

Michael Kelleher

1916 - 1923



Born 25<sup>th</sup> January 1893  
Died 27<sup>th</sup> July 1978

Information  
by Gra murphy

Project by Caoimhe murphy  
Scoil Eoin  
Innishannon  
4<sup>th</sup> Class

1916 - 1923

## Michael Kelleher

Michael Kelleher lived in Youghal. His family ran a pottery shop. One day the English army (Black and Tars) came looking for Michael and he ran out the back and tried to jump over the wall. But he could not jump over the wall. ~~But~~ the Black and Tars caught him and they <sup>were</sup> about to shoot him but Michael's mother stepped in front of Michael and said, "If you're going to shoot him you will have to shoot me first." So they did not shoot her because she was a woman. So Michael got away. After the war there was a treaty. Michael was commandant in the Irish Free State army. He was friends with Michael Collins.

Michael Kelleher

Volunteer uniform



1916-1923

1916-1923

## Michael Kelleher

- One of the founders of the Volunteer Movement in his native Youghal
- He served in the Volunteers from 1915 to 1922
- He held the rank of Captain in the Volunteers from 1915 and was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion First Cork Brigade.
- He underwent several hunger strikes both Irish and English prisons and prior to the Duce was arrested and suffered a long term of imprisonment
- He served sentences in Bere Island, Spike Island, Waterford and he was then deported to Wormwood Scrubs (where he took part in the historic hunger strike) Released he was re-arrested in 1921.
- On the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1921 he was tried by Military Court at Victoria Barracks, Cork (now Collins Barracks). He was found guilty and sentenced to five years penal servitude, for activities as a member of Volunteers
- Most of the prisoners refused to recognise the Court or Court Martial, at the time, but an exception was made in the case of those facing a capital charge
- He was a prisoner in Spike Island (together with three of his Volunteer Colleagues from Youghal) and when facing the death penalty to their Volunteer activities they were instructed on express order of Michael Collins to allow themselves to be defended



### MR. M. KELLEHER

(Seated on left), St. Mary's Potter  
Youghal, who has been 17 days on hung  
strike in the Scrubbs. He is at prese  
in St. Mary's Infirmary, Highgate Hi  
London.

(Photos, Horgan, Youghal)

## SPIKE ISLAND PRISON 1921

William Bland, James Keogh, Michael Kelleher (Medals on display), Pat Power.

(All from Youghal) - *Picture by Surgeon Major Louis Ronan*



The four were previously interned on Bere Island. They rioted on Spike, were transferred to Kilkenny and then to Waterford.

Messrs. Kelleher and Bland were deported to Wormwood Scrubs, where they took part in the historic hunger strike.



**The Trial  
of Civilians by  
Military Courts  
Ireland 1921**

**Seán Enright**

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### *Michael Kelleher and James Keogh, Youghal, County Cork*

On Saturday 5 March, 1921, these men were tried by military court at Victoria Barracks.<sup>565</sup> The prisoners were both charged on two counts: that of being improperly in possession of arms and of being improperly in possession of ammunition. They pleaded not guilty to both charges, and were defended by Joseph McCarthy.<sup>566</sup>

The evidence showed that on 17 February a motorised patrol was passing near Youghal, and at around 8.30 in the morning the patrol had come up from a by-road onto the road between Youghal and Killeagh. An officer had seen three men standing in a field around 300 yards away. The men were challenged and began to run. A shot was fired at the men. The first man had run across the fields and escaped but the other two (later identified as the accused) had made for a wall near the corner of a field. Another officer told the court that the men were found 'in a crouching position three or four yards from a gate in the wall'. They were searched but nothing was found in their possession.

An officer went back up to the wall where the two men had been standing and called for a spade. From this spot he dug up a 'short Webley revolver', which was loaded with three ordinary and three dum-dum bullets. Apart from the mud covering the revolver, it appeared to be in good working condition. Later inquiries were to reveal that this revolver had been stolen from the army the previous summer. A second revolver was found close by in a sluice in the wall. The revolver was in good working order and fully loaded.

The record of this trial was not preserved at the National Archive. The only other record was compiled by the court reporter, who left court before the end of the trial to avoid being caught out after curfew. It is known from other sources that Kelleher and Keogh were found guilty on both charges and were sentenced to five years' penal servitude.<sup>567</sup>





July 17<sup>TH</sup>

# Veterans of The Struggle



The annual Truce Celebration Dinner of the 1916-21 Club held last week at G.H.Q. Mess, McKee Barracks, Dublin, attracted veterans from many parts of the country including, of course, Cork, as well as Cork veterans domiciled in other counties.

Among them was **COMMANDANT MICK KELLEHER** who is a native of Youghal, Co. Cork, but who has been residing in Innishannon for the past 25 years.

Mick Kelleher has been one of the best known figures at the annual Beal-na-Blath ceremonies since 1923 and has been in charge of the guard-of-honour for the past seven years.

When speaking to Mick recently he showed a very interesting photograph which is reproduced here. The men in the picture are drawn from many parts of Cork County and all were members of the Irish Volunteers.

They were arrested by British Forces and deported to Wormwood Scrubbs, London, in 1920.

The group includes (in front) Messrs. **Denis Long**, Crookstown, and **Tommy Condon**, Rathcormac; in the middle are **Mick Kelleher**,

**Youghal; Paddy O'Sullivan, Cobb; Eddie Fowler, Cobb; Paddy Buckley, Araglen; Tim O'Brien, Dunmanway, and Tom Fanning, Fermoy.**

Mick cannot recall the name of the man in the back row at the extreme left but the other members are; Messrs. **Charlie Read, Cobb; Sean Hourihan, Kilmichael; Sean Lordon, Newcestown; Frank Hurley, Enniskeane and Sean Allen Beal-na-Blath.**

As far as Mick is aware six of the group are now dead.

"The group were arrested in February, 1920" recalls Mick, "and we were deported to Wormwood Scrubbs in different batches in that month and during March. There were over 300 I.R.A. men in our wing of the prison and the whole lot refused food.

The prison officials tried to tempt the men with choice food which the warders left in the cells. They would then leave and return after awhile to see if it had been eaten.

This move failed and on the sixth day the prisoners rioted and severely damaged their section of the prison.

They eventually had to bring in a company of the Coldstream Guards to quell the riot

which left the prisoners in control of the wing for about two hours.

During their period of control the prisoners had the Tricolour flying outside a bay window. It was put out by **Tommy Atkins** of Dublin.

The men were released according as they got weaker in prison from lack of food and, after treatment in hospital, they eventually found their way home to Ireland."

The story of the group shown in this picture is one of the many facets of the struggle for independence and the memory of it was revived for the survivors who met at the dinner in McKee Barracks.

Footnote: Mick also showed me the deportation order signed by Lord French on February 17, 1920, consigning him to Wormwood Scrubbs prison. These were also served on the other prisoners and stated that if within seven days they signed an agreement not to take any further part in the illegal organisation to which they belonged their release would be considered.

Mick's order, concealed in the sole of his boot before leaving Cork, now hangs in his home in Innishannon.

# Spike ceremony re-unites comrades of tragic days

**W**HEN Senator Moylan, Minister for Agriculture, to-day unveils a bronze plaque at Spike Island, Cork, to the memory of Capt. Patrick White, the ceremony will be attended by many who were fellow-prisoners of the noted Clareman when the Island was used by the British during the Independence War as a prison and internment camp.

Capt. White, who was a member of the East Clare Brigade, I.R.A., was shot dead by a sentry in 1920.

## HURLING GAME

While playing a hurling game with other prisoners, he put his hand through a barbed-wire entanglement to retrieve the ball and was shot.

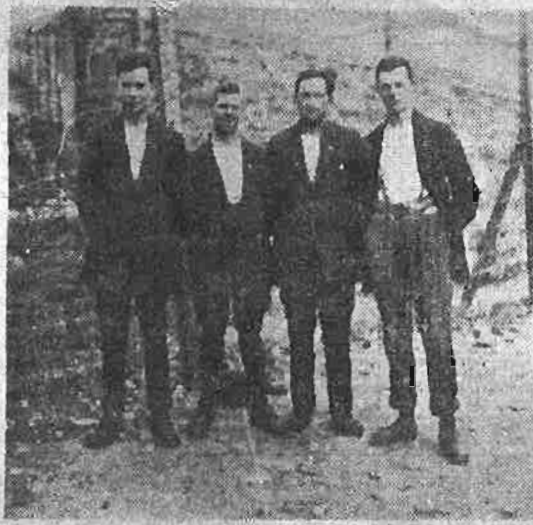
Among those present will be four members of the East Cork Brigade who were serving long sentences on Spike Island at the time — James Keogh, William Bland, Michael Kelleher, and Pat Power. All Youghal men, they later joined the National Army. Mr. Kelleher rising to Commandant and the others to Captain.

## DEPORTED

The four were previously interned on Bere Island. They rioted on Spike, were transferred to Kilkenny and then to Waterford.

Messrs. Kelleher and Bland were deported to Wormwood Scrubs, where they took part in the historic hunger strike. Released, they were re-arrested in 1921.

Another veteran of the struggle who will be present to-day is Mr. Tadhg Manley, T.D.



This picture was taken by the military doctor, Youghal man Surgeon Major Louis Ronan, on Spike Island in 1920. Left to right are James Keogh, William Bland, Michael Kelleher and Pat Power, who will attend to-day's ceremony. Major Ronan befriended many of the prisoners.

# Service Medals

BLACK  
&  
TAN  
MEDAL

THE  
ENERGIZING  
MEDAL

50<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
OF  
WAR OF  
INDEPENDENCE



