



1920 BLOODY SUNDAY 2020

A Cappagh Perspective

@KillyclogherGAA



Today, we mark the 100-year anniversary of Bloody Sunday, 21st November 1920, when 14 people were killed by British forces in Croke Park at a Gaelic football match between Dublin and Tipperary. Seven people were shot dead on the field or on the terraces of Croke Park, five were shot and subsequently died in hospital and two others were trampled to death.

The match took place in the middle of the Irish War of Independence which lasted between January 1919 and July 1921. The events of Croke Park on the afternoon of 21st November 1920 were a British reprisal for that morning's events when Michael Collins' Squad (or "twelve apostles") executed 15 British spies ("G-men"), operating out of Dublin Castle, known as the Cairo Gang.

The exhibition match, part of the "*Gaelic Sunday*" acts of defiance against British rule which were initiated by the GAA two years earlier, was only roughly ten minutes in when over a dozen trucks filled with Black and Tans, Auxiliaries and RIC approached Croke Park from the Canal End. The occupants ran through the turnstiles and proceeded to fire rounds indiscriminately at the crowd and at the players. Panic ensued and along with the fatalities there were a further sixty people lying seriously wounded.

Because of the county match not involving Tyrone, it is unlikely that there was anyone one from our Parish in Croke Park that day. However, we can ask ourselves several questions regarding the local GAA perspective on that day's tragic events - Are there any club links to Bloody Sunday? What was the local reaction to Bloody Sunday? What was happening in our Parish at this time?

Club Links to Bloody Sunday

Perhaps the best known of the victims of Bloody Sunday is Michael (Mick) Hogan who was the sole player killed that day. The Tipperary man from Grangemockler has been immortalised in GAA parlance because the winners at Croke Park finals climb the steps to lift the trophy in the stand named in his honour, The Hogan Stand. Many of us have sat in this stand without (maybe) realising the sad significance of the stand's name.

Mick Hogan's brother was a Christian Brother called Br. Thomas Hogan. This man's name is now remembered as the winners of the All Ireland Colleges football competition are presented with a cup named after him; The Hogan Cup (***Corn Uí Ógáin***). On 22nd April 2007, several of our youth players climbed the steps of the Hogan Stand to lift the Hogan Cup, with their Omagh CBS teammates after defeating St. Mary's CBS, Tralee. Each year, members of our minors play in schools' MacRory Cup teams hoping to reach the pinnacle of schools' football – The Hogan Cup.

Other club players have climbed the steps of the Hogan Stand to lift other trophies representing Tyrone.

Among the selectors photographed on Bloody Sunday with the Dublin team (although originally a Clare man) was Thomas Joseph Markham. Each year, since 1940, the winners of the All Ireland minor football championship have been presented with the Tom Markham Cup (***Corn Thomáis Uí Mharcacáin***). Tyrone have been fortunate enough to win this cup on eight occasions and several of our club representatives have held the trophy aloft.

So, we may not be aware of any direct contemporaneous links between Bloody Sunday and Cappagh Parish but there are links that remain to this day.

What Was The Local Reaction to Bloody Sunday?

The headline in The Ulster Herald on Saturday 27th November 1920 read, ***"TRAGIC DAY IN DUBLIN – MILITARY OFFICERS KILLED – HORRIFYING SCENES AT CROKE PARK – TROOPS FIRE ON SPECTATORS AT FOOTBALL MATCH – MANY KILLED AND WOUNDED."***

The article gave a graphic account of the day's events and then went on to detail "The Castle Narrative", a British account of Bloody Sunday that was quickly discredited. The report from Dublin Castle had attempted to state that they had been fired upon first by the spectators at Croke Park. It is widely acknowledged that this was an attempt to cover up for the indiscipline of the British troops who were ordered to make arrests at Croke Park rather than shoot indiscriminately.

The Ulster Herald report then goes on to detail a debate in the House of Commons in London the day after Bloody Sunday. Under the headline, ***"SEQUEL IN COMMONS – VIOLENT SCUFFLE"*** the paper reported that when they largely ignored the events at Croke Park the previous day, Nationalist MP Mr Joe Devlin attempted to raise the matter but was shouted down amid furious scenes in the chamber. He was then grabbed around the neck by Major Molson MP amid cries of "kill him, kill him" from the various benches. Mr Devlin stated, *"This is a fine specimen of your English courage and chivalry to attack one man among six hundred."* The sitting was suspended by the speaker and upon resumption, Major Molson apologised to Mr Devlin.

Interestingly, a similar passage of events transpired in Westminster after the second Bloody Sunday (1972) when another British attempt to rewrite the narrative of events provoked a furious response from the MP for Mid-Ulster, young Tyrone woman Bernadette Devlin.

In a further article on 27th November 1920 under the heading, ***"CROKE PARK AMRITSAR"***, the Ulster Herald stated, *"But the most appalling scenes of the day were yet to be enacted. At 3.30pm in the afternoon a volley of rifle was heard in the centre of the City, and Crown forces in military lorries were seen rushing in the direction of Croke Park. Fire was opened without warning of any kind on five thousand defenceless people. A murderous fire was kept up for fully five minutes, and when the firing ceased twelve men, women and children were dead on the field. And several hundred wounded. In the whole shocking history of modern British rule in Ireland nothing could*

exceed in horror the ruthless massacre of these people. No warning of any kind was given. The people were shot down like dogs, and a little boy of fourteen years bayoneted to death."

It then went on to rubbish the British narrative of events under the heading, "**BASE FALSEHOOD**", saying "*The villainously lying report issued by Dublin Castle about the Croke Park affair will yet live in history. For a base falsehood nothing could exceed in duplicity the statement that when the Crown forces arrived at Croke Park they were met by a volley of revolver fire. Nothing of the kind happened. Not a single shot was fired by the people of Jones's Road, and when the first volley of lead was poured into them, no one knew where the firing came from. While the people were trying to escape by the Clonliffe Road entrance deliberate aim was taken at them and scores of bullets discharged. One poor girl was trampled to death, and when the bloody work was completed twelve people lay dead and several hundred injured.*"

The following week, The Ulster Herald reported on a Pastoral Letter from Cardinal Logue which was read throughout the Diocese which stated, "*I believe, moreover, that every right-thinking Christian equally deplors and condemns the general indiscriminate massacre of innocent and inoffensive victims which was perpetrated by the forces of the Crown in Croke Park on Sunday evening.*"

What GAA Activity Was Happening In Cappagh At This Time?

The GAA was formed on 1st November 1884 in the billiards room of Hayes Commercial Hotel, Thurles, Co Tipperary. It must be remembered that at the time of Bloody Sunday, the Association was still in relative infancy.

Brendan Harkin, in his book "**Years to Remember**" states, "*Tyrone ranked among the weak counties and even during the early years of the Association had never more than a few affiliated clubs and by the turn of century had possibly only one, Stewartstown.*" He then goes on to explain that the Ulster Council was only formed in 1903 and gives an interesting local anecdote regarding this. The first Vice President of the Ulster Council was Mr Michael Vincent O'Nolan, who was born in the Mullaghmore area of our Parish and went to school in Killyclogher, with his mother being one of the Mellons of Eskeradoey in the Knockmoyle end of the Parish. MV O'Nolan's son went on to become the famous novelist Brian O'Nolan (aka. Flann O'Brien, aka. Myles na gCopaleen). MV O'Nolan was also the first Chairman of the Tyrone County Board serving from 1904-08.

The first recorded club in the Parish was the St Patrick's club which was based in the Killyclogher/ Mountfield areas and started out in 1905, fourteen years before Bloody Sunday. This club had great initial success winning both the Tyrone Junior Football Championship and the Tyrone Senior Hurling Championship in 1905-06. In the football, St Patrick's defeated United Gaels Letteree (Dromore), Wolfe Tones (Beragh / Sixmilecross) and Sarsfields (Omagh). In the hurling, St Patrick's defeated Aodh Rua (Tummery) and Lamh Dearg (Strabane) to claim the title. The hurling team had also been initially referred to as Killyclogher Shamrocks.

Brendan Harkin's book mentions the following officials at this time; Master McCullagh, H McGartland, M Gubbins, N Devlin, J McSorley and M Gorman. It also mentions the following football and hurling players at this time; James McGinn, Barney McGinn, Thomas Angham, Patrick Angham, John Doherty, John Curran, Paddy McCaffrey, Mark McGrath, Hugh McGartland, Andy McCarroll, John McCrory, Joseph McCrory, Patrick McCrory, John Donnelly, John Daly, Charles McCrea, P McCann, J Deary, Tom Brown, Barney Donaghy and J Rodgers.

On 23rd September 1905, the Ulster Herald report entitled "**GAELIC SPORTS AT MOUNTFIELD**" stated the following, "*Mountfield was en fete on Sunday last when the annual sports took place under the auspices of St Patrick's Hurling Club in well laid out grounds amidst towering hills and delightful scenery... The sports concluded with a fine exhibition of hurling between teams representing St Patrick's and Sarsfield Hurling Club.*"

The Ulster Herald reported on 27th January 1906 under the headline "**KILLYCLOGHER BOYS VISIT COMRADES AT SIXMILECROSS**" that "*On Sunday St Patrick's (Killyclogher) Gaelic football and hurling team visited Sixmilecross district to give an impetus to the Irish game.*" The paper later announces that on foot of this a club was formed in the Sixmilecross / Beragh area. The St Patrick's Club is also referred to "North Cappagh" in some of the Ulster Herald reports of this time.

On 13th October 1906 a notice was placed in the Ulster Herald which said, "*A special meeting of the St Patrick's Hurling Club was held on Monday night last to make final arrangements for the annual Gaelic Sports which will be held on Sunday, 21st October, at Killyclogher, in a splendid field kindly granted for the occasion by Mr M Gubbins (sic). The following committee were appointed to take charge of the Sports; Messrs. Neil Devlin, C Campbell, P McCrory, C McCrea, J McGinn, W Tierney. Hon. Secs. H McGartland, J McCrory.*"

The Ulster Herald regular section "**WITH THE GAELS**" of this time reports periodically throughout 1907 of activity involving the St Patrick's Club. On 29th June 1907, the Ulster Herald reports on the St Patrick's Club winning the McAnespy Cup, which was for the winners of the mid-Tyrone football league. St Patrick's were presented with the trophy before a match against Drumquin Gaels in Killyclogher by Mr M Mullan (Chairman of the UDC) with the Ulster Herald reporting, "*Mr Mullan made very complimentary remarks towards St Patrick's Club and urged them to continue their efforts on behalf of Gaelic football. He presented the Cup to the captain, Mr McGartland. The latter on behalf of the Club thanked Mr Mullan for his remarks and encouragement of the Gaelic games, and assured him that St Patrick's Club would zealously cherish the cup while in their possession.*"

In May 1908 the Ulster Herald reports on an "**ENJOYABLE CONCERT IN KILLYCLOGHER**" organised by the St Patrick's Hurling Club and chaired by Mr McCullagh, NT. The club thanked Rev J O'Kane PP, Mr McCullagh and Mrs Andrews for the use of the school.

In July 1908 the Ulster Herald reported that an exhibition hurling match took place at Greencastle Sports between Omagh Rapparees and St Patrick's for the purpose of fostering the game in the Greencastle area.

The Ulster Herald of 29th August 1908 gives a large report on that week's Mountfield Sports. In particular, it reports on a "**LADIES HURLING MATCH**" between the newly formed St Brigid's (Killyclogher) and Banba's (Omagh) subsequent to a march through the village behind the Recarson and Aldrummond bands. The report also castigates at length those who pontificated against such events on the "Lord's Day." It was extremely prescient of the Gaelic Sunday campaign launched ten years later in 1918.

On 12th September 1908, the Ulster Herald reported that St Patrick's were defeated by St Colmcille's Glassmullagh in the semi-final of the Tyrone hurling championship on a score of 2-08 to 1-03.

There then follows only periodic mentions of the St Patrick's club partaking in activities in 1909, 1913 and 1914, although mostly in friendlies and the Devlin Cup. Indeed, Joe Martin in his book "**The GAA in Tyrone 1884-1984**", describes the 1910s generally in Tyrone as a "*struggle for survival.*"

There is little mention of Gaelic games in the Parish then until August 1919 where the Ulster Herald reports of a football game at Knockmoyle Sports (organised by the local Sinn Féin Club) between Knockmoyle Shamrocks and a team from Castleroddy, refereed by Mr E Tierney. A County Board meeting in August 1919 was attended by Mr Eugene Gallagher NT representing the Knockmoyle Shamrocks. Knockmoyle played their first official game that month against a team from Tattysallagh with the Ulster Herald mentioning Kelly, McGrath, Gallagher and Wilkinson as fine performers for Knockmoyle.

Joe Martin's book makes reference to the brief appearance of a hurling team in Killyclogher in 1918 called Owen Roes.

The Ulster Herald also reported in August 1919 on an attack on goalposts at Strathroy Holm the night before a planned match. It refers to people hostile to the promotion of Gaelic games hinting at that the sectarian strife that was prevailing at the time.

Knockmoyle Shamrocks played Omagh Colemans in September 1919 and included among their team were; J McCrea, Martin, J Kelly, O Gallagher, E Hagan, O'Donnell, J Mellon, P McTaggart, P McCrystall, H McCrory, Wilkinson, Kenny, W Morris.

1920, the year of Bloody Sunday, began with much acrimony in the committee rooms of the County Board with Knockmoyle Shamrocks successfully claiming the points of a match against Fintona Pearses who then counter-challenged the decision.

In February 1920 the Ulster Herald reported "**NEW CLUB IN BELTONY**" stating, *"It is pleasing to know that a Gaelic football club has been established at Beltony, and it is hoped that the club will be in a position to enter a team for the proposed summer league. Recently the newly-established club met Knockmoyle Shamrocks in a friendly encounter, and after a good game, which was refereed by Mr Joseph Maguire (Mountjoy) the score stood:- Shamrocks, 3 goals 3 points; Beltony, 1 point. For the winners, Jim McCrea, E O'Neill and Frank McCrory were conspicuous, and for the losers Peter McAnulla, Eddie O'Brien, Jim Connolly and Victor McMackin gave a good account of themselves."*

Knockmoyle Shamrocks were represented at County Board meetings in 1920 by Eugene Gallagher NT and T McEnade (possibly McDaid).

Four months prior to Bloody Sunday, in July 1920, a Sports were held in Knockmoyle which culminated in a match between Knockmoyle and Newtownstewart.

So, at the time of Bloody Sunday, it was the Knockmoyle and Betony ends of the Parish that were flying the flag for the GAA with the Shamrocks and Sarsfields clubs. After a whirlwind start, the St Patrick's club in Killyclogher / Mountfield had all but disappeared by the end of the 1910s. In the decade after Bloody Sunday, two new clubs in the Parish, the Arvalee Emmets and the Beltony Sarsfields, dominated the Parish landscape. Their story is for another day.

What Else Was Happening In Cappagh At This Time?

The precarious state of the GAA in Cappagh, and indeed Tyrone, at the time of Bloody Sunday is maybe understandable given the tumultuous political climate that prevailed at that time. The Easter Rising of 1916 was still a recent memory and Nationalists in this part of the country were facing the heart-breaking prospect of being cut-off from their fellow countrymen with the partition of their country and their new

reality in a unionist dominated statelet. The country was in the midst of the War of Independence and World War One was just coming to an end.

On 20th June 1914 the Ulster Herald reported under the headline "**KILLYCLOGHER AND MOUNTFIELD CORPS**" the following: *"The men of Killyclogher and Mountfield corps of the Irish Volunteers marched to the Killyclogher Chapel on Sunday, where they attended Mass. The men of both corps presented a fine military appearance, and a feature of the parade was the attendance of a ladies' nursing corps, which is attached to the Mountfield battalion, and who took their places in the ranks just behind the men. About 200 men took part in the parade, and their display was highly praised by a large crowd, which witnessed the display."*

On 8th July 1917, in an Ulster Provincial Tournament senior football match, Derry (represented by Sarsfields) took on Tyrone (represented by Coalisand Mitchels) at Strathroy Holm to raise funds for the National Aid and Volunteer Dependants' Fund. The fund had been set up in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising. The County Final was also played on Strathroy Holm in 1917.

On 1st May 1920 the Donegal News ran a story under the headline "**MOUNTFIELD BARRACK BLOWN UP - EXPLOSIVES SAID TO BE USED**" stating, *"News reached the Omagh police on Tuesday afternoon that the police barracks in Mountfield had been blown up on that morning about half past three o'clock. The barracks which was recently vacated by the police was situated between two public houses, Carl's and Deery's, and from inquiries it was learned that the charges, which consisted of some high explosives, were inserted in the wall along a gateway between Deery's and the barracks."*

The month before Bloody Sunday, the Ulster Herald ran a headline "**PRIEST'S HOUSE AND SCHOOL SEARCHED**" reporting *"Knockmoyle, four miles from Omagh, was the scene of much military activity on Tuesday. A detachment of soldiers raided the National School when the pupils were leaving at 3pm. They held up the teacher (Mr Eugene Gallagher), whom they searched and kept in the building for over two hours during which time all books, registers, and school requisites were examined. Subsequently the residence of Mr Healy adjacent to the school, and in which Mr Gallagher lodges, was raided. A garden beside the house was dug up by military, but nothing was found that could be described illegal."* The report goes on to state that Parochial Hall was searched as was the Parochial House belonging to Fr McKenna CC. Fr McKenna was confronted by soldiers again the next morning after celebrating Mass in St Mary's Church. The teacher in the school, Mr Eugene Gallagher, was also the same man that was so active in the Knockmoyle Shamrocks Club.

On 6th November 1920 the Ulster Herald reports that the school in Knockmoyle and Fr McKenna's house were raided again, the second time in as many weeks. This time the soldiers also entered the Church in Knockmoyle and the sacristy was ransacked.

Also, on this day, a mere two weeks before Bloody Sunday, there was a special meeting of the County Tyrone Technical Instruction Committee regarding the closure of Omagh Tech to mark the death of Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence McSwiney. The vice-principal had been asked to explain his decision to close the school and stated that he had been ordered on an Omagh street by a member of the IRA to close.

At this time Eoin O'Duffy was secretary of the Ulster Council of the GAA and Michael McCaughey in his book "**West Tyrone Board of the GAA**" states that he made great efforts to revive the Association in West Tyrone through the setting up of a Mid-Ulster League. He was ably assisted by Mr Dan Hogan who was based at the time in Clones. Dan Hogan, of course, was another brother of Mick Hogan who died on Bloody Sunday. Jim McFaul from Killyclogher was tasked with assisting in our Parish to get the GAA back in better shape at that time.

Subsequent to Bloody Sunday, Eoin O'Duffy and Dan Hogan were also active in this area with the Volunteers and, indeed, one Tyrone Company (Clogher) was under the direct command of Dan Hogan as part of the 5th Northern Division (ND). In Fergal McCluskey's book "***The Irish Revolution, 1912-23, Tyrone***" the author describes how the two men were tasked by GHQ with reorganising the Tyrone area among others.

The months after Bloody Sunday in Cappagh continued to be tense. In February 1921 the Belfast Newsletter reported that roads were dug up between Omagh and Mountfield (close to Killyclogher) and between Omagh and Gortin (at Lislap) in attempts to block police operations.

The following month in March 1921, the Ulster Herald reported that people returning from an Omagh Dramatic Club event in Knockmoyle Hall were accosted by the "Specials" and ill-treated through bayoneted thrusts and verbal assaults.

Also, in 1921, a famous Irish nationalist poet and writer settled in the Old Rectory in Mountfield. Alice Milligan was a Methodist from the Gortmore area of Omagh. She became a very important figure in the Irish literary revival movement and was a close confidante of Douglas Hyde, being very active in the Gaelic League. She moved to the other end of the Parish in Tircur in her later years and is buried in Drumragh Old Graveyard.

This Month's Commemorations

So that was then.

The events of Bloody Sunday were a seminal moment in the history of the GAA. Quite rightly, the Association remembers the victims today.

Here in Cappagh, we remember the victims also.

We also remember the people of our Parish at that time.

Those Who Died

James Burke, Daniel Carroll, Michael Feery, Thomas Ryan, James Teehan, Joe Traynor, Michael Hogan, Jane Boyle, Tom Hogan, James Matthews, Patrick O'Dowd, Jerome O'Leary, John William Scott, William Robinson.

(WRITTEN BY NIALL McKENNA 2020)