

1916 History Project

After speaking to my grandmother I discovered that, like most Irish families, my relatives were greatly involved in 1916. My great, great grand uncle a man called Matthew Cummins, who was born on my grandfathers Farm in Meelin, Bandon, left Ireland for America at the age of 14 to seek his fortune. He became the president of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. This was an Irish Catholic group that was set up to help Irish Catholic Immigrants in America. It became an important focus of Irish American Political activity. I searched the Internet for information on him and I found the following paragraph

"In May, the New York Times published an announcement from Matthew Cummins, President of the Ancient order of Hibernians, as he addressed the Boston Gaelic Society on the 1916 rising: 'While we mourn those Irish Volunteers as martyrs... what a glorious record, that instead of dying like dogs on foreign battlefields for the British Empire, they gave up their lives at home fighting for freedom. Much of the support from Irish-America was of the same kind as Cummings': not only pro-Irish, but anti-British war effort."

I also found out that he was heavily

involved in funding and raising money for the Irish cause from America. As well, he was in contact with Roger Casement, one of the heroes of 1916, who was executed in Brixton Prison. He wrote many letters to Roger Casement outlining what his thoughts were on Republicanism in Ireland and how best to help Ireland become free.

On my Grandmother's side, I discovered that my great grandfather, Denis (Dorgan) Kiely, was a dispatch rider in the I.R.A. Along with his brother, Tom, they would spend many nights crossing over the fields around Innishannon, passing on secret messages between their I.R.A. group and I.R.A. command. Tom and his brother were mistaken for their ^{cousin} captain Tom Kiely, by the blacks and Tans and were dragged out of the house my Grandmother grew up in in Innishannon. The two brothers were interned for 22 months in Ballykinlar Barracks, a notorious British camp, in County Down. They were held there without trial until a truce was signed and they were released. Once they returned home to Innishannon they decided to stick to farming and give up their heroic past.