

West Cork

Stories of the

Revolution

1916- 1923

Eabha O' Leary

Rathbarry N.S.

This song was written by the late Dan Holland from Ballinascarthy about the famous Irish man Michael Collins, "The Big Fellow". Michael Collins was an Irish revolutionary soldier, and politician who was a leading figure in the early 20th century Irish struggle for independence. He was chairman of the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State for January 1922 until his assassination at Béal na Bláth on August 22nd, 1922. He was born on October 16th, 1890, at Woodfield, Clonakilty.



Michael Collins

Of all the great events in Irish history
All the great work that was done,
The Anglo-Irish treaty was wonderful
When the freedom of the twenty six
counties was won
Michael Collins was one who signed that
agreement
He said t'was the first stepping stone
To a free all Ireland republic
As an Irishman he was out on his own.

Chorus

*Michael Collins was the great Irish leader
By him the organisation was run
That fought for the freedom of Ireland
From 1916 to 1921.*

The Treaty was passed by the people,
It was also endorsed by the Dáil
Michael Collins was elected President
A majority he had overall
In government he was outstanding
Finance law and order his flair
His job was very demanding
Which he did with courage distinction and
flair

Chorus

Some who were opposed to the treaty
Collins tried to bring round
That it was the best for his country
Support like a hero he found
Coming back from his native Clonakilty
Patriot, brave faithful and true
He was killed by an assassin's bullet
In August 1922

Chorus

What a tragedy this great man was taken
He was only just in his prime
The achievement he did for his country
We will remember for the rest of time
Today we have put up this memorial
For Michael Collins in his own native
town
One of the last places in Ireland he visited
Before he was cruelly shot down.

Miltown R.I.C. Barracks



The Royal Irish Constabulary barracks at Miltown was burned to the ground by the IRA during the War of Independence on Easter Saturday April 3rd, 1920. It was unoccupied at the time. This magnificent building was constructed around 1830, and consisted of a barrack, constable dwellings, a schoolhouse, a teachers residence and a laundry.

The RIC were a key element in defending British Colonial rule.

As the War of Independence intensified, the force was withdrawn from small, rural barracks including Miltown.

On Easter Saturday April 3rd, the following barracks were either burned to the ground or blown up in Co. Cork: These were Watergrasshill, Upton, Coachford, Liscarroll, Ballyhooley and Miltown (near Skibbereen), Togher, Cullen and Newtown (near Conna).

I spoke with local man John O'Donovan, Kilkern House, Rathbarry who gave me some valuable information on the troubled times 1916-1922.

He told me the stories he had were from listening to his father and uncles talking about Irish freedom.

Quite a large number of local people from Ardfield/Rathbarry were volunteers in the period of 1916-1922.

Jack, Hughie and Mary Sweeney, Rathbarry (Milltown), O'Neill's, O'Keeffe's, Hurley's, McCarthy's, O'Donovan, O'Driscoll's, O'Leary's, O'Mahony's, Sullivans, Harts and O'Brien's – some of these people, men and women would have carried messages, food and small arm guns for more prominent people in the 'Struggle' as it was sometimes called.

Where John lives now, was previously owned by the Travers family and was used to feed people during the 'Struggle'.

Some other significant building destroyed was the coastguard station in Dundeady. This was burned to the ground in 1921.

The other coastguard station destroyed by fire also in 1921 was situated in Dunycove.



Water tanks of former Coast guard station.
Dunycove - Ardfield

One of the better outcomes after the truce, people came together to repair many damaged houses burned by the British.

In 1923/24 Clonakilty Agricultural Show was revived with Catholic and Protestant working together.

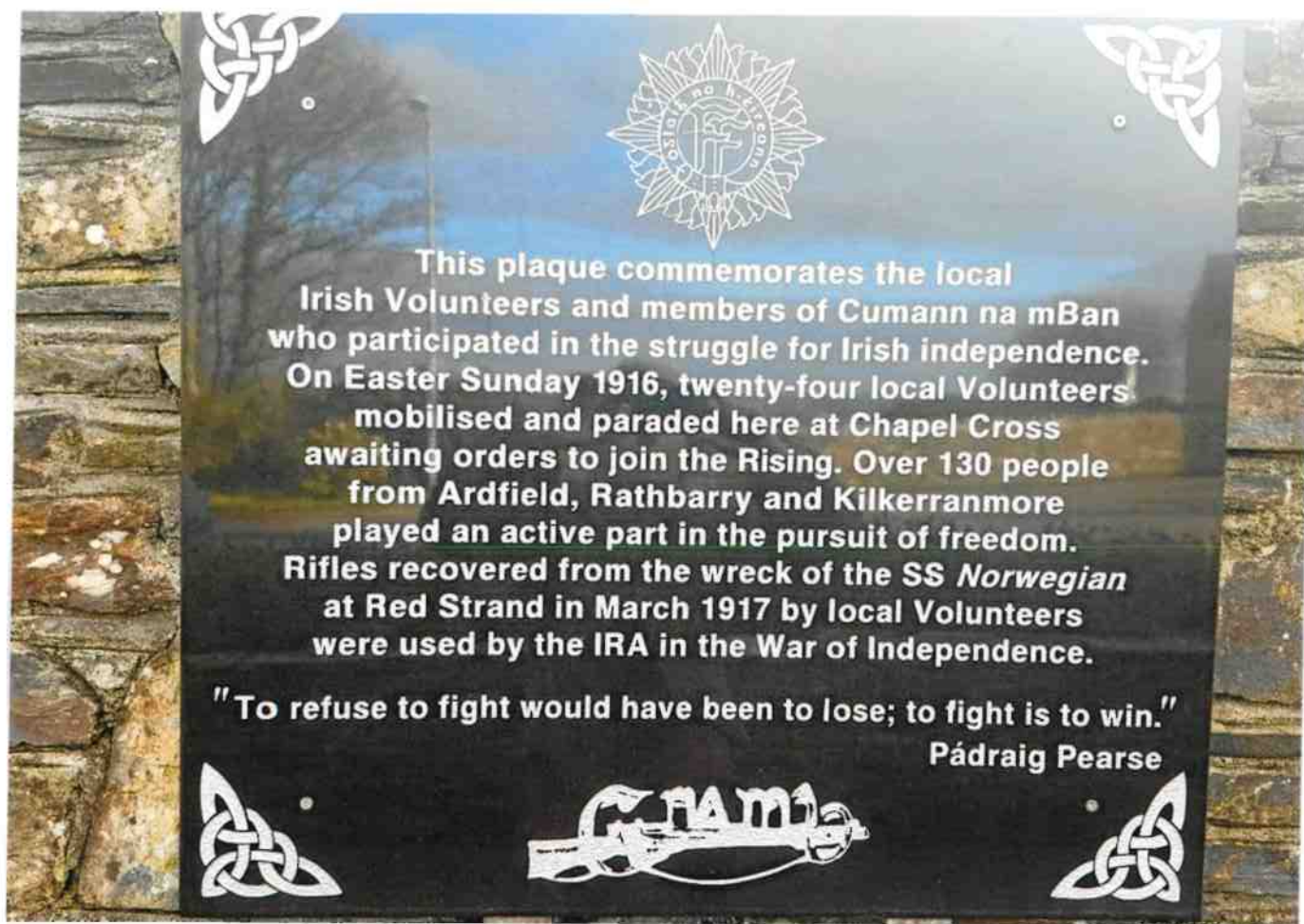
Lisavaird Co-op was also born, a facility that processed farmers milk and farm inputs at a good price.

Organiser and secretary of the time was Patrick O'Donovan, Balteenbrack, Ardfield who was also Adjutant Ardfield IRA from 1918-1922.



A plaque was erected at Chapel Cross, Ardfield on Sunday 4th December 2016 to commemorate the local Irish Volunteers and members of Cumann na mBan who participated in the struggle for Irish independence.

On Easter Sunday 1916, twenty-four local volunteers mobilised and paraded at the Chapel Cross, awaiting orders to join the Rising. Over 130 volunteers, with the support of the local community, risked their lives for Irish freedom.



A time capsule was also buried on the day – containing names of volunteers of the time 1916, photographs and news of then, 1916 and now, 2016.