

# Wicklow Gaol Comrades:

A Civil War Autograph Book

## Part one

First published in 2023 by Wicklow County Council  
County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town A67 FW96

© Wicklow County Council  
© Wexford County Council

Author: Aaron Ó Maonaigh

Design: A Worthy Cause

Editor: Ciarán Deane

Project co-ordinators: Catherine Wright, Wicklow County Archives; Gráinne Doran,  
Wexford County Archive

**ISBN** 978-0-9533904-8-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, for whatever purpose, without the prior written permission of the publisher, or a licence permitting restricted copying in Ireland issued by the Irish Copyright Licensing Agency, 63 Patrick Street, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

To the best of the publisher's knowledge, information in this book was correct at the time of going to press. No responsibility can be taken for any errors.

### **Photograph Acknowledgements**

*Askamore Parish Journal*, Marcella Byrne, John Dundon Jnr, Michael Fitzpatrick Collection, Richard Fitzpatrick Collection, Nicholas Furlong (Alice Kinsella) Collection, Gregan family, Éilis Madden, Military Archives, National Library of Ireland, Wexford County Archive, Wicklow County Archives Service, *Wicklow People*, Catherine Wright, Gráinne Doran.

The publisher has made every effort to contact all copyright holders, but if any have been overlooked, we will be pleased to make any necessary arrangements.

Any links or references to external websites or third-party publications should not be construed as an endorsement by Wicklow County Council or Wexford County Council of the content or views of these websites or publications.



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,  
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán  
Department of Tourism, Culture,  
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



# CONTENTS

Foreword .....	4
Acknowledgements .....	6
The Wicklow Gaol Autograph Book .....	7
Wicklow Gaol and the Civil War .....	10

## Wexford Prisoners

Thomas Dugdale (Gorey) .....	22
John Dundon (Ballindaggin) .....	26
Patrick Fitzpatrick (Kiltealy) .....	32
Thomas Fleming (Monaseed) .....	36
(Nicholas) Joseph Gibbons (Enniscorthy) .....	40
Patrick Gibbons (Enniscorthy) .....	44
Philip Lennon, Commandant (New Ross) .....	50
Patrick Murphy (Brideswell) .....	56
John (Seán) O’Neill (Enniscorthy) .....	60
Michael ‘Mick’ Sinnott (Davidstown) .....	62
James Walsh (Enniscorthy) .....	66

## Wicklow Prisoners

James Brennan (Carnew) .....	72
Patrick Conway (Wicklow) .....	76
Michael Gregan (Carnew) .....	80
Robert Keogh (Eadestown) .....	86
Edward (Eamon) Pownall (Arklow) .....	88

Carlow Prisoners .....	92
Kildare, Dublin, Westmeath Prisoners .....	102

Select Bibliography .....	108
---------------------------	-----

## FOREWORD

The **Decade of Centenaries** commemoration programme (1912-23) has especially placed archival collections – from both local and national repositories – at the forefront of our understanding of the revolutionary period and in providing a fresh perspective on past events. Wexford Libraries and Archives have delivered on an ambitious commemorative programme each year – including talks, lectures, exhibitions, publications, community events, workshops and historical walking tours. The council's archive service holds an extensive range of primary source materials for the period, many of which have been catalogued, digitised and made available online to enhance user access.

*Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book* is a collaborative project between the archive services of Wexford and Wicklow county councils. It offers a fascinating insight into the stark reality of incarceration in Wicklow Gaol in 1923, while at the same time humanising the men in their portrayal of their concerns, hopes and ideals. Aaron Ó Maonaigh's comprehensive research and compilation of

biographies on each of the men featured in the autograph book is an invaluable tribute to them – some of whom might otherwise have gone unrecorded in mainstream sources. The accompanying exhibition will particularly commemorate the eleven men from County Wexford and the five men from County Wicklow who are signatories in the book. Wexford County Council, in conjunction with Wicklow County Council is delighted to bring this important record from the Civil War period into the public domain.



**Cllr George Lawlor**  
*Cathaoirleach*  
*Wexford County Council*  
*April 2023*



**Tom Enright**  
*Chief Executive*  
*Wexford County Council*  
*April 2023*



The **Wicklow Decade of Centenaries Programme** supports the development of initiatives at county and community level to re-examine and commemorate significant events, individuals and groups during the revolutionary years (1913-23) in County Wicklow. As this decade of commemoration draws to a close, it gives us great pleasure to introduce this publication, *Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book*. A collaboration between the local authority archive services of County Wicklow and County Wexford, this is a significant project which tells the stories of the men held in Wicklow Gaol in 1923 during the Civil War.

The project is inspired by an archival item, a prisoners' autograph book, demonstrating the key role of archives in reassessing and understanding this pivotal period in our history. This project also highlights the central role played by local authority archives in the study and commemoration of this important decade at both local and national level. We hope readers will enjoy this vibrant and colourful publication, which beautifully evokes the stories

of the prisoners listed in the autograph book. Containing rhymes, messages, sketches and cartoons, it recalls their humanity, courage and humour in the grim surroundings of Wicklow Gaol, where they faced an uncertain future. We commend the archivists of Wicklow and Wexford County Councils for this excellent project and congratulate the author Aaron Ó Maonaigh for his thoughtful and detailed research and writing.



**Cllr Tommy Annesley**  
*Cathaoirleach*  
*Wicklow County Council*  
*April 2023*



**Emer O'Gorman**  
*Chief Executive*  
*Wicklow County Council*  
*April 2023*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been completed were it not for the wonderful support of the staff of Wexford and Wicklow County Councils. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Gráinne Doran of Wexford County Archive, and Catherine Wright of Wicklow County Archives for their unwavering support. It has been my pleasure to work with editor Ciarán Deane in bringing this project to fruition. I am indebted to the staff of Carlow Library, Kildare Libraries Service, the National Library of Ireland, and University College Dublin Archives. Special thanks is due to the staff of Military Archives, in particular Commandant Daniel Ayiotis, Sergeant Matthew Weafer, Lisa Dolan, Noelle Grothier and Sam McGrath who never hesitated to answer any query, nor once complained when I ordered a mountain of records! The help, guidance, and patience of my friends and fellow historians was an invaluable resource to draw upon over the course of this project. The following people helped in many ways, large and small, and often at a moment's notice: James Brady, Barry Brennan, Des Dalton, John Dorney, John Dundon, James Durney, Liz Gillis, the Very

Reverend James Hammel, Shay Kinsella, Barry Lacey, Ida Milne, William Murphy, Christopher Power, Dominic Price, Kerron Ó Luain, Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, and Gerard Shannon. This project was greatly enhanced by the many families who selflessly shared their time, stories, and family artefacts with me. To them, I am immensely grateful. I will forever be indebted to my grandfather Frank who instilled in me a love of history from a very young age, sharing as he did, his weathered copies of the *Capuchin Annual* and the stories of his own father's part in the Irish Revolution. To my parents Gearóid and Esther, and my siblings Nicola, Gerard, and Conor for all their love and encouragement. To my in-laws, the Brogans of Enniscorthy, who have always made me welcome in my home from home. Loch Garman abú! Mo bhean chéile Sarah, agus mo bheirt mhac Malachí agus Odhrán, naoi gcéad míle buíochas ó cheartlár mo chroí.



Aaron Ó Maonaigh  
*Cluain Dolcáin/Inis Corthaidh*

## THE WICKLOW GAOL AUTOGRAPH BOOK

Autograph books were very common in Ireland in the early twentieth century. People used them to collect autographs of family and friends and at social groupings. Because they were cheap and portable, they are perhaps the most plentiful of surviving examples of material culture from the Irish Revolution. Throughout the revolutionary period, Republican prisoners used autograph books to gather the signatures and details of their fellow internees and to record in word and image their experiences of prison life. These books recording various terms of imprisonment, ranging from the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence to the Civil War, are held in repositories around the country. Among the many autograph books held by the National Library is the aptly titled 'Book of Cells' – a pun on the Book of Kells – a jail notebook compiled in Reading Gaol after the 1916 Easter Rising by J. J. O'Connell (Irish



Volunteers, Chief of Inspection).<sup>1</sup> It contains verses and contributions from notable personalities such as Ernest Blythe, Arthur Griffith, Terence MacSwiney and others. Another significant example is the 'Book of Ballykinlar', a mammoth album, composed at the eponymous Co. Down internment camp during the War of Independence and containing the signatures of over a thousand prisoners. Beautifully illustrated, the Ballykinlar album has a page devoted to each of the camp's huts, with each page ornamented with a border of Celtic illuminated work by Micheál Ó Riada of Killarney, Co. Kerry.<sup>2</sup> Following the release of the Teachtaí Dála who had been interned at the camp, the book was presented at a meeting of Dáil Éireann held at the Mansion House, Dublin on 12 August 1921 where it was signed by luminaries of the revolutionary period such as Michael Collins, Éamon de Valera and Eoin MacNeill. The popularity of autograph books as a form of revolutionary material culture reached its peak during the 1916–23 period. Thereafter, their use sharply declined.

The Wicklow Gaol autograph book can be traced to Patrick Fitzpatrick, a native of Kiltlealy and member of the North Wexford IRA's flying column (see p. 30). It is

unique in that it is the sole surviving Civil War autograph book from Wicklow Gaol currently in public ownership (part of Wexford County Archive's Civil War collection). It offers fascinating insight into the Civil War and adds another layer of material for relatives and researchers alike to understand the experiences of the conflict's internees. It contains a range of anecdotes, seanfhocail (Irish proverbs), poems and contemporary political statements. Quotes from Patrick Pearse are recorded alongside those of the United States president Abraham Lincoln. It is illustrated throughout with drawings and watercolours of local scenes, including the jail itself and the prisoners that inhabited it. Of note are the contributions of John Dundon, whose entries recreate the intricate aesthetics of the Irish Cultural Revival. His elaborate watercolour and pen drawings include representations of nationalist motifs such as the harp emblem of the Society of the United Irishmen, demonstrating a historical consciousness and sense of continuity between various forms of Irish nationalist resistance. The influence of the Irish cultural revival can be seen in quotations from the works of poets Thomas Moore and 'Speranza' (Lady Jane Wilde). There are also messages of defiance. Some are combative,

1 Prison album, 'Book of Cells' (National Library of Ireland [NLI], J. J. O'Connell papers, MS 19,924).

2 Francis O'Duffy (Proinsias Ó Dubhthaigh), statement (Irish Military Archives [IMA], Bureau of Military History Witness Statement [BMH WS] 665 (3)).

such as the entry by Michael Teehan, of Westmeath, ‘They have tried to break our spirit but they’ll find it was in vain, for as soon as we are freemen, we’ll prepare to strike again’, others are humorous, such as the references to the jail as a ‘seaside resort’. One drawing illustrates an attempt by prisoners to escape from the prison.

Prison life was dull, and for many prisoners, autograph books offered a way to pass the time and break the monotony. Light-hearted verses are recorded alongside more solemn notes. Fallen comrades are remembered, such as IRA Chief of Staff Liam Lynch and Harry Boland, and these are mirrored in the graffiti which adorns the prison walls. Among those remembered are James Parle, John Creane, and Patrick Hogan, three anti-Treaty prisoners who were executed at Wexford Gaol in March 1923. Drawings and etchings also reveal something of the background of their authors, such as the nautical star, inscribed on the cell wall of Patrick Conway, a sailor from Wicklow. Elsewhere, religious or spiritual motifs demonstrate the relationship between Roman Catholicism and Irish separatist politics.

What emerges from this book is the strength of the bonds formed between the prisoners during their internment. Despite the grim living conditions and the

tedium of prison life, the prisoners remained defiant, their camaraderie unbroken. This autograph book recorded their comradeship and in doing so strengthened it.

## A guide for the reader

For this publication, every effort has been made to accurately identify each prisoner in the Wicklow Gaol autograph book and to reproduce and transcribe select entries of the Wicklow and Wexford prisoners. It has not been possible in every case. The absence of extant prisoner records for Wicklow Gaol has made the task all the more difficult. Where archaic or regional terms are used, a footnote clarifies the meaning. Some contributors wrote their names in Irish. Those names more commonly known by the anglicised version have been re-translated accordingly. Irish entries, some of which include the sean chló (old script), as well as regional and archaic terms and phrasing, have been faithfully translated in full by the author with the invaluable help of Dr Kerron Ó Luain.

**Aaron Ó Maonaigh**

*Cluain Dolcáin/Inis Corthaidh, Aibreán 2023*

## WICKLOW GAOL AND THE CIVIL WAR

Over the course of the Irish Civil War (1922–23), more than 15,000 military prisoners were incarcerated in the Irish Free State.<sup>1</sup> These men and women were held in a variety of locations, ranging from purpose-built internment camps, such as those at the Curragh, Co. Kildare, to conventional prisons and local barracks. Conditions were often poor, and as the number of political prisoners accumulated, dangerously overcrowded.<sup>2</sup> The growing number of ‘military captives’ — as the Free State administration termed Civil War internees — illustrated both the ruthlessness of the fledgling state’s authority and the increasing futility of the anti-Treaty Republican campaign.<sup>3</sup> At least 780 prisoners from the three counties of Carlow (181, including 6 women), Wexford (422,

including 15 women) and Wicklow (177, including 2 women) were interned during the war, a significantly high number given the relatively low intensity of the conflict in those counties.<sup>4</sup> The majority of those arrested in the southeast were interned locally at various institutions in their respective counties.<sup>5</sup> The period of time individual prisoners spent at these local institutions varied; however, by January 1923, the greater number of men had been transferred to the recently opened internment camps at the Curragh.

Wicklow Gaol was built in the late eighteenth century on the site of a previous gaol dating to the early part of the century.<sup>6</sup> It was used to house rebel prisoners during the 1798 Rebellion, many of whom were executed at the

- 1 William Murphy, ‘Internment during the Civil War’ in John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), p. 739.
- 2 James Durney, ‘The Curragh internees, 1921–24: from defiance to defeat’, *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society*, 20, part 2 (2010–2011), p. 17.
- 3 The term ‘military captive’, coined by Governor Páidín O’Keeffe and used in place of political prisoner, was a source of some pride to Cumann na mBan activists such as Síghle Humphries. Síghle Humphries, Civil War memoir, c. 1931 (University College Dublin Archives [UCDA], Síghle Humphries papers, P106/979 (1)).
- 4 *Éire: the Irish Nation*, 21 Apr. 1923; Information kindly supplied from the Civil War Prisoners’ collection (IMA, CW/P) database by Lisa Dolan, archivist at Irish Military Archives.
- 5 For Wicklow prisoners interned outside the county, see List of the prisoners from Co. Wicklow who were imprisoned during the Civil War [c. 1923] (NLI, Dulcibella Barton papers, MS 8786/4/35).
- 6 Wicklow Borough Corporation Minute Books, 25 June 1716; Wicklow County Archives [WCA], WLAA/WBC/M/1).

nearby Gallows Lane.<sup>7</sup> Between 1820 and 1843, the prison underwent significant expansion. Cells were fitted with gas lighting and heating apparatuses, yet bathing arrangements remained primitive.<sup>8</sup> It lay dormant for much of the early twentieth century, but was reopened in 1918 to cope with the ever-increasing number of political prisoners associated with the revolutionary events of that period.<sup>9</sup> During the War of Independence (1919–21), it was briefly occupied by troops from the Cheshire and Lancashire regiments of the British Army who used it as their headquarters.<sup>10</sup> In February 1922, as the fallout from the Anglo-Irish Treaty began to splinter the political and military wings of the Irish nationalist movement, it was briefly occupied by the IRA, who hoisted the tricolour over the building.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, the building came under the aegis of the Department of Defence of the Provisional Government. With the state

on the brink of civil war, the nascent government set about reappointing the crumbling Georgian structure as a military prison.



Cheshire Regiment graffiti at Wicklow Gaol — © Wicklow County Council

- 
- 7 Stan J. O'Reilly, 'Tales from Wicklow Gaol: murder, confinement, and escape, 1702–1866', *Journal of the Wicklow Historical Society: Irisleabhar na Cumann Seanda Chill Mhantáin*, 3:6 (June 2007), p. 35.
- 8 *Appendix to fifty-fourth report of the Inspectors-General on the prisons of Ireland, 1875, part ii: separate reports on county and city gaols and bridewells* [Cmd. 14971.1] (London, 1876), p. 366.
- 9 Andrew Kavanagh, statement (IMA, BMH WS 1,471 (5)); Matthew J. Kavanagh, 'Wicklow – 1920', *Capuchin Annual 1970* (Dublin), p. 591.
- 10 John Finlay, *Footsteps through Wicklow's past: a history of Wicklow town and its environs from the earliest times to the end of the Civil War and beyond* (Wicklow, 2013), pp 86–7; John Goodman, 'The Cheshire Regiment in Wicklow during the War of Independence' in Ciarán Deane (ed.), *Wicklow and the War of Independence* (Wicklow, 2021), pp 191–202.
- 11 *Irish Independent*, 8 Feb. 1922; *Wicklow People*, 11 Feb. 1922.



On 11 May 1922, three days prior to the arrival of the first group of prisoners, tragedy struck when Private Nicholas Doyle, of Milltown, Co. Dublin, was mortally wounded at the jail.<sup>12</sup> Doyle had been attempting to enter through the front gate while Private Bentley, a fellow sentry, was trying to open the gate from the inside. Bentley's rifle fell and discharged a shot that struck Doyle in the head.<sup>13</sup> He was transported to St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin, where he succumbed to his wounds three days later.<sup>14</sup>

According to the *Leinster Leader*, the first ninety prisoners were conveyed by lorries from Carlow to Wicklow Gaol, where, the correspondent cheerily remarked, they could have 'the benefit of both sea and mountain breezes'.<sup>15</sup> While its prisoners would come to refer to the jail as their 'seaside resort', conditions within were far from idyllic.

Minister for Economic Affairs Kevin O'Higgins

summarised the precarious nature of the new administration thus: 'The Provisional Government was simply eight young men in the City Hall standing amidst the ruins of one administration, with the foundations of another not yet laid, and with wild men screaming through the keyhole.'<sup>16</sup> The security of Wicklow Gaol and the humane treatment of the prisoners were secondary concerns for the Provisional Government, which was preoccupied with fighting a war and less than sympathetic to the plight of its 'captives'. How to establish a reliable and extensive prison system was a problem that plagued the civil and military administration of the Free State from the outset of the conflict. As the war progressed, complaints about overcrowding in prisons and the deaths of several prisoners at the hands of those responsible for their welfare became a regular feature of Republican propaganda.<sup>17</sup> Unlike at other regional prisons,

12 *Wicklow People*, 30 May 1922; James Langton, *The forgotten fallen: National Army soldiers killed in action during the Civil War* (3 vols, Dublin, 2019) i, p. 333.

13 Nicholas Doyle, Military Service Pension Application [MSPA] (IMA, Military Service Pensions Collection [MSPC], W/2D/327).

14 Death of Nicholas Doyle in 1922 (Irish Civil Registration Index [ICRI], General Records Office, SR District/Reg. Area - Dublin South, Group Registration ID: 3405294, entry no. 468).

15 *Leinster Leader*, 20 May 1922.

16 Kevin O'Higgins, 'Three years hard labour': an address delivered to the Irish Society of Oxford University 31 October 1924 (NLI, Erskine Childers papers, MS 48,092/1).

17 Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 2004), p. 138.



no executions took place at Wicklow Gaol during the Civil War,<sup>18</sup> however, contemporary reports of the living conditions in the jail reveal a harrowing picture of day-to-day life for the inmates. The poor state of the prison was first raised in the Dáil in July 1923 by Mr James Everett, Labour TD for Kildare-Wicklow, by which time, numerous prisoners had already passed through the gates (and the walls). This was the second time that Everett had spoken in the Dáil on issues relating to Wicklow prisoners, having unsuccessfully appealed for the release of Robert Keogh, a native of Stratford-on-Slaney, Co. Wicklow, whom Everett alleged had been assaulted by National Army troops and kept in a cattle wagon prior to his transfer to Wicklow Gaol.<sup>19</sup> Everett's second contribution provoked a heated parliamentary debate when he alleged that the County Council's sanitation officer had been denied entry by military authorities while attempting to assess the jail's conditions and the wellbeing of the internees. 'The windows and doors are broken, so what must the inside be like?' queried Everett. The prisoners were, he claimed, 'confined, three in each cell', while only 17 out of the 103 men had

mattresses, the remainder 'sleeping on the bare floor, and it is only within the last week that some straw has been brought into the prison'.<sup>20</sup> The jail lacked the most basic of hygiene requirements, including a sufficient supply of clean water and adequate lavatory accommodations, and this led to widespread ill-health in the prison population: 'Out of 103 prisoners one is in hospital suffering from pneumonia, fourteen are ill in bed; twenty-four are ill, but not in bed, and about thirty are generally unwell', Everett reported, and yet despite several appeals by the commandant of the prisoners to the governor seeking to remedy their neglect, no reply was received. Everett also viewed the matter as a public health concern, and he appealed to the government on the grounds that conditions at Wicklow Gaol posed a significant risk not only to the physical well-being of the townspeople of Wicklow, but also to the economy of the popular seaside destination. 'Being a seaside resort, the people are dependent on the holiday makers who come to Wicklow. As this is very warm weather, and such a number of prisoners are confined, the matter is a very serious one,' he continued. Calling for a government inquiry into the matter,

---

18 Wicklow native and anti-Treaty publicity officer Erskine Childers was briefly interned at Wicklow Gaol before being removed to Dublin, where he was executed at Beggars Bush barracks on 24 November 1922.

19 *Dáil Éireann debates* [written answers] - a County Wicklow arrest, 9 May 1923, vol. 3 no. 11; Register of parcels received by prisoners (IMA, CW/P/08/13).

20 *Dáil Éireann debates* - Adjournment of the Dáil - sanitary conditions of jails and barracks in which prisoners are detained, 3 July 1923, vol. 4 no. 1.

he demanded that the grievances raised be remedied ‘not alone in the interests of the prisoners, but in the interests of the civil population’.<sup>21</sup> Fellow Labour TD Richard Corish drew attention to his native Wexford where prisoners and soldiers shared accommodation at local barracks. ‘Some time ago’, Corish explained, ‘the medical officer attached to the Wexford unit [of the National Army] resigned because some of his representations in connection with this matter were not listened to, and the sanitary arrangements were not, according to what he thought, in the interests of public health’.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, substandard conditions and the ill-treatment of prisoners at Wexford Barracks appear to have been a longstanding complaint. Contemporary news reports also indicate that these incidents were neither isolated nor confined to the southeast.<sup>23</sup> Similar requests by Dublin Corporation, for example, were denied under the Public Safety Act of 1923, despite the Corporation urging that the Lord Mayor, the Medical Officer and the chairman of the Public Health Committee should be allowed to visit

the county’s prisons.<sup>24</sup>

General Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the National Army, attempted to explain away some of the concerns raised in the Dáil. While conceding that the government was aware of the unsatisfactory conditions at Wicklow, he attributed the shortage of adequate accommodation to the burgeoning prisoner population. The military authorities, he said, ‘did not propose to continue it as a prison’ and ‘conditions there are kept under close observation, and it is anticipated it will be cleared shortly’.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, he sought to deflect the blame onto the prisoners themselves: ‘If there are any places in which prisoners are housed in anything like unsuitable conditions it is principally as a result of the shortage of accommodation produced by the destruction carried out by the prisoners themselves in other places’, he claimed.<sup>26</sup> He also referred to a favourable assessment of general prison conditions from the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had recently visited

---

21 *Leinster Leader*, 7 July 1923.

22 *Dáil Éireann debates* - Adjournment of the Dáil - sanitary conditions of jails and barracks in which prisoners are detained, 3 July 1923, vol. 4 no. 1.

23 *Poblacht na hÉireann* [Wexford edn.], 26 Aug. 1922; *Free Press*, 9 Sept. 1922.

24 Marie O’Neill, ‘Dublin Corporation in the troubled times 1914–1924’, *Dublin Historical Record*, 47:1, Diamond Jubilee Issue (Spring, 1994), pp 56–70 (68).

25 *Dáil Éireann debates* - Adjournment of the Dáil - sanitary conditions of jails and barracks in which prisoners are detained, 3 July 1923, vol. 4 no. 1.

26 *Ibid.*

a number of prisons and internment camps across the country.<sup>27</sup> He quoted from a letter allegedly written to the authorities by a prisoner at Tralee Jail in Co. Kerry, which stated: 'This is a fine healthy place. I was never in so good a form before'.<sup>28</sup> This was sharply rebuked by Everett, who replied 'he did not write from Wicklow!' As the Dáil adjourned, Mulcahy was eventually forced to pledge that 'any matter which is wrong with Wicklow Jail is fully under notice and is getting attention'.<sup>29</sup>

The allegations raised in the Dáil by Deputy Everett were discussed during a meeting of Wicklow Urban District Council in early July 1923, at which a letter from the sanitation officer was read to the councillors containing the complaint that he was 'refused admission [to Wicklow Gaol] by the Commandant, who stated that he could not admit me without instructions from his superior officer'.<sup>30</sup> The Chairman of the Council was greatly perturbed by the

situation, telling his fellow councillors that 'the place was already condemned as uninhabitable.' Echoing Deputy Everett's concerns for public health and well-being, he added, according to a report in the *Wicklow People*, that 'the council was responsible for the health of the town, and this was not a very good advertisement, to have a jail full of men, fifty-four ... on the sick list'.<sup>31</sup> In closing the meeting, a resolution was passed recommending that the issue be brought to the attention of the military authorities with a formal complaint.

Wicklow Gaol's state of deterioration was further evidenced by the number of dramatic escapes. In the early hours of 30 July 1922, nine prisoners, drawn mostly from the Arklow and Aughrim areas, using cooking utensils from the jail's kitchen, burrowed their way through the recreation yard's crumbling stonework, creating a small crawl space opening onto Summerhill. Unfortunately for

---

27 *Freeman's Journal*, 4 July 1923.

28 *Dáil Éireann debates* - Adjournment of the Dáil - sanitary conditions of jails and barracks in which prisoners are detained, 3 July 1923, vol. 4 no. 1. For further evidence of questionable prisoner testimony regarding the conditions within the Free State penal system, see 'Treatment of Civil War prisoners in the Free State' (National Archives of Ireland [NAI], TSCH/3/S1369/3).

29 *Dáil Éireann debates* - Adjournment of the Dáil - sanitary conditions of jails and barracks in which prisoners are detained, 3 July 1923, vol. 4 no. 1.

30 *Wicklow People*, 7 July 1923.

31 *Ibid.*

the men, they were caught in the act by members of the public who duly alerted the guard.<sup>32</sup> Undeterred by the fate of their colleagues, five Republican prisoners from the Arklow and north Wexford areas, who had been diagnosed ill and removed to a local hospital, escaped from there in the same week. Among the escapees was Thomas Dwyer of Enniscorthy, a noted Wexford Republican who had already escaped the previous month from a hospital in Wexford prior to his recapture and detention at Wicklow.<sup>33</sup>

On 30 August 1922, the *Evening Herald* reported that National Army troops patrolling in the Gorey area arrested three men, one of whom, John Dunne of Ballywilliam, Co. Wexford, was an escaped prisoner from Wicklow Gaol.<sup>34</sup> On another occasion, in late 1922, during a visit to Wicklow Gaol to see her brother, Margaret Fitzpatrick managed to successfully smuggle some files and saws into the prison in a parcel; however, by the time of her visit, the intended recipient, Patrick Fitzpatrick (the owner of the Wicklow

Gaol autograph book), had already been transferred to Wexford.<sup>35</sup> On 21 February 1923, seven prisoners from the North Wexford Brigade IRA escaped by using bedding to descend from their cells into the exercise yard, where they succeeded in knocking a hole in the external wall,<sup>36</sup> through which they exited into a laneway. However, for one of the escapees, Michael Gregan (page 72) of Carnew, Co. Wicklow, freedom was short-lived. He was recaptured three months later at a farmhouse near Castlewhite, Co. Wexford, whereupon he was returned to Wicklow Gaol.<sup>37</sup>

Within a fortnight of Deputy Everett's protest against the conditions at Wicklow Gaol, 107 prisoners were transferred from Wicklow to the internment camps at the Curragh, Co. Kildare. Only a handful remained, including Michael Gregan. On the morning of 23 July 1923, Gregan made another dash for freedom with four other prisoners. Between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m., at the changing of the guard, a sympathetic sentry gained possession of a master key for the cells and released

---

32 *Wicklow News-Letter*, 5 Aug. 1922.

33 *Wicklow People*, 5 Aug. 1922.

34 *Evening Herald*, 30 Aug. 1922.

35 Mrs Margaret Maher (née Fitzpatrick) sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee, 4 July 1940 in Margaret Maher (née Fitzpatrick), MSPA (IMA, MSPC, MSP/34/REF/45284 (20)).

36 *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Feb. 1923.

37 Operations report, Carlow District [Dublin Command], 22 May 1923 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/09)

the remaining prisoners.<sup>38</sup> Carrying with them a rifle and fifty rounds, the men escaped through the same hole in the outer wall made during their previous attempt. The final escape from the jail occurred on 7 August, when two men from Tinahely, Noctor and Lanavan, who had been in custody on several charges of armed robbery,<sup>39</sup> took advantage of the poorly repaired wall to escape through it when they noticed a sentry being distracted by another prisoner.<sup>40</sup>

Within a week of the Tinahely men's escape, the two remaining political prisoners were transferred to Dublin.<sup>41</sup> The multiple escapes were a major source of embarrassment for the authorities. It was no longer believed that Wicklow Gaol could hold its internees. With the Civil War over and law and order restored, the number of internees decreased dramatically. The impetus for maintaining an extensive regional prison system no longer existed. The building's use as an active military jail ceased in 1924 and it was restored to civilian control. At a meeting of Wicklow County Council

on 26 May 1924, Secretary P. T. Healy reported that the '... Gaol has been taken over from the military authorities by an official of the Office of Public Works, who subsequently handed possession of the buildings to him as representing the County Council'.<sup>42</sup> Since then, the jail has remained in the possession of Wicklow County Council. In the years that followed its closure, it fell into a state of utter dereliction. Wild raspberries covered the graveyard, while the former exercise yards were used to store turf. In 1946, a visiting correspondent from the *Irish Press* reported that the 'empty shell of dank, decaying, musty creeper-covered masonry' was facing demolition to make way for the erection of a technical school and library on the site.<sup>43</sup> Fortunately, the project was shelved, and following considerable restoration works in the 1990s, Wicklow Gaol is currently in use as a highly successful interactive museum.

Aaron Ó Maonaigh

---

38 *Freeman's Journal*, 24 July 1923.

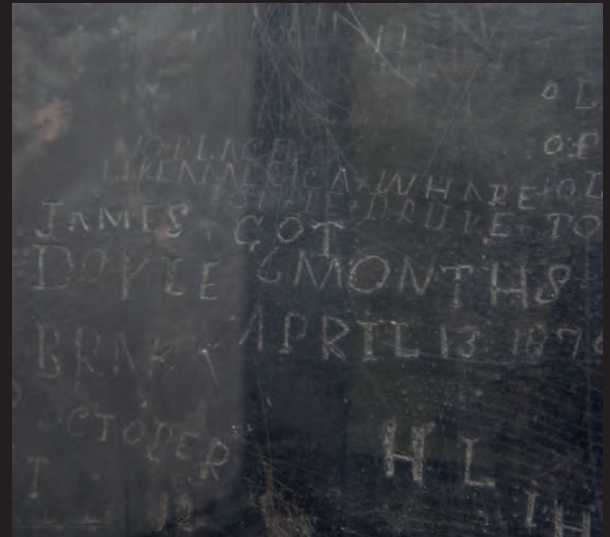
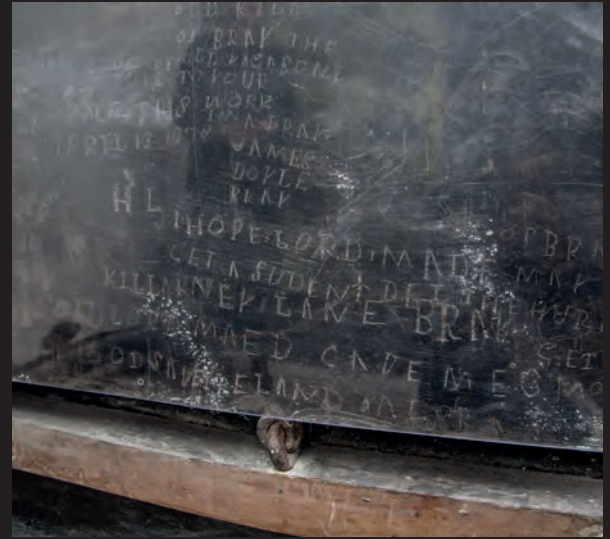
39 [Dublin] *Evening Telegraph*, 8 Aug. 1923.

40 *Irish Independent*, 8 Aug. 1923.

41 Stan J. O'Reilly, 'More tales from Wicklow Gaol: murder, confinement, and escape, 1866-1924', *Journal of the Wicklow Historical Society: Irisleabhar na Cumann Seanda Chill Mhantáin*, 3:7 (June 2008), p. 19.

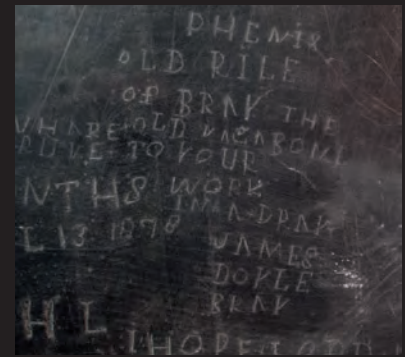
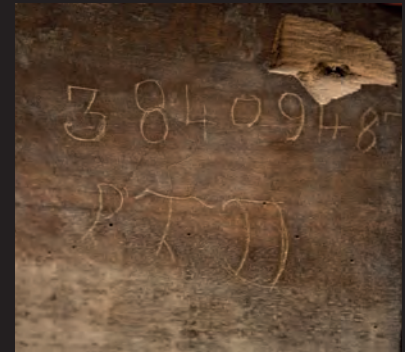
42 Minutes of Wicklow County Council, 26 May 1924 (WCA, WCC M/10 (123)).

43 Minutes of Wicklow County Council, 14 Jan. 1946 (WCA, WCC M/16 (88)); *Irish Press*, 17 July 1946.



Images from Wicklow Gaol —  
© Wicklow County Council







Prisoner graffiti depicting the harp of the  
Society of United Irishmen, Wicklow Gaol —  
© Wicklow County Council



# Wexford Prisoners

## DUGDALE, Thomas (c. 1893–1929)

Thomas Dugdale was born in England to Irish parents c. 1893. In 1901, he was living at 25 George's Street, Gorey, at the home of his maternal uncle, Thomas O'Neill, a weighmaster and town inspector. He was a pre-Truce member of the IRA (G Company [Gorey], 3rd Battalion, North Wexford Brigade), and at the time of the split in the nationalist movement, sided with the anti-Treaty forces, in which he held the position of quartermaster.<sup>1</sup> During the Civil War, Dugdale was one of a number of Republicans who had occupied Gorey RIC barracks prior to its evacuation in early 1922, upon which, they set fire to the building. He was arrested during the

fighting in Co. Wexford and interned at Wicklow Gaol. On 10 January 1923, he was transferred from Wicklow to No. 3 Camp — Tintown A, the Curragh, from where he was released at an undetermined date later that year. He was rearrested by National Army troops in the early hours of 17 May 1923 at a farmhouse at Coolinteggart, four miles from Gorey, and re-interned at Wicklow Gaol and the Curragh until his release on 29 November 1923.<sup>2</sup> Dugdale followed the career-path of his uncle and was a town inspector at Gorey in the years post-Civil War. He died of apoplexy after suffering a seizure at his home on John Street, Gorey on 12 April 1929.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 *The Echo*, 20 Apr. 1929 (Obit.); 3rd Battalion, North Wexford Brigade IRA, 3rd Eastern Division, nominal rolls (IMA, MSPC, RO 553 (29)).

2 *Freeman's Journal*, 19 May 1923; Operations report, Carlow District [Dublin Command], 18 May 1923 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/09); Alphabetical Index — No. 3 Camp — Tintown A (IMA, CW/P/08/14); *Éire: The Irish Nation*, 10 Nov. 1923.

3 Death of John Thomas Dugdale in 1929 (ICRI, GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — Gorey, Group Registration ID: 1440288, entry no. 216); Roche, *Here's their memory*, p.81.



Thomas Dugdale



North Wexford Flying Column during the Truce —  
Courtesy of Michael Fitzpatrick Collection

We live like hermits in <sup>this</sup> place  
we never see a woman face  
Strange it is though good for ill  
We dont forget the lassies still

Hicklaw Pool . June 1923

Thomas Diegdale  
John Stoney



**Transcript** opposite ←

We live like hermits in this place  
We never see a woman (sic) face  
Strange it is though good or ill  
We don't forget the lassies still.

Wicklow Gaol June 1923

Thomas Dugdale  
John Street, Gorey

The lovely months of summer time  
Pass slowly by.  
All through Wicklow jail we roam,  
Under the azure sky,  
Thinking on our friends and home,  
Mid shady bowers & glen,  
The friends we know, who love to see us,  
Coming home again.

J. Brennan  
Carnet

Wicklow Jail June 1923

## DUNDON, John Joseph (1901–67)

John Joseph Dundon was born 3 February 1901 to Edward Dundon, an RIC constable, and Kate Dundon (*née* Fardy) at Arthurstown, Co. Wexford.<sup>1</sup> He grew up in Ballindaggin, where his mother was a midwife for the Killane district.<sup>2</sup> He joined his local unit of Fianna Éireann and took an active part in the struggle for Irish freedom, including the removal and destruction of the customs and excise books at Enniscorthy and Gorey (April 1920), the destruction of Killane barracks (May 1920) and the attack on Clonroche barracks (April 1920).<sup>3</sup> Following the non-fatal shooting of a suspected spy at Enniscorthy in December 1920, he was forced to go on the run, whereupon he joined the Active Service Unit of the North Wexford Brigade IRA, taking

part in all its activities up to the end of March 1921.<sup>4</sup> During the Truce, he was appointed Adjutant of the 1st Battalion, North Wexford Brigade IRA.<sup>5</sup> At the outbreak of the Civil War, he played an active part in attacks against National Army positions at Enniscorthy and Ferns (July 1922). When the Republican forces withdrew from the former, Dundon continued to operate in the northwestern area of the county until his arrest on 19 January 1923 following an attack on a mail train from Dublin to Wexford.<sup>6</sup> He was detained at Carlow, Wicklow, and later at Tintown (No. 3) where he was grouped with many of the other Wicklow Gaol prisoners in ‘E’ Company’s hut.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, upon his release from internment, Dundon joined the National

- 
- 1 Birth of John Joseph Dundon in 1901 (ICRI, GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — New Ross, Group Registration ID: 181112, entry no. 416); Residents of a house 10 in Coleman [Ballyhack, Wexford] (NAI, 1911 Census of Ireland returns); Edward Dundon, service record (National Archives United Kingdom [NAUK], Royal Irish Constabulary Service Records 1816-1922, HO 184/25).
  - 2 John Dundon, ‘The War of Independence and Civil War’, *The Past: Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society*, 35 (2021), pp 60–73 (72).
  - 3 North Wexford Brigade IRA, index of operations during the Tan War 1917-1921, Brigade Activity Reports (IMA, MSPC, A/66/1/85); *New Ross Standard*, 9 Apr. 1920; *The People*, 27 Apr. 1920; Irish Times, 14 May 1920.
  - 4 Thomas Dwyer, statement (IMA, BMH WS 1,198 (20)); Thomas Francis Meagher, statement (IMA, BMH WS 1,156 (12)).
  - 5 1st Battalion, North Wexford Brigade IRA, 3rd Eastern Division, nominal rolls (IMA, MSPC, RO 551 (16)).
  - 6 *New Ross Standard*, 26 Jan. 1923; *Free Press*, 27 Jan. 1923.
  - 7 *Éire: The Irish Nation*, 10 Nov. 1923.



John Dundon as a boy, Ballindaggin —  
Courtesy of John Dundon, Arklow

Wicklow Gael.

25th May '73.

Oh ye who watch and wait beside the

strangest gate

do push with speed the poisoned punts  
that fell

but see! 'tis manhood's dawn, no longer

brings and fawn

back the traitors wine that's mixed  
with gael.

to onward onward all 'tis Ireland's final  
call

Our cause is just, we must we will not  
fail

though the road we tread is long, the

for we face is strong

yet those who fight for freedom never  
fail.

J. Dunstan.





Transcript overleaf →

urried

urried

yam.

2/12

Jobian

1923

← overleaf

## Transcript

*Wicklow Gaol 25th May 1923*

*Oh ye who watch and wail beside the  
Stranger's gate,  
Do grasp with greed the poisoned crumbs  
That fall,  
See! See! Tis' manhood's dawn no longer  
Cringe and fawn,  
Cast back the traitor's wine that's mixed  
With gall,  
So onward, onward tis' Ireland's final  
Call,  
Our cause is just we must, we will not  
Fail,  
Though the road we tread is long the  
Foe we face is strong,  
Yet those who fight for freedom never  
Fail.\**

*J. Dundon*

\* Dundon's original composition references the Gospel of Matthew, linking the plight of Jesus Christ at his crucifixion to that of Irish freedom: *'They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink'* (Matthew 27:34). It is possible that Dundon is referring to the release form offered to Republican prisoners during the Civil War. Those who signed the form swore not to take up arms against the Irish Free State. Thus, the 'traitor's wine mixed with gall' is symbolic of betraying one's Republican principles.

Army, but resigned after a month, having contracted pneumonia.<sup>8</sup>

After the war, he emigrated to England for a short spell, where he became a valued member of a men's outfitters in Chesterfield. Although the firm encouraged him to stay, offering to set him up on his own, he couldn't resist the call to his homeland.<sup>9</sup> Following a stint in Dublin, where he worked as a shop assistant at Arnott's department store, he returned to Wexford in 1939, and opened a drapery and menswear business at 19 Market Square, Enniscorthy.<sup>10</sup> In 1950, he moved with his wife and five children back to Dublin where they resided in Booterstown. During this time, he worked in Clery's department store. He invested in a public house, The Rock Tavern, in Blackrock. It was not a success. Dundon suffered from Parkinson's disease, and died of pneumonia at St. Michael's Hospital, Dún Laoghaire, on 14 January 1967.<sup>11</sup> His remains were interred at Deansgrange Cemetery, Co. Dublin.<sup>12</sup>



Wicklow Gaol — ©Wicklow County Council

8 Dundon, 'The War of Independence and Civil War', p. 71.

9 'Late Mr. Jack Dundon, an Appreciation', *Enniscorthy Echo*, 28 Jan. 1967.

10 *Enniscorthy Echo*, 3 Aug. 1940; *New Ross Standard*, 21 Jan. 1967.

11 Death of John Dundon in 1967 (ICRI, GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — Rathdown, Group Registration ID: 564479, entry no. 73).

12 *Irish Independent*, 16 Jan. 1967.

## **FITZPATRICK**, Patrick (1896–1962)

Patrick Joseph Fitzpatrick was born in Killealy in 1896 to John Fitzpatrick, a national school principal, and Jane Fitzpatrick (née Doyle).<sup>1</sup> He moved to Gorey as a young man, where he worked as a rate collector. While there, he joined the local company of the IRA, of which he was later appointed captain. In December 1919, he was brought before a petty sessions court and charged with possession of seditious documents. As a result, he was ordered to pay £50 and bound to keep the peace lest he be imprisoned at Mountjoy Gaol.<sup>2</sup> However, he ignored the court order and took part in the burning of the Royal Irish Constabulary barracks at Courtown (April 1920), during which he was wounded in the eye.<sup>3</sup> He ran as a Sinn Féin candidate in the local elections of June 1920 for the Gorey urban area and was elected as chairman of Gorey Rural District Council.

- 1 Residents of a house 46 in Killealy [Killealy, Wexford] (NAI, 1901 Census of Ireland returns).
- 2 Order book, Co. Wexford Petty Sessions Court Registers, 15 Dec. 1919 (NAI, Petty Sessions Court Registers, CSPS 1/4873).
- 3 *Wicklow People*, 24 Apr. 1920.

### Transcript opposite →

*Carlow — 19th Jan. 1923 —; Wicklow —  
May 9th Tintown*

*Released 19 Dec. 1923    19/12/23 released*

*E'corthy — Wex. 8th Jan. '23 — Wicklow  
Feb. Tintown Jail*

*Released 24 Dec. '23*

*Mrs Maher  
Bancroft Ave. (33)  
Tallaght  
1923 —*

This entry records the various dates and sites of Fitzpatrick's arrest and internment during the Civil War. 'Mrs Maher' is Patrick's sister, Mary Anne 'Margaret' Maher (née Fitzpatrick), a Cumann na mBan activist who sheltered escaped Civil War prisoners.



Carlow - 19<sup>th</sup> Jan '23 -; Wicklow - ~~19<sup>th</sup> Jan~~ Tin Teren

Released 19 Dec '23.

19/12/23 released

---

Carlow - 19<sup>th</sup> Jan '23 -; Wicklow - Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> 1923

Released 24 Dec '23

---

(mta maha (1923)  
Beancroft av (33)  
Dallagh)

One of his first proposals as chair, which was passed unanimously, was an acknowledgment by the council of the authority of Dáil Éireann.

Following the shooting of a civilian at Gorey in January 1921, Fitzpatrick was forced to go on the run. He joined the IRA's North Wexford Active Service Unit.<sup>4</sup> As a result, he was unable to fulfil his council duties and he tendered his resignation as district councillor and poor law guardian in June 1921.<sup>5</sup> The council initially refused to accept his resignation but was forced to accept it that September. The chairman of the council commented: 'In view of the circumstances we can only accept Mr Fitzpatrick's resignation with very great regret'.<sup>6</sup> Fitzpatrick would return to his position one month later, but left once again, on the eve of the Civil War, taking with him his rate receipt books, much to the chagrin of his superiors.<sup>7</sup>

When the Civil War broke out, Fitzpatrick held the rank of officer commanding the 3rd Battalion, North Wexford Brigade, and he went on to hold the position of adjutant of the North Wexford Brigade.<sup>8</sup> He fought on the anti-Treaty side and was captured in October 1922, whereupon he was interned at Enniscorthy Castle, Wicklow and Wexford Gaols.<sup>9</sup> Whilst on hospital leave from the latter, he escaped along with several other prisoners in November 1922 but was recaptured on 8 January 1923 at a house in Ballyduff, Co. Wexford.<sup>10</sup> He was interned again at Enniscorthy, Carlow, and Tintown Camp B, Co. Kildare, until his release on 24 December 1923.

He was reappointed as a rate collector in Gorey until he resigned under a cloud in 1928.<sup>11</sup> Sometime thereafter, he moved to Limerick and reenlisted in the army, in which he held the rank of sergeant major and served with the Army

---

4 Thomas Dwyer, statement (IMA, BMH WS 1,198 (22)); Patrick Carton, statement (IMA, BMH WS 1,160 (3)).

5 Minutes of Gorey Rural District Council, 25 June 1921 (WXCA, GRDC/1/17).

6 *Enniscorthy Echo*, 17 Sept. 1921; Minutes of Gorey Rural District Council, 24 Sept. 1921 (WXCA, GRDC/1/18).

7 *Enniscorthy Guardian*, 15 Oct. 1921; Minutes of Wexford County Council, 17 July 1922 (WXCA, WXCC/1/9).

8 3rd Battalion, North Wexford Brigade IRA, 3rd Eastern Division, nominal rolls (IMA, MSPC, RO/553 (30)).

9 *New Ross Standard*, 20 Oct. 1922.

10 *New Ross Standard*, 24 Nov. 1922; *ibid.*, 12 Jan. 1923; Memo to Publicity, 10 Jan. 1923 in Operations reports, 3rd Eastern Division, 10 Jan. 1923 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/01).

11 *New Ross Standard*, 25 May 1928.

Medical Service. Tragically, on 14 August 1962, he drowned in the River Shannon while on his way to work as a customs and excise watcher at the port of Limerick.<sup>12</sup>

At the rear of this autograph book, he recorded the dates of his arrest and various spells of internment. It is clear from cross-referencing the internment records of each of the contributors that Fitzpatrick retained possession of this book when he was transferred to Tintown Camp, as the book also includes entries from men for whom there is no record of their internment at Wicklow Gaol. Inscribed on the inside cover of the autograph book is 'Peig Ní Giolla Pádraig' (Margaret Fitzpatrick, sister of Pat) who was secretary of the Killealy branch of Cumann na mBan.



Prisoner cell, Wicklow Gaol – © Wicklow County Council

---

<sup>12</sup> *Irish Examiner*, 22 Aug. 1962.

## **FLEMING**, Thomas (1896–1968)

Thomas Fleming was born 6 August 1896 at Aughna-  
maulmeen, near Monaseed, Co. Wexford, the eldest son of  
Patrick Fleming, a farm labourer, and Hanna Fleming (*née*  
Kenny), both from Wexford.<sup>1</sup> In 1918, Fleming joined B  
Company (Askamore), 4th Battalion, North Wexford Brigade  
of the IRA.<sup>2</sup> His brothers William and Patrick were also  
active in the struggle for Irish independence. Thomas took  
the Republican side during the Civil War and was arrested  
in the first week of April 1923. He was interned at Wicklow  
Gaol, and later at the Curragh, Co. Kildare, until his release  
on 25 Aug. 1923.<sup>3</sup> He died at Baggot Street Hospital, Dublin,  
on 20 June 1968 and was interred at Tomacork Cemetery,  
Carnew, Co. Wicklow.<sup>4</sup>

- 
- 1 Birth of Thomas Fleming in 1896 (ICRI, GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — Gorey, Group Registration ID: 10659876, entry no. 217); Residents of a house 12 in Brideswell Big [Ballyellis, Wexford] (NAI, 1901 Census of Ireland returns).
  - 2 4th Battalion, North Wexford Brigade IRA, 3rd Eastern Division, nominal rolls (IMA, MSPC, RO 553A (11)).
  - 3 *Free Press*, 7 Apr. 1923; Alphabetical register of prisoners — No. 3 Camp — Tintown A (IMA, CW/P/08/13).
  - 4 *Irish Independent*, 21 June 1968; *Evening Herald*, 21 June 1968; Death of Thomas Fleming on 20 June 1968 (ICRI GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — Dublin, Group Registration ID: 530121, entry no. 55).





Thomas Fleming, seated, with brothers Bill (1901-1971), left, and Jack (1909-1988), right, 1942 — Courtesy of *Askamore Journal 4* (2015)



Wrecklow Gail  
June 1923

What is life that you  
should love it

more than manlike deeds  
of Duty?

There's a glory far above it  
Crown your brow with

goblet beauty.

Is to die with beacons heroics

lifting Freedom's standard

High

Thomas Fleming Bideswell



**Transcript** opposite ←

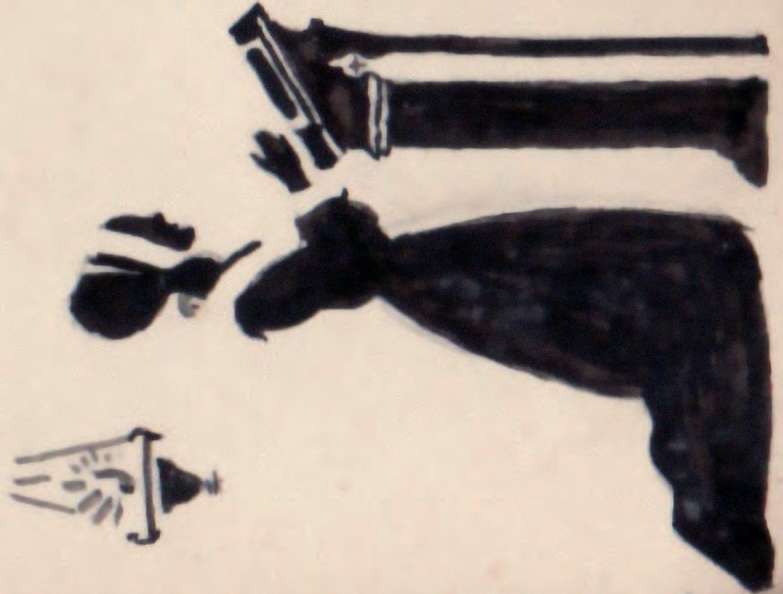
*Wicklowl Jail  
June 1923*

*What is life that you  
Should love it  
More than manlike deeds  
Of duty?  
There's a glory far above it  
Crowns your brow with nobler beauty  
Tis' to die with cheers heroic,  
Lifting freedom's standard  
High.*

*Thomas Fleming, Brideswell*

*But not a change of heart*

*J. Doyle  
Wicklowl jail*



*Canon C. C. C. C.*

## GIBBONS, Joseph (1901-1928)

Nicholas (aka Joseph) Gibbons was active in the struggle for Irish independence along with his brothers, James Francis Anthony (b. 1900 at Limerick) and Patrick (b. 1903 at Enniscorthy, see page 36). Joseph was arrested, along with thirteen other members of the IRA, in a wood near Ashgrove, Bunclody, on 3 August 1922 following a National Army raid on a nearby unoccupied dwelling, which the IRA were known to frequent.<sup>1</sup> He was interned at Maryborough Gaol, Co. Laois, Wicklow Gaol, and later at Tintown Camp where, in November 1923, he went on hunger strike in protest at his continued detention.<sup>2</sup> After twenty-three days on strike, Gibbons was removed to the camp's military hospital suffering from acute tuberculosis.<sup>3</sup> His health never fully recovered following his release from

prison. Joseph Gibbons died 30 March 1928 of pulmonary tuberculosis, attributed to his term of imprisonment, at his home on Woodstock Street, Athy.<sup>4</sup> Joseph's brother Francis (Frank) was arrested during the summer of 1922 and interned at Gormanston Camp, on the Dublin/Meath border.<sup>5</sup> During the War of Independence, Frank had been an active member of the North Wexford flying column and was one of three men responsible for the shooting of a suspected spy at Coolnahorna on 25 May 1921.<sup>6</sup> On 4 August 1931, Frank married Mary 'Minnie' Mullins, a Carlow native and Cumann na mBan activist, at Beechwood Avenue RC church, Ranelagh, Dublin.<sup>7</sup> He died 17 August 1960 at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Dublin.<sup>8</sup>

---

1 *Freeman's Journal*, 4 Aug. 1922; *Enniscorthy Guardian*, 5 Aug. 1922.

2 Roll of honour — North Wexford Brigade (UCDA, Moss Twomey papers, P69/165 (101)).

3 *Éire: the Irish Nation*, 22 Dec. 1923.

4 Death of Joseph Gibbons in 1928 (ICRI, GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — Naas, Group Registration ID: 1593405, entry no. 114); *Leinster Express*, 7 Apr. 1928.

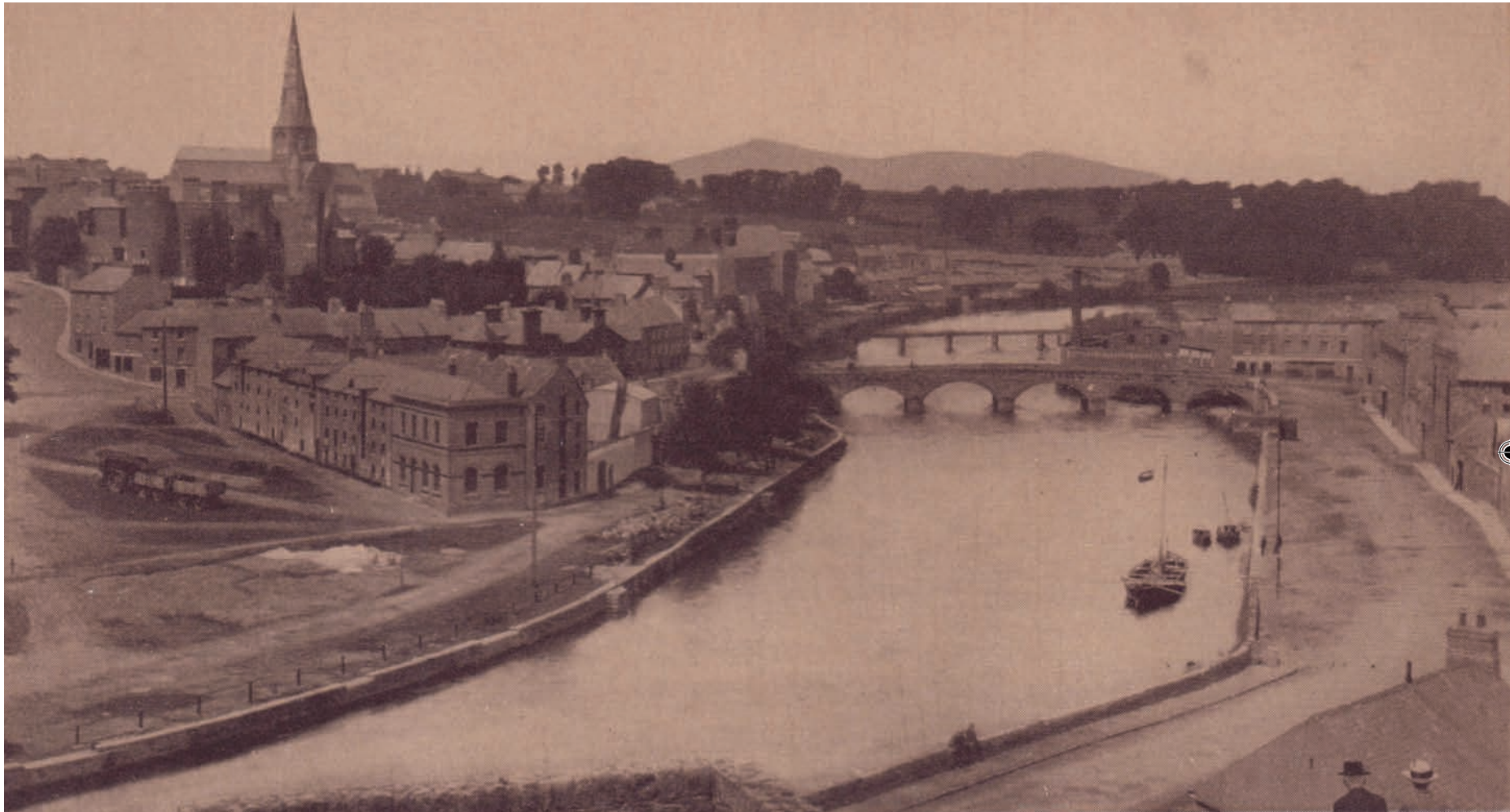
5 *Éire: the Irish Nation*, 10 Nov. 1923.

6 North Wexford Brigade IRA, 3 Eastern Division, brigade activity report (IMA, MSPC, A66/1/139); Thomas Francis Meagher, statement (IMA, BMH WS 1156 (7)).

7 Marriage of Frank Gibbons and Mary Mullins in 1931 (ICRI, GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — Dublin, Group Registration ID: 1366995, entry no. 173).

8 *Irish Press*, 18 Aug. 1960.





Joseph Gibbons's home town of Enniscorthy in 1923, the year of his internment. Photo: Alamy

**Transcript** opposite →

*Tintown No. 3 Camp*

*Curragh*

*No. 5 Hut*

*No. 5511*

*W.F.I.*

*Bimslak ego esto juno*

*Bun clo deman uno jest*

*Even on severes esto*

*Jo tinater to tato\**

*(Ballyhack)*

*Joseph Gibbons*

*No. 5 Mill Park Rode (sic)*

*Enniscorthy*

\* Gibbons's cryptic entry appears to be macaronic Latin. No meaningful translation can be found. His misspelling of 'road' is unusual for the literate son of a journalist, and sharply contrasts with the literary quality of his brother Patrick's entries.

My entry 1923

Comp out

That tread's over the heads of the  
Hundred is the march of that glory  
The march of our victor's may be  
But its... and the play oned  
Lancashire  
Catching any coin



Tombown No 3 camp

Curragh

No 5 Hut

No 5 5 11

W.F. 9.

Bunslak ego esto Juno

Bun clo deman uno jest-

Even on severes esto

Jo Tmator to tato

(Ballyhack)

Joseph Gibbons

No 5

Mill-Park  
Linniscorthy

Rode (?)

## GIBBONS, Patrick J. (1903–1967)

Benedict Patrick Joseph Gibbons was born 27 March 1903 at 13 Castle Street, Enniscorthy, the third of five children (three sons and two daughters) of Francis Lalor Gibbons, a journalist from Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, and his wife Mary Josephine Gibbons (*née* Courtney).<sup>1</sup> While still a schoolboy, Gibbons joined the local sluagh of Na Fianna Éireann in Enniscorthy. He was arrested, along with fellow Fian Patrick Tobin, following a Fianna raid on Enniscorthy train station on 27 October 1920.<sup>2</sup> The two boys were taken into military custody, where they remained for over a month, before being brought to trial on the charge of larceny. In line with Republican practice, both boys refused to recognise the legitimacy of the courts. They were sentenced to two

months' imprisonment in default of bail for refusing to give information regarding the movements of the IRA.<sup>3</sup> They were subsequently interned at Waterford prison.<sup>4</sup> In 1922, the family moved from Enniscorthy to Athy, Co. Kildare, where Francis Gibbons Snr joined the staff of the *Leinster Leader* as its representative in Athy.<sup>5</sup> While there, Patrick was employed as a full-time Irish teacher. He opposed the Treaty and fought on the Republican side during the Civil War. He was arrested on 25 April, along with six other men, at his family home in Athy, on suspicion of taking part in an attack on the local post office.<sup>6</sup> He was subsequently interned at Carlow, Wicklow Gaol, and Tintown (No. 3), the Curragh, Co. Kildare, until 18 August 1923.<sup>7</sup> Upon his

- 1 Birth of Benedict Gibbons in 1903 (ICRI, GRO, SR District/Reg. Area — Enniscorthy, Group Registration ID: 4782410, entry no. 136); Residents of a house 31 in Hospital Lane [Enniscorthy Urban, Wexford] (NAI, 1901 Census of Ireland returns).
- 2 Patrick J. Gibbons, court-martial case file and evidence, 7 Nov. 1920 (NAUK, WO 35/124/6); *Ibid.*, (NAUK, WO 35/120); *Leinster Reporter*, 6 Nov. 1920; *Enniscorthy Guardian*, 8 Jan. 1921.
- 3 *Irish Bulletin*, 6 Jan. 1921.
- 4 Waterford Prison General Register Index 1914–1929 (Irish Prison Registers 1790–1924, Book no. 1/39/23); Waterford Prison General Register Index 1917–1939 (*Idem.*, Book no. 1/39/30).
- 5 *Leinster Leader*, 3 Feb. 1923.
- 6 Operations report, Carlow District [Dublin Command], 27 Apr. 1923 (IMA, CW/OPS/07/09); *Leinster Leader*, 28 Apr. 1923.
- 7 Alphabetical register of prisoners — No. 3 Camp — Tintown A (IMA, CW/P/08/13).



release, Gibbons emigrated to Surrey, England, where he married Elizabeth Mary Blanchfield (b. 1917), a native of Co. Kildare, at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, Kew, London, on 18 September 1949.<sup>8</sup> They had two daughters, Frances Lalor (b. 1950) whom they named after Gibbons' father, and Patricia Mary (b. 1953).

Patrick Gibbons died, aged sixty-four at Hounslow, Middlesex, England, in 1967.<sup>9</sup> His brothers, James Francis Anthony Gibbons (b. 1900 at Limerick), and Nicholas Joseph Gibbons (b. 1901 at Limerick) were also active in the struggle for Irish independence.



Wicklow Gaol — ©Wicklow County Council

<sup>8</sup> Marriage of Benedict Gibbons and Evelyn Mary Blanchfield in 1949 (GRO, United Kingdom, England & Wales marriages 1837-2005, District/Reg. Area - Surrey Northern, vol. 5G, ff. 1,002).

<sup>9</sup> Death of Benedict Gibbons in 1967 (GRO, United Kingdom, England & Wales deaths 1837-2005, District/Reg. Area -Middlesex, vol. 5C, ff. 475).

## Transcript opposite →

*Wicklow Jail*

*'What without asking hither hurried,  
Whence,  
And without asking whether hurried  
hence.'\**

*Omar Khayyam*

*Mise agus meas agam ort  
Pádhraich Mac Giobúin  
Bealtaine 1923*

*[I am yours truly  
Patrick Gibbons  
May 1923]*

*Treasured memories (1923)*

\* Quotation from the text of Persian polymath Omar Khayyám (1048-1131), translated into English in 1859 by Edward Fitzgerald and published as the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. Khayyám's literature gained significant popularity throughout the English-speaking world. This entry and the one overleaf, display his fluency in Irish and his wider cultural and intellectual awareness. Fellow prisoner and Kildare native, Edward Behan, also quotes Khayyám in his entries in the autograph book.

WICKLOW. JAIL

What without asking hither hurried  
whence

And without asking whether hurried  
hence"

— Omar Khayyam.

Treasured  
pearls  
memories  
(1923)

Mys

azuf meaf azam opz

Páipaic Mac Zibúin

beataine 1923



M<sub>o</sub> Greac

Is m<sup>u</sup>níc a cuala zap<sup>r</sup>ín óz' á náð  
Zy<sup>u</sup>b fáda leo zo mbead<sup>r</sup> m<sup>o</sup>r  
Clé y fáda lom-pa feín an bú  
Zo mbead- paop ón uelc eazc<sup>o</sup>r  
A tm<sup>r</sup>izeap opm pa P<sup>r</sup>io<sup>r</sup>ín  
Dá zap<sup>r</sup>m<sup>z</sup>cap Cap<sup>e</sup>ap Cille M<sup>a</sup>m<sup>z</sup>án

y fáda lom zo paor<sup>r</sup>feap m<sup>e</sup>  
y zo mbead-pa paop ó feín na bple<sup>r</sup>  
Dob feap lom-pa beiz pa c<sup>r</sup>e  
Sead! beiz m' í<sup>r</sup>óp-luize fá an bfe<sup>r</sup>  
Nabí soibinn lompa feín ealú  
Cun baile mo h-óige í feap<sup>r</sup> ch<sup>u</sup>.

y í mo mian a beiz amuic pa ead  
y zan m<sup>e</sup> a beiz p<sup>e</sup>ap<sup>r</sup>a lem' cáide buan  
Map níl azam ac cáideap cuol  
Ó Daoine anuivníd pan P<sup>r</sup>io<sup>r</sup>ín éuain  
y í mo zúide zo lez<sup>r</sup>feap lom zo luá  
Cun zo bfeud<sup>r</sup>ad le znáð mo eoride ealú.

Paddy Gullbons. Wicklow Jail. June 1922.

Tintown Camp No 3

The Curragh

## Transcript opposite ←

*Mo Creach\**

*Is minic a cuala garsúin óg á rádh,  
Gurbh fhada leo go mbeidis mór,  
Ach is fada liom-sa féin an lá,  
Go mbead saor ón uile eagóir (mod.  
eagóir),*

*A imírtear orm sa príosún sin,  
Dá ngairmtear (mod. dá nglaoitear)  
carcair Cille Mhaintáin (mod. Cill  
Mhanntáin).*

*Is fada liom go scaoilfear mé,  
Ar go mbead-sa saor ó seint na bpléis,  
Dob fhearr liom-sa bheith sa chré,  
Seadh! Bheith im' shíor-luighe fá an bhféir,  
Narbh aoibhinn liomsa féin ealú,  
Chun bhaile mo hóige is fearr chú.*

*Is í mo mhian a bheith amuich (mod.  
amuigh) sa tsaol,  
A's gan mé a bheith scartha leim cháirde  
bhuan,  
Mar níl agam ach cáirdeas caol,  
Ó daoine anaithnid san príosún chiaín,  
Is í mo ghuidhe go leigfear liom go luath,  
Cun go bfeidfad le grádh mo croide ealú.*

*Paddy Gibbons, Wicklow Gaol, June 1923*

### Translation

#### My Pity

Often I heard a young lad saying,  
That it'll be ages 'till they're grown up,  
But it's ages for myself 'till the day,  
That I'll be free from all the injustice,  
That's inflicted on me in that prison,  
Called Wicklow Gaol.

It's ages 'till I'll be freed,  
That'll I'll be free from the greed of the police,  
I'd prefer to be in the ground,  
Yes! Lying for eternity under the grass,  
Wouldn't I love to escape,  
To the town of my youth [it's of better renown].

It is my desire to be out in the world,  
And not be separated from my eternal friends,  
As I only have a slender friendship,  
With unrecognisable people in the remote  
prison,  
It is my hope that I am released soon,  
So that the love of my heart can escape.

Original composition by Patrick Gibbons.

\* *Creach* has several meanings as Gaelige,  
including pity, ruin and regret.

Dundstown  
Cuscorshy



## LENNON, Philip (Commandant) (c. 1889-1934)

Philip Lennon was born at Mylerspark, New Ross, Co. Wexford, the son of Michael Lennon, a farmer. As a young man, he was apprenticed to a local business as a grocer's assistant. Lennon immersed himself in the burgeoning Irish language movement. His tireless zeal in the promotion of the Irish language soon caught the attention of his colleagues in Conradh na Gaeilge (Gaelic League), who promoted him to the role of regional organiser.<sup>1</sup> In 1915, Lennon was appointed head of the Irish Volunteers in the New Ross area.<sup>2</sup> Proving himself a resourceful officer, Lennon armed his company with rifles he purchased from British soldiers returning home from the European war.<sup>3</sup> During Easter Week 1916, Lennon's Company of Volunteers was detailed to attack the RIC station at Ballinaboola, Co. Wexford.<sup>4</sup> However, in the wake of the countermanding order and considerable opposition in the form of the local

RIC and Redmondite Volunteers, this plan was aborted. Nevertheless, in the mass arrests which followed the rebellion, Lennon was arrested and deported to Lewes Detention Barracks, England, whence he was moved to Frongoch internment camp, Wales.<sup>5</sup>

Upon his release from Frongoch, he threw himself back into the work of the Volunteer movement with characteristic zeal. It was not long, however, before he came to the attention of the authorities once again. In 1917, he was charged with unlawful assembly, convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment at Waterford City Gaol. On 2 December 1918, Lennon was arrested at his home in Mylerspark. During a search of the premises and his personal belongings, the RIC found a revolver and ammunition, as well as several pieces of Volunteer literature. In response to the discovery of the revolver,

---

1 *New Ross Standard*, 17 Aug. 1934; *Here's their memory*, p. 78.

2 *Irish Volunteer*, 13 Mar. 1915.

3 Mark Codd and Mick Murphy, 'Reminiscences of an Old IRA Man, Mick Murphy, "The Hardy Man"', *The Past: Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society*, 29 (2008), pp 130-144 (132).

4 Alexander Nowlan, statement (IMA, BMH WS 149 (4)).

5 *Weekly Irish Times, Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook, Easter 1916* (Dublin, 1917), p. 84.



Lennon replied: 'I have that for the protection of myself and my men'. He was taken to Cork where he was tried under the Defence of the Realm Regulations, found guilty, and sentenced to one year's imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>6</sup> Incarceration was to become a common theme of Lennon's revolutionary experience. Between 1916 and 1923, he was interned at no fewer than eight different prisons in Ireland, England, and Wales.<sup>7</sup>

Between his stints in prison, Lennon held the rank of O/C Wexford Brigade. In October 1920, the Wexford Brigade was reorganised and split into the North and South Wexford Brigades. Lennon was appointed as a battalion staff officer to the latter.<sup>8</sup> Following the arrest of column commander

Jack Whelan, Lennon took charge of the first incarnation of the North Wexford Active Service Unit.<sup>9</sup> He was on active service with the IRA until the Truce. He opposed the Treaty and resigned his position as District Court Register at New Ross in protest. Renowned for his strong principles, he refused a personal request from Michael Collins to join the Civic Guard upon its formation.<sup>10</sup> When fighting broke out between the pro and anti-Treaty factions in the summer of 1922, Lennon once again returned to the field. In his own words: 'Having loved the hills I went back to them [in] July 1922 and was captured by "Staters" on 8 January 1923'.<sup>11</sup> He was interned at Enniscorthy Castle, Wexford Gaol, Wicklow Gaol, and Tintown (No. 3), the Curragh, Co. Kildare, until his

<sup>6</sup> Philip Lennon, court-martial case file and evidence (NAUK, WO 35/102/37).

<sup>7</sup> Waterford Prison General Prisoner Index, 1908-1916 (Book no. 1/39/29); Cork County Gaol Index, 1913-1923 (book no. 1/8/69); *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*, p. 84; *Irish Bulletin*, 16 Apr. 1920.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Bailey, statement (IMA, BMH WS 1,430 (3-4); List of elected battalion staffs in the various brigades, etc. (NAI, DE/4/3/1 (58)).

<sup>9</sup> Tommy Brennan and Dinny Allen interview (UCDA, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/98 (68)); Flying Columns, North Wexford Brigade IRA, 3rd Eastern Division, nominal rolls (IMA, MSPC, RO/553B (2)).

<sup>10</sup> *New Ross Standard*, 20 Aug. 1937.

<sup>11</sup> *New Ross Standard*, 12 Jan. 1923.



of Haze & Voich to the bottom pair.  
Watersford, Richmond Barracks, Leices  
Windsor, Warrwood Streets  
Thengorke in 1916.

Watersford 1917

Cork 1918. to 1919

Cork. Bellgate, Warrwood Streets  
Early in 1920.

Stayed on the Hill twice the  
twice 1921. "The Day July

Having loved the hills went  
back to them July 1922, and

was captured by "Stokers" and  
January 8<sup>th</sup> 1923. Mrs. Lye

in Wick this year this day the  
31<sup>st</sup> May 1923. Philip P. Lennon

Trotter - July '23 - May 1924. R. Wood



bealtaine 31<sup>st</sup> 1923

béir éife fof seclait ní d'uibinn  
Piubó lonáin

Ireland Cannot be soled by  
Irish, English or Scotch  
whilst her Sons and Daughters  
are so true to her.  
God Bless The Brave and True.  
Phil Lennon.

Transcript overleaf →