

District Inspector & Resident Magistrate John Charles Milling

Dominic Price

The Orange Order Parades had passed off peacefully during the day in Belfast. At dusk the bonfires to commemorate the victory of William of Orange over King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 would be lit. The Nationalists could hardly contain themselves. After nightfall stones began to come over the roof-tops from McDonnell Street which backed on to the Falls Road. The Royal Irish Constabulary, in their dark green uniforms and spiked helmets, stood on the Grosvenor Road in considerable numbers. Their aim was to protect shops, businesses and residences from rioters at a notorious trouble spot in Belfast. Five hundred rioters ripped up paving stones for ammunition and began taunting the police. "Go on the Boers", they yelled. The police retreated under a barrage of bottles, stones and bricks. The rioters reached the Grosvenor Road and began smashing shop windows and looting. The Italian Ice-Cream Parlour received particular attention being stripped of all lemonade. Reinforcements from Cullingtree RIC Barracks arrived. On the orders of the District Inspector they drew their batons. Repeated charges were made to restore order.¹ The Police Officer leading one of the charges was hit by a paving slab thrown by the rioters. The injury was severe, completely shattering the left knee.² It was one of the three wounds District Inspector Milling received on the evening of July 12th. 1909.

John Charles Milling had been a District Inspector in Belfast since his promotion in January 1908. He had previously served in Antrim, Donegal and Fermanagh, where he was highly commended and received a number of awards for detective work and 'energetic and efficient conduct'.³ On concluding his service in Derrygoanelly, County Fermanagh, he was presented with an illuminated address.⁴ Milling was also a keen sportsman. He served both sides of the Northern community with equity and impartiality. Facing down rioting Nationalists on July 12th was just as much a part of his duty as ensuring that those responsible for driving up to 2,500 Catholics from their jobs at the Belfast shipyards (in June and July, 1912), were brought to trial. DI Milling investigated cases of violence and intimidation against Catholic and some Protestant shipyard workers who favoured Home Rule. He was shocked at the lack of cooperation from RIC colleagues at Henry Street Barracks, where the original complaints had been made. The cases came to court in late October and early November, 1912. On the first day a number of Protestants were found not guilty of attacks on eight Catholics. The following is Bonsall's account of what happened in the remaining cases:

'The Crown entered a *nolle prosequi* [prosecutor's application to discontinue criminal charges] in respect of the remaining seventeen cases, which led to a 'tiff' between the Judge and the Crown Solicitor. Some of the accused were rearrested (the legality of which action was questioned later) to appear at the Police Court next day before Garrett Nagle, the Catholic RM, and Mr. Davidson, a Borough Magistrate. They heard a number of routine cases before seven Magistrates, all of them stated to be Unionists and one said to be the Secretary of a Grand Orange Lodge, arrived unexpectedly and packed the Bench. When the contentious cases came up, the Crown asked the RM (as the magistrate before whom the informations had been sworn) to return the defendants for trial at a higher court. Nagle declined to do so on the grounds that he had no power under the Petty Sessions Act to exclude other Magistrates. The proceedings then degenerated into farce. The Crown Solicitor withdrew from the Court and after some consultation with magistrates and solicitors, so too did Garret Nagle RM and Mr. Davison JP. Then the Unionist Magistrates elected a Chairman and called the prisoners one by one, but the police [under DI Milling's command] would not produce them. Meanwhile, Mr. Davison took new dispositions elsewhere and eventually an improvised court was held at the 'police office', where Mr. Emerson JP sent the cases for trial, while irate Unionist JPs were kept out by DI Milling and a Constable.'⁵

The case was eventually resolved at the King's Bench Division of the Four Courts in Dublin. DI Milling received high praise for his integrity in carrying out his duties in trying circumstances.⁶ He was living up to the standards and expectations placed before him by his father and grandfather, both of whom had served in the RIC. His father, Oliver, rose to become County Inspector of the RIC for Mayo in 1887.⁷ The Milling family spent many holidays in Westport and when they moved there in 1887 they took a house at Barley Hill. The fact that a County Inspector was normally expected to reside at Castlebar says a great deal about the attachment of the Milling family to Westport. His grandfather, also Oliver, had received numerous awards for good service and for solving a murder case in 1863. He was also awarded the Constabulary Medal for Gallantry in action during the Fenian Rising of 1867.⁸

John Charles Milling was born to Oliver and Sissy Milling at Glasson, Athlone, County Westmeath, on March 27th, 1873.⁹ His father was a Sub Inspector at the time. The Millings belonged to a Protestant Sect called the Plymouth Brethren founded by John Derby in Dublin, 1827. The movement looked to the Bible for inspiration and observed Baptism and Communion. It rejected the formality of other established Churches and members referred to each other as *Brother*. It was, and still is, a Non Denominational Christian movement.

John Charles Milling married Elizabeth [Lilla] Malcomson on February 23rd, 1897 in Dublin under the authority of special licence granted by the Church of Ireland.¹⁰ Together they had three children; Robert b.1899, Marjorie b.1906 and Henry Desmond b.1915. Milling was 42 years old when he was appointed Resident Magistrate for County Mayo in January, 1915. He stayed in a Castlebar hotel for three months while searching

for a suitable home. In April, the family moved in to a house at Rosmalley on the shores of Clew Bay, two miles outside Westport. It was a relief for the family to be free from all the strife of Belfast. Watching the sun go down over the Reek and the Bay must have brought them great peace and contentment. It was to be short lived as the storm clouds were indeed beginning to gather.

The Home Rule Crisis of 1914 had abated with the outbreak of the First World War. Thousands of members of the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish National Volunteers, encouraged by their leaders, joined the British Army to fight for the 'rights and liberties of small nationalities' against 'the intolerable military despotism of Germany'.¹¹ It was John Redmond's controversial speech at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, where he offered Irish Nationalist support for the British Empire beyond Ireland's shores, which split the Volunteer movement.¹² Redmond's supporters became the National Volunteers while those who refused to join the British Army remained the Irish Volunteers. The Irish Republican Brotherhood had successfully infiltrated key posts in the Irish Volunteers and planned to make use of Britain's distraction in a foreign war to launch a bid for Irish freedom.

The Easter Rising of 1916 initiated a period of intense change as new social and political forces came head to head in a struggle to define the future of Ireland. The class structure of Edwardian society would be swept away and replaced by a new idealistic and committed younger generation. Milling, as an RM and former Police Officer, was deeply committed to the old regime. For him, Ireland was an integral part of the British Empire with all the opportunities and prestige that it brought. He was to be at the forefront of the British Government's attempt to resist those seeking to define a new Ireland. There were always going to be casualties when these two forces confronted each other, but few expected J.C. Milling, RM in Westport, County Mayo, to be one of the first.

As a new Resident Magistrate, Milling was well qualified. One third of the RMs in Ireland were drawn from the Officer Class of the RIC. Former Police Officers had the necessary professional and life experience, coupled with an in-depth knowledge of the legal system to work well as Resident Magistrates. However, Nationalist MPs complained at the appointment of English military and naval officers as RMs instead of suitably qualified Irish solicitors and barristers. The rising Catholic middle class was placing increasing pressure on Westminster for inclusion in and ownership of a changing Ireland.¹⁴ In spring 1907, Catholics accounted for just seventeen out of sixty seven RMs in office and by 1911 only 40% of RMs had legal qualifications.

Milling was one of four RMs in Mayo. The salary was just £425 for 3rd Grade RMs on appointment. It rose by £125 per annum on promotion to 2nd and 1st Grade. The salary had been set in 1870 and did not change until 1920.¹⁵ By 1916 two of the Mayo RMs were called up for military duty which left just Milling and Henry Tynan-Hinkson who lived at Brookhill, Claremorris. Henry and his wife, Katherine, were Catholics from Dublin. He had studied at Trinity. Katherine was an author.¹⁶ *The Years of the Shadow* (1919) and *The Wandering Years* (1922) describe her time at Brookhill in Claremorris. The books are a valuable testament of the life of the privileged in Ireland during, and just after the First World War.

Jack, as the Tynan-Hinksons knew the RM from Westport, became a close personal friend. Katherine offers an interesting insight into Milling's character. She said: 'He was the kindest and simplest of boys...irresistible to tease'.¹⁷ She goes on to describe how the Tynan-Hinksons would sing Jacobite songs and 'pretend to drink to a King over the water [which] was quite enough to set him [Milling] off'.¹⁸ Katherine described Jack Milling as 'so kind and hospitable...his hospitality was unbounded...he was always willing and eager to entertain his friends'. He loved to tell of the riots in Belfast. He used to remark, 'they have hard skulls in Belfast'.¹⁹ But there was another side to the character of Jack Milling. Katherine also refers to how her husband scolded him for 'the careless and imprudent things he was in the habit of saying publically'.²⁰ Milling, as a former District Inspector, was in the habit of stating things rather bluntly. *The Mayo News* regarded Tynan-Hinkson as 'a gentleman' but was reserving its judgement on Milling as he continued to be 'capable of saying and doing foolish things'.²¹ Milling RM had no time for those who did not respect the rule of law. As an Officer in the RIC he had taken the following Oath:

'I do swear that I will well and truly serve Our Sovereign, the Queen in the office of Constable without favour or affection, malice or ill-will; that I will see and cause Her Majesty's peace to be kept and preserved and that I will prevent, to the best of my power, all offences against the same; and that while I shall continue to hold the said office, I will, to the best of my skill and knowledge, discharge all the duties thereof, in the execution of warrants and otherwise, faithfully according to the law; and that I do not now belong, and that I will not, while I shall hold the said office, join, subscribe or belong to, any political society whatsoever, except the Society of Freemasons. So help me God.'²²

As a Resident Magistrate, John Charles Milling was to apply that Oath through the Courts. Milling travelled far and wide across the County in his duty as an RM. It brought him to Louisburgh, Newport, Castlebar, Balla, Kiltimagh and as far north as Ballina. Among the usual cases he dealt with were: robbery, assault, drunkenness, trespass, threatening and abusive language, no lights on a cart, non complying with the Sheep Dip Order, use of false weights and measures in a grocery and poteen making. The fines he imposed for these cases ranged from 1d [1 penny] to 1s [1 shilling]. Milling frequently called on those appearing before him on drinking or fighting charges to 'make a man of yourself and enlist'. His own son, Robert, joined up to fight in the War, serving in the Royal Irish Rifles. Milling had his application to enlist turned down.

The Easter Rising took place from April 24th to 30th in 1916. The following week, Milling and the local RIC had arrested and detained ten of the leading members of the local Irish Volunteers in Westport under terms of the Defence of the Realm Act [DoRA 1914]. Milling, along with the local District Inspector, Shore, were responsible for drawing up a list of Irish Volunteers to be deported to Frongoch in Wales and other British prisons. Milling was key to ensuring the RIC could legally detain and imprison Irish Volunteers. It was Milling's experience as a former Police Officer, combined with his

dedication and thoroughness as an RM, which made him such a threat to the Irish Volunteers in County Mayo. The 16th Lancers and the North Staffordshire Regiments arrived in Castlebar and more arrests followed with another twenty-two suspected Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin members being rounded up shortly afterwards. Among those imprisoned were Joseph Ring, Thomas Derrig, and P.J. Doris, Editor of *The Mayo News*. There were also two others sent to Frongoch who were to become highly significant later on; Joseph Ruddy and Charles Gavin.²³

Milling's reaction to the Rising, in identifying leading Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin members and ensuring their imprisonment, was not initially unpopular after 1916. The Rising was at first viewed with horror and disbelief and was seen as an act of disloyalty as thousands of fellow Irishmen were dying in the trenches of Flanders. The Rural District Council of Castlebar passed a resolution as follows:

'We...register our deep regret for, and resentment against, the deplorable and insane action of a section of Volunteers in this country, who at the time of terrible crisis in her history, seized the opportunity to disrupt the country, to precipitate civil war, to discredit the Irish Party and the Irish leader, and to bring irreparable damage and disaster to the prospects of prosperity and progress...?'



TOM DERRIG, EDWARD (NED) MOANE & JOE RING.

Copies of the resolution were sent to all District Councils, the Lord Lieutenant, John Redmond MP and the four Mayo MPs.²⁴ The Claremorris Board of Guardians also condemned the Rising but were more tempered in their use of language stating 'the Rising was a deplorable thing'. They stated their full confidence in Redmond and Dillon and felt it of paramount importance that Mayo show the Government it was in no way identified with anything that had happened.²⁵ Milling was therefore acting within a groundswell of public opinion which initially opposed the actions of Pearse, Clarke and Connolly. The executions of the leaders of the Rising, carried out under Prime Minister Asquith's direction and General Maxwell's orders, were to dramatically alter public opinion and initiate the departure of British rule after nearly 800 years. They were also to completely transform the Irish political landscape and tip the country into nearly a decade of conflict.

Identifying the leading members of the local Irish Volunteers was not difficult for Milling and the RIC. The Volunteers paraded in public and in uniform quite frequently. The RIC recorded all of their names, addresses and movements. If leading suspects travelled to Dublin by train, a telegram was sent from local RIC Barracks to Dublin Castle advising them of the departure, expected time of arrival and a description of the individuals concerned. Detailed notes were also taken of speeches or instructions given by members of the Volunteers. The RIC file on Joe Ring, O/C Westport Irish Volunteer Company, shows how thorough the police were. In this file, compiled in November, 1917, the RIC identified thirty-four of the leading Irish Volunteers in the Westport District complete with address, age, occupation, activities for the Volunteers and police witnesses. They also identified eleven key members of the Fianna [Sinn Féin Boy Scouts] along with address, occupation and constabulary remarks on same. The detail is astonishing and most of those named were to become key figures in the War of Independence in the West.²⁶ The RIC had the ability to incapacitate the Irish Volunteer Movement in West Mayo for many years had it been allowed to act more quickly and decisively.

It is evident from the RIC file on Joe Ring that Milling and the local RIC realised the danger posed by the Volunteers they had identified. The file describes the illegal assembly and drilling carried out by Joe Ring's Company of Volunteers in Westport on 4th November, 1917. The activities of the Volunteers that day posed no direct threat in terms of military operations. Instead, it was a show of strength, calculated to provoke the British authorities. Ring, described as 'a released Rebellion prisoner', assisted by Edward [Ned] Moane, Vice O/C, marched their Company of one hundred men from the Sinn Féin Hall, out past the Workhouse to the Quay. There they engaged in foot drill and returned to town 'at the double'. They were observed by Sergeant Hayes and Constables O'Brien, Sullivan, Holland and Tiernan. Each of the constables made a written report of the Volunteers' activities. D.I. Shore sent the report to the County Inspector, Steadman, who in turn sent it to British Army Headquarters Midlands & Connaught, highlighting 'active and locally prominent Sinn Féiners' with a recommendation for the prosecution of Joe Ring, Drummindoo, and Edward [Ned] Moane, Carrowbawn, of the Volunteers and William Malone, High Street, and Peter Kelly, Peter Street, of the Fianna. The Midlands and Connaught HQ, now alerted to the threat posed by the Westport Volunteers, forwarded the Report to Irish Command HQ at Parkgate, Dublin, informing them they had issued

County of Mayo - Dist of Westport - List of names of men identified by the Police as having taken part in Illegal Drill of Sinn Feiners at Westport 4-11-17

No	Names	Addresses	Age	Occupation	Acts done	Witnesses to prove Acts
1	Michael J Ring	Drummendoo	27	Farmer	In Command + gave words in drill movements	Nos 1 to 6
2	Edward Moane	Carrowbawn	28	Do [ditto - meaning as above]	2nd in Command	do
3	John McDonagh	High Street	47	Plasterer	marched	No 1,2,3,5, + 6
4	Patrick Kettrick	do	21	Messenger Lipton's	do	do
5	John Flynn	Bridge St	23	Lime Burner	do	do
6	Bartly Cryan	High St	27	Shop Assistant	do	do
7	Martin Keane	Bridge St	23	do	do	do
8	Mick Higgins	do	25	do	do	do
9	John J Franelly	Shop St	27	do	do	do
10	John Berry	High St	20	do	do	do
11	Patrick Haran	James St	28	Solicitor's Clerk	do	do
12	John Clarke	Altamont St	20	Apprentice Fitter	do	do
13	Owen Reilly	Fair Green	24	Assistant Cattle Dealer	do	do
14	Charles Gavin	High St	20	Shop Ast	do	Nos 1,2,3, + 6
15	Patrick O'Mara	Carnalurgan	22	Farmer's Son	do	No 2
16	John Hestor	Westport Quay	30	Labourer	do	do
17	Stephen Burke	Doon	24	Farmer's Son	do	Nos 1, 2, 3, + 5
18	Patrick McGing	Do	32	do	do	No 2
19	James McGing	High St	27	Tailor	do	Nos 1,2,3, 5 + 6
20	Martin Geraghty	James St	24	Butcher	do	do
21	Joseph Sullivan	Octagon	22	Tailor	do	do
22	Patrick Heraty	Altamont	21	Butcher	do	1,2,3 + 5
23	Michael Massey	James St	27	Shop Ast	do	1 + 2
24	James Rush	Shop St	19	Shop Assistant	Marched	Nos 1,2,3,5 + 6
25	Michael Kearns	Mill St	21	Tailor	do	Do
26	James McKenna	Carrowbawn	21	Farmer's son	Do	Do
27	Michael J. Giblin	Churchfield	24	Do	Do	Do
28	Gus Lennon	High St	25	Tailor	Do	Do
29	Michael J. O'Malley	Ardoley	26	Farmer's son	Do	Do
30	Thomas Reidy	Bridge St	19	Shop Assistant	Do	Nos 1,2,3 + 5
31	Michael McNally	Peter St	26	Tailor	Do	Do
32	John McEvilly	Shop St	22	Shop Assistant	Do	Do
33	James Kearney	Hill St	20	Tailor	Do	Nos 1 + 3
34	John Gibbons	Quay Road	19	Teacher	Do	No 1

Note in Col 7 the Numbers shown are the Witnesses as follows:

1	Sergt	Michael Hayes
2	Const	Patrick O'Brien
3	"	Patrick Sullivan
4	"	Francis Holland
5	"	John Tiernan
6	"	Francis J. Butler

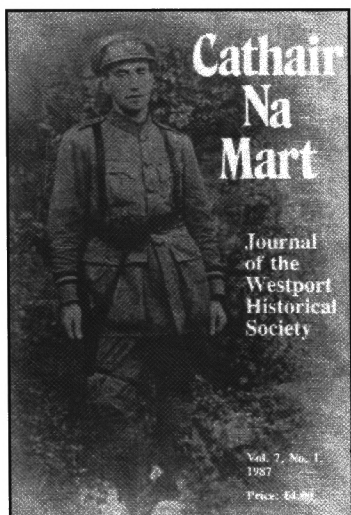
Co Inspector

D/I Shore

County Inspector Steadman with instructions to arrest Ring and Moane and 'for them to be lodged in Galway Prison'. They awaited instructions as to whether Ring and Moane were to be tried by Court Martial or 'dealt with by the Civil Authorities'. The General Officer Commanding, the Under-Secretary for Ireland and the Attorney General were all involved in the decision to cancel the order for arrest and not to prosecute Ring or Moane by Court Martial or even under Civil Authority. They simply advised observation of further movements.²⁷ This must have been a bitter blow for Milling and the local police. It may also explain why Milling now began to apply the law with greater force to those who came before him identified with Irish Nationalism. The Volunteers were unaware of their lucky escape. They became more confident in confronting the RIC in public and continued their public marching and drilling. 1918 was to be a long and difficult year of confrontation and public disorder. Milling, as RM was to continuously face Ring and his Company of Volunteers in the streets and courthouses of Westport and Castlebar.

It began on January 19th, 1918 with the visit of Éamon De Valera to Castlebar. He was welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd of about 3,000 people on the Mall. De Valera reviewed Companies of Irish Volunteers, drawn from across the county, to the pipes and drums of the Bohola Marching Band. He then delivered a rousing speech from the steps of the courthouse to the cheers and delight of the crowd. De Valera stated that 'if the English were serious about peace, all they had to do was clear out of this country'. He continued:

'We want no more pledges or Acts on the Statute Book...England should acknowledge our right and justice to our own complete Independence...We will man this country and no German, American, English or Dutch will come into the country except across our dead bodies.'²⁸



JOE RING

This speech, from the only surviving Commandant of the Easter Rising was inspiring to the young Volunteers and served to strengthen their resolve. For Milling, the speech was inflammatory, especially as it was delivered in his own District. On Thursday, March 14th, 1918, Ned Moane was arrested and charged with illegal drilling and unlawful assembly, before Milling RM at Westport courthouse. Ring turned out the local Volunteer Company to support Moane by singing, cheering and roaring support outside the courthouse. The RIC baton charged the Volunteers. It developed into a riot which Milling had been familiar with during his time in Belfast. Bricks, bottles and paving slabs were thrown at the police who in turn inflicted many casualties on the Volunteers. The plate glass windows of the town shops were smashed. Moane was given one month

in Sligo Prison. The violence continued for another two nights. Arising from the riots Milling issued warrants for the arrest of William O'Malley, Joe Ring, Thomas Ketterick, Charles Gavin and William Malone. They appeared in Westport at a Special Court in the RIC Barracks. Ring said 'We are Soldiers of the Republic and refuse to recognise the Court'. They appeared wearing their Volunteer caps which had to be forcibly removed. Ketterick then lit a cigarette! Ring also said that the Resident Magistrate had already decided on the case as he had said he 'would give Ring a long rest in the hotel in the town.'²⁹ Milling ignored Ring and remanded the five in custody to appear in Castlebar Court on March 20th. The proceedings in Castlebar turned into a circus when the Volunteers turned their backs on Milling and began to sing 'The Soldiers' Song'. Milling said O'Malley, whose case had been heard first, was a 'gentleman' but called Ring and the others 'street roughs' engaged in 'hooliganism' and 'blackguardism'. O'Malley received a one month sentence while Malone was acquitted [his name had been omitted from the charge sheet]. The others received six months hard labour at Sligo Prison. Milling had heard the case with another RM from Galway called Kilbride. As they left the Court the crowd allowed Kilbride to pass but surged forward howling abuse at Milling and shouting 'Up the Irish Republic' and 'Up De Valera'. The police drew their batons and cleared the way for the harassed RM. Baton charges continued down the Mall to disperse the crowd.

The people of Castlebar were not used to this level of violence and the Editorial in the *Connaught Telegraph* pronounced the following:

'Youngsters from Westport caused the unrest. Conduct of this kind will not free Ireland but tighten the chains around her'.³¹

This was not the way the young Irish Volunteers saw things. They had taken an Oath to the Irish Republic, established at Easter 1916. Most of the Volunteers were in their twenties. It took considerable courage for young men to stand up to the established order in the form of Milling and the RIC. Milling, however, lacked flexibility in handling the Volunteers. This facilitated further confrontation. Ring exploited this and receiving another prison sentence from Milling further enhanced his reputation as a leader among the Volunteers. Milling also managed to alienate moderate public opinion when, in August 1918, he refused to sign a licence for the Castlebar Town Club as the priest, who was one of the signatories of the Club, had signed his name in Irish.³² Nor was the obstruction to Milling's Court Sittings confined to Westport and Castlebar. In September 1918, Captain Stephen Donnelly, of the Ballina Volunteer Company, appeared before Milling on a charge of resisting arrest and assault on the RIC. Donnelly and his Company had refused to disperse when ordered and were baton charged by the RIC. Donnelly was knocked unconscious and came to in the RIC Barracks. He refused to recognise Milling's authority or that of the Court and was sentenced to five months imprisonment which he served at Sligo, Derry and Belfast Prisons.³³ When another case involving Milling and riotous behaviour occurred in Charlestown in January, 1919, the Bishop of Achonry intervened.

Milling and the local RIC had identified twenty-two people responsible for undermining the Court. Dublin Castle advised Milling to drop the case.³⁴ He was becoming a liability to the British administration as resistance to his Court Sittings was growing, thus undermining the dignity and rule of British Law.

Worried for the safety of his family, Milling had moved from Rosmalley into the town of Westport, to a house on the Newport Road, in October, 1918. He had received a number of death threats and this was followed by an arson attack on his boat during the summer. In January, 1919, his close friend Henry Tynan-Hinkson died. Milling felt very isolated. In writing, perhaps his last letter, to Henry's wife Katherine, he said:

'They are working me like a Galley Slave. I have Belmullet and Ballina Districts and am always on the road. Ye Gods, who would be an RM?...I feel so lonely and I cannot bear this country now.'³⁵

Milling applied for a transfer to County Antrim. His time in Westport was drawing to a close. Unfortunately, the transfer was too slow coming through and

'...John Charles Milling was foully murdered by bullets fired at him by some person or persons unknown, on the night of Saturday, 29th March at 11 o'clock, p.m.'³⁶



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

He was shot a number of times through the drawing room window facing the street as he wound the clock before retiring to bed. Staggering across the hall and into the dining room, another shot was fired as he collapsed onto the floor. Despite being in great pain, suffering from shock and internal bleeding, Milling survived until the following night when he finally passed away. He was attended by two local doctors and a specialist surgeon who had travelled urgently from Dublin. Milling could not be saved and died claiming that 'they have got me at last'.³⁷

News of his death was received with disbelief and dismay throughout the country. People were united in their condemnation of Milling's assassination. The Catholic Administrator for Westport, Rev. Canavan, informed his Sunday morning congregation of the 'dastardly attempt on Milling's life with bitter sorrow'.³⁸ The Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. Gilmartin, condemned the murder and in writing to Rev. Canavan said:

'If the perpetrator is not insane, he is a criminal of the first order, and it is the duty of all good citizens to do all in their power to bring to justice one who is an enemy of God, an enemy of society and an enemy of Ireland'.³⁹

The night Milling died a public meeting was held in the Town Hall in Castlebar. A resolution was passed expressing 'utter abhorrence at the dastardly outrage'.⁴⁰ By Thursday, April 3rd, the Military had arrived in the town and the RAF, based at Castlebar, flew over the surrounding area continuously. The funeral was held later that day. Lilla Milling was too distressed to attend the funeral. The local RIC sergeants carried the RM's coffin from his home to the Protestant Cemetery. The family were represented by his brother, Richard, his sister, Hilda and his brother-in-law County Inspector Walsh, Galway. Prayers and hymns were offered by the Plymouth Brethren who had travelled from Dublin. Attending also were the Marquis and Marchioness of Sligo, the Earl of Altamont and many Protestant and Catholic clergy from the district.

A meeting of the Urban District Council of Westport was held afterwards where they deeply regretted 'this foul stain upon their town'. They added that in 41 years of Land Agitation no outrage like this occurred in the town. They were, however afraid that the innocent would now suffer for the guilty.⁴¹ Curiously, only five members, (of the nine) were present; Myles Hawkshaw (Chairman), M. Dever V.C., P. McBride, J. Gilboy and P. McGreal. The Town Clerk, Egan, was also there. A resolution was passed expressing:

'...our strongest condemnation of the horrible outrage committed in the town on last Saturday night on the late Mr. Milling RM, by which he lost his life'.⁴²

Martial Law was imposed on the district of Westport. It restricted the movement of the local people and severely restricted business. Lilla Milling lodged a claim for £5,000 at the loss of her husband. It was later raised to £6,000 and was levied on the local rate payers. Some, like Lord Sligo, attempted to exempt themselves from payment. The money to be paid became known as 'the Milling Tax'.

Milling's murder had all the hallmarks of the type of killing to be carried out by Collins' Squad throughout the War of Independence. It was brutal and carried out up close and personal with the aim of killing the victim outright. Milling's death had a profound impact on the course of the War of Independence in Mayo. The RMs in the county began to hand out more lenient sentences and even acquittals. It became impossible for them to bring Irish Volunteers to court who were now sent to Galway for trial by Court Martial. The British Court system eventually collapsed with the establishment of the Republican Courts. The Volunteers in Mayo carried out many actions during the conflict which followed. There were no more murders in the dead of night of British officials, RIC, Tans or spies. The same courtesy was not to be reciprocated by the Black and Tans or the Auxiliaries. Violence had been unleashed and was to be visited on the county until 1924. That Milling was a warm and caring family man is beyond question. Professionalism and integrity were the hallmarks of his career as a District Inspector and as a Resident Magistrate. His conduct drew admiration, praise and respect from many. But it was to be his deep commitment to the rule of law under a British administration and the manner in which he dispensed justice in court which made him such a threat to the Irish Volunteers.

It was a threat which some people felt had to be removed. The perceived safety of one's own home was no longer a reality in the county. John Charles Milling was to be the first of many such deaths in Mayo.



MILLING RESIDENCE AT NEWPORT ROAD, WESTPORT.

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National Archives of Ireland, Microfilm, RIC Officers Register, MFA 24/16, & 24/10.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ Bonsall, Penny. *The Irish R.M.s., The Resident Magistrates in the British Administration of Ireland*, Four Courts Press, Dublin. Pg. 135. [An Illuminated Address was a highly decorated manuscript with statement of appreciation for outstanding service dedicated to the recipient.]
- ⁵ *Ibid.* Pp 137-138 [Bonsall reports from accounts of the proceedings recorded in the *Irish News*, 1st, 2nd and 5th November, 1912.]
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- ⁶ *Ibid.* Pg. 138.
- ⁷ Home Office Records: HO 184 Series. National Archives of Ireland, Microfilm, RIC Officers, MFA 24/16, General Register of RIC MFA 24/6
- ⁸ Home Office Records: HO 184 Series. National Archives of Ireland, Microfilm, RIC Officers MFA 24/16, General Register of RIC 24/10
- ⁹ National Registry for Births, Deaths and Marriages. Birth Certificate of John Charles Milling.

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