

# Republican and R.I.C. Casualties, 1919-1924, the Mayo Connection

*Vincent Keane*

## Republican Reconstruction in Mayo 1920-1924

It is most appropriate that on the eightieth anniversary of the ending of the Anglo/Irish War that the names of those Irish Republican Army members who died in that conflict should be remembered. Too often, historians have glossed over the incidents of this war without paying due respect to the heroic dead. When the Civil War ended in 1923 the Republican Movement set about reconstruction and the reorganisation of its various groups. The people who supported the IRA in both wars had endured much hardship and quite often they were refused any compensation by the courts or from the special funds that had been set up for such purposes by the new Free State Government. There were still Republicans in prisons and internment camps, without trial, up to late 1924. Of prime importance was the support of the dependents of these prisoners, and for this purpose the Irish Republican Prisoners Dependents Fund (IRPDF) was set up. The Irish White Cross had been set up in 1920 and large amounts of cash flowed in from Irish emigrants, especially America. From the IRPDF emerged the Reconstruction Committee in 1924 and its brief was to alleviate hardship among ex-Republican prisoners who now found that employment was impossible to find, unless of course they lowered their principles and signed the declaration of allegiance form to the Free State.

Orders went out from IRA GHQ to all Brigades in 1925 to compile lists for their areas of those that had died as a result of the conflicts of 1919-1921 and 1922-1923. Also to be included on the lists were those that had suffered torture and hardship. The Brigadier for Mayo at this time was Tom Ruane of Ballina and he convened a Brigade meeting for the purpose of compiling the list for the North Mayo Brigade area. Structures had changed dramatically since the ending of the Civil War and Mayo was organised into North and South Brigades; the old 4th Western Division and West Mayo Brigade structures had now been replaced. For example, Westport and Louisburgh were now designated as 'B' Company, 1st Battalion, North Mayo Brigade. The completed lists eventually found their way to GHQ in 1926 and what follows in this article is taken as being the definitive list for the north Mayo area. It must be stressed that there were many more cases that could be cited here as examples of hardship but many people did not seek assistance and put up with their lot without complaining; consequently the true picture of what the people endured may never emerge.

## **North Mayo Brigade**

**Caine, Mrs. Mary**, Corrick, Towneyoogane, Newport. Mother of the Caine brothers who spent their whole time on active service. Anthony was wounded and interned for seven months in 1922/3. Peter was imprisoned at Westport but escaped and was on the run until July 1923. He was then re-arrested and interned at Harepark, Co. Kildare. On his release he was charged with armed robbery and sentenced to five years. He was finally released in December 1925 unconditionally. He is now an inmate of Castlebar Lunatic asylum. His treatment whilst at Maryborough Prison was the centre of much attention.

**Carabine, Mrs**, Belmullet. Two sons were on active service during last war and were detained during 1922/3. One of these boys was wounded in the head whilst in Mountjoy. She depends on having the boys working.

**Collins, Mrs**, Geesala P.O. Erris. Was imprisoned in Galway 1920-1 for six months. Her son Michael was interned at Ballykinlar during Tan War. Three of her sons were on the run for eleven months during the last war. Her new Ford car was commandeered by Free State forces 'for having sympathies with the Irregulars' and no compensation was given.

**Corrigan, Brian**, Owenduff, Tonlague, Achill. On active service 1921 and late war. (Civil War).

**Dixon, James**, Corlough, Belmullet. Was on wholtime active service during both wars and on the run. Was imprisoned in 1924. He is in poor health and the only support for his mother and invalid brother.

**Donoghue, John**, Lakefield, Shraigh [Srah?]. Interned from Christmas 1922 until Christmas 1923. Is now in poor health and unable to support widowed mother.

**Fergus, Edward** and **Bernard Fergus**, Acres, Newport. Active service in Tan and recent war. Both were arrested and suffered much.

**Gavin, Charles**, Mill Street, Westport. Imprisoned 1920, active service 1921 and imprisoned again in 1923. Has lost his employment.

**Gibbons, John R.** Castlebar Street, Westport. On active service during Tan and recent war. Unable to work.

**Healy, Michael**, Ardnaree, Ballina. Was involved in both campaigns and is now laid up in the Sanatorium. Brother killed in action in 1923.

**Hegarty, Peter**, Bofeenaun P.O, Crossmolina. Severely wounded in hip on arrest. Spent one year in prison. As nine pieces of bone were extracted during an operation he now has a short leg. He is unable for any manual work.

**Killelea, Mark**, Castlebar. On active service during last war. Had operation on foot as a result of injury in Tan War. Was forty days on hunger strike and now awaiting trial. Native of Ballinasloe.

**Kilroy brothers (John and Michael)**, Business premises destroyed by Tans. In very poor circumstances.

**Kilroy, James**, Ballyglass P.O. Belmullet. Arrested in August 1920 and spent time in Portland and Dartmoor prisons. Arrested again in 1923 and imprisoned until 1924. Is in very poor circumstances.

**Lavelle, Michael**, Barrack St. Belmullet. Badly beaten by the Tans in 1921. Imprisoned in Galway for four months, released because of bad health. Was beaten again by Tans on his return to Belmullet.

**Malone, James**, (Broddie) Westport. Wholtime active service in both wars. Two years in prison, still has bullets in leg from the date of his arrest in 1922. Is very disabled at present.—

**McDonald, Michael**, Skerdagh, Newport. Was on fulltime active service in both the Tan and last war. His health broke whilst in Galway and Tintown Internment Camps. Is still confined to bed most of the time (1925).

**McHale, Miss Annie**, The Bog, Rehins, Ballina. Imprisoned 1922/3.

**McMenamin, Mrs. Pat**. George's Street, Newport. Daughter was in prison, now in poor circumstances.

**McMenamin, William**, Bracklagh, Glenhest. Was in jail and badly beaten by the Tans. Parents in poor circumstances.

**Moane, Edward**, Carrabawn, Westport. Imprisoned in 1917, active service in Tan and late war.

**Moran, Martin**, (ex-British internee), Shraigh [Srah?]. Arrested October 1920, imprisoned until January 1922. Spent his time at Derry, Sligo, Mountjoy and Dartmoor prisons. Now married and in poor circumstances.

**Moran, Thomas**, Mulranny. Was in prison 1922/3. Premises wrecked by Free State troops.

**Mulderrig, Michael W**, Crossmolina. Health has failed completely since he was on active service. Is now crippled.

**Mulloy, Paddy**, Railway Cottages, Tiernaur, Carrowbeg, Newport. Wounded in nine places at Kilmeena Ambush, 1921. Was imprisoned during last war, has aged mother to support. Received £50 from Pension Board.

**Munnely, John**, Co. Councillor, Carrowmore, Belmullet. Arrested 1923 and held for nine months. Consequently his little homestead at Erris went to waste.

**O'Hara, Miss B.**, George's Street, Newport. Was in prison and now unable to work.

**O'Hara, Mrs**, Knox Street, Ballina. Daughter died as a result of doing difficult dispatch work during both wars. Other daughter was in prison 1922.

**O'Malley, James**, Cross, Louisburgh. Active service in 1920. Beaten by the Tans, paralysed as a result.

**O'Toole, Anthony**, The Square, Louisburgh. On active service in late war, received injuries to eyes, prevented from emigrating.

**Staunton, Michael**, Cloggernagh, Islandeady. Spent nine months on the run and nine months in prison 1920-1. Was also in prison in last war and had his premises wrecked. Is now in bad health owing to a cart going over his body.

**Sweeney, John**, Kinockillane P.O. Ardagh. On active service and imprisoned during Tan War, active service and imprisonment for sixteen months during last war. Sister was also in jail and mother is widowed.

## **RIC Casualties 1919-1922, the Mayo Connection**

New publications on the War of Independence and the making available of archival material has made the task of compiling casualty lists from this period of our national history much easier. Students of the War of Independence in Mayo are familiar with the names of those who died from the IRA ranks in the county, but what of those who were on the opposite side of the conflict – the

RIC? Mayo had the reputation of being one of the largest suppliers of recruits to the RIC and it was therefore inevitable that they would suffer proportionally in a conflict such as existed in the country from 1919 to 1922. Two lists have been compiled from records, one list deals with RIC personnel who were actually killed within the county, and the second list is one that details the deaths of Mayo-born members of the force outside of the county.

As the War of Independence developed, the RIC began to reduce its numerical strength. This was due to retirements, dismissals, resignations, being ostracised, a shortfall in recruiting and an increasing amount of casualties. To overcome this situation the British Government started a recruiting campaign in Britain to supplement the depleted ranks of the RIC. On taking up duty in Ireland these new recruits were fitted out with police jackets (bottle green) and army trousers (khaki), and soon they were to become known as the 'Black and Tans'.<sup>1</sup> In the various records available these new members of the RIC are easily identified as they all have force numbers which exceed the number 70,000. They were official recruits to the RIC and not a separate force, as many have perceived them. Nine 'Tans' were to die in Mayo in what in republican parlance became known as the 'Tan War'. The activities of the 'Black and Tans' are well documented elsewhere in the many books relating to the War of Independence. This short article simply documents the names and places of death of those men of the RIC who died in Mayo and the Mayo men of the RIC that died elsewhere.

The records show that twenty-three members of the RIC were killed in Mayo; eight of these can be considered as 'Black and Tans', as they had an official number that exceeded 70,000. Twenty-six Mayo born RIC members were killed across the country; four of these were 'Black and Tans'. A typical Irish RIC man was the son of a small farmer and had no other occupation prior to his entering the force.

### **Part 1: RIC fatalities within County Mayo**

**Armstrong, Sergeant Thomas** (53611). Mortally wounded outside the Moy Hotel, Knox Street, Ballina, on 21 July 1920. He was fifty-six years of age, born in Cavan, and had a family of eleven.<sup>2</sup>

**Beckett, Constable Harry** (80290). Twenty-one years of age and from Lancashire in England. He had but one month's service in the RIC before being killed at the disastrous ambush at Kilmeena on 19 May 1921.<sup>3</sup>

**Blythe, Constable Sydney** (78576). Twenty-six years of age and from Norfolk in England. He had four months service in the RIC and was a former soldier of the British Army. He was killed at the Carrowkennedy ambush on 2 June 1921.<sup>4</sup>

**Browne, Constable James** (79746). Another casualty of Carrowkennedy, Browne was twenty-three years of age and from Roxborough in England. He had but three months' service in the RIC and was a former soldier in the British Army.

**Butler, Sergeant Francis** (59260). Sergeant Butler was a Roscommon man and aged fifty-six. He was wounded by a long distance shot by Jim Moran (Tiernaur) of the West Mayo Brigade Flying Column outside the RIC barracks in Newport and died later in Castlebar Infirmary on 19 May 1921.<sup>5</sup>

**Coughlan, Sergeant John** (55450). Sergeant Coughlan was killed at Derrewkillew whilst on a cycle patrol from Drummin RIC Barracks on the night of 22 March 1921. A chance encounter with some officers of the West Mayo Brigade Flying Column led to a gun battle, with Coughlan being mortally wounded by the Brigade O.C, Michael Kilroy. Sergeant Coughlan was a Mayo man with twenty-nine years' service in the RIC. He was single and aged forty-eight years. This gun battle occurred on the road from Carrowkennedy to Oughty at the lane leading to the home of Paddy Hoban at Derrykillew.

**Cranny, Ex-Constable.** The IRA targeted many ex members of the RIC, and at Ballyhaunis on 6 April 1922 two such members were attacked. Cranny died and ex-Constable Butler was seriously injured.

**Creegan, Sergeant Francis** (59658). Sergeant Creegan was well known to the Westport Battalion IRA. He was killed at Carrowkennedy on 2 June 1921. Two weeks earlier he had played a prominent part in the Kilmeena ambush. A native of Fermanagh he lived at John's Row Westport; he was aged forty-three, was a married man and had twenty-one years' service in the RIC.

**Doherty, Constable John** (57416). Died at Carrowkennedy on 2 June 1921. He was Roscommon-born, was forty-seven years of age and had twenty-five years' service in the RIC.

**Doogue, Constable Pierce** (60412). Doogue was a Laois man and stationed at Ballycroy RIC Barracks. He was killed during a riot at the fair in Belmullet on 15 June 1920 by a stone thrown by the rioters. He was a single man, aged forty-two and with eighteen years' service in the RIC.<sup>6</sup>

**Dowling, Constable Thomás** (60016). Dowling was also a casualty of the Carrowkennedy ambush. He succumbed to his injuries at the County Infirmary, Castlebar, on 7 June 1921. He was forty-six years of age, had twenty-one years' service and was a native of Laois.

**Foody, Ex-Sergeant Anthony** (56773). Foody had retired from the RIC on 19 June 1921. He was found shot dead at Carralavin, Bonniconlon, on 7 July 1921. He was a native of Fermanagh.

**French, Constable William** (75811). French was twenty-five years old and a native of Gloucester, England. He had but six months' RIC service before being killed at Carrowkennedy on 2 June 1921.<sup>7</sup>

**Higgins, Constable Thomas** (62730). This constable was killed just over the Mayo border whilst on a cycle patrol in the direction of Dromore, Co. Sligo on 1 July 1921. He was attached to the Ballina RIC Barracks. Higgins was thirty-seven and single; he had fourteen years' RIC service and was a native of Galway.

**Hopkins, Constable Thomas** (70690). Hopkins was home on leave from his post at Dromore RIC Barracks, County Tyrone. He was shot dead near his home at Lefane on 7 May 1921. He had served one year in the RIC.

**King, Constable John** (63068). Constable King was on the same patrol as Constable Higgins above. He died on 1 June 1921. King was thirty-six years of age and had thirteen years' RIC service. He, too, was a native of County Galway.

**Maguire, Constable Joseph** (66577). The Crown forces were engaged in a large-scale round-up in the mountainous area of Skirdagh, north of Newport, after the Kilmeena ambush, when Constable Maguire was shot dead on 23 May 1921. Maguire was single and was twenty-eight years of age. He had nine years' service and was a native of Fermanagh.<sup>8</sup>

**Oakes, Constable Herbert** (78855). Oakes was killed at the Tourmakeady ambush on 3 May 1921. He was an ex-soldier of the British Army and was a native of London. He was twenty-four years of age, married and with three months' RIC service.<sup>9</sup>

**O'Regan, Constable Patrick** (67167). O'Regan died at Tourmakeady on the same date. He was a twenty-six year old single man from Clare with eight years' RIC service.

**Power, Constable William** (61221). Power was also killed at the Tourmakeady ambush. He was a Waterford man with eighteen years' RIC service. He was aged thirty-nine and was a single man.

**Regan, Constable John** (80138). Regan was the fourth RIC member to die at Tourmakeady. He was an ex-soldier of the British Army and a native of Stafford

in England. Regan had but one month's service in the RIC and was aged forty-one.

**Stevenson, District Inspector Edward James** (72024). Stevenson was killed at Carrowkennedy on 2 June 1921 and was the highest-ranking officer of the RIC to die in action in Mayo. He was only twenty-two years of age (there was a two-tier entry into the RIC) and was a former officer in the British Army. He was single, had one year's service in the RIC and was from County Down.

**Stephens, Constable William** (73707). Constable Stephens was killed by gunfire at Ballyhaunis on the night of 29 March 1921. He was an ex-soldier of the British Army with five months' RIC service. Stephens was a native of London and was a single man aged forty-one.

## **Part 2: Members of the RIC, natives of Mayo, who died outside of the county**

**Bloxham, Sergeant Henry** (58519). Serg. Bloxham was killed at Waterfall, five miles south-west of Cork City on 21 January 1921. He had been attached to Ballincollig RIC Barracks. He was forty-one years of age, married, with twenty-two years' service in the RIC.

**Burke, Sergeant Michael** (66998). Burke was stationed at Swatragh RIC Barracks, Co. Derry, and was shot dead in an ambush outside that village on the night of 5 June 1921. He was a single man from the Ballinrobe district, was aged twenty-eight years and had eight years' service in the RIC.<sup>10</sup>

**Carroll, Constable John** (62341). Attached to Limerick City RIC Barracks, Carroll was shot dead at the Railway Hotel, Limerick on the night of 12 June 1920. He had thirteen years' RIC service, was single and aged thirty-eight.

**Clarke, Constable Joseph** (no number available). All that is recorded about this man is that he was a native of Mayo and was thirty-one years of age. He was shot dead in Cork City on 4 November 1918.

**Clarke, Constable Patrick** (61068). Clarke was attached to Cliffoney RIC Barracks, Co. Sligo, and was shot dead at Creevykeel Cross on 27 June 1921. He was a forty-three year old single man with eighteen years' RIC service.

**Frizelle, Sergeant Frederick** (59994). Frizelle was attached to Derry City RIC Barracks and was killed with two other Special Constables on the night of 3 May 1922. He was a forty-one year old married man with twenty-one years' RIC service.



**Gaughan, Constable John** (64181). Gaughan was stationed at Tullow, Co. Carlow. He was killed with another constable at Tullow on 8 September 1920. He was a single man, aged thirty-four, and had twelve years' RIC service.

**Gibbons, Sergeant Tobias** (60748). Sergeant Gibbons was attached to the Gort RIC Barracks, Co. Galway. He was shot dead in bed at St. Bride's Nursing Home, Galway, where he had been recuperating from dropsy. He was a single man with twenty years' service and was aged forty-four.<sup>11</sup> His brother John identified the body. Sergeant Gibbons's home address was given as the Fair Green, Westport. An RIC constable from Oughterard was also killed in this attack.

**Heffron, Constable Thomas** (69264). Constable Heffron was a native of Doonfeeny, Ballycastle, and was shot dead at the Railway View Hotel in Belfast on 26 January 1921. He had three years' RIC service, was aged twenty-six and was single.

**Higgins, Sergeant John** (55504). Sergeant Higgins was attached to Lecky Road RIC Barracks in Derry City. He was shot to death at Creggan Road on 1 April 1921. He was a widower aged forty-nine and had twenty-eight years' RIC service.

**Kelly, Constable Thomas** (64253). Kelly and a fellow constable were killed at Ballisodare Railway Station on 19 April 1921. He was married with twelve years' RIC service and was aged thirty-seven.

**Lynch, Constable John** (61290). Lynch was attached to the RIC Barracks at Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. His patrol was ambushed at Ballough, Lusk, Co. Dublin on 13 January 1921. He had seventeen years' RIC service, was thirty-eight years old and was married.

**McCann, Constable Patrick** (70598). McCann was killed accidentally at Cappamore RIC Barracks, Co. Limerick on 26 December 1920. He was aged thirty, was single, with four months' service.<sup>12</sup>

**McDonnell, Constable James** (50616). Constable McDonnell was to die on the day that the first Dáil Éireann was meeting in Dublin. This is the incident recognised as the start of the War of Independence. He died at Soloheadbeg with a fellow constable. McDonnell was aged fifty-seven years and was married with five children. He was a native of Belmullet and had thirty-six years' RIC service.<sup>13</sup>

**McDonald, Constable Patrick** (70694). McDonald was accidentally shot dead at Edenderry RIC Barracks whilst it was under attack on 3 June 1921. Nothing further is recorded about this man.<sup>14</sup>

**McGuire, Constable John** (69743). McGuire was one of six RIC members killed at Rineen, Co. Clare on 22 September 1920. He had one year's RIC service, was twenty-eight years of age and was single.<sup>15</sup>

**Moran, Constable Michael** (69674). Moran was from Liscromwell, Castlebar, and was twenty-three years of age. He had joined the force in January 1920. He was in a Crossley tender that was ambushed at Glenwood, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare on 20 January 1921. Six RIC men died in this ambush.<sup>16</sup>

**Morgan, Constable George** (70802). Morgan was attached to the RIC Barracks at Ballyduff, Co. Kerry. He was killed there on the night of 31 October 1920. He had seven months' RIC service, was single and aged twenty-three.<sup>17</sup>

**Moyles, Constable Thomas** (71364). Constable Moyles had eight months' service in the RIC when he was killed in an ambush at Toorengarriv, Co. Kerry on 28 January 1921. He was a single man aged twenty-one years.

**Mugan, Constable Thomas** (68857). This constable was killed by his own rifle at Ballinamore RIC Barracks on 18 April 1921. He was aged twenty-two, had two years' RIC service and was a single man.

**Mulhern, Detective-Sergeant William** (61051). This detective was killed as he emerged from the church in Bandon, Co. Cork, where he had been attending Mass on 25 July 1920. He was a thirty-nine year old married man with seventeen years' RIC service.<sup>18</sup>

**Mulloy, Sergeant Michael** (61673). Mulloy was one of six RIC members killed in an ambush at Glenwood Co. Clare on 20 January 1921. He was thirty-eight years of age, married and with fifteen years' RIC service.

**Munnely, Constable James** (66662). Munnely was a thirty-year old Ballycastle man. He had eight years' RIC service and was a single man. He died in an attack on Drumquin RIC Barracks, Co. Tyrone, on 26 August 1920.

**Murphy, Constable Edward** (69231). Murphy was attached to the RIC Barracks at Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon. On 1 September 1920 he was killed with another constable near Frenchpark. He was a single man aged twenty-four and had two years' RIC service.

**Nixon, Constable James** (64718). Nixon was a thirty-four year old constable when gunshot wounds killed him on 2 March 1920. No further details are available on this incident.<sup>19</sup>

**O'Connor, Constable Patrick** (69676). O'Connor was killed at Drimoleague, Co. Cork on 1 February 1921. He was ex-British Navy and Army with one years' RIC service. He was single and aged twenty-two years.

### Notes

1. Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, p 345. The 'Tans' first made their appearance in Ireland on 25 March 1920. Several high-ranking RIC officers resigned in protest at their recruitment.
2. RIC personnel records only indicate county of birth.
3. This ambush has been well documented in several articles and books over the years.
4. For a good account of this ambush read *Raids and Rallies* by Ernie O'Malley, and *The Awakening* by Michael Kilroy (at Westport Public Library).
5. Read Michael Kilroy's account of this episode in *The Awakening*. Moran, who shot the sergeant, was himself to die at Shramore, Newport, during the Civil War of 1922/3. A former comrade of the Active Service Unit (Flying Column) of the West Mayo Brigade shot him while he was operating with Joe Baker's Column in the latter days of the Civil War.
6. A good account of this incident can be read in *Police casualties in Ireland 1919-1922*, by Richard Abbott.
7. The official death toll of RIC at Carrowkennedy was seven (one D.I, one Sergeant and five constables). It has often been stated that twelve were killed in this ambush, but the RIC records show that the figures do not match up. It has been explained that there were many recruits to the RIC in the 1920/1 period ('Tans') who would have had no next of kin to claim them in the event of their deaths; perhaps the casualty list from Carrowkennedy was higher and that the authorities were able to hide the true figures. Those that were killed, and had next of kin, were able to bring civil actions against the government for compensation. The seven families involved at Carrowkennedy were all compensated and this can be verified from the Mayo Circuit Court records for 1921 in the National Archives, Dublin.
8. It was during this roundup that 'Big' John Browne of Kilmeena IRA Company was killed.
9. Read *Raids and rallies* by Ernie O'Malley for a full account of this battle.
10. Read *Police casualties in Ireland 1919/1922* for an account of this constable's death.
11. Read *Police casualties in Ireland 1919-1922* for account of this incident, also *The Irish Times*, 17 March, 1922. The author would appreciate any further information on this RIC Sergeant and his Westport connections.
12. This constable's birthplace was given as Mayo, but he could have been living anywhere when he joined the RIC.
13. The best account of this incident can be found in *My fight for Irish freedom* by Dan Breen.
14. Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland 1919-1922*, p318.
15. *Ibid.*, p123.
16. Michael Brennan, *The war in Clare*, p101.
17. Read *Kerry's fighting story* for further information on this incident.
18. Read *Guerilla days in Ireland* by Tom Barry for a full account.
19. Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland 1919/1922*, p319.

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