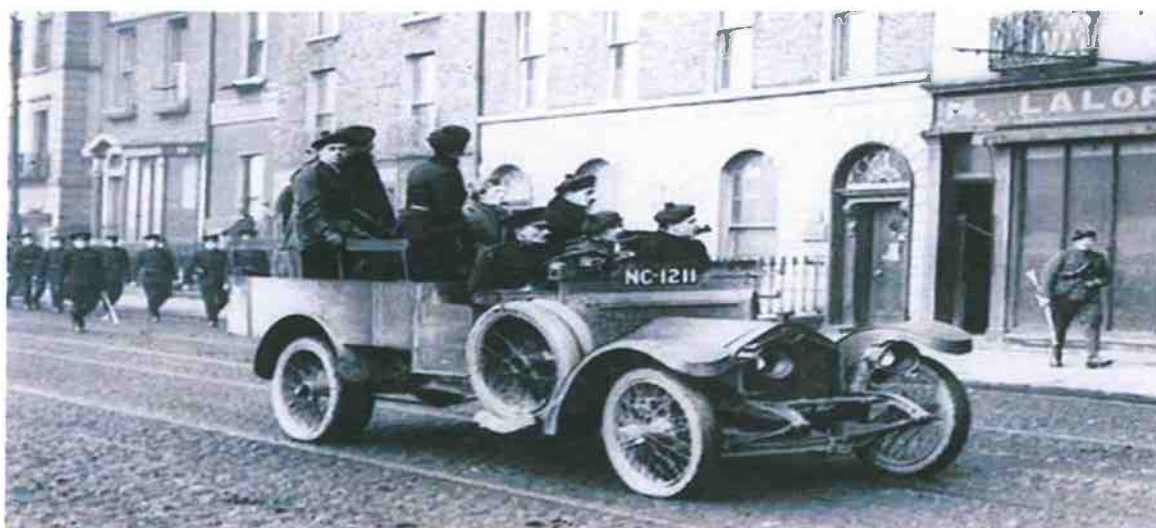


My name is Sean Finn. I am 9 years old and I live in the townland of Derrivereen, Clonakilty. This is a rural part of West Cork and today remains very similar to the period of 1916-1923. The local river, the Argideen runs through the townland from west to east and has been an important part of the area both as a crossing port and an economical point.

Last year, a very old man in our neighbourhood Michael O'Donovan passed away but in the years before his death he recorded activities and events that happened in the area during 1916-1923. Michael wrote his book "Then and Now" *Changing Times in Kilmeen and Castleventry Parish*.

In his book he wrote a story about his Mum and Dad and it involved the Black and Tans. The Black and Tans were ruthless and merciless members of the British Forces. They were deployed to Ireland to terrorise the local people of Derrivereen, Gearagh and Rossmore. Michael remembers his mother telling him a story of how the Black and Tans would barge in to a house and demand to know who stayed the pervious night and then proceed to search the house upsetting the people and the place as much as possible.

There was also a curfew law enforced whereby all the locals had to be indoors by a certain time in the evening. Anybody seen out after curfew hours was shot immediately by the British. Michael remembers his Dad talking about the activities of the Tans in my local area. They travelled in a lorry known as a Crossley Tender which were built in Manchester, England. They were 3 tonne 4x4 trucks and the Tans would stop and search the houses in the area they were in. During the period when the curfew was in force, the owner of each house had a duty to write down the name of each person staying in the house. The sheet was pinned to the back of the front door. The British would come and examine the sheets and everybody on the list had to be accounted for. This was done for all children and adults. If there was someone working on a particular farm, but living elsewhere, the Tans would be angry as they needed to know who lived where and in what house. If the Tans did not believe a certain person about the people living in the house, they would break down the house as they were ruthless and they didn't care how much damage they did.



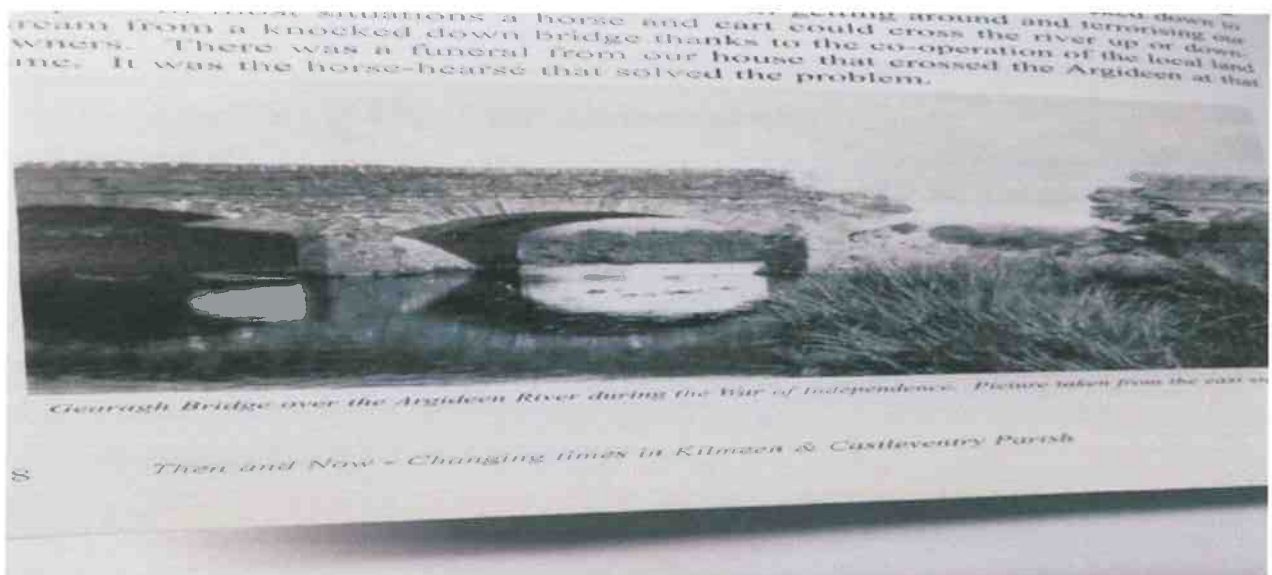
Michael O'Donovan's house here in my neighbourhood was one such house which was searched by the Black and Tans. The British had inside information on safe houses and on Volunteers on the run. They had a lot of information on the people who lived locally. It was difficult for people in Ireland during these hard times.

Another incident involving Michael's parents and the Black and Tans involved a run in with the Black and Tans. One afternoon, they were travelling into Clonakilty town on a back to back horse and trap. Michael's eldest brother Jim who was only a few months old was with them. Just as they were leaving Clonakilty to come home to Derrivereen, the Tans ordered them on to the road, took over the horse and trap and left them to make their own way home.

The horse and trap were an ideal way for the Black and Tans to drive around the area after curfew hours because if anyone was caught breaking the law they were reprimanded by the British. They drove out from Clonakilty, took the Sleaveen road near my house to Bealad and there was a man named Johnny Harte coming from work. He heard the sound of a horse and trap being driven very rapidly. He thought it was one of the locals rushing back from work to avoid the curfew. Unfortunately, it was the Tans. They told him to lie down on the road as they were going to shoot him. They decided not to shoot but instead tied him to the trap. They set off with the horse and trap and drove as fast as they could until they arrived at Reenasreena. Poor Johnny was dragged along the road for at least 5 miles. The Tans untied him and left him in the dyke in a semi-conscious state and drove off.

Michael's parents' horse was found the next day tied to a lamp-post in Clonakilty in a totally exhausted state without food or water. The horse had to recover for months from the cruelty he suffered.

Another problem the people in my area had to overcome was the hardship of trying to get from A to B. The IRA at the time were trying to protect the Irish people. They would blow up or demolish bridges so as to prevent the Black and Tans from using the roads in their Crossley Tenders. Gearagh Bridge is near my house and this was used by the local people to cross the river in their horse and traps. The horses and traps were small enough to cross the



river which helped them to travel where they needed to get to.

A little bit up the road from Gearagh Bridge is the old Rossmore School. This was used by a unit of the Essex Regiment under Major Percival. In this school the Essex Regiment would take locals hostage and they were locked in here for days or months. Jim Keating who is a neighbour of mine, his Dad Timothy Keating of Gearagh was a hostage in the old school.

Another story my father told me about people living around our area during this period is of Jim O'Sullivan. Jim was born one of nine children at Knockawaddra near Ballygurteen. He went to school locally. He joined the local Kilmeen Company of the IRA and joined the West Cork Flying Column in 1920 under the commanding officer Tom Barry. He was involved in the Kilmichael ambush against the British Auxiliaries exactly one week after joining and was shot by the Auxiliaries under a false surrender on November 28th 1920. He is buried in Castletown Kenneigh. A monument is erected in Rossmore village to honor him.

