

MY STORIES

from 1916-1923



flag of Ireland ↑



flag of Cork ↑

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Stories from Johnny French

Background:

When the leaders of the 1916 Rising were executed, Irish people were horrified. Soon after, came the War of Independence and the Civil War. Like most other parishes, some families in Leap supported the IRA while others didn't.

- There was an RIC Barracks in Leap village.
(RIC = Royal Irish Constabulary)
- RIC wives could not be employed. They also couldn't mix with the neighbours.
- The Irish language was banned under English rule. My neighbour, Johnny French, remembers that his father was never taught Irish. He had no Irish at all.
- In school, no football was played in Leap. The teacher was against it.
- At weekends, children (including Johnny) would play cards, hunt (e.g. rabbits) and play pitch and toss (later explained).

- There were 2 branches of Cumann na mBan in the Leap area. One in Leap and one in Corran. They would take messages from one Cumann to the other.

• Here are some stories that Johnny told us •

• Pitch and Toss •

Pitch and Toss was a game that Johnny and his friends would play when they were growing up. They would play it at the "5 crosses" which is where Johnny lives.

How to play: First, they would throw a stone. Then, they would throw pennies and see who would be the nearest to the stone. Whoever was the nearest, would get to keep all of the pennies.

• Next, will be some stories about people. Again, I was told many wonderful stories. •



• This is my drawing of the old penny. One of the pennies they used to play Pitch and Toss with. •

William F Spaight

Mr. William F. Spaight

Colonel William F Spaight and his wife Lucy, lived in Union Hall. He was a retired English Colonel. They owned a mansion with 24 rooms in Union Hall village. They also were the owners of the building in Leap that served as the local Police Barracks.

The local IRA burned down his house. Before they had burned it down, they had raided his house so that they would have all of his goods. Seemingly, anyone who acquired contents from Spaight's house, would never have good luck!

John Browne:

John Browne: John Browne was an RIC man who was living in County Clare. He has a niece called Sheila Healy (living in Main Street, Leap). John's mother, who was from Leap, owned a shop in Leap. The Black and Tans bought their cigarettes in her shop. The local IRA were fearful that Mrs Browne was passing on information to John, as he was an RIC man.

For that reason, at the age of 24, John Browne was shot by the IRA. He is buried in Leap Graveyard



This is a picture of John's mother's grave but he is mentioned on the headstone. (Leap Graveyard) picture: own collection.

- John's brother, Tom, had a revolver (type of gun) put to his head and was threatened. He was told to leave Leap and never come back. He never returned! Tom also lived in Leap.

Paddy "Fly" (Sullivan)

Paddy "Fly" (Sullivan) He was originally from Schull, but he was living in Drumoleague. His real name was Paddy Sullivan, but most people called him Paddy "Fly". He worked as a water diver and a pump sinker.

He was a very sociable man who would talk to anyone, on both sides. The local IRA thought he was unreliable. The Leap area wanted to "get rid of him".

The Leap IRA was very ruthless. The night before he was killed, he was brought to a house (which is near Frenches). Mrs. O'Donovan lived in the house that he was brought to. Two men were chained to John. Mrs. O'Donovan had to feed him.

The following morning, he was taken to a field in Cappanahaha. Fr. Holland (the parish priest at the time) was brought to him at gunpoint to give Paddy Fly his last rites. Then, Paddy was taken a few fields away and shot. Instead of burying him, he was left there and the ditch was knocked down to cover him. His body was never found! So Paddy was shot just for being kind to people!

I would like to thank and acknowledge Johnny and
Kitty French for helping me with my project and giving
me their time. It is very much appreciated.

by: Raonaid Kerrisk
6th class.

Leap N.S.

PARENTAL CONSENT

I hereby give permission for my child to submit an entry for the Stories of the Revolution Schools' Project. I understand that this story will form part of an archive and may also be used in a future publication.

Signed: Bart Kerrisk Date: 22/2/17

Address: Cullane East, Leap, Co. Cork

Child's Name: Raonaid Kerrisk

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Skibbereen Heritage Centre supported by Cork County Council Centenary Programme and Muintir Skibbereen Credit Union.