

My nan Mary Dwyer lived in the Skeames Island. It was she told me of the difficulties they had in those days. Her mother had told her that the Black and Tans went into the islands searching for the Free Staters. The Free Staters were on the run from the Black and Tans.

They went from one island to the next with rifles and bayonettes. They had to cook and feed the Black and Tans and the Free Staters too with the very little food they had.

The Islanders often gave up their beds to the Black and Tans who were often covered in fleas and lice as they slept in outhouses and hen houses. The Black and Tans set fire to houses in Castle Island.

The women on the island were afraid and frightened as their men used to be away fishing for weeks on end, fishing for lobsters along the coast. This left the women vulnerable.

The Free Staters used to bury their guns at the top of the strands at the high water mark and return later on to retrieve them.

When the Black and Tans came into the islands they used to sink their punts so that the Free Staters couldn't escape. Nan's grandfather was away fighting off Kinsale at this time, and his boat was saved.

The Free Staters went from the Skeame island to Horse island where they hid in the copper mines.

This is all my nan could remember her mom telling her, about these times.

by
Lydia Dwyer

This story was told to Lydia by her grandmother Mary Dwyer, from Collatsum, Church Cross, Skibbereen, Co. Cork.