

Helping With the Guns

JOHN K. COTTER was born in 1878 in the Glen on Cape Clear Island. He spent half his life on Cape Clear as a fisherman. He was the father of Mary Frances Cotter who lived in the Glen until a couple of years ago. Mary was a neighbour of Sorcha Luciola (one of the people writing this story). When the fishing industry started to decline John K Cotter and his wife ELLEN and their seven children sailed in their boat [called Gabriel] for a new life in KENMARE in 1920. They had two more children and opened a post office and a shop. He died in 1968. Shortly after the start of the First World War in 1914, some people brought nine hundred guns from Germany to Dublin to help the Irish volunteers in the 1916 rising. The boat called Asguard came into Howth in Dublin with the guns on Sunday morning 26th of July 1914.

John K. Cotter was the only person on the pier at the time. A member on the crew of the Asguard from Gola Island, Donegal recognised JOHN k. Cotter from a fishing event in 1913. He asked John to help with the boat. John caught the rope, gave it to him and with help from some of his own crew, who by now were getting off Cotters boat Gabriel, took the Asguard around the pier and moored it. John and another Cape Clear islander called CON CADOGAN went onto the Asguard and with other crew, opened the cargo boxes and distributed the guns to hundreds of Irish volunteers who had arrived on the pier after marching from Dublin to collect the guns.

After the guns were taken off, Johns boat Gabriel towed Asguard from Howth pier into a safe position where she could safely head to sea. The guns were used by the Irish volunteers in the 1916 rising in Dublin. Cape Clear islanders are proud of the part played by John K. Cotter and the crew of the Gabriel in helping in that historic adventure.

Collected by Alex Cocking and Sorcha Luciola (Rang 3)