place was guarded by the Bunbrosna yeomen. When the rebels arrived it was dark and they surrounded the building. Accounts of events subsequently vary depending on the different sources and prejudices. It is clear that the rebels took over the Hospital grounds fairly easily and in spite of various opinions not much evidence of Protestants being killed. Gordon's account indicates that the rebels were taking measures to butcher 28 Protestants. Seward's account is unreliable (he gives a figure of 5,000 rebels!) but he states that a priest celebrated mass after the take-over and that 'they then collected in a house a great number of Protestant men, women, and children and would have set fire to it 'but for the arrival of the Kings Troops. Musgrave says "Some of the rebels proposed to put the boys (who were all Protestants) to death after having plundered them of their clothes. The labourers and the popish servants of the hospital were the leaders in this nefarious business and seemed to exalt in it".

It is not clear why but around 500 rebels moved out of the hospital to meet Lord Longford with a body of yeomen and the Argyle Fencibles on Thursday afternoon 6th September near Bunbrosna village. The real difference between the sides were the field guns in possession of the crown forces. The rebels made three abortive attempts to seize or put the guns out of action but they suffered major losses due to a culmination of devastating grapeshot and the cavalry forces. Eventually, they fled in all directions. One group said to include Longford and Cavan men took shelter in an abandoned farmhouse. When surrounded they offered to surrender but the house was set on fire. Some who tried to escape were shot down or bayoneted.

The following day the houses of the people within a 4 mile radius were

searched and any suspects were put to death immediately. Castlereagh wrote to Mr Wickham secretary to the Duke of Portland that

“Letters from Mullingar state that a decisive advantage was gained yesterday at Wilson’s Hospital near the town by a company of yeomen commanded by Lord Longford supported by a detachment of regular troops . The rebels lost about 150 killed and were dispersed”. Tradition has it that a number of United Irishmen had escaped into the islands of Lough Derravaragh and Lough Iron or along the banks of the Inny River. One of the more interesting stories of the Westmeath Rebellion concerned a man called John Reilly who was captured by the yeomen after the battle. After searching for a while they found a document hidden under the rim of his hat. It was written in French and it said

*“ Far may the boughs of Liberty extend,
For ever cultured by the brave and free;
For ever blasted be the impious hand
That lops one branch from the noble tree!
Patriots ‘tis yours to make her verdure thrive,
And keep the roots of Liberty alive.”*

It was enough to rank as treason . He was tied to a horse and cart as they used boughs from a tree to flog and torture him. Covered in blood they gave him his liberty to run by Major R - in charge and told “ Now fly for your life you dog for the first man that overtakes you will cut you down “.Reilly snatched a stone and threw it at the Major. It struck the horses head causing it to bolt and throw the rider. Reilly made his escape and hid in the rushes by a river where the yeomen could not find him. Three years later on 23rd June 1801 as the Major was returning home he was stopped at Sonna by Reilly who gained revenge by shooting him dead. It caused panic amongst the gentry but in spite of offering rewards Reilly was never taken.

Wilson Hospital was in effect the last major event in Westmeath in 1798 even though unrest continued for some time. Kilbeggan had been part of a

Wilson’s Hospital.



possibly hastily constructed plan earlier in July. It arose more out of a series of defeats rather than victories. Captain Anthony Perry of Inch who was a Protestant married to a Catholic and born in Co Down was one of the leaders in the Wexford Rebellion. He had

fought from Vinegar Hill to Hacketstown . He had been arrested earlier in May and tortured in Gorey in particular by a sergeant of the North Cork Militia nicknamed *Tom the Devil* who cut his hair close to his head and burned the roots with a candle. After being released by a magistrate on 28th May 1798 he had go on the run. After the defeats in Wexford he escaped into the midlands to link up with Kildare and Meath rebels. The plan in early July was to attack a small garrison at Clonard , Co Meath and then march on to places like Kilbeggan picking up more insurgents before eventually taking Athlone. The local small force of yeomanry led by Lieut- Col. Tyrell defended the town on 11th July and sent messages to Kinnegad, Mullingar, and Edenderry for re-inforcements. Without cannon the rebel forces had little chance of success.

The arrival of yeomen from Kinnegad ("Kinnegad Slashers") brought slaughter and mayhem amongst the rebel ranks and they fled in all directions. Perry and a priest Fr. Kearns escaped into Offaly and when attempting to cross a bog near Clonbulloge they were captured by Messrs Ridgeway and Robinson of the Edenderry yeomen and hanged in that town. Ironically Fr. Kearns had been a curate at one point in Clonard. The plan to capture strategic points in the midlands like Clonard, Kilbeggan and Athlone was fine except that the rebels had not the resources in men and firepower after a series of defeats to take on well armed soldiers and yeomen.

The effects of the rebellion in general terms meant that 20-30,000 died within a matter of months, most of them rebels. Afterwards claims for damages to property to (over half came from Wexford, Wicklow and Kildare) were over £1 million and between 1798-1800 around 70 catholic churches were burnt out or damaged in a reign of terror. The claims in Westmeath made on or before 6th April 1799 (see list) for damage to property amounted to a total of £2,808 - 3s - 7d. The two specific claims for Kilbeggan were Jeremiah Booth, Merchant for the loss of tobacco or pipe clay (£12 -7s - 6d) and Edward Murphy, Merchant who lost Wine, Brandy, tobacco, and sugar at Sallins, Co Kildare. It is also noted that Samuel Wesley Handy of Bracca Castle had a claim for £568 - 17s in respect of cattle, meadow, and hay at Kilalla, Co Mayo.

The Catholic Churchs attitude to the rebellion was generally one of opposition to the United Irishmen and Defenders and this would have been in line with the Bishop of Meath, Dr Plunkett who was a vehement opponent of the rebels. The general loyalty to the Government was understandable in many ways but what was difficult to comprehend was in July 1798 the principal inhabitants of Moate and neighbourhood made a presentation to George Clibborn, Captain of the Moate yeomanry in recognition of his efforts to maintain peace and order. Clibborn was intolerant and severe in his implementation of the law and this would especially have affected Catholics yet three parish priests, a curate and a Carmelite prior signed the presentation to Clibborn. Even in 1800 when the Government was pushing to get ad-

LIST of PERSONS who have suffered LOSSES in their PROPERTY in the

COUNTY of WESTMEATH,

And who have given in their Claims on or before the 6th of April, 1799, to the Commissioners for enquiring into the Losses sustained by such of his Majesty's *Loyal Subjects*, as have suffered in their Property by the Rebellion.

This LIST is published for the Purpose of calling the Attention of all Persons well acquainted with the County of Westmeath, to the several Claims therein specified; and all such Persons are requested to communicate, as soon as possible, to the Commissioners (or any one of them) under Cover, to the Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Parliament House, Dublin, such Observations respecting the *Loyalty or Losses* of the several Persons mentioned therein, as may enable the Commissioners to ascertain their Title to Compensation.

CLAIMANT'S NAME.	ADDITION.	RESIDENCE.	County in which they reside	Place where Loss was sustained.	Nature of Loss.	AMOUNT CLAIMED.
Adams, Travers	—	Cornpark	Westmeath	Charard-bridge, Kildare	Linen cloth	£. s. d. 88 11 3 4
Booth, Jeremiah	Merchant	Killeggan	ditto	Great road leading from Dublin to Athlone	Tobacco and pipe clay	12 7 0
Brown, Hugh	Esquire	Togblon	ditto	Refidence	Sheep	92 8 0
Buller, John	—	Barrowdun	ditto	ditto	A mare, a gun and cast	17 14 9
Curley, Patrick	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Saffers and glass	1 18 3
Curtin, Thomas	Merchant	Mullingar	ditto	Maringhstown and Ravenshill, Co. Wex	Shug goods	32 11 6
Duffy, John	—	Cappiltown	ditto	Refidence	Furniture, plate, books, wing and cast	43 14 11
Fallon, William	Linen Manufac.	Bonavilla	ditto	Blandrumney	1 Juno cloth	70 0 0
Gavin, Michael	Miller	Miltoona	ditto	Clooneyry, Kildare	Flour and sacks	19 16 0
Handy, Samuel Wesley	Esquire	Brasca Castle	ditto	Killiney, Co. Mayo	Cattle, meadow and hay	568 17 0
Higgins, John	Genl.	Kinnegad	ditto	Blackwater, Co. Kildare	Mail coach and four horses	80 0 0
Jones, Michael	Shopkeeper	Athlone	ditto	Cappagh, Co. Kildare	12 Hogheads and 1 barrel of porter	42 5 6
Kelly, Francis	—	Marill	Westmeath	Road near Mullingar	Cash, watch and cloaths	31 14 4
MacDonnell, William	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	12 Firelocks, windows broke and cast	4 7 9
McDonnell, John	Farmer	Jansfown	ditto	ditto	3 Mares	15 7 6
McLaughlin, Wm.	Ditto	Ditto	ditto	ditto	1 Mare, a car and tackling	10 4 9
McColly, Edward	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Firelock and glass	1 13 9
McCahan, Joseph	—	Street	ditto	ditto	A horse, spirits, windows and yarn	17 2 10
McEwan, Celia	—	Athlone	ditto	ditto	30 19 7 4	
Mitchell, Thomas	—	Higspark	ditto	ditto	A horse	8 15 6 4
Mitchell, Stewart	—	Mullingar	ditto	ditto	A mare	10 16 11
Moore, George	—	Rathganny	ditto	ditto	Two mares	26 10 6
Moore, William	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Glass broke, gun and cloaths	4 9 2 4
Moore, Henry John	—	Rathganny	ditto	ditto	A mare, bridles, saddle, expenses of another mare	17 11 2 1
Morphy, Patrick	—	Mullingar	ditto	Lands of Ferrbrann Tyssainm, County Westmeath	Sheep, mares and heifers	115 4 6
Murphy, Edward	Merchant	Killeggan	ditto	Sallin, Co. Kildare	Wine, brandy, tobacco and sugar	70 2 7
Murray, Francis	—	Ariglas	ditto	Refidence	A mare	11 7 6
Murray, Thomas	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Glass	0 16 6
Murphy, John	—	Ditto	ditto	ditto	Horse, firelock and bridle	13 2 8
Payne, George	Linen Manufac.	Capprell	ditto	Rallyshamney Co. Wex	Linen cloth	92 4 0
Rochelle, John Travers	—	Wilson's Hospital	ditto	Refidence	Wine, bottles, cloaths, gun	37 5 2
Rochelle, John Travers, (or Trustees of Wilson's Hosp.)	—	Lenny	ditto	ditto	Cattle, furniture, provision, cloaths, arms	147 15 3 4
Roswell, John	Esquire	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Glass, spirits, guns, fathes, and a mare	79 10 2
Rice, William	—	Ditto	ditto	ditto	Firelock, fath, glass	3 14 8
Scott, Henry	—	Ditto	ditto	ditto	Firelocks	3 0 0
Shea, Thomas	Merchant	Mullingar	ditto	Ballinacrumma Co. Kildare	Merchandise of different kinds	28 10 2
Smyth, Charles	Farmer	Kilpatrick	ditto	Refidence	Houses, furniture, provision, corn, a mare	105 14
Spence, Hugh	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Saff broke, and firelock	2 8 4
Spence, Charles	—	Ditto	ditto	ditto	Glass, hat and coat	1 10 0
Spence, James	—	Ditto	ditto	ditto	Linen, firelock and glass	9 8
Thomson, Isaac	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Glass, firelocks and furniture	14 2
Tomlinson, Edward	—	Mullingar	ditto	ditto	Gun, glass and fathes broke	10 5 0
Tremble, Alexander	—	Ballinac	ditto	ditto	Mare, bacon and cloaths	15 1 11
Walsh, Michael	Carman	Bonavilla	ditto	Ballydrumney, County Westmeath	Horses	11 16 2
Wilson, James	—	Ballinac	ditto	Refidence	Glass and firelocks	3 2 6

2808 3 7

dresses in favour of the Act of Union the Rev. Thomas Dunne P.P., Kilbeggan signed a declaration in Roscommon approving a legislative union with Great Britain. Bishop Plunkett signed similar declarations for Meath and Westmeath in conjunction with the freeholders of the counties. The Roman Catholic Bishops certainly seem to have been out of line with the general body of Catholics in that respect. Grattan even described them as "a band of prostituted men engaged in the service of the Government". This may have been unfair in some respects as it must be remembered that most of the 18th century was a continuous fight for the bishops and priests against the Penal Laws and most of them did not want to lose what they had gained in the years prior to 1798. Perhaps the opposition of the Catholic Church might be a factor in explaining why memories and folklore of 1798 appear to have been buried compared to the Famine in the 1840's. The Famine was obviously a greater catastrophe affecting to some degree every corner of Ireland but one would have expected that something as stirring as 1798 (the only real rebellion between the 1690's and 1916) should have had greater folklore memories. James Woods in his Annals of Westmeath (1890) chronicles many of the events in Westmeath. He says "Suspicion was arrested - trial was death. But we will not stay to apostrophise those horrid days - that tyrannical epoch, whose memories still live in every hamlet - by every streamlet and river - by every mountain or morass - in every town and city, wherever the innocent blood of an oppressed people was shed." However some memories of 1798 do seem to have been forgotten or are buried in time but not always in the 25 years or so after the rebellion.

Retribution

One other possible affect of the rebellion was the resentment felt for many years by the local Catholics towards the Robinsons, Handys, Rochforts and other families who participated on the Government side in the rebellion.

MURDER AND REWARD.

WHEREAS on the evening of the Eleventh of OCTOBER, instant, between the hours of seven and eight o'clock, SAMUEL ROBINSON, late of Ballinacorney, in the County of Westmeath, was waylaid and barbarously Murdered, at Courstown, in said County, by Persons as yet unknown, who after having knocked him down on the high-road, put a rope about his body, and dragged him into an adjoining field, and there beat his brains out with stones, and then covered him in a field with post-hole stails.

Now we, whose Names are hereto subscribed, holding in just abhorrence the said Murder, do hereby promise to pay the Sums respectively annexed to our Names, to be disposed of in REWARDS for the apprehension and conviction of the Persons concerned in said Murder.

And we also promise to apply to Government for the PARDON of any person concerned in said Murder, (except the person who actually perpetrated same) who shall come forward and discover his accomplices, and we promise to pay to them said Reward.

And we promise to pay to any Person or Persons who shall within six Calendar Months, discover and prosecute to Conviction any person or persons concerned in said Murder, the sum of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS.

And to any Person who shall give such positive INFORMATION as will lead to the discovery and conviction of any of the persons concerned in said Murder the sum of

FIFTY POUNDS,

and his or her name shall be KEPT SECRET.

SUBSCRIBERS' NAMES.

Longford	- - - - -	£30 0 0
Castlemaine	- - - - -	20 0 0
H. R. Pakenham, M. P.	- - - - -	20 0 0
Robert Smyth, M. P.	- - - - -	20 0 0
Thomas Chapman, Bart.	- - - - -	20 0 0
Richard Nagle, Bart.	- - - - -	20 0 0
Richard Leverage, Bart.	- - - - -	20 0 0
Richard Malour	- - - - -	20 0 0
Nalph Smyth, Caybrook	- - - - -	20 0 0
William Robinson	- - - - -	20 0 0
Francis Adams	- - - - -	20 0 0
H. M. Tuite	- - - - -	11 7 6
Robert Cooke	- - - - -	11 7 6
Thomas Pakenham	- - - - -	10 0 0
M. H. Temple	- - - - -	10 0 0
Major-General L'Estrange	- - - - -	10 0 0
John Tisdall	- - - - -	10 0 0
Thomas Robinson	- - - - -	10 0 0
James Glibbons	- - - - -	10 0 0
Mesde Dennis	- - - - -	5 0 0
Charles Kelly	- - - - -	5 0 0
Rev. Charles Vignoles	- - - - -	5 13 0
H. W. Battersby	- - - - -	5 13 0
Gustavus Lambert	- - - - -	5 13 0
Richard Handcock, jun.	- - - - -	5 0 0
H. Cooke	- - - - -	5 0 0
J. M. Daly	- - - - -	5 0 0
James West	- - - - -	5 0 0
William Caulfield	- - - - -	5 0 0
T. S. Whitesey	- - - - -	3 0 0
John C. Lyons	- - - - -	3 0 0
W. S. Hill	- - - - -	3 0 0
B. Maguire	- - - - -	3 0 0
W. Coffe	- - - - -	3 0 0
W. Felkerston H.	- - - - -	3 0 0
J. Parker	- - - - -	3 0 0
Edward Felkerston H.	- - - - -	3 0 0
Thomas Robinson, Ck.	- - - - -	3 0 0
Francis Smith	- - - - -	3 0 0
William Robinson	- - - - -	3 0 0
Owen Daly	- - - - -	3 0 0
D. T. Osborne, for the West-	- - - - -	3 0 0
meath Constabulary	- - - - -	50 0 0

It is earnestly requested that all Persons desirous of testifying their detestation of this horrid Murder, will, without delay, send in their Names as Subscribers to the Office of this Paper.

Notice in Westmeath Journal in October 1824 regarding a reward for private Information in the murder of Samuel Robinson.

Arising out of the murders in Ballinagore, Samuel Robinson was a hated man for the rest of his life. From being a person of considerable property he apparently through a series of unfortunate circumstances slipped down the social scale and by 1824 he was moving in humbler circles. On 8th October 1824 between 7-8 P.M he was waylaid at Conronstown by persons unknown . A rope was put around his neck and he was dragged to an adjoining field and there he had his brains beaten out with stones and he was covered in potato stalks. He had in his possession on leaving his house several bills and other law papers which he was to proceed on at the coming sessions in Moate on 12th October - none of them were in his pocket when he was found.

The Westmeath Journal on 14th October 1824 said he distinguished himself during the 1798 rebellion in the Kilbeggan Corps of the yeomen cavalry as a brave and zealous soldier which gained him the esteem and approbation of the Noblemen, Gentlemen, and Magistrates of this and adjoining counties but also gained him the deadly hatred of the disaffected. His life had often been in jeopardy and many attempts were made to assassinate him before this eventual success. The main reason for the murder was obviously the Civil Bills in his possession but it did seem that some justice did prevail in the case of Robinson as from the time of the rebellion his life was in constant danger and as a consequence it did affect his wealth and position in society until his ultimate date with destiny.

On 21st December 1822 William Henderson , Steward to Samuel W. Handy of Bracca Castle was viciously attacked by four men on his way home from Kilbeggan Market. Again it may have been more related to specific land problems at the time but just like Robinson , the 1798 rebellion and Handy's part in it would still have been fresh in peoples minds. A meeting of the Magistrates in the town on 3rd January 1823 included Gustavus H. Rochfort, Samuel W. Handy, John Middleton Berry, John Armstrong, and many others with 1798 connections. A reward for over £180 was subscribed for the capture of the villains. The resolutions included lofty statements about putting down a system subversive of all orders e.g. "Endangering the lives of the well disposed, tending to demoralise the lower classes, and reflecting an indelible disgrace on our National Character".

On 3rd September 1815 Rev. William Marshall wrote to Dublin Castle from Kilbeggan about a 'a spirit of rebellion' in the town with attacks on the Protestant Church and also on the house of a man called Price. The following night another attack was made on the Price house and several panes of glass were broken. At that time Charles Price was a Permanent Sergeant of the Moycashel Infantry and in one account of events in 1798 a Sergeant Price was said to have killed 14 men. The attacks on the family house were again possibly related to a dislike of the family arising out of events in 1798, especially if indeed he killed 14 men.

1799

In Samuel W. Handy's letter in May 1799 giving the main leaders of the rebellion he mentions that John Murray who was described as one of the leaders was then back in Kilbeggan and to quote Handy "He and all the Principals are suffered to come and remain at home peaceably and quietly to the very great terror of all his majesties Loyal Subjects". He mentions the possibility of another rising and that several possible places were mentioned including Kilbeggan, Tyrellspass, and Clara. He writes that "The first and last of these towns are disaffected to our Government and Constitution (save a very few)". Whether there was a genuine fear or threat to Protestants is not clear. It may be that Handy was exaggerating the situation in order to get more troops. He suggests that "a party of Army" be kept all summer in these towns and adds "For if they are left depending on a few yeomen and Loyalists particularly in Kilbeggan there is a great danger that the rebels will become masters". There maybe a hint as to his real intentions in the final section of the letter when he mentions that the Loyalists are ready to do their duty as they did in 1798 "but hoped to be treated as yeomen, to be put on permanent pay, to have a uniform lest that they should be taken as rebels, treated as such and be sufferers as in a Day of Confusion where it is hard to distinguish people in coloured clothes".

One of the direct effects of the French landing in the west in 1798 was the re-inforcement of temporary barracks in the midlands such as Birr, Banagher, and Portumna and in October 2,000 soldiers were in Athlone. The purpose of this was to stop any French landing and control the local population in Westmeath and Longford arising out of the various rebellions like Kilbeggan, Wilson's Hospital etc. The fears of a landing continued and in 1810-11 plans were drawn up by Napoleon to send around 30,000 men to Ireland. This led to the setting up of further temporary and permanent barracks in the midlands to assist in a defence line along the Shannon and to be quickly deployed if there was a landing in the west.

In 1811 Kilbeggan had a Temporary Cavalry force of 154 Privates and 117 horses and an infantry force of 12 officers and 400 privates. This was mainly strategic but the Government would also have been conscious of the fact that Kilbeggan was a troublesome area and after 1798 was a likely danger spot. There was a smaller force overall in Mullingar with an infantry force of 8 officers and 562 privates and there was also a force of 8 officers and 360 privates in Moate. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 there was less need for temporary barracks and many were dismantled.

1803

The abortive rebellion of Robert Emmet in 1803 had little effect on the country in general and is best remembered because of his speech from the

dock and the unfortunate murder of the Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland, Lord Kilwarden and his nephew the Reverend Richard Wolfe on 23rd July 1803. Emmet himself was horrified at the murder. According to an article in the Church of Ireland Monthly magazine written some years ago the Rev. Wolfe was said to be Rector of Kilbeggan but he was only 24 years old and there is no confirmation from the records that he was the rector at that time.

It seems that some Kilbeggan men may have been involved in the events in Dublin at that time. On 20th February 1804 a petition was presented to Alex Marsden by Charles Manner a Conservator in relation to three Kilbeggan men - Matthew Burke, Michael and John Dogherty.

"The humble petition of the above states that they stayed in lodgings on the night of 23rd July (the night before the rebellion) in the House of Peter C—one of the watchmen in St Nicholas Parish who was on lawful duty in New Street under the direction of Mr — one of his Majesty's Justice of the Peace.

That your petitioners were in lodgings aforesaid before the hour of nine o'clock on the said 23rd July and did before the said hour go to their beds, neither they nor any of them did depart till about the hour of — on the following morning when they were taken prisoner from their beds and sent to the Provost by the military.

That your petitioner have procured from respectable gentlemen in the town where your Petitioners resided from their infancy and recommendations hereto annexed as I would perhaps to hope your honour will order them to be taken from their present confinement where they are in a wretched situation without the means of supper

Your Petitioner ...with consideration"

The "reputable gentlemen" referred to in the petition were from both sides of the religious divide and they had sent two endorsements of the men involved

"We the Magistrates, Freemen, and Principal inhabitants of the Corporation of Kilbeggan in the county of Westmeath do certify we know Matthew Burke late an inhabitant of the town of Kilbeggan but now at Prison on board one of His Majesty's tenders in the Harbour of Dublin, to be an honest, sober, industrious and well affected man. Given under our hands at Kilbeggan on 6th February 1804

William Fleetwood, Provost of Kilbeggan, Edward Faulkner, Church Warden, William Marshall, Minister, Willian Codd, George Codd, Thomas Faulkner, Thomas Berry, Thomas Dunn P.P. and Art Judge."

With regard to the Dogherty's they submitted the following

"We whose names are hereto inscribed do certify that we have known Mick and John Dogherty for a number of years back during which time they always behaved themselves as faithful and loyal subjects and that Mick Dogherty served on His Majesty's service for several years until he was dis-

charged on account of his sight as will appear from his discharge and we understand they went up to Dublin in June last for the purpose of working as labourers”

The same signatures as above plus Henry Briscoe and William Gamble.

It is not clear if the petition from both Protestants and Catholics worked but certainly it would have helped their case.

Kilbeggan was quiet during the 1803 “rebellion” although on 9th August 1803 George Clibborn wrote from Moate to Major Sirr that John Warnford Armstrong of Ballycumber had told him that Arthur O’Connor one of the leaders of the United Irishmen had been seen near Kilbeggan the previous Saturday by Charles Clerk (Captain Clerk) and that O’Connor was in the company of Connell , a blacksmith. Whether it was true or not it certainly had little impact on the area.

Reasons for Kilbeggan Rebellion

When looking for reasons why the rebellion took place in Kilbeggan rather than somewhere else in Westmeath it would seem that the only real factor that distinguished the town was John McManus. He was the Commander of the United Irishmen in the region constantly in contact with headquarters in Dublin. Even in our limited knowledge of him he was certainly dynamic in his optimism of what he could do. He may not have been able to deliver the troops stated in his May letter but it is easy to believe that in the heady excitement of the Summer of 1798 many young men would have been inspired by his belief and optimism. The timescale of his arrest and the outbreak of the rebellion cannot be mere coincidence.

It was just over three weeks since many of the leaders were arrested and the rebellion broke out in Kildare and Meath. Events were moving at a rapid rate and the executions in Ballycumber just a few days before must have convinced the leaders to make a show of strength and perhaps there was a fear that they would all be arrested themselves or that McManus and Carey might talk (It is not very clear as to what Carey knew). The fair was an ideal place to gather a force as people came from all over the midlands to Kilbeggan’s markets and fairs.

One other factor which may not have been too clear in 1798 but became much more obvious in the 19th century was the strong agrarian opposition in Westmeath and especially in the Kilbeggan area. There was no obvious reason why the Kilbeggan area would be any worse than other parts of Westmeath and in fact the Defenders seemed to be more active in other parts of the county. However a brief look at the 19th century shows a strong level of opposition in the Kilbeggan area to the landlords and authorities. It was so strong a tradition that it is difficult not to believe in retrospect that it was not a factor.

Land Agitation in Kilbeggan in 19th Century

Between 1800 and the Famine various local secret societies flowered sometimes called Ribbonmen but in the early part of the 19th century were more often called "**Carders**" (they drew a board from which nails projected over the face and chest of their victims causing disfiguration and sometimes death) and "**Threshers**" (often noted for cutting off the ears of their victims). It was cruel but must be seen in the context of its time. The Governments laissez-faire policy of non-interference in the market place left all the power with the landlords and with a move to more pasture land, evictions, high rents etc. became the order of the day for the cottier and many others. With no legal redress secret societies like the Ribbonmen were always likely to be prevalent. In the dead of night they acted in a violent manner against tithe farmers, process servers etc., sometimes for the general good but more often for personal and specific reasons. The object of agrarian violence was mainly defensive and conservative in intent. Westmeath was continually one of the worst areas and the gruesome murder of a farmer and his wife called Connell near Athlone in 1813 was cited 20 years later by Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons.

In 1813 a letter from Thomas King of Kilbeggan gave an account of attacks on a number of houses in the area. It was so serious that Gustavus Rochfort proposed in November 1813 a plan to search for arms in Westmeath, Offaly and parts of Longford - all on the same day! Horseleap was considered a depot for arms at that time. A special meeting was held in Clara about the "Carders" and some like Rochfort believed there was a plan to join with Kildare and Meath.

In 1814 Durrow & Horseleap were two of the worst areas and William Marshall, Minister, Kilbeggan wrote about attacks on Protestants and seven yeomen in the area were disarmed in different attacks (Charles & Henry Droughten, John & Adam Brennan all of Newtown, Henry Slater, John Tomison, and Mick Lusk) and one family the Handibos of Rahugh fought off their attackers. It was so bad that a decision was made by Captains Rochfort and Daniell to take up all arms from the yeomen. A Proclamation was issued by the Lord Lieutenant and Council in the Baronies of Clonlonan & Moycashel that there be a curfew from 29th November 1815. One Mullingar judge said all the trouble in Westmeath was being "Vomited from the Dublin crater" inferring a central Ribbon organisation in Dublin. Even six years later it was believed that Kilbeggan was linked with Dublin and a letter to Lord Sidmouth in Britain on 2nd January 1821 stated that there was much swearing in Westmeath and that Kilbeggan was the centre of activity.

The situation was so serious in the Durrow, Kilbeggan, and Castletown area in 1819 that a meeting of the Burghers and Freemen and inhabitants of Kilbeggan was held on 25th December regarding the "**Carder**" disturbances. It was resolved that Bernard Maguire, Provost, Mr Cuff, Treasurer, and

Captains Barnett and Belton (of 1798 fame) be appointed officers to set up an Association to suppress the disturbances in the county. Over 100 signatures were obtained. A letter issued to the landlord Gustavus Lambert, Dublin seeking permission to set up the Association.

Kilbeggan continued to be a problem area and in April 1822 an extraordinary session was held in the town by Kilbeggan magistrates to place the Barony of Moycashel under the Insurrection Act owing to the many outrages committed. These outrages included the murder of Thomas Knox a member of the police force and hopes were expressed in Kilbeggan "That many would be sent to New Zealand".

In January 1823 D.O'Donoghue, Chief Magistrate of the Police wrote to William Gregory at the Castle

Sir "With respect to the present state of the district under my supervision, I have the honour to report that generally speaking it is quiet with the exception of the district of Kilbeggan where an atrocious assassinating spirit always had prevailed and continues still to show itself wherever any opportunity affords. Several instances of this nature have recently occurred especially in the barbarous assault of a Steward belonging to Mr Handy of Braccagh Castle , although the exertions of the police have been increased with a view to checking these disorders. I shall direct additional patrols to be on duty during the remainder of the WinterYour obedient servant etc. "The fear of another rebellion like 1798 was so great that even when the area was peaceful it was taken as an ominous sigh as shown in another letter from O'Donoghue to Gregory dated 7th July 1823. He indicated that tranquillity had been restored in the area but added "*This unusual state of quiet alarms the minds of some loyal men who recalled that a similar calm took place immediately previous to the 1798 rebellion. Although the lower classes have for some time past been a good deal agitated by rumours industriously circulated seemingly with a mischievous intention. I do not apprehend that any attempt at insurrection will be made hereabouts provided the capital be kept tranquil*"

Much of the violence related to local disputes concerning rent , land and employment . Competition for land amongst small holders was fierce causing high rent and subsequent defaulting . In October 1824 Samuel Robinson was murdered and other years like 1832 were also bad . The Robinson case mentioned elsewhere best illustrates the influence of events in 1798 on the memory of the people. In the investigation into his murder T.D.Martin, Chief Constable said "*This man was obnoxious to the people since 1798 having apprehended a Catholic Clergyman engaged in the late disturbance , which his late occupation was not calculated to obliterate. His brothers and friends are Protestants and very respectable as farmers in Westmeath only 3 miles from Condrinstown*". An anonymous letter to the police from someone claiming to have overheard the murderers, stated that a group of men saw Robinson coming and one of them said "*Here is Sam that hung a priest*".

The influence of Daniel O'Connell through the Catholic Association was a major factor in the success of Hugh Morgan Tuite of Sonna in the election of 1826 when he ousted the Protestant nominee Robert Smyth of Drumcree. This brought a major kick-back as Protestant landowners like Hayes W. Battersby of Ballard, Lord Castlemaine and other landlords in the area seized cattle for rent in "a spirit of revenge" for the part played by the people. Fr Cantwell P.P. and future Bishop of Meath gave £50 to aid people who had their cattle seized.

Land related crime continued through the 1830's and the police recorded 55 incidents of violence in Westmeath in 1834 and in 1836 there were 50 cases of intimidation involving the occupation of land in the county. In spite of the Famine. Kilbeggan was relatively quiet until the early 1850's when for a period of around 20 years it exploded with violence.

Ribbonmen in Kilbeggan

Between the 1850's and 1870's there were 40 murders in Westmeath and in the Kilbeggan area this included Thomas Farrell in January 1853 ; Edward Kelly in February 1858; Thomas Jessop in April 1859; Francis Dowling, Ballinagore in November 1870 etc. and all were land related and said to be organised by members of the Ribbonmen or secret societies. In 1870 alone there were 6 shootings, 12 intimidations, 41 threatening letters , one serious assault, and 9 injuries to property in Kilbeggan. It was so bad following the murder of Jessop in 1859 that a police force of 25 men were quartered on the town and a levy of 12 shillings in the pound on the rating was put on the town in order to pay for them. This caused considerable trouble between the town dwellers and those outside the town who did not have to pay. In 1859 the Kilbeggan Constabulary lodged in the military store in Athlone 200lbs of gunpowder, 160 lbs. of shot, 24 boxes of percussion caps, 14 powder flasks, and 28 stand of arms.

The situation was so bad in Westmeath that by 1870 a special commission was set up in 1871 called " The Select Committee in Westmeath (Unlawful Combinations)". Evidence was taken from the clergy, landlords, magistrates and police force. However such an enquiry was unlikely to look at the land system as the heart of the problem. George Boyd Rochfort of Middleton Park was one of the witnesses and spoke of "all rights of property and employers have gone". This from someone who evicted 186 people in 1860 just to enlarge his estate. Very few people were ever convicted of any of the crimes in the Kilbeggan area. The Catholic Church condemned the criminal activities but they continued until the formation of the Land League. It would be wrong to ascribe pure motives to the so called Ribbonmen as selfishness, self-interest, and crime played a major role in their activities. While this type of violence declined in the area there was much in the way of land agitation and

great courage shown by many during the Land League era especially in townlands like Cloneyheigue and Donore, Horseleap (which even got a mention in the English House of Commons in 1913).

While it is dangerous to apply motives for events in the Kilbeggan area in the 19th century to a single event in 1798, there is the point that on at least two occasions in the 19th century Kilbeggan was considered by the authorities as one of the worst areas for Ribbonism in the country i.e. 1821 and the period from 1852-72. There was always an undercurrent of violence and agrarian agitation in the area and it seems probable that this was also the case in 1798. While many of the men who gathered in Kilbeggan are anonymous in the mist of time it is clear that they would have been of either a rural background or lower trading classes of the time. They would have had the same grievances as many other areas against the land lords regarding rent etc. and against the authorities for some of their policies on trade which cost jobs. All it needed was the spark of someone like John McManus to ignite them into rebellion. The action of the men in Kilbeggan achieved very little and arguably it made things worse as the authorities watched the area more closely for many years afterwards. However the area continued to remain disaffected from the early to the late 19th century including attacks on some of the men and families who were on the side of the Government in 1798 and continued to be representative of the Protestant ruling class. Perhaps this was the greatest affect of the events in Kilbeggan in June 1798. The murder of many innocent people in the immediate aftermath was significant enough to leave the seeds of disaffection and resentment to root and grow into acts of violence which even in the 1820's still involved individuals and families who participated on both sides in events in 1798.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A - Analecta Hibernica 20 from Nugent Papers A List of Occupiers of Houses & Lands in Kilbeggan in 1682

“James Dove (1/3 of a house and plot); Thomas Lee; Edd. Bart; James Connor; Charles Fleetwood; John Wade; Virtue Lee widow; Stephen Bonor; Patrick Innis; James Higgins; Darby Connor; Phelim Kelly; Thady Conon; Nicholas Puddy; Cornelius Dooly; John Crowdon; John Doyle; John Ryan; John Geoghan; Dennis Geoghan; Patrick Bradshaw; William Hogan; John Price (“the waste tenement backside and garden”); John Blake “House and plot of ground for a garden with several Parks” late of Thomas Mullock now of Thady Connor; houses in Pudden Lane, Mill Lane and Bridge land, between James Doyle’s house and the bridge; several parks in Kilbeggan, occupied by Thomas Mullock, Henry Green, Curate of Kilbeggan, Dinnis Geoghogan, John Mullock; Margaret Meyley; John Geoghogan, John Crowdon; James Doyle; Paul Briscoe; Thady Connor”.

Census of 1659

Land Owners - “Ballincrean etc Harry Hopkins, Coolatore John Cooke; Skehanagh John Sherlock; Crynan Hugh Geoghegan; Garryduff, Edward & Thomas Bailey; Kiltóher, Thomas Skelson & John Lorde; Lowertown, Edward Lowe; Ballybrade, Thomas Lowe; Frevenagh, John Fleetwood; Kilbeggan Borough, Richard Harrison & John Nelson; Castletown, John Clerke ; Balrath, Solomon Griffin; Rathnugent, John Lease; Creine , Richard Patience; Lismoynes, John Jones; Lohanlough, George Low; Ballingreny, James Geoghegan; Cappankirke, Hugh Geoghegan; Killelen, John Roe; Ballyconnell, Bryan Sheil, Gary Edmond Coffy; Streamstown, George Peyton; Moycashel William Ponntney Lt; Newtown , William Lowe; Cumminstown, John Pearson; Derryhall, Thomas Pearson; Kilcuney, Hugh Langley.”

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Townlands</u>	<u>No of People</u>	<u>Titulados</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Irish</u>
Borough / Town		99	Richard Harrison John Nelson	19	80
Kilbeggan	Ballinstocan	12			12
	Grange of Kiltubber	19			19
	Shenanagh	11	John Sherlock		11
	Cloneglin	14			14
	Kilmooneene	13			13
	Muldrum	7			7
	Ballyguigan	14			14
	Grynan	9	Hugh Geoghegan gent		9
	Ballinderye	28			28
	Loghangore	23	Laurence Sedgrave gent 3		20
	Shurin	9	Thomas Gibbons gent		9
	Tonyfort	28			28
	Ballymacmorish	6			6
		---		---	---
TOTAL		193		3	190

APPENDIX B-

KILBEGGAN TRADERS 1824 (Pop. 1,800)

- Postmaster** - Laughlin McLoughlin
Attorneys - John W.Briscoe, Bernard Maguire
Apotecary - John Flood
Brewers - John Fallon, Andrew & Bernard McManus
Leather Sellers - Charles Barnett
Drapers - John Berry, Mary Kelly, Edward Whitfield.
Grocers - Jeremiah Booth, David Carey, Tim Galvin, Wm. Mulready,
L. Ward
Millers - John Whitfield
Bakers - Hugh Fullerton, Dan Geoghegan, Thos.Rourke.
Tallow Chandlers & Soap Boiler - John Kelly
Joiner - Edward Fletcher
Publicans - Joseph Barnett, Michael Daly, Mary Digan, T.Doolan,
Michael Robbins, John Sheridan, John Storey
Hotel Keeper - Edward Whitfield.

APPENDIX C

PADDY PHYLAN

In 1979 Liam Kelliher interviewed his neighbour Paddy Phylan who was in the twilight of his years but had a great story to tell of Kilbeggan and its history and also stories of his own life and his family (some time in the future justice might be done with a full account of Paddy's memories and life).

Remarkably, Paddy's Grandfather was alive and well in 1798 and aged 32! Because of this he was handed down a direct account of events in Kilbeggan in 1798. His grandfather was born in 1766 and died in 1859. He was 70 years old when he married and to put it in perspective he was around 10 years older than Robert Emmet in 1798. As mentioned in the text he was a carman and he had two horses and drayed from Dublin. In Summer it was two journeys per week and they would leave for Dublin at midnight with the nose bag and the horses. The road would be thick with carmen who stopped at Kinnegad and Kilcock. He remained a carman until around 1830 but the arrival of the Grand Canal brought an end to his occupation.

He then started contracting and built a store for the Grand Canal Company at Nolan's which used to be called "The Buildings". Unfortunately, the canal did not come that far because it would have taken 3 or 4 locks to bring it into the town. He had built as far up as the roof but as the Grand Canal Co. did not want the building he never finished it and eventually the Lambart's finished the roof. His grandfather built the corner house in the Square and Phylan's yard was also commandeered to build the Market House. His father found a stone from the old Abbey which had an Abbot's head carved on it and it was given to the Cistercian abbey in Portlglenone, Co Antrim.

Paddy was also interested in politics and he attended meetings of the United Irish Party under John B. Redmond. He joined the Volunteers in 1913 and then went down to the 'Land League' to drill. He recalled that the Drill Sergeant would shout "Company fall in, tallest on the right, shortest on the left, single rank size". They marched to Horseleap led by the Kilbeggan Fife and Drum Band and got the train to Mullingar to be inspected by Major Dease and Captain O'Connor in the Fair Green in Mullingar. They only had wooden guns except for one old Mauser rifle used to practise in the Dramatic Hall. When the Volunteers split over the issue of going to fight in the war Paddy and others like the McGuinness's formed a Cumann of Sinn Fein in Kilbeggan in August 1917. Michael Collins called to Kilbeggan one evening after the 1918 election and Paddy shook hands with him in the old Sinn Fein Hall. Collin's addressed a meeting out of a window on the second floor looking over at Dunican's old shop.

He continued to be active in politics during the period of the Black & Tans and the arrival of the guards. He also remembers the night the Head Constable was shot dead going to mass. That same night the Black & Tans burned

the Dramatic Hall in reprisal and the oddest thing was that they took the bands instruments from the Hall and marched down the street playing Irish tunes including "God save Ireland". He was not at the first Fianna Fail Ard Fheis in 1926 but he joined them after the split with Sinn Fein and he attended the 1927 Ard Fheis with Peter Hurley, Matt and Mick McMahan. They hired a car for £2 and carried a flag which said "***We demand that there be no oath***". It was some time before De Valera and Fianna Fail agreed to take the oath.

Paddy was elected for the County Council in 1928 and again in 1933 and served a number of times over the years. He was also a Peace Commissioner - amongst the first elected by Fianna Fail after their success in the 1932 election. On the County Council he served on various committees such as the County Committee of Agriculture, Vocational Education Committee etc. One of his most significant motions related to the Arterial Drainage Act passed in 1945. He proposed that the maintenance rate be abolished on arterial rivers like the Brosna and be substituted by a county at large charge and that the nature of the work be done as a national scheme. Other counties took up the same proposal afterwards and wanted it as a national charge .

In a varied career (which included winning the Mile Flat Championship of Leinster in Athletics in 1926) he made a major contribution to Kilbeggan and Westmeath and his great and accurate memory has helped to keep alive events and places in Kilbeggan that otherwise might have been lost.

APPENDIX D

REV. GEORGE LAMBART

A member of the Lambart family of Beauparc he was born in 1754 and qualified from Trinity College in 1775. It was as Vicar of Rathconnell 1779-97 and Rector of Killary 1797-1819 that he made his major contribution by spying for the authorities. He was part of a Magistrate and landlord class in Co Meath that was zealous in their opposition to Catholics, Defenders, and United Irishmen. Lambart was ideally situated between Navan and Slane on the River Boyne to report on developments in his area. He had a network of informers and spies who cost around £500 to run in the 18 months up to February 1798. His intelligence was at times exceptionally good as he predicted a year in advance that Tara Hill would be the headquarters for the rising in Meath. He often antagonised colleagues as he liked to get his own way e.g. Hamilton Gorges of Kilbrew was an M.P. in Meath in 1797 and he was opposed by George's brother Gustavus. Rev.Lambart warned the authorities about various items from emissaries from Dublin, the swearing in that took place early in 1797, the appointment of captains, the efforts to arm rebels, and about the French landings.

APPENDIX E

ACCOUNT OF FLOUR SENT BY LAND CARRIAGE TO DUBLIN

<u>PERIOD</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>OWNER</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>OWNER</u>
	Ballinagore	W. Fleetwood	Coola	D.Fitzpatrick 1778-81 R.Connolly 82-93 *
	Cwt		Cwt	
June 77/78	3,158		210	
June 78/79	4,151		644	
June 79/80	3,578		414	
June 80/81	3,976		126	
June 81/82	5,926		* 2,936	
June 84/85	6,070		3,658	
June 87/88	6,772		5,089	
June 89/90	3,262		4,693	
June 92/93	2,564		3,156	

(Also sent 1,034 by Canal)

The largest total in the county was sent from Coola in 1792/93 e.g. R.Garrett, Athlone was 1284 cwt. In 1789/90 Coola was the largest by road in Westmeath but places like Armstrongs, Clara only sent 1,410 cwts by land and 3,492 by canal. The other two major suppliers to Dublin were Tighes of Carrick and Purdons of Riverstown.

APPENDIX F

A KNIGHTHOOD FOR A DINNER! by Frank X. O'Leary

Lord Townsend who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1767-1773 left Dublin in the year 1773 on an official visit to Roscommon. Accompanied by his aides-de-camp he travelled in the Viceregal carriage drawn by four horses. On the evening of the second day of the journey an axle of the vehicle broke and as the necessary repairs would occupy several hours, the travellers were compelled to seek shelter for the night. This they secured in the modest hostelry of Thomas Cuffe of Kilbeggan near which village the accident occurred. The humble inn was in marked contrast to the noble mansion near Tullamore in which the party had arranged to spend the night and this fact, coupled with the unexpected mishap to his vehicle, put my Lord Townsend, who was noted for his love of physical comfort into very bad humour indeed. The inn-keeper gave the party a very cordial welcome and although he saw that his guests were of undoubtedly high rank, he had no idea that he was entertaining beneath his lowly roof such an exalted personage as the Viceroy of Ireland. A meal was ordered and the guests withdrew to a parlour to await its preparation. Overhearing a remark that they expected "the fare would be commensurate with the appearance of the house", Cuffe resolved to give the party an agreeable surprise and retired to the kitchen to consult with his wife who was an excellent cook. The good lady "rose to the occasion" with the result that their distinguished patrons were, in a short time, partaking of a good dinner well cooked and well served.

The welcome and unexpected sight of excellent fish and fowl, joints of meat, a variety of vegetables, and the many other little but necessary accessories to a good meal made the Lord Lieutenant and his attendants feel on very good terms with themselves and their annoyance at the unexpected interruption of their journey quickly disappeared. Then, as now Kilbeggan was famous for its good whiskey and copious draughts of this excellent liquor still more enhanced the opinion of the Earl and his companions of the entertainment provided. Under the influence of the good things Townsend, who was as remarkable for his personal jollity as he was for his fondness of the pleasures of the table completely unbent and forgot his previous discomfort. Quip jest and story helped to make the hours pass quickly and time and again the noble revellers drank the toast of their host and hostess. While his guests enjoyed the fare provided, Mr Cuffe had busied himself arranging for the repair of their equipage and his assurance that it would be ready for the resumption of their journey on the following morning raised him still more in their estimation. In addition they were certain they would sleep in comfort as one of the Viceregal attendants on inspecting the sleeping apart

ments pronounced them as equally good as the menu.

These were days of hard drinking when men, in particular those in the highest walks of life, boasted of their powers to carry a large quantity of liquor. The noble lord and his companions were no exception to this, and by midnight when the time for retiring had arrived, they were all more or less under the influence of the potent beverage. And now Lord Townsend in an intoxicated condition commanded that Cuffe who by this time had learned the identity of his principal guest, be brought before him. Escorted by a semi-inebriated aide-de-camp he appeared in the Viceregal presence. The Lord Lieutenant in an affectedly grave speech thanked his host for the excellent fare he had provided. And then prompted by the imp of mischief which is so much accountable for the irresponsible acts of the devotees of Bacchus, Townsend said :

“Mr Cuffe, I cannot find words to sufficiently express my thanks, but that you may know how great my gratitude is, and that the country may know how much I am indebted to you I propose to record my thanks in a manner which while you live, will demonstrate to your countrymen how faithfully you have served in this hour of need, your king’s Irish representative. In short Mr Cuffe, I propose to confer upon you the Order of Knighthood.

“My Lord!” remonstrated one of his suite.

“Think of what you are doing” added another.

“I am quite serious” said His Excellency in answer to these protests “What are orders for if not to award merit? Here, Cuffe, kneel down”.

But Cuffe bewildered by the turn things had taken stood in dismay and glanced at Townsend’s companions in mute appeal.

“Kneel down, sir” repeated the nobleman raising his sword and waving it in the direction of the frightened innkeeper.

Seeing that he was determined to carry out his intention the members of his suite uttered no further words of protest and more in dread than in joy, poor Cuffe, at another peremptory command from the earl, fell upon his knees looking up terror-stricken at the raised sword of Viceregal authority. Then laying the weapon upon the innkeeper’s shoulder Townsend repeated the words which formally elevated Thomas Cuffe to the Noble Order of Knighthood.

“Arise, Sir Thomas!” said the Earl at the conclusion of the ceremony and he gravely shook the newly-made knight by the hand. Each member of his suite did likewise.

Then the party broke up and retired for the night, their astonished guest making his way to the kitchen where his wife awaited him. When he informed her of the honour which had been thrust upon him she received the information with mixed feelings of doubt and surprise. At first she thought that her spouse had been imbibing some of the good Kilbeggan whiskey with his roistering guests and it took him a considerable time to convince her that

this statement was true. Finally seeing that her husband was not trying to tax her credulity, the good lady believed his story, and with no small feeling of elation tried to realise her sudden access of honours. Her womanly vanity too was touched when she was addressed by her husband as "Lady Cuffe".

The coming of morning saw the Viceregal party astir in preparation for their journey, and now thoroughly sobered by the night's rest. At breakfast one of the entourage ventured to remind His Excellency of his foolish freak of the previous night and by himself reviewing the incident in his sober senses very much regretted his prank. Perplexed as to what action he should take he expressed the opinion that Cuffe would not take advantage of the act performed while in his "cups".

While Thomas Cuffe, as became the plain honest fellow that he was, was agreeing to consider the incident as not having occurred, it was not so with his wife. Even though the period for which she had worn the title was exceedingly brief Lady Cuffe was loath to relinquish it and declared as much in unmistakable terms to her harassed husband. While he was anxious to show deference to the wishes of his distinguished guest he was equally desirous to refrain from offending his good wife. Placed thus in a dilemma he philosophically decided as he afterwards expressed it "not to fall out with the woman I'll have to live with all my life for the sake of a man whom I would most probably never see again even though he was the Lord Lieutenant himself".

Following the stormy interview with his wife Cuffe returned to the presence of Townsend and taking his courage in both hands, announced that his lady was very much opposed to the relinquishment of the title. Despite the pleas and protests of the now irate aristocrat the newly-made knight refused to budge and in despair the Viceroy decided to accept the situation quietly. Then Sir Thomas produced a liberal quantity of the brew of his native town and under its soothing influence the Viceroy became mollified and began to see and enjoy the humour of the previous night's incident. When the repaired coach was brought to the door the Viceregal party took a cordial leave of Sir Thomas and Lady Cuffe and continued their journey to Roscommon.

The entire country was soon ringing with the story of the unusual conferring which in the course of the telling received many embellishments. It brought to the innkeeper knight the custom of the curious, of both high and low estate, who came from near and far to visit Cuffe's hotel and its titled proprietor. While some ridiculed others no doubt were of the opinion that the knight and his lady were more entitled to their honours than many of the titled adventurers who had received them under circumstances which showed that they acted against the interests of their country.

APPENDIX G

WESTMEATH MILITIA

When Westmeath was balloted there was considerable trouble. It was said that on the day appointed 'deluded country people' to the number of about 2,000 men assembled from various parts of Co Westmeath and Longford to oppose balloting at Five Mile House. They demanded the ballot bag to burn it. The magistrate had a strong party of neighbours assembled and he gave them the word to fire on the mob which already started throwing stones. Nine were reported to have been killed and a great number wounded. By the time the military came the mob had dispersed 'the governors proceeded to ballot when the business was concluded impartially and strictly conformable to the wholesome law of the land. While the main shout at Five Mile House was 'no militia' there were cries of 'no tithes'.

There is a contemporary description of the Westmeath Militia at Loughlinstown in June 1795

"The camp consisted of the Westmeath, Downshire, and Drogheda militia and Pentshire Fencibles. The camp formed a half circle and extends from Loughlinstown to Brennanstown. The corps drew lots for the station and the Westmeath drew the right wing which was well situated by Loughlinstown groves. The Westmeaths were the only ones to have wooden booths (which contain an officer and 36 men each).

In 1797 there was much evidence of Defender / United Irishmen penetration of the armed forces including the Westmeath Militia. (In Wicklow in one week alone 21 men from King's County Militia deserted to the outlaw Joseph Holt). Some of the men in the Westmeath militia who were sworn from their allegiance from August 1796 onwards were Matthias Bullen, Laurence Reilly, Daniel Cooney, Francis Morrison, Patrick Devine, William Garvey, Thomas McDermott, and Patrick Fury, sworn to the secrecy of the United Irishmen. John Conoughty sworn a Defender before he enlisted. Garret Masters and Thomas Dalton were tendered oaths but refused. In June 1797 the Westmeath militia offered awards of £20 to any person with information leading to the conviction of persons attempting to seduce soldiers from their duty.

When George Moore investigated disaffection in the Westmeath Militia in 1798 he concluded that soldiers in that regiment were disaffected 'to a man' but that the immediate cause of their wrath was the fact that their Colonel Lord Westmeath had been pocketing money due to the men and there were other abuses. Moore reported that the disaffection was 'in great measure the fault of their Colonel and officers. The men had not been dealt with fairly.

Westmeath Militia in Cork

The only conflict of 1798 in the Co Cork became known as "The Battle of the Big Cross" near Ballinascarty which took place on 19th June, just a short time after events in Kilbeggan. The official letter from Sir Hugh Reilly, Lieut.-Colonel to Lieut-General Sir James Steward at Cork and dated Bandon 20th June was as follows

"Sir - I have the honour to inform you that a party of the Westmeath Regiment consisting of 220 men, rank and file, with two six pounders under my command were yesterday attacked on our march from Clonakilty to Bandon near a village called Ballymacarty by the rebels who took up the best position on the whole march.

The attack was made from a height on the left of our column of march with very great rapidity and without the least previous notion by between three and four hundred men as nearly as I can judge, armed mostly with pikes and very few firearms. We had hardly time to form but very soon repulsed them with considerable loss, when they retreated precipitately but not in great confusion; and when they regained the height I could perceive they were joined by a very considerable force. I with the greatest difficulty, and risk to the officers restrained the men, halted and formed the greater part of them, when I saw that the enemy were filing off a high bank, with the intent to take possession of our guns.

A detachment of a hundred men of the Caithness Legion under the command of Major Innes was on its march to replace us at Clonakilty, and hearing our fire pressed forward and very critically fired upon them, whilst we were forming and made them fly in every direction with great precipitation. At the same moment a very considerable force showed itself on the heights in our rear. A vast number of pikes appeared, and some with hats upon them and other signals, I suppose in order to collect their forces I ordered the guns to prepare for action and very fortunately brought them to bear upon the enemy with good effect, as they dispersed in a short time and must have left a considerable number of dead. Some were killed in attempting to carry away the dead bodies. It is impossible to ascertain the loss of the enemy but a dragoon who came this morning from Clonakilty to Bandon reports that their loss is one hundred and thirty.

I feel most highly gratified by the conduct and spirit of the officers and men of the Westmeath Regiment and had only to complain of the too great ardour of the latter which it was impossible to restrain. I cannot give too much praise to Major Innes, Captain Innes, and all the officers, non-commission officers, and privates of the Caithness Legion for their cool steady conduct and the very effectual support I received from them. Our loss was one sergeant and one private.

I have the honour to etc.

Hugh O'Reilly

Lt- Col. Westmeath Regiment

"The popular tradition in Cork is that the leader was Tadhg an Asna O'Donovan although Domhnall Mor McCarthy was also said to be the leader in the conflict. Hugh O'Reilly says he had a force of about 220 men and was assisted by a hundred men from the Caithness Legion. Accounts of the rebel force varied from 300-700 men which would tie in with O'Reilly's description of events. There is a traditional account of events which does agree to some extent with the official account.

The story is that Tadhg an Asna after the initial attack led a number of pikemen in a daring assault on the two six pounders which were causing havoc. The Westmeaths were overwhelmed and the Irish captured the two cannon. Tadhg then rushed up to Colonel O'Reilly and seized the reins of his horse and called on him to surrender. At that time a Sergeant Cummins in the Militia shot Tadhg in the back and he fell. The loss of their leader caused confusion and with the arrival of the Caithness Regiment from Bandon volley after volley was fired into the ranks of the Irish who were forced into retreating.

The attack was partly based on the belief that the Westmeath Militia would not put up such a great fight because of the disaffection in their ranks due to poor living conditions, shortage of pay etc. However this belief was incorrect and the rebels suffered the consequence. Tadhg an Asna was dragged to Clonakilty and his body thrown into a place called the Croppy's Hole. He was subsequently beheaded then drawn and quartered.

With regard to the Westmeaths eleven men were arrested as suspected ringleaders and brought to Cork by Lord Bandon and his yeomen for Court Martial. The men of the regiment were at Skibbereen under the command of Nugent. He had a figurine made of a Croppy to be used as a target. The password in use was "All is well and five pounds for a Croppy's Head".

The result of the trial held in Cork on 11th July 1798 was that four men - William Conlon, Thomas Reddy, Michael Gunley, and John Bray were sentenced to death and shot in the Dyke Field, Cork on 30th July 1798. Four men were transported across the sea - Thomas Gunning, Thomas Whelehan, Brian Martin, and William Mahedy. One man Patrick McLoughlin got 500 lashes and two others were acquitted - Felix Fitzgerald and Matthew Martin.

Coincidentally, West Cork's only other real contribution to the 1798 rebellion were the brothers Henry and John Sheares two United Irishmen defended by John Philpott Curran the Kilbeggan representative in parliament. The midland connection was maintained in the case which cost them their lives as they were betrayed by John Warnford Armstrong (known as 'Sheares 'Armstrong) from Ballycumber and a captain in the Kings County Regiment of the Militia who died at nearby Clara in 1858. He worked closely with two

officers of his regiment i.e. the diligent Clibborn from Moate and L'Estrange. The Attorney General in opposition was John Toler later Lord Norbury who lived in Durrow near Kilbeggan.

On 12th July 1798 the trial began with Armstrong as the main witness . It went all through the night and on the morning of the 13th. they were found guilty. On Saturday, 14th July they were executed.

APPENDIX H

TRIAL OF JOHN McMANUS & OWEN CAREY

Proceedings of a General Court Martial held by the Order of Brigadier General Charles Barnett at Mullingar June 29th June 1798 for the Trial of John McManus and Owen Carey.

President Colonel Francis Blake, Northumberland Fencibles ,

Major Robert Anderson, North. Fencs Captain John Wood , North Fencs, Captain Isaac Du Bois, do Captain Henry Cole do Captain Thomas Lyte, Roxburgh Dragoons Captain Gustavus Rochfort, Moycshl Cav.

Lieut. John Lee of the Northampton Fencs to Act as Judge Advocate. The Court being met and duly Sworn Proceeded to the Trial of the Prisoners John McManus & Owen Carey Confined by Order of Brig. General Barnett.

CHARGE

For having Acted, Aided & Assisted by Words or otherwise in the Rebellion now existing in this Kingdom.

The Prisoners John McManus & Owen Carey being Arraigned severely Pleased **NOT GUILTY**

Lieut. Henry Daniel Of the Meath Demifore Cavalry Sworn.

Q. Did you take in Custody the Prisoners John McManus and Owen Carey

A. I did

Q. Where did you take them ?

A. At Killskergh.

Q. Had either of them a Pass?

A. One of them showed me a Pass, I think Carey.

Q. Relate to the Court what Conversation you had with the Prisoners

with Respect to that Pass.

A. Prisoner Carey said he got the Pass from Captain Armstrong , who was his Captain. I demanded where he had been ? He said at his Father-in Laws in the County Cavan who had got a Paralytic Stroke. I asked him how McManus came to be with him? He answered he came for company . I asked was the Pass in Captain Armstrong's hand writing. He answered first it was but afterwards in Conversation he said it was not .

Q. (By the Prisoner McManus) Did you hear anything of a funeral and did I not tell you I was waiting for Mr Edmund Reilly who was at that funeral .

A. I asked him where he intended to Sleep that Night? He said at Mr Reilly's. The Prisoner told me of a Funeral but I know nothing of it.

Q. (By the Court- The Pass being produced). Is that the Pass they Produced?

A. To the best of my Recollection it is.

Thomas Robinson, High Constable of Demifore Barony Sworn.

Q. Relate to the Court what you know of the Conduct of the Prisoners McManus and Carey while at Crossakiel in the vacinity of Meath.

A. Mary Stevens informed the Witness there were two Gentlemen at Philip Ginty's (her master) that there were a great number of other Persons in the House coming from a Funeral who were leaving the House on Account of improper expressions used by the two Gentlemen and her Mistress sent for witness to take them. I sent for two of my Men but before they came Prisoners made their Escape and got about one Mile and a Quarter before I overtook them and then Assisted Lieut.Daniel to take them into Custody .

Q. (By the Court) Are the Prisoners now on their Trial the Persons you assisted to take into Custody.

A. They are.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Did you not here that we sent for you from Ginty's shortly after we came there ?

A. I did not till the Prisoners told me so themselves and I was not at the Funeral.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Did you see us at Ginty's House?

A. I did not.

Q. (By the Prisoners) When you came to the House at Killskergh did you not go out with Carey on finding McManus asleep on the Table to Fire at a Mark for half a pint of Punch?

A. I walked out with him and we fired at a Mark and Carey mentioned our firing for a jug of Punch.

James Gilsean Sworn

Q. Did you know the Prisoners Carey and McManus and are they now in Court ?

A. I saw them before at the House of Philip Ginty in Crossakiel on Friday, 8th day of June.

Q. Did the Prisoner McManus ask you if the Country was quiet ?

A. He did and I told him it was.

Q. Did he ask you if the United Men had Arms or Pikes?

A. I did not hear him speak of United Men.

Q. Did he ask you if the People were Ready or prepared to Rise?

A. He did ask me if they were Ready.

Q. Did he say on your answering the People were quiet that they were not so in his Country and that they would shortly be in a Blaze.

A. He did say they would shortly be in a Blaze.

Q. Did he say that your Country , meaning the County Meath ought to be so?

A. He did say so.

Q. (By the Court) What did the Prisoner McManus say about Arms or Pikes?

A. He asked had they any Arms or Pikes .

Q. (By the Court) Was the Prisoner Carey at the Conversation you have mentioned with McManus and assenting to it?

A. He was present at the same Table and said McManus was going on foolishly.

Q. (By the Court) Did he say McManus was going on foolishly in consequence of some strangers coming into the Room?

A. He did not agree in Consequence of some Strangers coming in but he was against him.

Q. (By the Court) What answer did you make McManus when he asked you were there Arms or Pikes in the Country?

A. I told him I did not know whether there were or not.

Q. (By the Court) Were you and the Prisoners drinking in the same Company?

A. Not in the same Company but in the same Room.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Was McManus drunk at the time you mention or were you drunk?

A. We were both a little hearty but I was not drunk.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Were you flogged at Oldcastle and for what?

A. I was Flogged there for being in Company with the Prisoners by order of Lieut.Daniel.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Did you make any Information on Account of Lieut. Daniel's telling you he would give you 400 lashes with what you got at Oldcastle ?

A. Lieut . Daniel did threaten to give him 400 lashes but he did not give the Information entirely through fear of being flogged but he believed he would be flogged.

Francis Battersby Esq.Sworn

Q. Did you draw this Affidavit (the Affidavit was produced to Witness and is hereunto annexed) and did Gilsenan swear to it?

A. I did draw this Affidavit and read it to Gilsenan truly and he swore to it .

Q. Was there any Force or Threats used to make Gilsenan Swear to the Affidavit?

A. Not in the least. I took the Deposition as Gilsenan directed me.

Lieut.Daniel Recalled

Q. Did Gilsenan make his Confession before he was Flogged or after?

A. One part of it he made the Day before he was flogged and one part after viz. before he was flogged he confessed that McManus asked him were the People ready to Rise and after he was Flogged he acknowledged that McManus asked him about the Arms and Pikes.

Q. Did he swear his Affidavit before Mr Battersby through fear of further punishment ?

A. I do not know I was not in Town but I advised him to before he left Oldcastle to tell the whole Truth if he wished to save himself.

Mary Stevens Sworn

Q. Do you know the prisoners McManus and Carey.

A. I do

Q. Did you see them at the House of your Master Phillip Ginty on Friday

the 8th June.

A. I did

Q. Do you know James Gilsenan.

A. Yes sir.

Q. Relate to the Court the conversation you heard between the Prisoners and James Gilsenan.

A. The prisoner in the white clothes (McManus) asked Gilsenan were they prepared. Gilsenan said they were a little but not much. McManus said his Country People were prepared, that they would have a battle some of these days and said that they had hooks that would knock a Horseman's Head off and that the Horsemen might make a hole to bury themselves in (meaning a Grave), the Prisoner in the blue clothes (Carey) desired McManus to take care of what he was saying. McManus bid Carey hold his Tongue he was an Orange Man.

Q. What reason had Carey to bid McManus hold his Tongue?

A. I don't know but there were Strangers coming into the Room.

Q. (By the Court) Where were you when this Conversation passed. And how did you hear it?

A. I was above stairs making Beds when I heard them I stooped down to a hole that was through the Loft and saw them and listened to them.

Q. Were you sent there by your Mistress for the purpose of listening to them?

A. I was not.

Q. (By the Court) Were you sent to call Thomas Robinson, High Constable to apprehend the prisoners.

A. I was by my Mistress.

Q. (By the Court) Was that in consequence of the Conversation you overheard or did your Mistress hear the prisoners herself ?

A. It was in Consequence of the Conversation I overheard and which I told my Mistress.

Q. Have you given this information in consequence of any fear of Punishment or any hope of Reward.

A. No I have not.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Were you not sent by us at two different times for Thomas Robinson to inform him that we wanted to see him and that you returned from his house and told us he was at the funeral.

A. I was sent once by the prisoners.

Edward Dennis Sworn

Q. Do you know the Prisoners McManus and Carey?

A. I know McManus but not Carey.

Q. Did the Prisoner McManus ever tell you he had upward of 2,300 men under his Command in the Parish of Castletown?

A. No that was not what he told me but he told me there were Societies in the Parish of Castletown to the Amount of upwards of 2,000 men.

Q. Did you conceive that these men were under McManus's Command from his Conversation with you.

A. He did not tell me they were under his Command , there was no mention of Commanding or Obeying.

Q. Did not the Prisoner McManus tell you that he had 2,300 men in the Parish of Castletown or in the neighbourhood of Kilbeggan.

A. He told me that he had Societies of United Irishmen there to the Amount of 2,000 men.

Q. Did you make this Discovery voluntarily or by Promise of Reward or fear of Punishment.

A. Voluntarily.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Where did that Conversation you have mentioned take place and when ?

A. In my shop in Phillipstown shortly after the last Assizes.

Court adjourned till ten o'clock tomorrow morning Saturday, June 30th.

Court resumed at ten o'clock in the Morning according to the adjournment and again Adjourned to Friday , the 6th day of July at ten o'clock in the Forenoon.

Friday 6th July, 1798 Court met according to Adjournment . The Prosecution being closed the Prisoners John McManus and Owen Carey were put on their Defence.

Matthias McManus Sworn

Q. (By the Prisoners) Did you go for any and for what purpose to Crossakiel and Oldcastle on Sunday last? If you did mention to the Court what passed there.

A. On Monday last I called at the house of Ginty at Crossakiel to show the room where the Prisoners sat at the time the alleged Conversation passed. On asking her to show the room she hesitated for some time and with Reluctance showed it. She told me they sat in a Certain Corner of the Room which she showed me, where there was a seat and a small Table. I asked her to show me the Hole in the Loft . On looking at the Loft I could perceive no hole but on examining it closely I found there were chinks and openings between the Boards immediately over where they sat but at a few feet distance there was an opening I could put my little finger in. On observing there was no Hole over where they sat she then said they sat on a Settle Bed under the Hole though first she said they sat in the Corner. The Hole was large enough to put his finger into but was partly stopped with Cobwebs and Dirt.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Were you prevented from making any enquiry in the neighbourhood of Crossakiel and Oldcastle ?

A. I was in Oldcastle.

Q. (Cross Examined) Are you in any way interested in this trial or are either of the Prisoners related to you ?

A. John McManus is my son.

Q. (By the Court) What enquiry did you wish to make in Oldcastle?

A. I wished to enquire relative to the Declaration of Gilsenan the time he was flogged

Q. (By the Court) By whom were you prevented making enquiries?

A. By Captain O'Reilly of the Meath Demifore Cavalry.

Q. (By the Court) Was Captain O'Reilly any way connected with the Prosecutor).

A. I can't tell.

Q. (By the Court) Did not Captain O'Reilly suspect your pass to be a forged one ?

A. He found fault with my pass .

Q. (By the Court) Is that the pass you produced to Captain O'Reilly.

A. That is the Pass

(N.B. The Pass is hereunto annexed)

Lieutenant Edward Barlow of the Moycashel Cavalry Sworn

Q. (By the Prisoners) Relate to the Court what Conversation you heard pass between Lieutenant Daniel and Gilsenan in Codd's House, Mullingar

A. I don't recollect the time the Conversation happened but I remember being with Lieutenant Daniel in Codd's House with Gilsenan. I remember Lieut. Daniel took an Examination out of his Pocket and asked Questions from it to Gilsenan but not being interested in the matter I do not recollect them but to the best of my recollection Gilsenan answered the Questions.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Did Lieut Daniel make any use of Threats of Punishment at that time to Gilsenan

A. Not in my presence.

Matthias Farrelly Sworn.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Are you related to any of the Prisoners?

A. Carey is married to my sister.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Did you see the Prisoners? At what time? And where in the County Cavan?

A. I saw them at Hugh Brady's of Currina in the County Cavan on Thursday evening the day before they were taken.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Do you know what brought them there ?

A. Owen Carey told me he came to the County to see my Father who was sick.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Was your father ill at that time? And what answer did you give him of his state of Health.

A. I told him he was better, there was no danger of his dying immediately.

Cross Examined

Q. Did you ever hear that the Prisoners McManus and Carey had fled from there own Country for fear of being apprehended as United Irishmen.

A. Never till after they were taken.

The Reverend James Elrington of Kilbeggan Sworn

Q. (By the Prisoners) Do you know John McManus and what is his General Character?

A. As to his General Character I can say nothing but for what I know of him his character is unexceptional , he appears to be a Sober, well conducted Man. I have known him for the two last years.

Cross Examined

Q. Have you ever heard or do you know that the Prisoner McManus was looked upon to be leader of the United Irishmen in the Neighbourhood of Kilbeggan.

A. I heard he was .

Q. Did you ever hear of a man under the assumed name of O'Ferral come to Kilbeggan as an Emissary of the United Irishmen from Dublin or the North and having held a Consultation with the Prisoner McManus ?

A. I never did .

Q. Did you ever hear the prisoner McManus fled from Kilbeggan for fear he should be apprehended for being a United Irishman.

A. I heard it currently Reported.

Q. (By the Court) Was it before or after McManus went away that you heard a Report of his being a leader of United Irishmen.

A. After he went away and before.

Michael Seery of the Moycashel Cavalry Sworn.

Q. (By the Prisoners) Do you know Owen Carey ? And what is his General Character ?

A. I knew him formerly till within these five years and his Character then was very good and I never heard the Contrary till he was taken.

The Court has given Prisoners time till ten o'clock tomorrow morning to prepare their Written Defence.

PRISONERS DEFENCE

To the Honourable Court Martial now in Mullingar

We stand charged with Aiding and Assisting the Rebels by Words and otherwise . How has that been supported . Not the slightest Attempt of proving any single Act against either of us of Aiding or Assisting the Rebels but it has been proved by Lt. Daniel that we had been made prisoners by him at a Public House in the County of Meath and on his interrogation Prisoner Carey immediately informed him , which has during the trial proved to be true , that Prisoner Carey informed Lieut. Daniel that his Father -in-law had been taken ill and on hearing of him being in a dying situation he went immedi-

ately to see him and from the situation of Kildare and the upper part of the County Meath he brought Prisoner McManus to accompany him. On Lieut. Daniel asking for a Pass, Prisoner Carey immediately informed him that he was one of the Clara Yeomanry and he had a pass signed by Captain Armstrong which he admitted was not genuine. It has been proved by Ferraly Careys Father-in Law that McManus and Carey had come to Currina in the County Cavan and on being informed by him that his Father was better they then returned to Crossakiel on their way home. Has Lieut Daniel in any part of his evidence or by the Testimony of any of the witnesses he has produced been able to prove that we ever concealed ourselves, changed our names or did any single Act like men fleeing from Justice.

What does Robinson the Constable prove ? Does not he and Ginty's maid Mary Stevens admit that we wished to see him that day at Ginty's House . Has there been a single tittle of evidence been proved against us of Aiding and Assisting the Rebels in our Own Country where we were most likely to have influence. The only evidence produced against us is that barely of Words in a Strange Country and to a Set of Strangers and how has that been supported by the evidence of Mary Stevens and James Gilsenan. The most improbable, inconsistent and unlikely tale that was ever laid before a Court of Justice. That a Servant Maid in a Common Whiskey House upstairs over a Room where there were several Companies drinking, should put her ear to a hole on one of the Boards give an accurate Account of a Conversation between McManus one of the prisoners and James Gilsenan the witness wherein McManus asked Gilsenan about Pikes and Arms and were they up and that they ought to be in a Blaze in that Country. Is this Story likely or probable?. Certainly Lt.Daniel who has carried on the prosecution saw Clearly that this Witness alone would not gain Credit with any Court. The story in itself and her mode of hearing it is so exceedingly improbable and unlikely that it was necessary to have recourse to a mode of procuring Evidence not to be very much favoured in a Court of Justice.

Then the evidence of Gilsenan was resorted to. How has that been obtained? What credit can be given to anything sworn to by a man treated in the manner he has been?.What is Lieut.Daniel's own account of Gilsenan? That he was flogged and that he gave him some information, part before he was flogged and part after. What credit is due to a witness circumstanced as Gilsenan was? But let us for a moment see what the whole of the Conversation alleged to have been heard by Mary Stevens and partly confirmed by the testimony of Gilsenan. A room full of Strangers in a Whiskey House, half drunk, great Clamour and great Confusion and both admit that on Prisoner Carey's hearing any Conversation between Gilsenan and McManus, instead of encouraging immediately considered it idle and silly and desired McManus

not to be foolish . Did McManus persist ? No on the contrary he made use of an expression to Strangers that must break all degree of confidence between them. His answer was that his companion meaning Carey was an Orange Man. The whole of the Conversation ought to be taken together and if so Carey the Prisoner showed Disapprobation of it. If they went there on any settled deliberate Plan of inciting or encouraging Rebellion is it likely or natural to suppose that one of them would have treated the Conversation in the manner mentioned, both by Mary Stevens and James Gilsonan, namely that of calling it foolish. Is it more likely as one of the Prisoners called it foolish conversation, that it was merely a Conversation of Curiosity, as to the State of the Country and not a Conversation to encourage Rebellion? For had they gone and for that purpose they would have certainly joined in their opinion. Prisoner McManus reply was that Carey was an Orange Man.

Next in support of the Prosecution the Testimony of a man of the name of Dennis was resorted to which with humble Difference and great Respect is not evidence on this trial as it is said to have been a Conversation which happened immediately after the last Assizes of Phillipstown and must have been early in the month of April last past or six weeks before any Rebellion broke out in this Kingdom .And what was the Conversation related to by Dennis, was that McManus informed him there were Societies of United Irishmen formed in the Parish of Castletown to the number of 2,300. Did Dennis on giving his Testimony mention or insinuate that McManus had them or had the Command of them. (Certainly Not) but on Captain Moore's producing a letter to him, he then said McManus had them meaning thereby that McManus had command of them though it is a fact of notoriety and well known to one of this honourable Court that there were never 500 men fit to carry Arms in the Parish of Castletown . From Captain Moore producing a letter to Dennis the contents of which we cannot know but it is reasonable to presume there was a letter, wherein Dennis acknowledged his own guilt .

Upon the whole of the evidence as no single Act has been proved or any Attempt made of the kind, we humbly hope this honourable Court will weigh the tale in the Whiskey House improbable indeed to a very high degree and supported by the testimony of James Gilsonan obtained in a manner too shocking to observe further on . What has been the character of McManus by the Rev. Elrington ? He has known him for two years last past and that his character was unexceptional but that he heard since he was Apprehended that he was charged with being a leader of the United Irishmen but this he never heard till after he was made a prisoner and which he must have ? ...ever so Innocent from his being taken up as a United Irishman .

The Character of Carey by Michael Seery a Yeoman of the Moycashel Cav-

alry was also unexceptional and we humbly hope this honourable Court will also take into consideration the fatality by which we have been deprived of bringing forward evidence from the neighbourhood of Crossakiel and Oldcastle . We again hope that on mature consideration from the improbability of the story in the Whiskey House and the Mode of procuring the testimony of Gilsenan and from the Conduct of the Prisoner Carey on hearing any Conversation about the Rebellion it must create rational doubt in the minds of this honourable Court and induce them to lean on the side of Mercy and particularly so as no single act or word has been proved against them in the Country in which they were likely to have influence.

“The Court having duly considered the evidence for and against the Prisoners John McManus and Owen Carey together with their written defence are of the opinion that the Prisoner McManus is guilty of having aided and assisted by words and otherwise in the rebellion now existing in this Kingdom and do therefore sentence him to Transportation for Life beyond the seas and that the whole of his property shall be confiscated and the Court are further of the opinion that the Prisoner Owen Carey is not guilty of the charge alleged against him and do therefore acquit him.”

John Lee ,Northampton Fencs
Acting Judge Advocate

Francis Blake
Col North. Fencs
President

Approved
Charles Barnett Brig.General

APPENDIX I-TRIAL OF McMANUS & CAREY

July 9th 1798 the Court having met proceeded to to the trial of the

PRISONER

John McManus having being confined for having written a Treasonable Letter Dated Kilbeggan May the 2nd for the Purpose of Overturning his Majestys Crown and Dignity in this Realm of Ireland and for the Purpose of stirring up and Promoting the Rebellion that now Exists in the Kingdom .

Prisoner being Arraigned Pleded Not Guilty

A Letter Signed John McManus Dated Kilbeggan May 2nd 1798 was produced to **William Moore Assistant 2 nd General (?) who was Sworn.**

Q. Is that letter in the hand writing of the Prisoner John McManus.

A. I have seen the Prisoner write. It is his Hand writing.

Mr John Lillys Sworn and the Letter produced to him

Q. Is that Letter in the Hand writing of the Prisoner John McManus.

A. To the best of my knowledge it is.

Christopher Hartford Sworn

Q. Is that Letter in the Hand writing of the Prisoner John McManus .

A. To the best of my knowledge it is.

LETTER

Kilbeggan 2nd May 1798

Dear Citizen,

Conformable to the Information I received when I last had the pleasure of seeing you , Immediately on my return to the Country , I sent Instructions to the Respective Barony's to have their Numbers properly re-

turned , their Collections made ? and Appointed a Day for the County meeting accordingly (which was last Saturday) , when to my great Mortification I was totally Disappointed they not having come according to appointment . I cannot pretend to account in any manner for this timid Conduct on the part of the Delegates but surely there is nothing in my opinion that can Justify it . I was prepared to go up on Sunday as requested but considered it totally as I was destitute of any Returns , saving those of this Barony. I am certain that there must be a very curious Idea formed of this County from such an pardonable neglect but I also flatter myself that were Matters really known to our Friends no blame would be attached to me. From our first moment of receiving the System of Organisation in this Barony, we lost not a Moments time . The People are all well Prepared and in four hours we can bring to the field 3,400 men determined to Stand or fall in the Cause of their Country , all they want is a Knowledge of the Moment. I am Certain the good sense of our Friends (thro' the neglect and intimidation of the other Barony's) would not suffer such a Number of Brave Men to be Sacrificed and I hope still for the necessary Information .

From the variable Dispositions of the lower order of the People, I do think many of their Baronial Numbers excusable , it takes and requires great Patience as well as Perseverance to bring them to a proper sense of their Duty and I know the Exertions of some in particular has not been wanting . I have again sent word for our County Meeting to Assemble this week and inform me when the Delegates should be in town with proper Returns .

Yours most fraternally

John McManus

No. of Troops in this Barony
70 Northumberland Fencibles in this town,
40 Grange Yeomen Infantry, Tyrellspass,
35 do Cavalry, Moat

With a few more not mentioning

The fact is we are determined to put them down in a Moment or ten times their Number.

(My brother was in town all last Week and tells me he called different times and had not the Fortune to meet you within. I hope there will be no disappointment now -

Directed to Mr Pat Gallagher 124 Thomas Street, Dublin".

A doubt having arisen as to the legality of Proceeding on the Prisoner's Trial he being under Sentence of Transportation for Life, the Court was Cleared and it was decided that the Trial should Proceed .

Robert Walsh Esq. Sworn

Q. Of what Profession are you?

A. An Attorney.

Q. What is the usual Custom in Courts of Law? Can a Prisoner after Conviction and receiving Sentence be Tried on another Indictment?

A. He can Certainly.

The Prisoner being put upon his defence, submits to the mercy of the Court.

This Court having taken into consideration the evidence against the Prisoner John McManus are of the opinion that he wrote a treasonable letter dated Kilbeggan 2nd May 1798 for the purpose of overturning His Majesty's Crown and Dignity in this Realm of Ireland and of stirring up and promoting the Rebellion that now exists in this Kingdom and do Sentence him to suffer Death

Mr J.Lee, Northampton Fenc
Judge Advocate

Francis Blake
Col. Northums Fencs
President

Approved

Charles Barnett
Brig Gen

The Prisoner Owen Carey being Arraigned Pleaded Guilty.

The Prisoner begs leave to submit to the Mercy of the Court and to give as his Reason for forging the Pass that he was going to the County of Cavan to see his Father -in-Law, on his arriving at Fore he heard that the County of Cavan was disturbed, he drew the Pass and says he intended to give it to Captain Armstrong on his Return which intention he declared to his Companion John McManus.

The Pass is annexed by Order of the Court.

The Court having taken into Consideration the crime to which the Prisoner Owen Carey has pleaded guilty do sentence him to serve His Majesty for life as a Soldier beyond the Seas.

John Lee, Northampton Fencs
Acting Judge Advocate

Francis Blake
Col. North. Fencs
President

Approved Charles Barnett Brig.Gen.

At Half past 2 o'clock the Court adjourned until further orders.

APPENDIX J-THE TRIAL OF EDWARD REDDY

General Orders by Brigadier General Charles Barnett
Athlone July 5th 1798

Prisoner : Edward Reddy

Confined by order of Colonel Francis Blake

Charge: For being an abettor in the Rebellion now existing in this Kingdom by Conspiring to poison several soldiers quartered in the Town of Mullingar on Saturday the 9th June last.

The Prisoner Edward Reddy being arraigned pleaded Not Guilty.

Doctor Edward Naghten Sworn.

Q. Do you know the Prisoner Edward Reddy.

A. I do.

Q. Relate what conversation you had with the Prisoner on the 9th June last?

A. About 9 o'clock in the evening of the 9th June I was sitting in my shop in this town of Mullingar Edward Reddy (the Prisoner) came and devised to speak to me in private pointing to the Parlour Door. We went in and he said I want to ask you a question Doctor. What effect would Laudanum have if boiled in Liquor or mixed with Spirits if given or taken by soldiers?. My reply was You Rascal!Who was the diabolical villain who sent you with such a message to me? To which he made answer "Andrew Shaughnessy". Do you know that Villain has planned the taking of my Life and that I have a Rope about your Neck at Present ? And desired him to leave my house directly, on which he left the House.

Q. What Conversation passed between you and the Prisoner on the 10th June last?

A. On my telling some of my Friends the Conversation that had passed the Day before He asked was not Shaughnessy the greatest villain on earth? I answered I must put the Regiment upon their guard to take care of the men. O'Dear Doctor says he if you tell this I'll be Hanged. I answered by God I can't help that. I'll tell Doctor Carey.

Q. Did you conceive by the two Conversations that you had with the Prisoner that he and Andrew Shaughnessy had Conspired to Poison the soldiers quartered in Mullingar.?

A. I never formed a belief that the Prisoner previous to that was that kind of man but I believe that some Plot was laid and that the Prisoner was sent on that Message.

Q. Do you believe he would have been employed to carry such a Message had he not been in the confidence of Shaughnessy.

A. I can't form a belief.

Q. (By the Court) Was there any appearance of Guilt on Reddy when you said that you would put the Regiment on their Guard?

A. He appeared as pale as Paper and seemed frightened and dismayed.

Q.(By the Prisione) How long have you known me? What is my General Character?And do you believe me capable of conspiring the Death of any Man?

A. I have known him five or six years and looked upon him always as an industrious honest Man and a Man I never thought would have been guilty of conspiring against the Life of any Man.

Q. (By the Prisoner) Relate to the Court the Conversation you had with Andrew Shaughnessy on Friday the 8th of June last?

A. Edward Reddy came to me the next morning and asked me did I see Andrew Shaughnessy ? I told him I did and says to him, was he speaking to you about the matter that he was telling me? He answered he was. I asked him , who did he tell was in the Church Yard as he told me only Mr Rochfort He put his hand on his side and says he could not tell then but he would another time.

Q. (By the Prisoner) Was it from Friendship I went to you?

A. I believe it was.

Q. (By the Prisoner) Did I afterwards tell you who the Persons were that were conversing in the Church Yard.

A. No, you did not.

Q. (By the Prisoner) Did you desire me to inquire of Andrew Shaughnessy who those Persons were?

A. I believe I did.

Q. From the different conversations the Prisoner had with you and particularly the last, did you believe he was in the confidence of Andrew Shaughnessy?

A. I do not know bit I believe they Communicated together.

Q. (By the Prisoner) Was there anyone in the Shop with you when I brought the Message to you on the Saturday Morn?

A. I cannot tell.

Quarter Master John Harris of the Northumberland Fencibles Sworn

Q. Do you know the Prisoner?

A. I do.

Q. Were the men of the Regiment in the habit of drinking at his House?

A. I frequently saw the Men there drinking.

The Prosecution closed and the Prisoner was put upon his Defence.

Mr Thomas Browne Sworn.

Q. (By the Prisoner) What is my General Character?

A. I never heard in my Life anything to his Prejudice until now and I have known him for five or six years. I always had a good opinion of him.

Mr James O'Donnell Sworn.

Q. (By the Prisoner) How long do you know me? And what is my General Character.

A. I have known him for nine or ten years. I never heard anything against him till now but he always had a fair just Character.

The Prisoner in his Defence read a paper which is here Copied.

“Hearing that Colonel Blake and a Party of the Officers were at my house, inquiring for me, I happened not to be within at the time, soon after I came in my Wife told me that the Officers were looking for me. I made answer to her and said I am not afraid, I have done nothing amiss and accordingly followed them down to the lower part of the town and gave myself up. They asked me if I brought such a Message to Doctor Naghten? I did not hesitate a moment but acknowledged I did. They confined me immediately wherein I suffered severely both in Person and Property and my business totally vanished for which I paid a weighty Licence to the King. Were I to know the nature of the Message that I had the misfortune to take from Shaughnessy and a man that was the least of my acquaintance in the town of Mullingar I would be one of the first that would discover of him and will show hereafter Instead of Conspiring to hurt a Soldier, I will prove that I was the Soldiers friend, the detachment of the Northumberland Regiment whenever they came to town called at my place and I always was ready to change their Notes. If I had not the Change I searched the town to get them changed. I will also prove myself a Soldier and never retracted from that Principle or dishonoured the pair of Colours I now have. If Col. Blake would permit me I would advertise in the Public Papers or Hand Bills in Defence of my Character from the day I was born to the present day. I hope no party will change the noble mind and humane Principles of Colonel Blake and his officers from Administering Justice to the Innocent.”

The Court having duly considered the Evidence for and against the Prisoner Edward Reddy together with his written Defence are of the opinion that he is Guilty of being an Abettor in the Rebellion now existing in this Kingdom by Conspiring to poison several Soldiers and do sentence him to suffer Death but in consequence of the good character given of the Prisoner The Court do recommend the sentence be commuted to Transportation for Life.

John Lee, Northumberland Fencs.
Acting Judge Advocate

Francis Blake
Col. North. Fencs.
President

Agreed
Charles Barnett

In consequence of the Courts recommendation the sentence of Death passed on the Prisoner Edward Reddy is changed to that of Transportation for Life.

APPENDIX K

BISHOP PATRICK PLUNKETT

He was born in Kells in 1738 and appointed as Bishop of Meath in 1778. From 1780 he started visitations around the diocese which lasted up until the 1820's and he preached annually in each parish on various topics. For about 20 years he rode around on horseback preaching and carrying out his pastoral duties. He had spent many years in Paris in pre-Revolution times and hated the French Revolution. A devout Catholic it was to be expected that he would be against the Rebellion of 1798. He spoke out many times against the spirit of insurrection e.g. in Kilbeggan in 1791 he spoke against the "riotous disposition of some of the flock" and in 1795 he cautioned against Defenderism and in 1797 he complimented the people on the peace and subordination of the town. The pro-Government stance of Plunkett and many of the bishops while understandable was not always in line with the priests and their flock who sometimes did not appreciate his comments on the "credulity of the lower classes, the decay of Christian piety, and the prevalence of the impious principles that are disturbing a great part of the continent".



*Most Rev. Patrick Joseph
Plunkett, D.D., 1778-1827.*

VISITATIONS OF BISHOP PLUNKETT TO KILBEGGAN 1780-1805

<u>Year</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sermons</u> etc
1780	42	Sept 11	Visited Rahugh & Kilbeggan
1782	42	Sept 22	
1785	41	Aug 18	Rev. T. Dunne P.P.
1786	29	May 26	
1787	34	June 15	Repentance
1788	105	June 6	Perfection

			(Two chapels repaired / 6 schools)
1789	102	July 23	Repentance & Conversion
1790	57	July 4	Obligation of parents to instruct children
1791	34	July 4	Duties of Masters & Servants with remarks on Paschal duty & riotous disposition of people.
1792	49	July 5	
1793	32	Oct 10	
1795	41	Sept 15	Neglect of sacraments amongst those who think themselves of the better sort; rioting, quarrelling and cautions against Defenderism.
1796	60	June 30	Observations on the festival; Paschal Communion & clandestine marriages.
1797	54	Sept. 14	Neglect of sacraments, profane cursing & swearing inveighed against, compliments on the peace & subordination of the town & on the zeal displayed in forwarding the erection of a new chapel.
1798	56	Oct. 25	
1799	32	June 8	
1800	54	June 29	Guilty of the neglect of the Paschal duty aggravated by the circumstances of the time
1801	82	June 4	Festival of Corpus Christi, neglect of Paschal communion ; thieving & stealing.
1802	121	June 24	St John as a pattern of virtue, catechism
1804	109	Sept 9	
1805	112	Sept 25	Pilfering & thieving; Catholics guilty of such sins either know not the disposition requisite for the sacraments of Penance & Eucharist etc.

His visits continued up to 1822 and he died in 1827 at 89 years old.

APPENDIX L

JOHN WARNEFORD ARMSTRONG

John Warneford Armstrong of Ballycumber, Co Offaly was known as ‘Sheares’ Armstrong because of the major part he played in the conviction of John & Henry Sheares of Cork. In 1798 he was Captain in the King’s County Militia and based at Loughlinstown. Armstrong was said to be favourably disposed towards liberty from his student days at TCD. He occasionally visited the bookshop of Patrick Byrne of Grafton Street who was a United Irishman and Byrne became friendly with Armstrong in the expectation of winning him over to the cause. Byrne arranged a meeting between the Sheares Brothers and Armstrong at his shop on 10th May 1798. Armstrong confided in his friends Captain John Clibborn of Moate and Col. L’Estrange who were both in the King’s County Militia (It is amazing the number of participants in the trial who had connections with Westmeath / Offaly and relatively speaking were quite close to Kilbeggan including John Philpott Curran, the Attorney General John Toler the future Lord Norbury and Thomas Drought a witness for the defence). They encouraged him to proceed with the contact and obtain evidence against the brothers.

He went on to meet the brothers at their home in Baggot Street on several occasions and gained their confidence. He communicated the information back to his Westmeath friends Clibborn and L’Estrange and also to Lord Castlereagh who urged him to have dinner with the Sheares family on 20th May. It was the next day they were arrested having confided and trusted in Armstrong as an ally. The trial took place on Thursday, 12th July in the morning and went on all night until around eight in the morning of 13th July 1798. A brave defence was put forward by their counsel including Plunkett, Curran etc. but to no avail. The presence of the future Lord Norbury as Attorney General was not likely to help their case. Their faith and trust in Armstrong was badly misplaced and conviction was a certainty based on his evidence.

For his efforts Armstrong received a promotion, a commission of the peace, and he drew a pension of about £500 per year from the Government and by the time of his death in 1858 it cost them around £30,000. The trial established that the Sheares brothers might at the least have been imprudent in trusting someone on so little evidence but it also showed their integrity. They were barristers by profession and had a close relationship all their lives. They had spent time in France during the Revolutionary Period and were imbibed with the ideals of freedom. In August 1793 they both joined the United Irishmen together on the first step to their unfortunate deaths. Even in death they walked out on to the platform together inspiring many romantic and tragic tales about them to the detriment of the name of Armstrong

who for the rest of his life was described in a derogatory way as 'Sheares Armstrong'. However, Armstrong was presented by the King's County Militia with a testimonial engraved on a gold medal for his services to the state in the betrayal and prosecution of the two brothers.

APPENDIX M

HANDY FAMILY

John Wesley and his brother Charles were the founders of the religious movement of Methodism. Between 1747-89 Wesley visited Ireland on twenty one occasions. In 1748 he spent about a month in the midlands and much of that could be attributed to Samuel & Jonathan Handy of Coolalough House near Kilbeggan.

The first of the Handy family to come to Ireland was a lieutenant in the Cromwellian Army. He stayed on in Ireland and acquired an estate at Coolalough and Bracca in Ardnurcher, Horseleap. The family were major figures in the life of Kilbeggan and Horseleap in the 18th century. In 1747 Samuel Handy of Coolalough House was visiting his sister-in-law in Dublin. He was impressed with the seriousness of her spirit and the plainness of attire and he offered her financial help which was declined. She invited him to hear one of John Wesley's preachers in Dolphins Barn. He was sceptical especially when he found himself surrounded by poor mean looking people unlike his normal fellow church worshippers.

The preacher was Paul Greenwood of Haworth and he wore plain dark clothes. Handy was impressed with the power of his sermon, the prayers and the hymns and decided he wanted to hear more. He invited the preacher to breakfast and found out all he could about Methodism. He invited him back to Coolalough House and his home gradually became a centre of Methodist influence. Handy initially accompanied preachers to places like Tyrellspass, Phillipstown, Tullamore, Moate and Athlone and his influence became a tower of strength for Wesley and the Methodists. Quarterly meetings were held at Coolalough House for many years and later at Handy's home at Bracca Castle. Many were converted in the area although Kilbeggan was less influenced than some other surrounding towns like Tyrellspass.

On January, 15th 1748 Wesley wrote "God has begun great work here . The people of Tyrellspass were wicked to a proverb - swearers, drunkards, sabbath breakers, thievesfrom time immemorial. Now the scene is entirely changed - not an oath is heard or a drunkard seen among them " .. The following month they were only saved from a "popish mob" by the arrival of Samuel Handy with some Dragoons. When he came to Coolalough in May 1748 Ruth Handy was still in bed after the birth of a baby. In 1751 she had a baby who was called Samuel Wesley Handy and he was to play his part in 1798. The Handys were not well disposed towards the Catholics although they were in constant danger themselves e.g. in January 1765 a young man named Joseph Priestman got into his house and with a pistol threatened to murder Handy and his family and burn the house unless he was given 50

guineas. Handy eventually overpowered him and took the boy to Mullingar Jail.

In the period up to 1798 Samuel Wesley Handy , a 2nd Lieutenant in the Fartullagh Cavalry wrote regularly to Dublin regarding developments in his area. It was he that gave the list of leaders of the rebellion in a letter dated 15th May 1799 and in May 1798 he gave the names of possible United men to Secretary Cooke including Sir Duke Gifford who was said to have read a string of resolutions to a large body of men near the town of Kinnegad, Henry Higgins of the Fartullagh Corp. said to have acknowledged publicly that he was a United man and when he was acquitted bonfires were lit all over Westmeath for him and Hugh & Edward Shiel whom he claims were intimate with Lord Edward Fitzgerald and were constantly in his company 'walking arm and arm'. Certainly the family would not have been popular with Catholics as they were part of the yeomanry which attacked with great fervour during the 1798 rebellion. On 3rd January 1823 a notice appeared in the Westmeath Journal about an "alarming outrage" against William Henderson, Steward to Samuel Wesley Handy of Bracca Castle. Just like the murder of Samuel Robinson the attack was more related to contemporary events than 1798 but without doubt there would have been long memories and great hatred of the Handys from some sources in the area. The list of Magistrates and subscriber to the notice included Handy, Thomas Handy, John Middleton Berry, John Armstrong, Gustavus Rochfort etc. All families with connections to events in 1798.

APPENDIX N

TRIAL OF MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Proceedings of a General Court Martial held by order of Brigadier General Barnett at Mullingar which had adjourned to Tuesday July 10th 1798 for the Trial of all such Prisoners as shall be brought before him .

President Col.Francis Blake, North.Fencibles

Major Robert Anderson, North Fenc's Captain John Wood , North Fenc's Captain Isaac Du Bois do, Captain Henry Cole do, Captain Thomas Lyte do Captain Gustavus Rochfort, Moycashel Cav.

Lieutenant John Lee, Northampton Fencibles to Act as Judge Advocate.

The Court being Met and duly Sworn proceeded to the Trial of

PRISONER

Michael McDonagh Confined by Order of Brigadier General Barnett

CHARGE

That he on the morning of the 17th June last , a Rebellion the existing in the Kingdom did Assemble with a Number of Armed Men In Kilbeggan in the County of Westmeath to the number of at least one Thousand armed with Pikes , Muskets, and other offensive Weapons for the Purpose of overturning His Majesty,s Crown and Dignity in this Realm of Ireland and for the Purpose of his Arming a Company of his Majestys Northumberland Regiment of Fencibles then and there Quartered for the Protection of his Majestys peaceable and Loyal Subjects.

Prisoner Michael McDonagh being arraigned Pleaded Not Guilty

Darby Spelman Sworn

Q. Were you in Kilbeggan on Sunday 17th June last.

A. Yes Sir

Q. Did you see the Prisoner there?

A. I did.

Q. Did you see the Prisoner in Company with Mulhall's son that morning?

A. I did.

Q. Had he any Arms in his Hand?

A. He had a Stick but whether there were anything on it, I can't tell.

Q. Was there a Pistol presented at you by Mulhall or the Prisoner and for what purpose.

A. By Mulhall there was to force me with them to Assist them.

Q. Was there any Party of Rebels armed with Pikes and Pitchforks then near the town.

A. There was.

Q. Did the Prisoner appear to be Acting with the Rebels?

A. To the best of my knowledge he was .

Timothy Nowlan Sworn

Q. Were you in Kilbeggan on the Morning of 17th June last?

A. I was

Q. Did you see the prisoner there?

A. I did.

Q. Relate to the Court what happened you that morning?

A. I stood that morning at the Battery between 5 and 6 o'clock, we beat off the Rebels to the other side of the Bridge. I came from that to my own Door where Timothy Galvin, Assaulted me with his Pike. I levelled my Piece at him. He bid me "Fire you Dog". I did so and killed him. Michael McDonagh the Prisoner came to my Back with his Pike and Stabbed me, he got me down under him and thought to Pierce my Belly, which I Received in the Wrist and Groin. I was rescued from him by John Fuller who fired at him

and by Harry Graham.

Q. Were there many People in the Street whom you call Rebels that Morning?

A. More than I can number.

John Fuller Sworn

Q. Were you in Kilbeggan on the Morning of the 17th June last?

A. I was

Q. Did you see the Prisoner there in Company with other Rebels who attacked the Town of Kilbeggan that Morning?

A. I did. Nowlan shot Tim Galvin (one of the Rebels), McDonagh came behind Nowlan and thrust him with his Pike which threw him partly on his Face , after he fell he took him by the Breast and turned him, he gave him two Stabs with his Pike. I fired at the Prisoner and Retreated to the Battery . The Rebels were coming on me too fast.

Q. How near were you to the Prisoner and Nowlan when Nowlan was Stabbed?

A. I was about 150 yards distance at first and advanced to Mr Cuffe's door and then fired. They were at Harry Grahams door.

Q. Were you near enough to distinguish the Prisoner so that you can positively swear to him?

A. To the best of my knowledge between 40 and 50 yards.

Prosecution closed and Prisoner put on his Defence. Calls no Evidence but Submits to the Mercy of the Court.

The Court having taken into consideration the Evidence against the Prisoner Michael McDonagh are of the opinion that he is guilty of the charge adduced against him and do Sentence him to suffer Death.

John Lee, Northampton Fencs
Acting Judge Advocate

Francis Blake
Col.North Fenc's
President

Approved
Charles Barnett Brig.Gen.

PRISONER

Owen Carey confined for having forged a Pass in the name of Andrew Armstrong Dated the 2nd June 1798 for the Purpose of enabling him to Escape an Arrest which he was apprehensive off on account of his being charged with being an United Irishman and by such Escape Evading Justice of his Country and for uttering said Pass knowing it to be forged .

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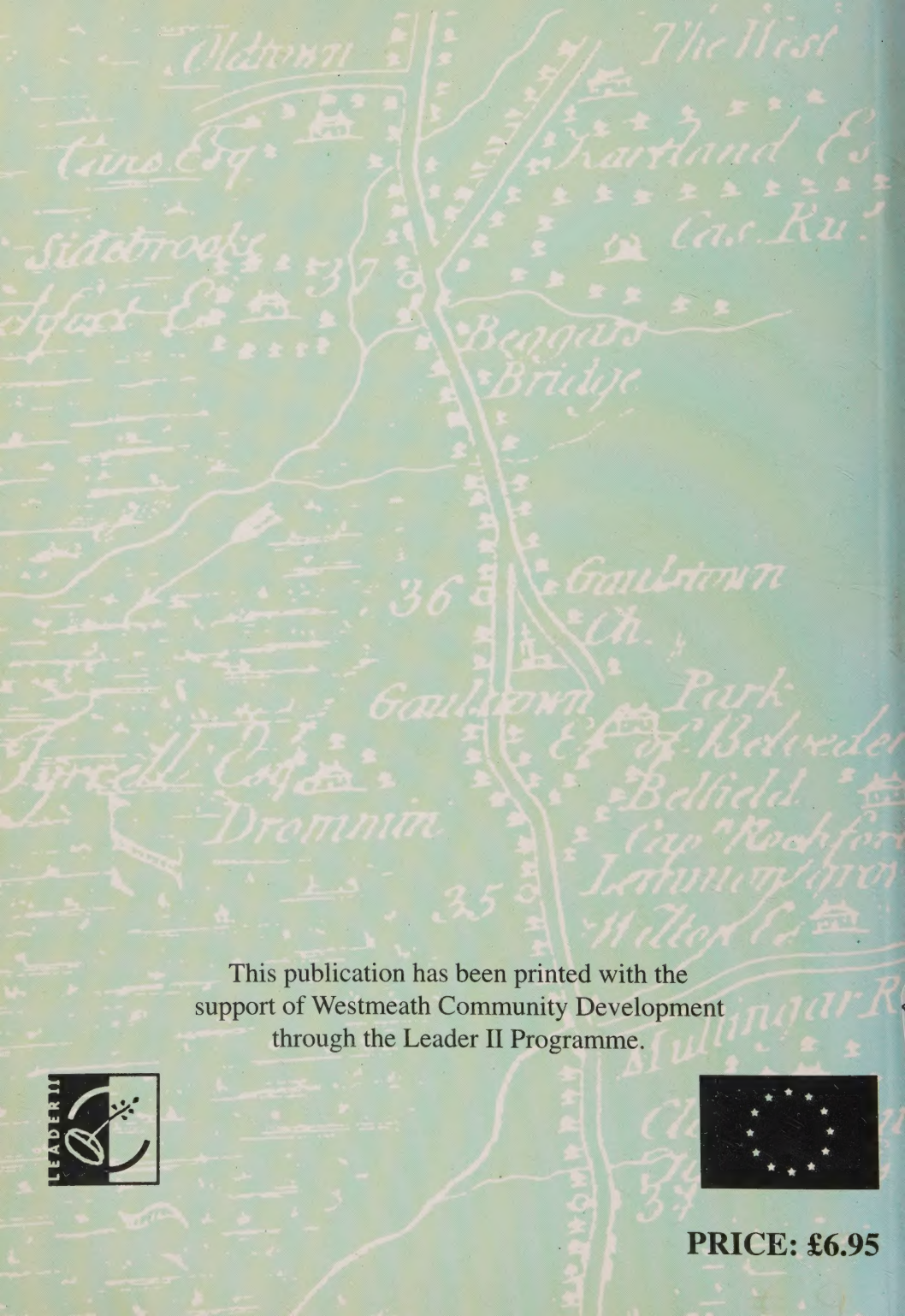
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