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1798 in South Tipperary

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“If fifty-thousand trusty men of Tipperary had joined the Wexford men of ‘98 there would not have been an English soldier left on Irish soil”¹.

So spoke Dean Kinane of Cashel on St. Patrick’s Day 1898 at the town’s ‘98 commemoration celebrations. Many other churchmen and local dignitaries spoke in other parts of the country that year, praising the men of ‘98 and pledging the erection of monuments in their honour².

Never once did any of the speakers allude to the history of 1798 in their native county of Tipperary. Many (like the Dean) implied that there was none³. It was generally recognised that Tipperary was a quiet place in 1798.

How correct is this viewpoint? It is beyond doubt that Tipperary did not rise in such numbers and with such success as Wexford; but this does not mean that the county was ignorant of the United Irishmen and their ideology. Lest we forget, Tipperary was the home of rebellion just 50 years later. Why then was Tipperary so quiet in ‘98?

The first question that must be tackled is: how quiet was the county during that year? Canon W. P. Burke stresses that “there was not at any time the least attempt at insurrection in Tipperary”⁴. Dr. Bray, the Archbishop of Cashel, wrote to Dr. Moylan, Archbishop of Cork, in July 1978: “I am happy to understand the County Cork is so tranquil. This county is perfectly so”⁵. The county, however, was restless enough to warrant a 9 p.m. curfew imposed on 30 June 1798 by the authorities in Tipperary⁶.

A number of areas were worried that because of their Catholicism they would be implicated in any further rebellion in their county. On January 2, 1798 the inhabitants of Clonmel, Ardfinnan, Newcastle, Clogheen, Cahir and the surrounding neighbourhood took the oath of allegiance from Lord Donoughmore. In the town of Cahir “he was attended by a very great concourse of people who showed a zealous desire to testify their loyalty and obedience to the laws”⁷.

On June 9, 1798 the Roman Catholics of Carrick-on-Suir and its vicinity pledged loyalty to the existing constitution after seeing the address of the bishops and gentry of Dublin to the people rebelling at that time⁸. On June 12, 1798 the *Freeman’s Journal* reported that “there is scarcely a man to be seen here (Clonmel) in coloured clothes that is not coming in to the magistracy, confessing his guilt and taking the oath of allegiance”⁹.

The larger towns were not the only places where this was happening. In many of the smaller parishes in Lord Donoughmore’s jurisdiction people were coming forward “in great numbers”, having “decided to have an opportunity in taking the same oath”¹⁰.

Over-all it seemed that this show of loyalty was caused by fear of implication in the future rather than by pure loyalty¹¹. However, the nett effect was that Tipperary got quite a good name with the authorities. In April 27 1798 Major General Sir Charles Asgill called on the inhabitants of Queen’s County “to follow the example of the counties of Tipperary, Kildare and the King’s County and give





The '98 Memorial in Clonmel, the work of the Fenian J. K. Bracken.

up all their concealed arms, pikes and ammunition"¹².

Lord Donoughmore in general seemed very happy with the lands under his control. In November 1797 he wrote about "the present peaceable situation of the people of our Baronies"¹³. In December he wrote to Lord Castlereagh: "Nothing, I am persuaded, where the peace of the county is concerned, will bother you"¹⁴.

So far so good. However, one underlying trend that may be noticed is that these "loyal subjects" seem to have arms and pikes to give up. One suspects that all was not as rosy as it was painted.

In May 1798 a man by the name of Tobias Bourke told the authorities about a secret society in Cahir meeting in the home of Rev. William O'Meara. The society was the United Irishmen, and a well-organised branch of it at that. There were nine on the central committee. They were in close touch, through one of their members, a Captain Morris, with Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the Central Committee in Dublin. According to police accounts they were also well armed¹⁵.

There were also societies organized in Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir¹⁶; but most of these were put under pressure during April and May of 1798 by the High Sheriff of Co. Tipperary, Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald¹⁷. During those months he toured the county collecting pikes and getting lists of sales from blacksmiths¹⁸. He himself said: "The people of this county are coming in crowds to me and others are begging mercy, giving up their pikes, informing against those who swore them and who were their captains"¹⁹.

Throughout 1797 and right up until 1802 the United Irishmen were reputedly swearing in new members²⁰. In 1797 an attempt was made to induce artillery-men stationed in Clonmel to take the oath²¹. In the same year a man named Hally was caught swearing in a number of people in a public inn²².

In May 1798 a Mr. Rollerton wrote that "Most of the papists of any corps have been sworn to the United Irishmen. One of them has been active in swearing others". In the same letter he reports that a United Irishman tried to swear in an informant of his by telling him that soon people would be rising out and killing each other, and that if he did not get a pike and rise too he would be killed²³.

In 1799 William Dillon was caught administering the United Irishman oath to a private officer in

the Ancient Irish Corps²⁴. A number of other men were charged that year with being United Irishmen; most of them were labourers²⁵.

In 1797 Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald wrote: "Every night the enemy are out. So far as I can learn they have a General and inferior officers . . . their army are kept in the mountains . . . they are extending themselves every night"²⁶.

It is debatable whether these incidents of United Irishman activity are true or merely paranoia on the part of the authorities. Either way it suggests that the society was active, and in some cases perhaps even strong. In 1798 Fr. Bartholomew Mackey, the parish priest of Emly, was removed — supposedly because of threats made against him by the local United Irishmen²⁷.

The main problem in dealing with any kind of 'disturbance' at this time is that a number of different forces may have been at work — the United Irishmen, common criminals or "The Defenders", the local agrarian agitators. Because the authorities tended to refer to most disturbances as caused by United Irish, it is difficult to separate each or to categorize them.

In November 1797 "a party from Co. Waterford" called on the home of Lord Donoughmore's porter in Knocklofty, Clonmel. They were armed, but were fought off by the porter with his musket. The group sent a message to Donoughmore, indicating that they had no intention of injuring him nor any of his fellow landlords. "On the contrary they wished him well", and stated that their intention was "only to push down those petty tyrants", and that they would not go near either him or his tenants. It seems all they wanted was arms; getting none, they left.

The next day Lord Donoughmore set out to search for them with a party of 5th Dragoons and a number of his brother's (Francis Hutchinson) Yeoman Cavalry. A few days later he searched the County Waterford side of the River Suir and found arms; but seemingly the men had escaped.

While he was away, a mason's house in Lord Donoughmore's employment was searched for arms by a small party of insurgents. Donoughmore complained to Dublin Castle about the steady flow of armed men coming down from the Comeraghs through Ardfinnan and Newcastle into co. Tipperary. He suggested placing garrisons at these points to try to stem the flow, as he was worried that it could become much more serious in the future²⁸.

The reason for these attacks was clearly to obtain arms; but as to who these 'insurgents' were is not clear. Finding this out seems to hinge on the phrase 'petty tyrants'. It seems likely that the 'tyrants' referred to are the English, so that possibly these men were United Irishmen. Somehow it is hard to imagine Defenders wishing landlords well!

On March 28, 1798 at about one o'clock in the afternoon a party of about 1,000 country people, led by officers in uniforms of blue and scarlet, marched into Cahir from the direction of Clonmel. They went from house to house, taking any weapons they found. The house of Lord Cahir was surrounded and stripped of all weapons; when this was done they marched peacefully away²⁹.

The evidence of blue and scarlet uniforms seems to point directly to the United Irishmen, and this episode has been linked to them by previous writers. Whoever they were, the Government's response was to send the army into Tipperary to lean heavily on each district and disarm the inhabitants³⁰.

More incidents of what may be loosely called "seditious activity" occurred throughout the county in this year. In the *Freeman's Journal* of April 6 1798 the following incident is reported: "The High Sheriff of County Tipperary received information that a number of United Irishmen being assembled for the purpose of committing some outrage in the neighbourhood of Dundrum"³¹.

Judkin Fitzgerald sent for the Louth Militia and the Cashel Yeomanry and proceeded to Dundrum, where he found "a large assemblage of those deluded persons". The rebels fired at the advance guard, then turned and fled, pursued by the troops. The report states that "the insurgents lost some men"; more were thought to be wounded, but the rest escaped into the mountains.



In the follow-up search of the area a blacksmith was apprehended, in whose forge several pike heads were found. The next day "many hundreds" assembled near Holycross, armed with guns, pikes and pitchforks to make an attempt to rescue those captured. These too were routed, and some put into prison³².

The night of July 16, 1798 was a busy one for somebody, supposedly the Defenders. In the diary of James Scully he refers to a report of Defenders attacking Tipperary town that night. Three days later three of their leaders were hanged and beheaded³³. What a group of supposed agrarian agitators were doing attacking a garrison town is anybody's guess. Could it be that this particular section of the group had greater things in mind?

Coincidentally on the same night a group, said to have been United Irish, were active around Cashel. On July 18, 1798 three men were court-martialed for "acting and aiding in the rebellion which now exists in the Kingdom". Fifty men in all, armed with scythes, pitchforks and pikes, went to Cashel with the intention of taking and burning the town. The rebels took over a blacksmith's forge to make their weapons; he overheard them say "they should proceed to Cashel to take the place".

Their plot was foiled, however. Four of them were hanged, and a number of others transported after 1,000 lashes of the whip³⁴. Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald in his official report passed off this incident as inconsequential. He stated that the reasons for this disturbance was "(the) effect of the exertions of the adjacent counties on some bankrupt tenants in this county". He went on to say that since then the parish had confessed their guilt, and some were punished³⁵.

Accordingly, as can be seen Tipperary was not as quiet around 1798 as some would have us believe. Yet, as far as is known, folk-memory of these small outbursts hardly survived.

The same could not be said for the one real attempt at a rising in Tipperary, an event which has been known as the Rising at CarraigmoCLEAR. The facts of the attempted rising at CarraigmoCLEAR, on the north eastern side of Slievenamon, have been lost to time. However from various and diverse sources a picture can be pieced together.

It seems that the plot was hatched at war councils held in both Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel on July 20, 1798. The plan was to light fires at various places along Slievenamon calling the insurgents to a selected meeting-place. One of these fires was to be lit on CarraigmoCLEAR Hill, to call the rebels from the area around Nine-Mile-House to arms.

Unfortunately, a drunken "croppy" in "The Grand Inn" in Nine-Mile-House told the story to the owner, Neill. Neill informed William Despard, a loyalist living at Killaghy Castle, Mullinahone. Despard warned the authorities, and a false beacon was lit on CarraigmoCLEAR on the night of July 22, 1798³⁶.

Local men from the area around Nine-Mile-House and Mullinahone arrived at CarraigmoCLEAR the next morning, only to find a party of yeomanry waiting for them. General Sir Charles Asgill met them with detachments of the Wicklow Militia, the Hompesch Cavalry and Kilkenny Infantry. General Myers, who was travelling on the road from Callan to Clonmel, heard about the assemblage; with his Callan Yeomanry and a few of the Louth Militia, he engaged the rebels.

The rebels, seeing the army converging on them, fled, either home or to the mountains, pausing only to ransack the Grand Inn for ale, whisky and livestock, much of the latter being driven before them up the mountain. Unfortunately for the rebels, however, with the arrival of troops from Carrick-on-Suir there was no escape³⁷.

What the final fate of most of the rebels was is not known. It is known that a few were killed as they fled; more were taken prisoner and shot after having been tried by military tribunal. On the same day a further 16 were captured; they presumably were spared³⁸.

It seems that some of the local Protestant community joined in the fray on the side of the military.



Dorothea Herbert in her "Retrospections" tells of a clergyman who "perform'd the greatest achievements in the battle but came home desperately batter'd and wound'd — his powder horn was beat into his side by a stone — whilst straggling he lep'd into an inclosure where were posted about twenty of the rebels — he however by good horsemanship escaped and drove two of their prisoners before him. They were instantly condemn'd to be shot"³⁹.

By 24 July most of the rebels had surrendered, and those that were left were retreating deeper into the wilder parts of the Slievenamon hills⁴⁰. By July 30 the last of the rebels were rounded up and the attempted rising was at an end — except for continued plunder by some of the soldiery at Nine-Mile-House!⁴¹.

The incidents surrounding the CarraigmoCLEAR Rising have been immortalised in song and story. Most notable are the *sean-nós* songs *Sliabh na mBan*⁴² (not be confused with Kickham's ballad "Slievenamon") and *Ar Shliabh na mBan*⁴³. Kickham in the 1850s and 1860 wrote several songs and stories about the incident — "Carraig-Mocléara", "Rory of the Hills" and "The Sop is Lit"⁴⁴.

A number of other songs and stories still exist about the event. All seem to be based on one premise — that the rising on CarraigmoCLEAR was large and important. By all accounts it was neither. Apart from the understandably romantic view represented in songs and stories, there is another source probably closer to the bone — that of the confessions of the participants and government records of the event. On 30 July, 1798 Lieutenant Despard listed the principal leaders of the rising: John Power of BallinacLugh, a farmer who collected the people from around Mullinahone and led them to the mountain; John Meagher of Nine-Mile-House, a publican, the leader of the Nine-Mile-House group; Cormack of Nine-Mile-House, who collected the "Mountaineers"; Thomas Ryan of Mullinadubrid; John Doran of The Glebe, a labourer, who with others robbed the mail coach at Mullinahone on 23 July; and finally Ned Bulger⁴⁵. Cormack surrendered on 24 July on the promise of a pardon⁴⁶.

Despard's list of leaders does not always tally with those of the captured participants. Dennis Collins in his confession to the authorities says that at 8 o'clock on the morning of 23 July he was called on to get ready to go to the hill. He went to Frankfort to get a pike handle; when he got there, there were already some men doing the same, all from Frankfort.

He was told where the mountain was, so he went with only the pike handle. He then joined the rebels, most of whom were from Castlejohn, Cappa, Croan or Currasilla, all armed with either pikes or pike handles. A Patrick Cahill from Croan mounted on a horse had a pike; Collins suspected that he was one of the principals. According to Collins, there were 200 men or more there⁴⁷.

It seems that of those who confessed only Collins said he was a willing participant. Pat Fling [Flynn] went to the forge at South Lodge on the same morning and met a number of men forging pikes from harrow pins. Two armed men, William Hogan and David Howlan, threatened his life if he did not join them. They then threatened everyone that their houses would be burned down if they did not join them. "Fling" was armed with a long pole, with an iron spear two feet long. Most of the people around him had either poles or pikes⁴⁸.

A number of others called on took the first chance they had to go home once they heard the army coming. They were James Heelan, Garrymorris; William Singer, Hardbogg; John Burke, Mullin-golough and Patrick Burke, Grange. All of these claimed they were forced to go by the rebel leaders with guns or pikes. Many others, out of fear for their lives, did not run away as early⁴⁹.

Most of those captured said their leader was John Power — not the farmer from BallinacLugh (as Despard stated) but a man originally from Ballinroan. It has been said that this Power was an officer in the French service who returned to take charge of his local rebellion. In the song *Sliabh na mBan* we are told: *Níor tháinig ár major i dtús an lae chugainn* — Our major did not come to us at the start of the day. This line has always been associated with Captain Power⁵⁰.



In another song, *Ar Shliabh na mBan*, we are told: *Gheobhadh Captaen Paor an lá úd stat dúinn is talamh shaor* — Captain Power would win the day and a free land for us⁵¹. It seems that John Power made his escape and returned to France⁵².

Rev. W. O'Connor of Grange sent Richard White, who later gave evidence, with a message for the rebels not to destroy the Grand Inn. The rebels complied after taking enough stock and ale to last them for their stay in the mountains. White says he saw pikes and guns in the hands of a number of the rebels⁵³.

Another ploy of the ringleaders was to tell prospective combatants that success had already been won. On July 27 1798 Major General St. John wrote that a number of prisoners had told him that many of them were told that Carrick-on-Suir was already in rebel hands. He continued:

“This attempt [Carraigmochar Rising] was too insignificant even to create alarm, but it clearly ascertains the disposition of this part of the country. In different places they are . . . taking the oath of allegiance and at this moment all appearances of rebellion is at an end⁵⁴.”

The High Sherriff Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald was seemingly called on to account for the appearance of a rising in an otherwise peaceful county. He reported:

“ . . . as to what took place at Nine-Mile-House and Mullinahone the 23rd, it was the last effort of Co. Kilkenny and the adjacent mountainy parts of the Co. Tipperary . . . their futile efforts were immediately crushed by General Myers who happened to be passing by — since that they have come in and given up their spears. The Government need not be alarmed at the state of this County . . . if I thought there was any real danger it would be my duty to report it — I ought not to raise alarm without sufficient cause and I am sorry to hear that others have done so⁵⁵.”

Judging by the tone of the later part of this letter, it seems that the High Sherriff was annoyed at somebody informing Dublin Castle of the event behind his back. That somebody possibly was St John. It seems that the rebellious tendencies of this part of Tipperary were well and truly squashed. In fact, on August 8 Major General St. John wrote again that “the deluded people of my district have surrendered themselves and their arms with every appearance of repentance”. Having interrogated them he writes that: “Their plan was to attack Carrick-on-Suir, Fethard, Cashel and Clogheen” and then to attack Clonmel⁵⁶.

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Although small efforts at rebellion and minor skirmishes speckled Tipperary during these years, no concerted effort at a rising was made. Neither was there any indication that Tipperary planned to link-up with Wexford. This problem has bothered many people over the years, and a number of reasons why Tipperary's effort was so weak have been suggested. However, for different reasons such a rebellion might not have had strong popular support in some areas.

In 1776 the population of the town of Clonmel was about 5,000; by 1821 it had risen to 13,012. In the 1790s we can only assume that the number lay somewhere in between¹. With such a large urban population it seems strange that some seditious activity did not take place here.

At that time Clonmel had many of the trappings of a local country town. In 1798 Major General Henry Johnson was entertained by Clonmel Corporation as he travelled from his great victories against the rebels in Wexford. One of the town's main streets was called ‘Johnson Street’ after him — now Gladstone Street. Other streets were named after the sea victories in the war against France, more after admirals and generals, e.g. Nelson Street, Wellington Street and Anglesea Street; these names still remain today.²

The backbone of this loyalism in Clonmel were the Quakers, the Society of Friends, who had come to the town with Cromwell and his army and settled down quickly. They did not intermarry much,



but as a group set up trade and industry in the town.³ After a number of years they became the main driving force behind most of the local industries. By the 1790s they were doing very well for themselves, and for the town.⁴

The two principal Quaker families in Clonmel were the Malcolmsons and the Grubbs. In the 1770s the Grubbs were trading with Waterford, Cork and Dublin, importing and exporting materials to and from England and even further afield.⁵ So powerful was the family that Clonmel was known as "The City of the Grubbs".⁶

During the early 1770s the Clonmel Quakers put all their profit back into their factories and mills. Plainness in speech and behaviour was their rule, and they were noted at this time as kind and fair employers.⁷ It is said that one Quaker employer bequeathed his shoe-making industry to his Catholic foreman.⁸

By 1796 the early puritan stream was fast disappearing, as the Quakers became more prosperous and wealthy. A man named William Savery who visited the home of the Grubbs that year described it as "a sumptuous establishment indeed"; he contrasted it with the poorer homes of the Roman Catholics.⁹ However, the Grubbs continued to put some of their wealth into the town. Robert Grubb built the "House of Industry" (workhouse) outside the West Gate of the town, "to be a place for confinement and lodging of vagrants and an asylum for the poor and helpless".¹⁰ The Quakers also built a Charter School, later to be the residence of Charles Bianconi, on the outskirts of the town,^{11&12} founded in 1748.

In 1798 the Grubb children were at the Quaker school in Ballitore, Co. Kildare; but because of the Rebellion, the headmaster closed the school. The Grubb children were then enrolled at the Clonmel Charter School,¹³ where the education they received would have been of an inferior standard to what they would have been accustomed to. Yet it must have had some merit for the sons of the richest family in Clonmel.

The Quakers accordingly became an important element in the town, providing employment and social assistance to the townspeople. There can be no doubt that they were a popular sector of the community. Consequently, there was no reason for the townspeople to disturb the Quaker community by showing interest in or giving support to rebellion.

For another reason why popular support for rebellion was lacking we must go back to the 1760s. Because of the prominence of the Butler family, much land in counties Tipperary and Kilkenny was still in Catholic hands. Over the years, however, many of these landowners had intermarried with the local Protestants, thus diluting their politics. By the 1760s the county was virtually divided between the largely Butler lands, stretching from a centre in Kilkenny across Tipperary through Cashel to Cahir, with flanking regions of predominant Protestant landowners in the north-west and in the southern region of the Suir.¹⁴

It was inevitable that this dormant conflict should explode at some stage. The flashpoint came in 1761, when there was an election contested between Maude of Dundrum and Mathew of Thomastown; the Mathew adherence to the established church was always in doubt. Tension now enflamed the upper classes along the lower reaches of the Suir.

This bitterness came to a climax in the early 1760s when the Protestant gentry wholeheartedly supported the claim of a "Popish Plot", supposedly organised by the Catholic landowners and minor gentry of the area. The result of this was the execution of Fr. Nicholas Sheehy, parish priest of Clogheen. Through his comfortable family background he was linked to the Catholic gentry; he was also connected to the rebels, although the association was obscure.

This anti-Catholic outburst, only 32 years before 1798, would have been fresh in the minds of many who lived in the area. Such a memory would have diminished any inclination to sedition. Some writers have cited this reason, along with the fact that Tipperary had such a relatively small



Protestant community, as the main reason for such a lack of rebellion in Tipperary.¹⁵ Although this is somewhat simplistic, there is no doubt that it had some bearing on the result.

The primary cause of Tipperary's inactivity, however, must be laid at the feet of one man — Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald, the High Sheriff of County Tipperary. *The Freeman's Journal* of 3 November, 1798 praised him for "his valiant efforts in keeping down the United Irishman scourge"¹⁶. Not only were his methods effective but also extremely brutal and cruel; naturally, it is for these that he is most remembered.

Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald lived at Lisheen near Cashel. His real name was not Fitzgerald but Uniacke. His father, Robert Uniacke of Corkbeg, county Cork had assumed the surname of Fitzgerald under the terms of a grand-uncle's will. Thomas's mother was a daughter of John Judkin of Greenhills near Cashel, and Thomas assumed the additional surname under the terms of the will of his maternal uncle, John Judkin.¹⁷

Between 1797 and 1799 Fitzgerald was given the job of scouring the county with his company of Hessians searching out rebellion.¹⁸ Lord Mathew of Thomastown said of him in 1799:

"the (Mathew) has frequent opportunities of observing that he (Fitzgerald) was an extremely active, spirited and meritorious magistrate, and a very principal means of putting down rebellion, preventing escapes and preserving the lives and properties of his majesty's subjects"¹⁹

Peasants suspected of being United Irishmen were, without trial and proof, thrown into jail. On market days a number of them were brought out, stripped and tied to a cart; they were then drawn up and down the street, with soldiers flogging them at both sides.²⁰

Peasants were not the only people to be at the wrong end of Fitzgerald's wrath. In 1798 he arrested a man named Fox, suspected of being an United Irishman leader. After being flogged, Fox admitted he was a rebel General and declared that a number of the Carrick-on-Suir yeomanry were United Irishmen.

Fitzgerald marched into Carrick and flogged a number of Yeomanry, including a man named Wells.²¹ Other men flogged that day were Francis Doyle, Thomas Bourke, Philip Higgins and Fr. Lonergan of Carrickbeg. The last three were informed on by a man named Devanny, who was in Clonmel jail for perjury.²² Doyle, Bourke, Higgins and Lonergan were amongst those who pledged loyalty to the crown on June 9, 1798.²³ Another man informed on by Devanny was Thomas Quinlan who was later hanged.²⁴

Fitzgerald wrote later about the yeoman Wells:

"My flogging Mr. Wells had so satisfactory an effect that sixty of the Carrick yeomanry were obliged to confess publicly on their parade that they were United and that eight of them were sworn Sergeants... you know it was the cat (whip) alone that brought out the truth and nine thousand, five hundred pikes and one thousand, five hundred stand of arms".²⁵

The principal merchant in Carrick-on-Suir was Mathew Scott, a kind and generous man, benevolent to the poor. In April 1798 he placed at the disposal of the Protestant rector 1,000 barrels of oats to be sold at a low price. On June 22, 1798 when Fitzgerald came to Carrick Scott was arrested and charged with sending pikes to New Ross hidden in oats. Scott protested, but in vain; he was brought to Clonmel and put in jail.

Three days later Major General St. John, the military commander of the district, hearing of Scott's plight, sent the Mayor of Clonmel, Hackett, to offer Scott bail. He declined and appealed for immediate trial. Fitzgerald was summoned, but made the excuse that two of his witnesses had absconded. Scott paid the bail of £20,000 and was released after twelve days. At Clonmel in 1799 Scott successfully sued Fitzgerald for damages.²⁶ It transpired in the proceedings that Fitzgerald had acted on the evidence of the perjurer Stephen Devanny.



In his diary, Sir John Moore wrote of Fitzgerald:

“Mr. Fitzgerald was, we were told, making great discoveries (in Clogheen). He had already flogged truth out of several respectable persons who had confessed themselves to the Generals, Colonels and Captains of the rebels. The rule was to flog each person until he told the truth, and give the names of the other rebels. Those were then sent for and underwent similar punishment. The number flogged was considerable; it lasted all the forenoon. That some were innocent I fear is equally certain”.²⁷

In May 1798 Fitzgerald wrote to Lord Camden that, because a number of Catholic priests and bishops had declined to help him, he was “obliged to order some for transportation and deprive others”.²⁸ At a trial in 1799 he claimed that only by “cutting off their heads” could some people be made to talk!²⁹

At the Cashel sessions in 1798 three tenants were tried and acquitted. A few days later Fitzgerald arrived and sent out an order for them to be brought back; they were immediately flogged.³⁰ In Clonmel he boasted that he would flog the deputy governor of the county, a Catholic. The man, whose name was John Lalor, heard of the threat and went to meet Fitzgerald who had applied for a warrant to arrest Lalor, though for what reason is not known.³¹

The Hon. Francis Hutchinson describes a scene at Clogheen:

“There was a man of some property and good character who kept an inn (Jeremiah McGrath); this man was brought out of his house by Mr. Fitzgerald, tied up to a ladder and whipped. When he had received some lashes Fitzgerald asked him “who swore you?” the man answered he was never sworn. After a few more strikes the question was repeated and received with a similar answer. The remedy was resumed for the supposed obstinacy with additional suggestion. “If you do not confess I’ll cut you to death”. The man was unable to bear the torture any longer, then did name a person who, he said, had sworn him; but the moment he was cut down he said to Lord Cahir: “The man never swore me, but he (Fitzgerald) would cut me to death if I did not accuse somebody and to save my life I told a lie””.³²

On another occasion Fitzgerald arrested a man named Lynch, a yeoman “for having the low forehead of a rebel”.³³ One Laurence Keating was walking in the street one day when Fitzgerald hit him with his sword and told him “as a darned rascal kneel down and take off your hat to the High Sherriff”.³⁴

The most frequently quoted case of Fitzgerald’s cruelty is that of Bernard Wright, a French traveling schoolmaster who was tutoring the Grubb children in Clonmel.³⁵ Fitzgerald flogged a man named Nipper, *alias* Dwyer, who “confessed” that Wright was a secretary of the United Irishman. Wright in reality was a respectable Protestant, whose loyalty was never in doubt.

When Wright was brought to him, Fitzgerald grabbed him by the hair and dragged him to the ground. He kicked him and cut him across the forehead with his sword; then he had him stripped to the waist, tied to a ladder and given 50 lashes. A Major Riall from the garrison then arrived and was handed by Fitzgerald a note written in French as evidence for flogging Wright.

Fitzgerald did not understand what it said, but assured the major that he would find ample evidence in it to justify the punishment. Major Riall, who was able to read French, returned it, telling Fitzgerald that it was harmless. It read: “Sir, I am extremely sorry I cannot wait on you at the hour appointed, being unavoidably obliged to attend Sir Lawrence Parsons. Yours Baron Clues. To B. Wright, Esq.”³⁶

Fitzgerald ordered 50 lashes more, after which he asked how many lashes Wright had received; he then ordered Wright’s waistband to be cut and 50 more lashes to be given there. Fitzgerald then called for a rope to hang the Frenchman.³⁷ When none was around, he went to get one and to ask for an order to hang Wright. When he returned he ordered Wright back to jail, saying he would flog



him again the next day. Wright was left in jail for a week without medical help, and yet miraculously survived.³⁸

On March 14, 1799 Bernard Wright sued Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald for damages of £1,000. The facts of the case and numerous other examples of Fitzgerald's brutality were put before the court. The jury found a verdict for Wright with £500 damages.

On 6 April, 1799 Fitzgerald petitioned the House of Commons "to be indemnified for certain acts done by him in the suppression of the late rebellion". The government carried through the Act of Indemnity on behalf of Fitzgerald, but the judges refused to set aside the Clonmel verdict.³⁹ On 5 August, 1801 the King conferred a Baronet on Fitzgerald and he died peacefully in bed nine years later.⁴⁰

— 3 —

Thus ends South Tipperary's story of 1798. The county was more active than many commentators give it credit for, but because of contemporary circumstances successes were lacking. In the 1850s and 1860s the memory of 1798 was dusted down and retold by the Fenians, particularly around Mullinahone, where they were proud of their '98 heritage.

They even used the Hill of Carraigmoclear for meetings:

"The men took their places..... marching as well..... as disciplined soldiers..... their destination was the hill of Carraigmoclear, some four miles from Mullinahone, and memorable in connection with the history of '98. (July 1863)¹

It was Charles Kickham who took it upon himself to re-awaken the ghosts of '98 under Slievenamon. He said that when he was young his mother told him stories of the suffering of the rebels and their families in 1798 and of how her own relations had come under suspicion.² Ironically, some of the Kickhams had fought on the other side.³

Kickham wrote a number of poems and stories relating to the rebellion; most undoubtedly were fiction, but unfortunately they were not seen as such by later writers.⁴ In the song "Rory of the Hills", it has been suggested that Rory is John Meagher, the "Head and Leader" of the insurgents (according to Lieutenant Despard's report.⁵), and that the man who had "roamed on a foreign strand" was Captain John Power.⁶ These points are substantiated by other sources; many others are not, however.

In 1898 the 1798 memories were once again evoked. This time no allusions were made to Tipperary's history in any of the major speeches.⁷ Centenary clubs were formed; Tipperary had eight branches, boasting 749 members,⁸ and much green sash wearing,⁹ "Boys of Wexford" singing, and marching ensued. No mention was made of Tipperary and '98; in fact, so superficial were the celebrations that in 1904 when the statue to commemorate 1798 was erected outside the Town Hall in Clonmel there was no ceremony and no elaborate unveiling.¹⁰ The excitement of six years before had died down, suggesting that the 1898 celebrations were really an excuse for open nationalism rather than a real effort on the part of Tipperary to commemorate the '98 dead — many of whom did die in their own county in the years 1797, 1798 and 1799.¹¹

FOOTNOTES

Part I

1. *Clonmel Chronicle*, March 19, 1858.
2. National Archives (hereafter NA). CBS 16076/S; CBS 17949/S; *Clonmel Chronicle*, May 4, 1858.
3. N.A.; CBS 16076/S.
4. Canon William P. Burke: *History of Clonmel* (hereafter Burke). (Kilkenny, 1933), p. 163.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Carrick-on-Suir and its People* — P. C. Power (Dublin, 1976), p. 90.



7. *Freeman's Journal*, January 2, 1798.
8. Power, op. cit., P. 88.
9. *Freeman's Journal*, June 12, 1798.
10. N.A.; R.P. (Rebellion Papers) 620/33, 174.
11. N.A.; R.P. 620/37, 134.
12. *Freeman's Journal*, April 27, 1798.
13. N.A.; R.P. 620/33, 174.
14. N.A.; R.P. 620/37, 146.
15. N.A.; R.P. 620/37, 126.
16. R. B. McDowell: *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801* (Oxford, 1979), p. 389.
17. W. G. Neely: *Kilcooley: Land and People in Tipperary* (Belfast, 1983), p. 74.
18. N.A.; R.P. 620/37, 106.
19. *Ibid.*
20. N.A.; R.P. 620/63, 37.
21. McDowell, op. cit. p. 567.
22. N.A.; R.P. 620/53, 121.
23. N.A.; R.P. 620/37, 106.
24. N.A.; R.P. 620/6, 69/10.
25. N.A.; R.P. 620/6; 99/15; also 620/6, 69/17.
26. T. Pakenham: *The Year of Liberty* (London, 1969), p. 57.
27. Kevin Whelan: "The Catholic Church in Co. Tipperary, 1700-1900" in *Tipperary: History and Society*. ed. William Nolan (Dublin, 1985), p. 217.
28. N.A.; R.P. 620/53, 90.
29. Pakenham, op. cit., p. 66.
30. D. G. Marnane: *Land and Violence: A History of West Tipperary from 1660* (Tipperary, 1985), p. 33.
31. *Clonmel Gazette*, 6 April 1798.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Marnane, op. cit., p. 33.
34. N.A.; R.P. 620/3, 22/1.
35. N.A.; R.P. 620/39, 130.
36. *Romantic Slievenamon in History, Folklore and Song* (ed. James Maher, Mullinahone, 1954) pp. 103-106; *The Valley near Slievenamon* (ed. James Maher, Kilkenny, 1941), p.71.
37. *Romantic Slievenamon*, p. 103; N.A.; R.P. 620/4, 33/5; Power, op. cit., p. 91.
38. *Romantic Slievenamon*, p. 104.
39. *Ibid*, p. 105.
40. Power, op. cit., p. 91.
41. *Romantic Slievenamon*, p. 111.
42. *Ibid*, p. 102.
43. Daithí O hOgáin: *Duanaire Thiobraid Arann* (BAC, 1981).
44. W. Murphy: C. J. Kickham: *Patriot, Novelist and Poet*. (Dublin, 1903).
45. *Valley near Slievenamon*, p. 77.
46. N.A.; R.P., 620/4, 33/4.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Romantic Slievenamon*, p. 106.
51. See notes 43 & 44.
52. *Romantic Slievenamon*, p. 106.
53. N.A.; R.P. 620/4, 33/4.
54. N.A.; R.P. 620/4, 33/5.
55. N.A.; R.P. 620/39, 130.
56. N.A.; SOC (State of the Country) Papers, 1017/49.

Part II

1. *Clonmel Official Guide*, (Clonmel, no date) p. 19.
2. E. Shee and S. J. Watson: *Clonmel: An Architectural Guide* (Dublin, 1975), p. 13.
3. *The Grubbs of Tipperary, Studies in Heredity and Character* (Cork, 1972), p. 82 (hereafter Grubb).
4. Grubb, 82.
5. Grubb, 75.



6. Grubb, 76.
7. Ibid.
8. Oral — Mrs. Peg Rossiter, Clonmel.
9. Grubb, 82.
10. Grubb, 84.
11. Shee and Watson, op. cit., p. 40.
12. P. J. Kennedy: *The Clonmel Charter School (1747-1886)*, (Clonmel, 1936), pp. 3-13.
13. Grubb, 81.
14. L. M. Cullen: *The Emergence of Modern Ireland (1600-1900)* (Dublin, 1983), p. 122.
15. Ibid, p. 123, 128.
16. *Freeman's Journal*, Nov. 3, 1798.
17. Burke, p. 160; Marnane, op. cit., p. 34.
18. T. Pakenham, op. cit., p. 283.
19. Marnane, op. cit., p. 34.
20. Burke, p. 160.
21. McDowell, op. cit., p. 580.
22. Power, op. cit., p. 89.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. McDowell, op. cit., p. 580.
26. Burie, pp. 161 & 162.
27. *Nationalist*, Nov. 12, 1904.
28. N.A.; R.P.. 620/37, 151.
29. Pakenham, op. cit, p. 283.
30. Burke, p. 160.
31. Ibid, p. 161.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Grubb, 122.
36. Burke, p. 162.
37. Ibid. (Pakenham, op. cit. states firing squad, p. 284).
38. Pakenham, op. cit., p. 284.
39. Burke, p. 163.
40. Marnane, op. cit., p. 34.

Part III

1. R. V. Comerford: *Charles J. Kickham* (Dublin, 1979), p. 57.
2. Ibid, p. 19.
3. Ibid.
4. Kickham's style of writing is somewhat too romantic to be taken as fact.
5. See Part 1.
6. See Part 1, note 44.
7. N.A.; C.B.S. 1676/S; C.B.S. 15010/S; *Clonmel Chronicle*, March 5 1898; *Clonmel Chronicle*, May 25, 1898.
8. N.A.; C.B.S. 16235/S.
9. N.A.; C.B.S. 15010/S; *Clonmel Chronicle*, March 19, 1898 and May 4, 1898.
10. *Nationalist*, Jan. 13, 1904.
11. N.A.; C.B.S. 17949/S. (Three members of the Corporation were suspected of being I.R.B. men).

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