

Caheragh Farm in 1921

Tom Barry was a wanted man. The war of Independence raged on in Ireland during the summer of 1921. Barry's ability as guerilla leader was well known in the IRA and also by the British forces.

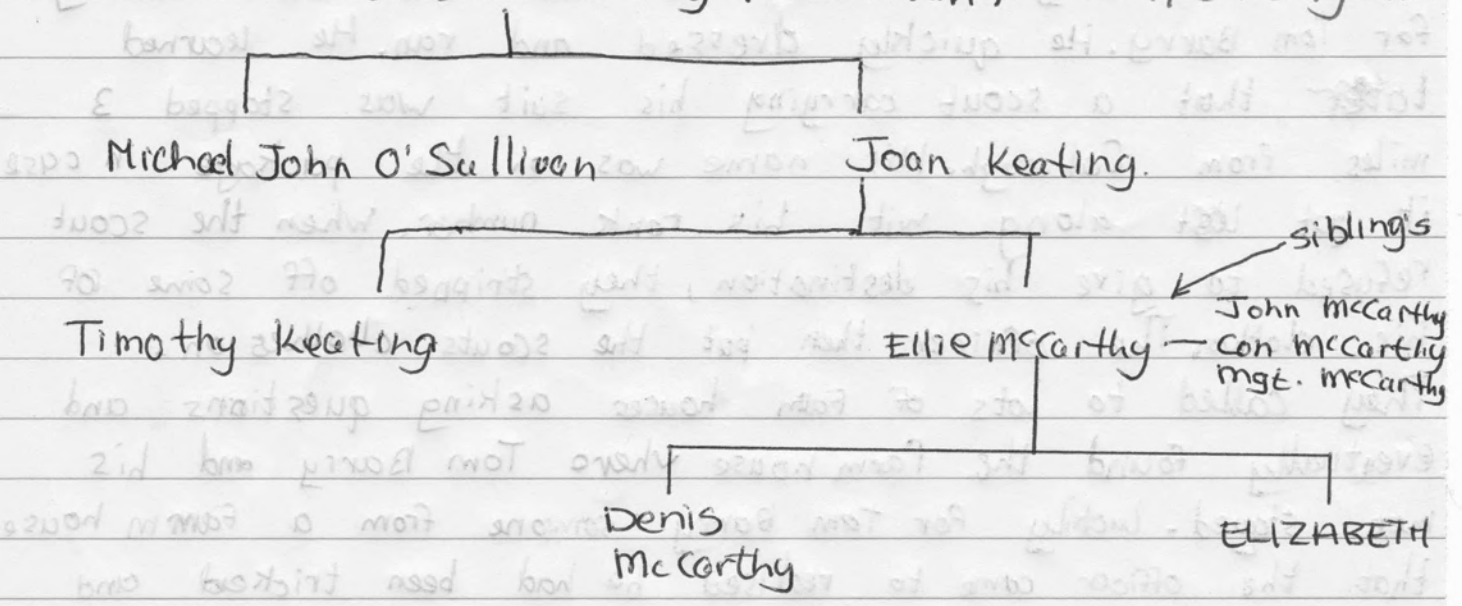
The President, Eamonn de Valera summoned Tom Barry to General Headquarters in Dublin on 19th of May with a detailed account of the military position in the south. This journey was going to be extremely dangerous for him as he could be caught and killed at any time. It was decided that he would travel by train to Dublin while pretending to be a medical student. He would be given some medical supplies to help convince the enemy of this. Also he was to receive his only civilian suit from Cumann na mBan in Ballydehob. This was to be delivered to column headquarters in Caheragh. The headquarters were at the farm house of John McCarthy and his aunt Mary McCarthy of letter, Caheragh. John had died in Cork on 13th of November but thanks to the help received from Joe McCarthy and Dan O'Donoghue of Drimoleague they called to the home of his brother Con instead on the 16th of May. Con McCarthy was a member of the Skibbereen battalion.

Tom Barry and his men slept outside on rubber sheets on the ground about 250 yards from the house. It was hidden by briars. They thought it was too dangerous to sleep in the house. in case it was being watched by the British. After a few hours sleep they were woken with the news that many British soldiers were stopped

a few hundred yards down the road and were looking for Tom Barry. He quickly dressed and ran. He learned later that a scout carrying his suit was stopped 3 miles from Caheragh. His name was on the package in case it got lost along with his rank number. When the scout refused to give his destination, they stripped off some of his clothes. The officer then put the scout's clothes on. They called to lots of farm houses asking questions and eventually found the farm house where Tom Barry and his men stayed. Luckily for Tom Barry someone from a farm house that the officer came to realised he had been tricked and managed to warn Barry with help from others to the danger. In the end a tailor near Crookstown worked all through the night to make the suit and Barry got the train to Dublin.

By Eleanor Keating
4th class
Caheragh N.S.

Siobhán Leahy (O'Sullivan) SNA, Caheragh NS



Told to Eleanor
Told by Siobhán Leahy,

Recalling incidents at Caheragh farm in 1921

J.L. McMahon — Story
Jack Power — Picture

"This is only instance out of many hundreds which could be given to show the great help friendly people can give their guerrilla army and how they can efficiently hamper the enemy."

Comdt. General Tom Barry in "Guerrilla Days in Ireland" referring to an incident at Letter, Caheragh in 1921.

As pointed out in Chapter 23, he had received two messages from the Adjutant General that President De Valera had asked that he should call to General Headquarters in Dublin on May 19 with a detailed account of the military position in the South.

Such a journey for a man as "wanted" as he was not something to relish. He had decided to travel by train in the guise of a medical student and was supplied with various items to convince the enemy that this was so. Miss Kathleen O'Connell of the Ballydeob Cumann na mBan who stored his only civilian suit was to have it at the column headquarters, Caheragh, on May 16.

Headquarters was the farmhouse of John McCarthy and his aunt, Mary McCarthy of Letter, Caheragh. John died in Cork on November 13 and thanks to the assistance of Joe McCarthy and Dan O'Donoghue, Drimoleague, we called to the home of his brother Con, looking sprightly and who with enthusiasm recalled this and other instances in the fight for freedom in West Cork.

Con himself was a member of the Skibbereen battalion while John or Jack as he was known to most

was a volunteer in the 5th Bantry battalion. Con today lives with his niece and her family at Dreeny off the Skibbereen-Drimoleague road. Before referring us to the relevant passage of the book, he pointed out that the dispatch carrier mentioned in it was another old I.R.A. man, John Levis, Gurrans, Caheragh.

"Arriving at Headquarters on the morning of the 16th, after travelling Caheragh in 1921.



Mr. Con McCarthy pictured at the spot in the corner of a field about 300 yards from the house of the late Jack McCarthy, Letter, Caheragh. It is here that Comdt. General Tom Barry and others slept for fear that the nearby dwelling was under observation by the British forces who were in close proximity.

all night I immediately went to bed, or to be more correct asleep on the ground rolled in a few army blankets under a small makeshift bivouac of two rubber ground-sheets. This was erected about 250 yards from a friendly farmhouse in a corner of a field and it was effectively camouflaged by a heavy growth of briars. The farmhouse was too dangerous to sleep in as it was known to be a resort of the Volunteers but we usually had our meals there.

PULLED OUT

"After a few hours sleep I was rudely pulled out of my blankets with the news that a big column of British soldiers on foot were halted a few hundred yards down the road and that they were enquiring for me by name. Rapidly dressing, I did not wait to make further enquiries, but grabbing my arms and equipment set out as fast as I could run in the direction away from the enemy."

"That evening I learned how they got on the track. Three miles from Caheragh they held up the scout carrying my clothes. Unfortunately after the parcel had been taken from Miss O'Connell's house someone fearing it would be lost had written my name and rank very clearly on the brown paper cover. The troops, the Kings Regiment, from Skibbereen, grilled the scout as to his destination but as he would not answer, they placed him inside the ditch, stripping him of his outer clothes and left him under a small guard. An officer then put on the labourer's clothes and set out in the direction in which the scout had been travelling. A few hundred yards behind him came the British troops. The disguised officer called at numerous houses produced a parcel with my name on it and asked where I was staying. He was passed along to Caheragh and eventually was shown the farmhouse near where the bivouac was situated.

MADE MISTAKE

"The officer in charge must have assumed I had some of the Flying Column with me but then he made his first mistake. Instead of surrounding the farm immediately, he waited for the reinforcements he had already requested from Skibbereen. Meanwhile, one of the men from a house where the officer had made enquiries, noticing the soldiers following up the messenger and suspecting the trick that he had been playing set out cross country to relay the message which I was to receive in time. Fr John Crowley C.C. of Caheragh was one of those who passed on the warning. This is only one instance out of many hundreds which could be given to show the great help friendly people can give their guerrilla army and how they can effectively hamper an enemy."

A friendly tailor from near Crookstown worked through the night to provide Barry with a suit and the O'Mahony girls of Belrose safely delivered him to the railway station at Cork.



Mr. Con McCarthy, brother of the late Jack McCarthy, pictured with his niece, Mrs. Joan O'Sullivan, at her home at Letter, Caheragh, which was the place of refuge given by Jack to Comdt. General Tom Barry and members of the West Cork Flying Column during the fight for freedom.



A view of the McCarthy farmstead at Letter, Caheragh.

no lights. The other car was the property of Mr. Patrick John O'Sullivan, 6 Meadow Park Road, Ballyvolane, Cork," Sgt. Brosnan said.

The road surface was wet, the defendant Murray had told the Sergeant. "The other driver, Mr. O'Sullivan, said he had a passenger with him and that they had been pushing the car because it had broken down. Both men were sitting in the car when I arrived on the scene," the Sergeant continued. "Mr. Murray had told me that he was down on the car before he saw it. This is a blind junction and Mr. Murray would have had a line of vision of some 35 yards," he added.

There were lights on O'Sullivan's car when the Gardaí arrived, Sgt. Brosnan said, but a witness had told the Sergeant that he had seen the car earlier without any lights.

"Mr. O'Sullivan was unsure of what they were doing in the middle of the road at that time. I understand that they had been in a licensed premises some time before the incident," Sgt. Brosnan said.

Mr. Patrick O'Sullivan then told the court that his car had broken down shortly after he and a friend from Ballydeub left the pub. "The car had to be pushed, he told the Gardaí that it had broken down. When we left the pub it went off alright but it broke down in the middle of the road a short distance down the road. We were pushing the car when we heard the other car coming," he said. Mr. O'Sullivan went on to tell the court that he had avoided injury because he was pushing the car from the driver's door.

Justice McCourt then ordered that the charge of dangerous parking against Mr. O'Sullivan be struck out and he then convicted Mr. Murray of careless driving, fining him £5 with £4.37 expenses.

Macra na Feirme

BANTRY Macra had a most unfortunate experience in the national club question time competition. The five-member team of Helen Howard, Gerard Burke, Jerry O'Neill, Eddie O'Flynn and Tom O'Flynn represented Carbery at the county final of the competition. There they emerged as winners, only to be deprived of the title on a technicality because of a deduction of marks due to late entry. The county championship was thus awarded to the runners-up, Midleton, who now go forward to represent Cork in the competition at national level.

LISAVAIRD

The national panel speaking team of Miah O'Mahony, Mary White, Carmel Crowley and Richard White were narrowly beaten into second place in the regional final by Kilmee.

The novice public speaking team of Elma O'Brien, David O'Hea, Conor Murphy and John O'Brien gave a creditable performance against Kilmee and Ardfield-Rathbarry.

Lisavaird Macra sponsored the best dressed lady competition at Lisavaird Show on November 1st. It was judged by Miss Marie O'Leary, Bandon, our National Council representative, and it was won by Mrs. J. Jennings of Dunmanway.

BALLINSPIITAL

Ballinspittal held their A.G.M. on September 23. A large number attended the meeting. Officers elected for 1978/79 were as follows: President, P. Hayes; Vice-Presidents, Rev. D. Neville, P.P., Rev. J. McCarthy, C.C., J. J. Hayes and J. O'Donovan; Chairmen, P. Copithorne; Vice-Chairman, Denis O'Reilly; Hon. Sec., H. O'Sullivan; Hon. Treasurer, V. Lynch; Asst. Sec., D. O'Brien; P.R.O., F. Connolly. Regional Delegates: P. Hayes, D. O'Reilly, P. Copithorne, H. O'Sullivan

and J. O'Donovan.

Ballinspittal took honours in the regional farms tasks competition held in Rossbarbery, P. Hayes, D. O'Reilly and C. Coughlan were over all prize winners of 14 teams. They then took part in the county farm tasks on Sunday, October 8, where they were narrowly beaten by Whitechurch.

Ballinspittal took part in novice public speaking during the month. They came third in the regional final. The team were as follows: Speaker, Philip Copithorne; Chairman, Theresa Connolly; proposer, Vincent Hayes, and second, Doreen Lynch.

Ballinspittal and Ballinadee Macra na Feirme held their annual dinner dance on November 26. A very large number attended a most enjoyable night. Guest speaker at the dinner was Mr. Jim Harley, Bandon (Agricultural Advisor). Guests who attended were Mr. and Mrs. Jim Harley, Bandon; Mr. and Mrs. Derry O'Donovan, Ballinspittal, and Mr. and Mrs. Pat Cahalane, Ballinspittal.

Ballinspittal Macra na Feirme held their annual question time and dance in the Community Centre on December 10. The quiz was very enjoyable, even though the teams taking part were small in number. Bantry won the quiz. Team was as follows: Helen Howard, Gerard Burke, Jerry O'Neill and Eddie Flynn. There was a large crowd at the dance and with lovely music from the band, it also proved to be successful.

BANDON MACRA

The end of 1978 also saw the end of some of the courses that Macra had organised and taken part in. They were car maintenance in Ballineen and swimming in Dunmanway. But one of the courses that did not finish at the end of the year is Farm Accounts in Bandon Farm Centre. This consists of everything a young farmer should know about farm records, cash flow, balance sheet, taxation, insurance and further planning.

This does not mean it is the end of the course. Internal decorating, first aid and celi dancing are among the wide range of courses that are offered by Macra for the long nights after Christmas. If anyone is interested in doing any courses above mentioned they are very welcome.

BANDON MACRA

The annual dinner dance of Bandon Macra na Feirme was held in Cokley's Atlantic Hotel, Gametstown, on November 12. It was a very enjoyable night for the large crowd which included many well-known guests, who helped the club over the past year.

Mr. Flor Riordan, County Chairman, attended. He spoke on valuable experience and knowledge to be gained by being a member of a Macra club. He thanked Bandon for their help and for the two members who are now delegates, Marie O'Leary, national delegate, and Dan Crowley, regional delegate. He concluded by wishing the club every success in the future.

Novice Public Speaking. Four members of the branch set a very high standard in the recent novice public speaking which took place lately. They were Mr. John Lucey, Mr. William Coffe, Miss Maura Hourihane and Miss Margaret Callaghan. The subject they discussed was a very interesting one, 'The Power of Advertising', which they

death v

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The woman in the article is my mother Joan O'Sullivan and the man is her uncle Cornelius McCarthy and John McCarthy was his brother. Both these men were my granduncles. All of them have died; Joan on October 30th 2007, John on November 13th 1978 and Cornelius on May 28th 1982. The farmhouse in the article is where I grew up and I often played in the field mentioned in it. I remember Cornelius to be a very stern man who had little time or patience for children. I only saw my granduncle John once a year as for many years before he died he lived in a nursing home in Cork. He visited once a year on the day of Skibbereen show. I'm not sure if this day had a particular significance for him. From my memories of him, which are very vague, I recall that he was a big man and that he was bald. I don't remember his funeral. On the other hand I do have some memories of going to Cornelius' funeral. He was buried in Caheragh new cemetery. I have a photo of their grave. As he was a member of the Skibbereen battalion, there was a firing party at his funeral and the tri-colour on his coffin. What stood out for me was the noise of the gun fire. My grandmother Ellie and her sister Margaret (who were sisters of Cornelius and John) were both members of "Cumann na mban". I recently found her name, Ellie Keating in the military archives. I played with their medals as a child not realising the significance of them.

I was asked what I remembered about the article. I remember the pictures being taken, though I didn't really know why they were being taken as I was ten years old at the time. The article was published in the "Southern Star" on January 13th 1979. My mother said that she didn't realise that the photo of her would be in the paper because if you look closely at her jumper you will see safety pins stuck in it. She was doing the washing that day and any pin that she found on the clothes, she pinned to her jumper. The article was cut out of the Star and kept safely in a hollow statue of Mary. Over the years it got quite tatty and torn until eventually it was lost. I eventually got a copy of it in 2016 from the Star office.

I was recently asked if there was an arms dump at home as it was used regularly as a safe house. I asked my older brother and he informed me that there were two. Both were dry gullies/drains, about 6 feet long and over grown. ¹ One was to the left of the front door at the other side of the ditch and under the washing line. ² The other was down behind the piggery and in by a ditch. The guns were wrapped up and shoved in to the drain away from prying eyes. The house is situated in a valley so it was ideal as a safe house as it had a 360° view of the surrounding area. My mother often said that her room was where the people who were being hidden slept. They could look out the back window upstairs and they had a clear view across the valley to where the lookouts were placed.

Siobhán Leahy

Eleanor your dad plastered the house around 1998.

Niamh if you look across from your house you will see the home place of Cornelius McCarty, where Michael Hourihane lives.



This is the farmhouse in the article.



This is the statue that the article was kept in



This arms dump was to the left of the front door and underneath the washing line. It was in a dry gully/drain and was about six feet in length.



This arms dump was to the west of the house. It was situated behind the piggery and in by the ditch in the photograph. This was also in a dry drain.



This is the field 300 yards from the house where Comdt.-General Tom Barry and others slept for fear that the house was under observation by the British forces who were in close proximity. The lower ditch has been taken away in recent years to enlarge the field.



This is the view from the back of the house. You can see right across the valley. The lookouts were situated on the hill opposite so that they could see any troops approaching. This was also the view from the back window in the upstairs of the house.

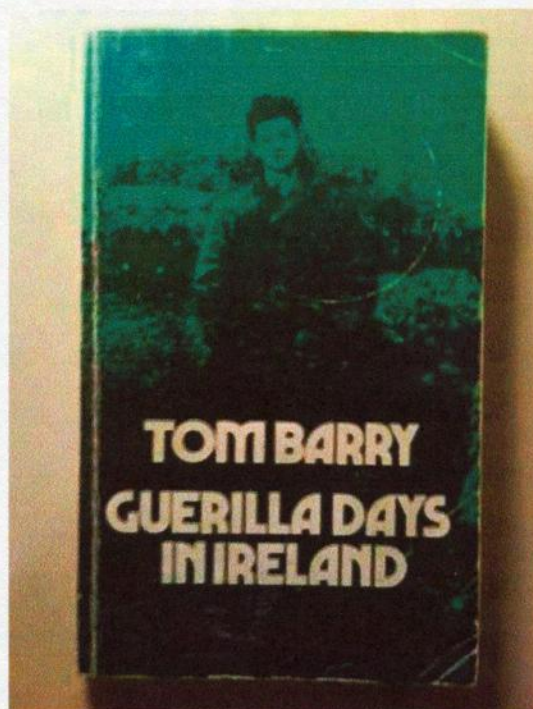


This is the headstone to John and Cornelius McCarthy in Caheragh new cemetery.

Caheragh Co GUMANN NA MBAN.

Name	Address	Rank	Present Add.
Miss Mary O'Sullivan	Dreenavoragh ✓	Captain	Home
Miss Bridie O'Sullivan	Coolbue ✓	Secretary	HOME
X Miss Nora Keohane	Caheragh ✓	Treasurer	..
Miss Ellen Cotter	Bearna ✓	MEMBER	..
Mrs Cadogan	Old Court ✓	..	..
Mrs Ellie Keating	Dromorneen ✓	..	..
Mrs Kate Harrington	" ✓	..	..
Miss Kattie Keohane	Kileenleigh ✓	..	..
Miss Abbie Cronin	Clouncugger ✓	..	..
(Mrs Jennie McCarthy O'Donovan.)	xRank Killenleigh	..	..

This is the page in the military archives showing Mrs. Ellie Keating, Dromorneen, my grandmother and a sister of Cornelius and John McCarthy. Her sister Margaret McCarthy was also in the Cumann na mBan.



This is the book mentioned in the article.