

Union Hall stories from the time of the War of Independence:

(Paddy O' Driscoll and his wife Rita came into the school on Wednesday February 8th and told us these stories.)

Around 1920, Paddy's father (Michael) and uncles were living in Myross Island. One uncle, Pat, owned a house and farm in Bawnlahan also. There was a crop called mangles, which was a bit like beet growing there and in November two of Paddy's uncles, Peter & Tom were sent up to this farm to draw in the mangles before the frost which would destroy the crop.

The Black & Tans arrived at the house and lined up the two uncles to be shot, thinking they were the other 2 brothers, Pat & Michael, who were on the run at the time.

A drunken policeman came along and informed the Tans that they weren't the right 2 brothers. The lads were left off but the Tans burned the house.

Many local bridges were blown or destroyed at the time also by the IRA to keep the Auxies and Tans out. The main bridge in Rineen however was so well built that it wasn't destroyed. The keystone was too well built. The smaller bridge in Rineen village was blown though. Both roads were impassable for a while.

Paddy's uncle, Pat O' Driscoll was captain of the volunteers in Union Hall and Myross.

Connie Buckley, uncle of Paddy, was captain of the volunteers in Castlehaven.

Connie Buckley's brother was Barty. On one occasion during the war of independence, men were captured in Union Hall and being taken to Skibbereen through Rineen. Barty managed to escape and jumped over the bridge wall onto the land and made his way through the woods until he arrived at a safe house in Raheen.

Pat O' Driscoll was engaged to Rita's aunt (Margaret Hurley) who died from milk poisoning and was buried at night. A dose for cattle got into milk. Several people in the Castlehaven area were very sick. Some went blind. Burials took place at night in case they would be shot.

In the Buckley household in Gortbrac there was a hidden space under the floor for hiding people in. Furniture was covering the entrance to this space.

There was an arms dump on Myross Island and the Tans never found it.

The Fish Shop in Union Hall today was the site of the RIC Barracks and this was burned down during the period by local active men. The same thing happened in Rosscarbery and Skibbereen.

Jeremiah O' Donovan Rossa was married to a grandaunt of Paddy's mother and Barty Buckley's.

Paddy's father bought Paddy's home place in Bawnlahan from Wolfe's in 1936. His uncle Pat had the farm across the road (scene of the Tans incident mentioned earlier) for much longer.

Paddy's father Michael fished for many years. He was herring fishing around the coast.

There is a song called 'Casey of Drishane' which a cousin of Rita's gave them recently. This is about 15 verses in length and tells the story of Casey (a school teacher) and he prepping the lads to fight for Ireland.

There are graves in Myross Cemetery which are separate from the rest of the cemetery by a wall. This is because there was a threat of bodies being stolen after burial for research. For a

period after burial these graves were guarded to prevent this happening.

There was a creamery in Rineen which closed in 1946. It was located just at the Skibbereen side of Rineen between the post box and Charlie Daly's house very near to the post box.



L-R ; Rita O' Driscoll, Paddy O' Driscoll, Paddy French, Sarah McCarthy, Liadhain Hogan.

Recorded by;

Paddy French (Bawnlathan)

Sarah McCarthy (Brade)

Liadhain Hogan (Bawnlathan)

All pupils of Union Hall National School and school Principal Brendan McCarthy.

Liadhain (Lia) now lives in the house where Paddy's 2 uncles were lined up to be shot. The house remained an O' Driscoll house until the 1990s being owned by Paddy's first cousin known as Big John.

CASEY OF DRISHANE

By Cornelius M. Duggan

As the boys of '67 sought to right the Isle of Green
Up rose a youthful Fenian band, 'round dear old Skibbereen,
Amongst them was a leader true, a fair haired "bouchal bawn",
A daring youth, the soul of truth, Tom Casey of Drishane.

As master of a country school, well known for miles around,
The greatest problems of the day, his pupils could expound.
Beloved by every Fenian from the Hen to Sullane,
A truer Celt no'er were a belt than Casey of Drishane.

His patriotic fervor won his every pupil's heart,
As the story of their injured land to them he did impart.
The older boys indignant grew, each Paudrig, Sheemna, Shawna,
With Thade, and Mike all grasped the pike, with Casey of Drishane.

Above old Coomnagoohy's crest the midnight moon doth shine,
Reflecting "Cathlan Leingigh" on the waters of Lough Ine,
The heart of every Burchill youth, in Gortasa-a-Iomain,
Throws high with pride to march beside the captain of Drishane.

From Ballyna, Dromadeon, the hills and dales they cross,
To-night they'll see their Carbery Chief, the brave O'Donovan Rossa.
The farmers lock their watch dogs in at smiling Bealiban,
The noise to curb, and not disturb, the meetings at Drishane.

In close formation, double quick, down the old boreen,
They march beneath the "Phoenix" flag, brought out from Skibbereen,
Thus many's moonlit night was spent until the gleam of dawn
Dispelled the gloom o'er distant "Caom" and meadows of Drishane.

A youngster asked his mother, "Mama dear, who are these men
Who march in silence past our door, and vanish in the glen?
"Your father's serjeant of that band", she said "allians bawn",
"They go to drill on yonder hill with Casey of Drishane".

All honour to the womanhood of Carbery's lovely vales,
Who bore and nurtured patriot sons self-sacrificing Gaels,
There maid, and mother, watched all night to see that trait'rous spawn
Or sneaking foes should not oppose the Fenians of Drishane.

The "Rising" proved abortive, soon a British dungeon cell
Awaited those who failed to fly, and "Seanachie's" still tell
Of scarlet lines of soldiers all around the Carbery's drawa,
They ne'er got hold of Casey bold, the captain of Drishane.

Secreted in a rocky cave, adjacent to Cape Clear,
The fisher-folk supplied his wants till succour came anear,
A barkentine for New York bound, by name the "Early Dawn",
Sailed in the bay, and bore away, with Casey of Drishane.

Long years have flown, the country school is a week-drawn ruin to-day.
The master and his pupils, where, A Thighcarua, where are they?
The flowering bloom of Carbery's youth, the men of brain and brawn,
The true and tried, who stood beside their captain at Drishane.

The pupils, few remained at home, and some have passed away,
The greater portion are exiled, in many lands they stray,
Where'er they wander, East or West, by forest, field and lawn,
In dreamland still, they march and drill, with Casey of Drishane.

The master captain paid the toll, at Death's mysterious gate,
He's sleeping 'neath Northampton soil, in Massachusetts State.
Were he within his native land, awaiting judgement's dawn,
In Sherkin's shade, would friends have laid, the captain of Drishane.

God rest you, Captain Casey, you've not lived and worked in vain.
Your teaching finds expression in the movement of "Sinn Fein",
When o'er fair Carbery's cloud-capped hills, the shades of night are drawn,
Fond tales are told of Casey bold and the Fenians of Drishane.