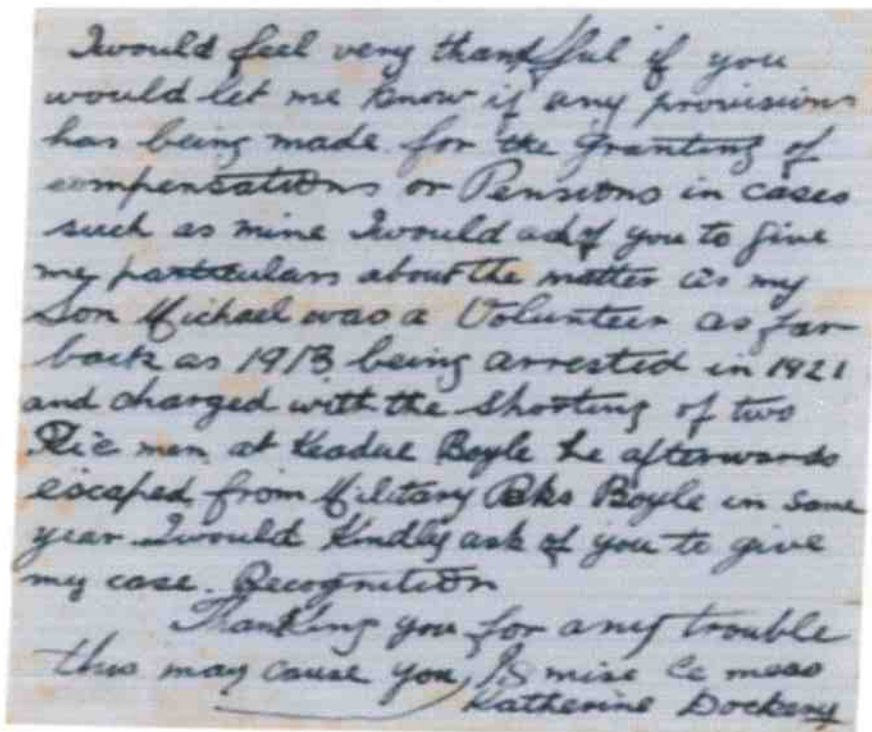


## THE BRITISH SOLDIER AT THE THE HEART OF AN IRA ESCAPE

On 22 March 1921 an RIC patrol was ambushed by the IRA at Keadue, County Roscommon, resulting in the deaths of RIC Constables William Devereux and Michael James Dowling and the injuring of Sergeant O'Reilly. A member of the North Roscommon Brigade IRA, Michael Dockery, was later arrested and sentenced for his part in the Keadue killings. He was held at Boyle Barracks, County Roscommon before being transferred to Dublin to stand trial, however in May 1921 he escaped. Remarkably a few days earlier another IRA prisoner, James Molloy, had also escaped from Boyle Barracks. Both men had made their escapes with the help of a man called George Meadlarklan, who was in fact a British soldier.



I would feel very thankful if you would let me know if any provision has been made for the granting of compensations or Pensions in cases such as mine I would ask you to fine my particulars about the matter as my son Michael was a Volunteer as far back as 1913 being arrested in 1921 and charged with the shooting of two RIC men at Keadue Boyle he afterwards escaped from Military Bks Boyle in some year I would kindly ask of you to give my case. Recognition  
Thanking you for any trouble this may cause you,  
Yours sincerely  
Katherine Dockery

After the Meade ambush in which Dockery and ~~Myx~~ Molloy were caught after the shooting of an R.I.C. man at Boyle, she became friendly with a soldier customer with a view to the release of these men both of whom were under sentence of death. The soldier in question was a Charlie Meade-Larkin, of the Bedford Regiment, who frequented the shop for the purchase of wool for rug making, and applicant actually approached him with a view to determining whether he would assist in the escape of Dockery and Molloy. Having secured his collaboration she sent an urgent message to Delahunty, and Delahunty and this Sergeant made arrangements for the escape. She was used as an intermediary for messages between the Barracks and the I.R.A., from the time the matter was mooted by him until the escape of Dockery and Molloy. Even the very moment that had been selected by the Military Sergeant for the escape was conveyed to her and she, in turn, transferred it to Delahunty.

Generally, dispatches from a large number of the prisoners in Boyle Military Bks., through the connivance of this Sergeant (Meade-Larkin), were sent to her and transferred to the I.O. She also appears to have got very useful information from this Military Sergeant amongst it being the case of the removal of a large party (she mentions 100) of prisoners from Boyle to Sligo. Lorries were to be used for their transfer and, on the suggestion of Delahunty, she got the Sergeant to remove the magnetos from the lorries.

His role in the prisoners' escape was discovered and Meadlarklan was court-martialled and imprisoned at Colchester, England. He maintained that he escaped from Colchester and then returned to Ireland. His return may be explained by the fact that he had married a woman from Roscommon named Winifred [possibly Henry or Nearly] on 6 May 1921. Meadlarklan then adopted the surname Mcloughlin, stating that people in Ireland had found his name difficult to pronounce and often called him Mcloughlin and 'When I escaped from Colchester & returned to Ireland I thought of how lucky it was for me to be known as Mcloughlin as the British were still in Ireland & it would be harder for them to trace me'. He later reverted to the name Meadlarklan.

George Gabriel Meadlarklan was born in England to English parents [sometime between 1888 and 1892], and had served with the Bedfordshire Regiment for 15 years, before being drafted to Ireland during the War of Independence. It appears that he was interned in a prisoner of war camp in Germany during the First World War

He was stationed at Boyle and says that ‘from the beginning my sympathy was for them in their fight for freedom’. Meadlarklan befriended a local shop owner called Margaret Judge, who was a member of Cumann na mBan. British soldiers from the Barracks frequented Judge’s shop and she used her position to gather information for the IRA and allowed meetings to be held there. Judge was asked to act as an intermediary to arrange for the escape of James Molloy and Michael Dockery from Boyle Barracks. Meadlarklan agreed and he not only supplied valuable information to the IRA via Margaret Judge, but also opened Dockery’s cell door, to affect his escape.

CONTINUOUS ACTIVE SERVICE DURING PERIOD FROM 1ST APRIL, 1921, TO 31TH JULY, 1921.

- (a) Unit or Units..... *English Army*
- (b) Duration (giving dates) of service..... *above period*
- (c) District or Districts in which active service was rendered..... *Boyle*
- (d) Officer Commanding in each instance..... *Michael Dockery (deceased)*
- (e) In what way do you claim that your service was active service?..... *under his orders I worked for I.R.A.*
- (f) Particulars of any military operations or engagements or services rendered during the period..... *Released from custody Michael Dockery (Brigadier of North Ros. Brigade) and Jim Malloy Belfast.*

*It appears that in 1921 whilst serving with the British Forces, he was connected with the escape of I.R.A. prisoners from Boyle Military Barracks.*

He enlisted in the pro-Treaty National Army on 27 February 1922, under the name George McLoughlin and said that his former IRA prisoners Michael Dockery, Alex McCabe T.D. and Commandant Jim Hunt now wanted to help him out and 'joined me up in the Free state Army' (sic). He worked as an officer's cook and in June or July 1922 he injured his hand while on duty at Sligo Jail when a glass bottle exploded, resulting in the amputation of two of his fingers. He received a wound pension for this injury. Meadlarklan applied for a Military Service Pension but was unsuccessful. He died in Maida Vale Hospital, Marylebone, London on 25 October 1958

I got this story from the military service pensions collation.

*name: Louis Kelleher  
age: 11*