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Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

Title

The Irish Volunteers in north Co. Dublin, 1913-17

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Abbreviations

A.O.H.	Ancient Order of Hibernians
C.C.	Catholic curate
C.I.	County Inspector, R.I.C.
CM	Commuted (sentence)
C.O.	Colonial Office
Col.	Colonel
Const.	Constable (police)
C.S.	Chief Secretary
C.S.O.	Chief Secretary's Office, Dublin Castle
C.S.O.R.P	Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers
D.I., Dist.	Inspr. District Inspector, R.I.C.
D.L.	Deputy Lieutenant
D.M.P.	Dublin Metropolitan Police
Fr.	Father (Catholic priest)
G.A.A.	Gaelic Athletic Association
Gen.	General
GOC.	General officer Commanding
G.P.O.	General Post Office
H.C.	Head Constable
HQ.	Headquarters
IMP.	Imprisonment
I.R.B.	Irish Republican Brotherhood
ITGWU.	Irish Transport & General Workers Union
J.P.	Justice of the peace
K.C.	Kings Counsel
Lieut.-Col.	Lieutenant-Colonel
M.P.	Member of Parliament
P.P.	Parish priest
OC.	Officer Commanding
R.C.	Roman Catholic
R.I.C.	Royal Irish Constabulary
U.I.L.	United Irish League
U.V.F.	Ulster Volunteer Force
S.H.S.	Skerries Historical Society

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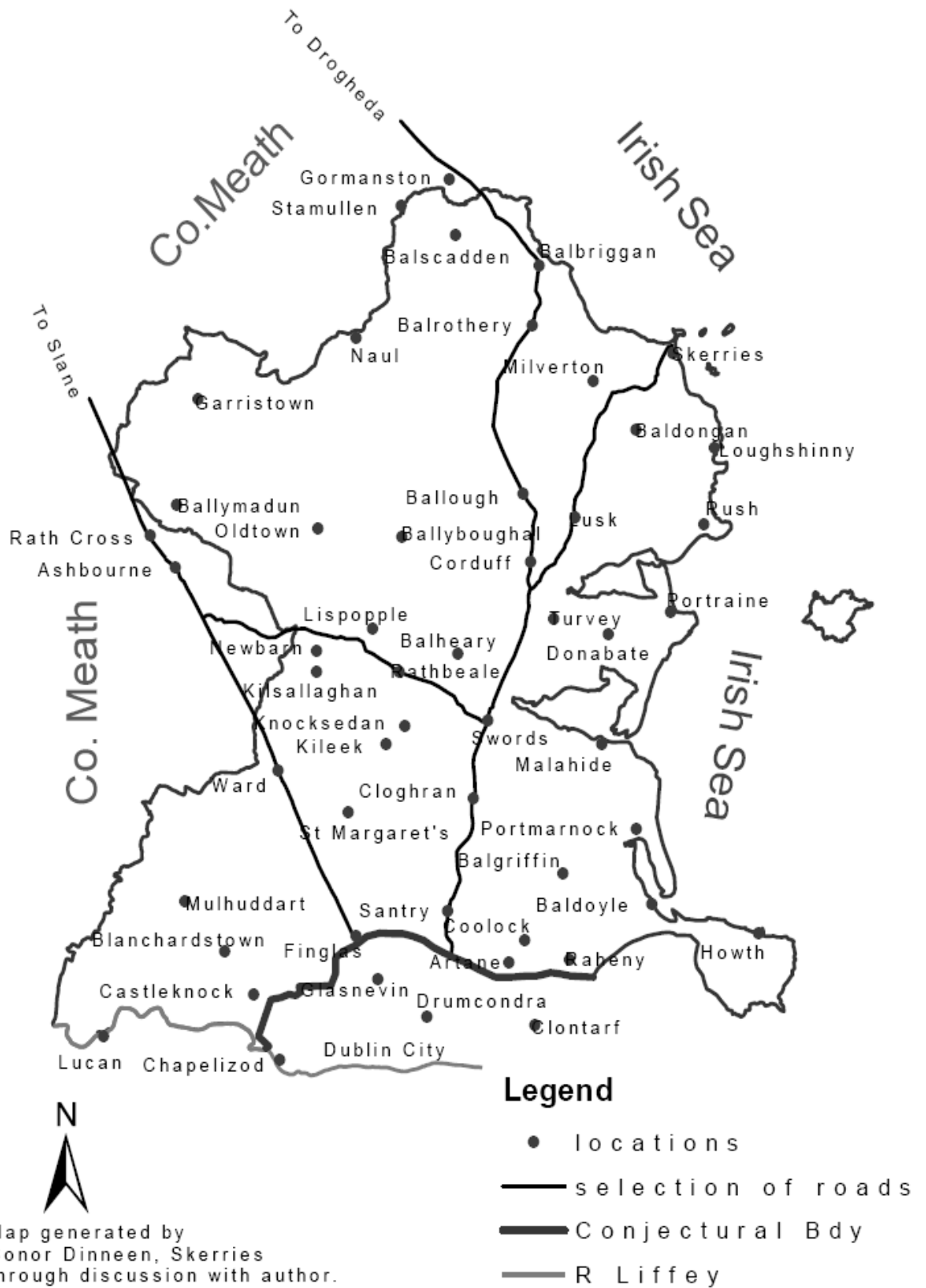
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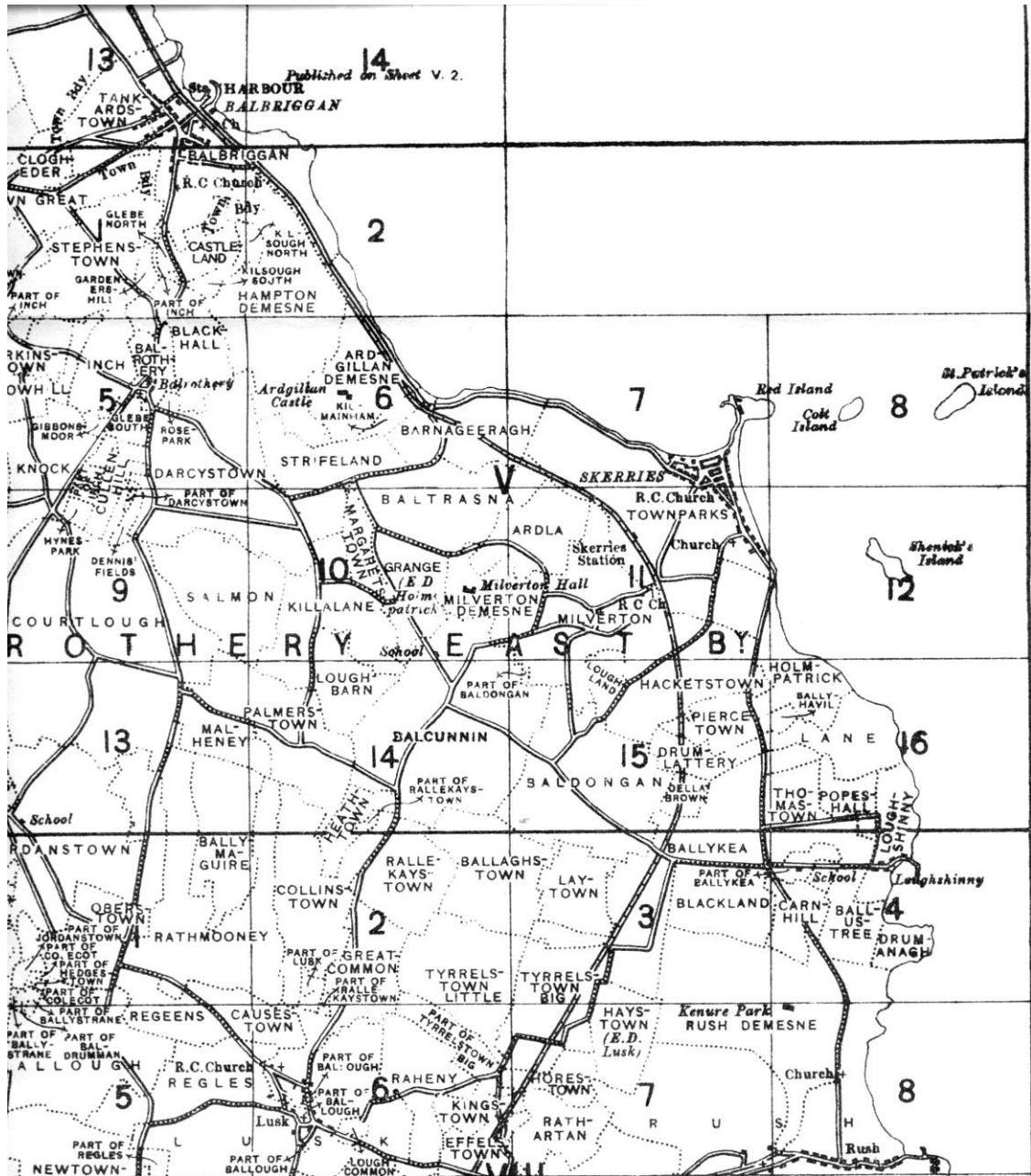
Last, but not least, thanks are also due to my fellow students on the MA course in Local History, who I shared my ups and downs with during the period of the course.

Map 1 North County Dublin



Map 2

Extract from the Ordnance Survey Townland Index Map of County Dublin (showing Skerries and its environs). To the sheets and plans on the scale of 6 inches to 1 mile (1: 10,560), and 25.344 inches to 1 mile (1: 2500).



Summary

The objective behind this M.A. Thesis was to chart the establishment and subsequent development of the Irish Volunteer movement under Eoin MacNeill, in north County Dublin, in the period 1913 to 1917. Within that primary aim it was envisaged that the development of the Skerries Irish Volunteer company would become apparent, but within its proper context in the wider movement in north County Dublin and beyond.

As a means to achieve these objectives recourse was made to both primary and secondary sources. The former was looked to for new information while the latter was expected to show what is already known on the subject in hand. While the Volunteers were attached to companies, it was proposed to see them as people within a 'community of association' i.e. as a group of like-minded individuals (in this case men), all engaged in the pursuit of a defined set of goals.

During the period of examination, a great variety of events occurred, in which the Volunteers of the north county and Skerries participated. It began with the formation of the Volunteer movement itself and then its subsequent transformation into the National Volunteers under John Redmond which was an important change. The Volunteers of the study area took part in the Howth Gun-running in July 1914. At the time of the Redmondite-split, Volunteers either reverted to MacNeill or remained with Redmond.

The north county Volunteers participated in the 1916 Rising, with the Fifth Battalion under the command of Thomas Ashe and Richard Mulcahy and also with Dublin City garrisons such as at the General Post Office and the Mendicity Institute to name just two. They collectively fought hard and are now remembered in the 1916 Rolls of Honour housed at the National Museum of Ireland. Those who died are remembered by memorials such as that at Rath Cross, Ashbourne, County, Meath.

Introduction

The objective of this study is to look at the establishment, development, and evolution of the Irish Volunteer movement in north County Dublin during the period from 1913 to 1917. The study will at all times keep its focus mainly on the Skerries Irish Volunteer company. The Irish Volunteer movement, having been established on 25 November 1913 at the Rotunda Hall, Sackville (O'Connell) Street, Dublin, was organised by a Provisional Committee under Professor Eoin MacNeill. The movement subsequently went through a series of changes and these will be examined with particular emphasis on the impacts on the local level. The first change was the take over of the movement by John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party, thereby turning it into the Irish National Volunteers. Then there were the efforts to arm the Volunteers by bringing in guns at Howth and Kilcoole. After a number of months the movement divided into the National and the Irish Volunteers and it was the latter force which participated in the 1916 Rising. The repercussions as they applied to north County Dublin, such as those who lost their lives, who suffered arrests and internment and their later releases, will all be examined here.

The forces which propelled the Volunteer movement in whatever guise as well as those which hampered its development will also be looked at. It was these forces which shaped the political and economic landscape both nationally and locally in north County Dublin. In addition, while the study will be mainly focused on the Skerries Volunteer company it will be important that this company can be seen in its wider geographical context of both north County Dublin and the still wider hinterland of northeast Leinster.

When looking at the Volunteers, use will be made of what Professor Raymond Gillespie terms an 'interpretative tool' which allows for the study of groups of people by seeing them as a 'community of interest'.¹ Thus, groups of like-minded individuals such as the Irish Volunteers can be categorised into manageable units as a pragmatic approach to their study within their own community. Another important aspect of the study will be that both qualitative and quantitative analysis will be adopted where ever possible.

¹ Raymond Gillespie, 'An historian and the locality' in Raymond Gillespie and Myrtle Hill (eds), *Doing Irish Local History; pursuit and practice* (Belfast, 1999), p. 13.

The geographical delineation of north County Dublin is seen in Map 1. The area was bounded on its eastern side by the Irish Sea and on its northern side by the course of the River Delvin from Naul to the sea at Gormanstown. The southern side is somewhat problematic as it was under constant encroachment by the expanding city of Dublin. This led over time to boundary changes occurring under the 1881 Municipal Boundaries Commission, under several local acts of parliament and then under the 1926 Greater Dublin Commission. However for the period of interest here, none of the above applies and another boundary line needs to be found. For a start, certain townships can be said to have already been subsumed into the urban area and thus the following places will not feature in this study, Clontarf, Drumcondra, Glasnevin, Clonliffe and Chapelizod.² There is no natural topographical feature such as the River Tolka, which earlier had formed the southern boundary. Therefore, to get around this problem the reader is asked to imagine in conjunction with Map 1, a line drawn from Raheny on the east coast skirting the aforementioned townships but taking in Artane, Finglas, Ashtown and Castleknock. This will define the more complex part of the boundary and if the line should loosely follow the contour of the River Liffey until it nears the district of Blanchardstown and beyond that to the county Kildare-Meath-Dublin border, then that completes the extent of the southern boundary.

The remaining western boundary is described by former Oldtown resident Patrick Archer thus ‘...its western boundary...is left undefined for a distance of some thirteen miles... it extends southwards to a point on the northern bank of the River Tolka somewhere between Cardiff’s Bridge and Blanchardstown...’³ In another work he adds that ‘...the boundary is generally accepted that it is bordered on the west by (from north to south) by Knockbrush, the Hill of the Broughan, the Moat of Kilshane and the Hill of the Ward (all west of the Ashbourne Road) and the following lie east of the Ashbourne Road: the Moat of

² Arnold Horner, ‘From city to city-region-Dublin from the 1930s to the 1990s’ in F.H.A. Aalen and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Dublin City and county; from prehistory to present* (Dublin, 1992), p. 353. *Thom’s Almanac and general directory* (Dublin, 1916), pp 1763, 1772. Ruth McManus, Joseph Brady and Anngret Simms (eds), *Dublin, 1910-1940: shaping the city & suburbs* (Dublin, 2002), pp 308, 321. Séamas Ó Maitiu, *Dublin’s suburban towns, 1834-1930: governing Clontarf, Drumcondra, Dalkey, Killiney, Kilmainham, Pembroke, Kingstown, Blackrock, Rathmines and Rathgar* (Maynooth Historical Studies, 2003), p. 140-1.

³ Patrick Archer, Bob Brown and Jarlath Duffy (eds), *Fair Fingall* (An Taisce Fingal, 1975), p. 1.

Coolrath, the Rath of Kilsallaghan, the Moat of Palmerstown, the Moat of Knockineek, and the Moat of Knocklyon...'.⁴ The towns and villages of north County Dublin were situated in the baronies of Balrothery (east and west), Coolock and a portion of Castleknock and Nethercross.⁵ Examples of the parish populations in 1911 were Balbriggan (2,273) Donabate (2,503) Swords (1,893) and Skerries (1,819), while the combined parish of Lusk and Rush was (1,304).⁶ Map 2 provides a view of the town of Skerries and its environs.

The historiography of the Irish Volunteer movement nationally is a complex one and went through a series of changes during the period under examination here. This led to a myriad of publications on the different parts of its evolutionary history. The sources to be used here will depend to a large degree on what questions are asked in the study. Thus, the first question has to do with the reasons for the establishment of the movement in November 1913. Thereafter other questions arise from when and where in north County Dublin did Volunteer companies form? What were the circumstances around its take over by the Irish Parliamentary Party in June 1914 and the subsequent change of name to the National Volunteers? What level of participation did the north County Dublin National Volunteers take in the Howth gun-running and what if any arms were obtained by them? What were the circumstances of the so-called Redmondite-split amongst those companies in the autumn of 1914? What is known about the split in regard to how many men stayed with John Redmond and how many went with MacNeill's Irish Volunteers? How involved were Volunteers of the study area in the 1916 Rising? What were the actions of the Fifth Battalion under its Commander, Thomas Ashe? Were any Skerries Volunteers with the battalion during Easter Week 1916 and at the so-called battle of Ashbourne? What were the circumstances surrounding the general surrender as ordered by Pearse? Other questions relate to the events after the Rising collapsed such as what were the

⁴ Rena Condrot, Pat Hurley and Tom Moore (eds), *Old tales of Fingal* (An Taisce Fingal, 1984), p. iii.

⁵ Samuel Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Ireland, comprising the several counties, cities, boroughs, corporate, market, and post towns, parishes, and villages, with historical and statistical descriptions...* (2 Vols. London, 1837), ii.

⁶ *Thom's Almanac and general directory* (Dublin, 1916), pp 1893, 1735, 1771, 1890, 1898. W.E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds), *Irish historical statistics; population, 1821-1971* (Royal Irish Academy, New history of Ireland, ancillary publications ii, 1978), p. 29.

consequences for the arrested men? What prisons in Britain were they interned in? What happened to them there? When were they released?

When it comes to secondary sources and how they relate to the Irish Volunteer movement on the national level, the following works are expected to be of use here. One of the first seminal works in this case was F.X. Martin's *the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915; recollections and documents*; equally his later 1964 work *The Howth gun-running, and the Kilcoole gun-running, 1914*, also provide invaluable information on those episodes.⁷ More recent works are Richard Killeen's *A short history of the Irish Revolution, 1912 to 1927*, published in 2007;⁸ and the 1998 work by David Fitzpatrick *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: provincial experiences of war and revolution*.⁹ In regard to the 1916 Rising and its aftermath, among the many works are Fearghal McGarry's 2010 work, *The Rising; Ireland; Easter 1916*;¹⁰ and his 2011 work *Rebels; voices from the Easter Rising*;¹¹ Shane Hegarty and Fintan O'Toole's 2006 work, *The Irish Times book of the 1916 Rising*;¹² Charles Townshend's 2005 work *Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion*;¹³ Michael Laffan's 2005 work *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Fein Party, 1916-1923*;¹⁴ Peter Hart's 2003 work *The I.R.A., at war, 1916-1923*;¹⁵ and his 1999 work *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916-1923*;¹⁶ Joost Augusteijn's 1996 work *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experiences of ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921*;¹⁷ and his 2002 article 'Motivation: why did they fight

⁷ F.X. Martin (ed.), *The Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915; recollections and documents* (Dublin, 1963).

F.X. Martin, *The Howth gun-running and the Kilcoole gun-running, 1914* (Dublin, 1964).

⁸ Richard Killeen, *A short History of the Irish Revolution, 1912-1927* (Dublin, 2007).

⁹ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921: provincial experiences of war and revolution* (Cork, 1998).

¹⁰ Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising; Ireland; Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010).

¹¹ -----, *Rebels; voices from the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2011).

¹² Shane Hegarty and Fintan O'Toole, *The Irish Times book of the 1916 Rising* (reprint. Dublin, 2006).

¹³ Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion* (reprint. London, 2006).

¹⁴ Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Fein Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁵ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at war, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003).

¹⁶ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1999).

¹⁷ Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experiences of ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996).

for Ireland? The motivation of Volunteers in the revolution'.¹⁸ Older works are the 1969 work by John M. Heuston *Headquarter Battalion, army of the Irish Republic, Easter Week, 1916*;¹⁹ and Desmond Ryan's 1949 work *The Rising: the complete story of Easter Week*.²⁰

Biographies are another valuable source and examples are Sean O'Luing's 1970 work *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*.²¹ Maryann Gialanella Valiulis's 1992 work *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy, and the founding of the Irish Free State*.²² On the aspect of Frongoch Prison camp, a place where many prisoners found themselves after the Rising, then Sean O'Mahony's 1987 work *Frongoch, university of revolution* is a useful starting point.

Articles on various aspects of the Irish Volunteers are found in a wide variety of journals and periodicals and for example J.J. Lee's 2006 work '1916 as virtual history' in *History Ireland*;²³ and two articles in *Riocht na Midhe*. These are the 2010 work by Noel Tier 'The 5th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne, Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 to Sunday 30 April 1916',²⁴ and the 2003 work by Terence A. Dooley 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916'.²⁵ The 2010 local history journal by the Fingal County Library titled *Fingal Studies*, No.1, is expected to be useful. In it are two articles of particular interest to this study, one is by Bairbre Curtis 'Fingal and the Easter Rising 1916' and the other is by Peter Whearity 'John Jack 'Rover'

¹⁸ Joost Augusteijn, 'Motivation: why did they fight for Ireland? The motivation of Volunteers in the revolution' in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2002).

¹⁹ John M. Heuston, *Headquarter Battalion, army of the Irish Republic, Easter Week 1916* (Tallaght, 1969).

²⁰ Desmond Ryan, *The Rising: the complete story of Easter Week* (Dublin, 1949).

²¹ Sean O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary* (Tralee, 1970).

²² Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992).

²³ J.J.Lee, '1916 as virtual history' in *History Ireland*, vol.14, No. 2 (1916: 90th anniversary issue, Mar.-Apr. 2006).

²⁴ Noel Tier, 'The 5th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne, Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 to Sunday 30 April 1916' in Séamus MacGabhann (ed.), *Riocht na Midhe, records of the Meath Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. xxi (2010), pp 180-88.

²⁵ Terence A. Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in Séamus MacGabhann (ed.), *Riocht na Midhe*, vol. xiv (2003), pp 194-229.

McCann (1886-1920): Irish Volunteer'.²⁶ Other articles by the last mentioned author, published by the Skerries Historical Society, are, in 2010 'Brothers in arms; Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers 1916' in *Time & Tide* 7, vol.7;²⁷ and the 2004 article 'Thomas Hand, 1878-1920, Irish Volunteer' in *Time & Tide* 4, vol. 4.²⁸

In regard to primary sources published or unpublished accounts provided by men and women who were participants or associates of the Irish Volunteer movement are numerous. One of these is Bulmer Hobson's 1918 work *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916* vol.1;²⁹ and another is the 1966 account by Colonel Joseph Lawless's 'Fight at Ashbourne',³⁰ and also found in his 1948 work *Dublin's fighting story; 1913-1921; told by the men who made it*.³¹

One of the best primary sources is the Dublin Castle records. Though the originals are held at the Public Record Office (PRO) London, the material is also accessible in microfilm and hard-copied form in the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives of Ireland and in some university libraries. Of most interest here is the British in Ireland, Series One, Colonial Office Class (CO904) parts one to six. Part one relates to 'anti-government organisations 1882-1921' part two deals with 'police reports, January 1892 to December 1897, divisional commissioners and county-inspectors monthly confidential records' part three relates to 'police reports (inspector-general, and county-inspector) February 1898 to December 1913' part four deals with 'police reports (inspector-general and county-inspector) 1914 to 1921' part five contains information on 'public control and administration 1884 to 1921' and part six with 'judicial proceedings, enquiries and miscellaneous records 1872 to 1926'. Of primary interest here are what parts three and four have to offer.

²⁶ Joseph Byrne (ed.), *Fingal Studies*, No.1 (Local History Journal of Fingal County Libraries, summer, 2010).

²⁷ Frank Whearity, 'Brothers in arms; Matthias & Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers 1916' in *Time & Tide* 7, vol. 7 (Skerries Historical Society), 2010), pp 122-45.

²⁸ Whearity, 'Thomas Hand, 1878-1920, Irish Volunteer' in *Time & Tide* 4, vol. 4 (Skerries Historical Society, 2004), pp 36-81.

²⁹ Bulmer Hobson (Eoin MacNeill, intro.), *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, vol.1 (Dublin, 1918).

³⁰ Joseph Lawless (Col.), 'Fight at Ashbourne' in *Capuchin Annual*, vol. 33 (1966).

³¹ Various authors, *Dublin's fighting story, 1913-1921; as told by the men who made it* (Tralee, 1948).

The National Archive of Ireland has further material in the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, especially that which relates to the activities of individual Volunteers during the Rising. Contemporary newspapers, both national and provincial, are another important source. The former are represented by the *Irish Times*, the *Weekly Irish Times*, the *Irish Independent*, the *Sunday Independent*, the *Freeman's Journal*, among others. Examples of the latter are the *Drogheda Independent* and the *Meath Chronicle*.

The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook contains contemporary material from the issues of the Irish Times Newspaper Company collated and published in 1917. It provides information in relation to the Rising, the executions of the rebel leaders, details of the arrested and deported persons, including those from north County Dublin. Another important source for the revolutionary period from 1913 to 1921 is the Bureau of Military History witness statements held in Cathal Brugha Military Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin and at the National Archive of Ireland in Bishop Street, Dublin. Amongst those who assisted the bureau from the study area were Joseph (Col.), Lawless whose witness statement was (No.1043), and the others were Charles Weston (149), James Crenigan (148), Michael McAllister (1494), and Dr Richard Hayes (97), among others. Local sources not held in repositories are oral and photographic evidence and these are also important. These are further supplemented by online sources such as the 1901 and 1911 census returns.

It is proposed to approach the subject of the Irish Volunteers from what Professor Raymond Gillespie terms 'a community of interest'. Behind the concept lie the essential elements of 'people, place and time' but with the greatest emphasis being on the people in a study. Any group of people 'living together with something in common' can be looked at in that way including groups connected through 'webs of kinship'.³² It is believed here that the Volunteers of the study area fulfil the necessary criteria for consideration as a community of interest. Interestingly, Bulmer Hobson also wrote about the concept in his 1909 work *Defensive warfare; a handbook for Irish Nationalists*. He claimed that a 'community of national sentiment will go so far, but a community of interest to

³² Gillespie, 'An historian and the locality' in Raymond Gillespie and Myrtle Hill (eds), *Doing Irish local history; pursuit and practice*, pp 12-14.

back it up will be stronger still and this must not be an intangible far-off interest, but a real vital ever present interest which will give to each unit of the national army the same strength and sense of security that is possessed by the whole'. In addition 'finance must be at the basis of a community of interest'. Importantly Hobson stressed that a 'defensive war is in reality [still], a war'.³³ Hobson was born in Belfast in January 1883 and was a founder member of the Dungannon Clubs in 1906, before moving to Dublin in 1908. He became 'centre' of the Teeling circle of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. In 1911 he became a member of that organisations Supreme Council and two years later became secretary of the Irish Volunteer Executive, much to 'the disquiet of the Clarke-MacDermott group within the Irish Republican Brotherhood'. In 1914 he became one of the principle advisers to Eoin MacNeill and was still doing so in April 1916.³⁴

A brief insight into the five chapters in the study will follow here. The first chapter is titled 'The formation of the Irish Volunteer movement'. It gives a short preamble into the political and economic landscape as it was leading up to the formation of the Irish Volunteer movement. The burning issues of the day were Home Rule and the Irish Parliamentary Party's obsession with that matter. The so-called Larkinite-strike brought about by James Larkin's trade union the Irish Transport Workers Union and the formation of James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army, to defend Larkin, will be explored. The rise of Sir Edward Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force and it implications for the South of Ireland is important too. The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Irish Volunteers under Eoin MacNeill and the part played by the north County Dublin domiciled Kettle brothers will be looked at. The issue of arms and the need to obtain them will be gone into. The chapter will end by determining which Volunteer companies had formed prior to the takeover of the movement by Redmond and the Irish Party in June 1914.

The second chapter is titled 'The National Volunteer movement'. This deals with the movement after it had been subsumed by the Irish Parliamentary Party.

³³ Bulmer Hobson, *Defensive warfare: a handbook for Irish Nationalists* (West Belfast Sinn Fein Club, 1909), pp 26, 28-9.

³⁴ Patrick Maume, 'Hobson (John) Bulmer' in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. Accessed from <http://dib.cambridge.org.jproxy.nuim.ie/quicksearch.do;jsessionid=843FA387DAE7D0C139769F2827FFEBCFD> (29 Oct. 2011).

Its subsequent progress in north County Dublin as it developed into individual companies will be examined. The Howth gun-running and the participation of Volunteers from the study area will be of interest particularly from the perspective of the Volunteers of Skerries. The chapter will end with an appraisal of the state of the Volunteer movement with regard to the number of companies and their memberships. It will be seen that the movement reached its highest point prior to the so-called Redmondite-split in the autumn of 1914.

The third chapter is titled 'The Redmondite-split and its aftermath'. It will examine the circumstances surrounding the split as it impacted in the study area. Details of what happened after the split in regard to what companies went with Redmond and those who went with MacNeill will be provided. The subsequent development of the Irish Volunteer movement in the study area will also be gone into.

The fourth chapter is titled 'The 1916 Rising in north County Dublin'. The dramatic events surrounding the Rising along with details of the participation of north County Dublin Irish Volunteers acting with the Fifth Battalion under Thomas Ashe and Richard Mulcahy will be looked at. The consequences of the surrender, as they applied to the Volunteers of the Fifth Battalion, will be examined. When those who were arrested and imprisoned are identified, then details of their lives can be used to generate further information about where they came from in the north county, about their occupational profiles, marital status, ages and so on. Additional information held by the Royal Irish Constabulary or the Dublin Metropolitan Police will also be included in the study.

The fifth and last chapter is titled 'The aftermath of the Rising'. The experiences of those interned from the study area, especially those incarcerated in the north Wales prison, Frongoch, will be examined along with their subsequent releases from that and other British prisons.

Chapter One

The formation of the Irish Volunteer movement

Home Rule was occupying the minds of the Irish populace North and South. In Dublin City and county, from late August onwards the spectre of the great Dublin lockout, otherwise known as the Larkinite-strike, took hold of people's imaginations. The labour dispute was subsequently played out between the forces of socialist James Larkin, his union, the Irish Transport Workers Union and the business tycoon, William M. Murphy, then chairman of the Dublin Federation of Employers. It began on Tuesday 26 August when Dublin tramway drivers walked off the job. The situation intensified on the next so-called bloody Sunday, when protesting workers were baton charged by Dublin Metropolitan Police on Sackville, Street, Dublin. The forces of the state came in behind Murphy and his fellow employers. This led to the establishment of the Irish Citizen Army to protect Larkin and his union organisers.¹ The Larkinite-strike greatly affected the metropolitan area especially the dockworkers, carters, factory hands, but in north County Dublin the work profiles were different with workers engaged in agriculture, fisheries and factory-mill work as at Balbriggan. These workers also suffered some degree of hardship and in some instances this led to acrimony with their employers and on occasion it manifested itself with malicious burning of employers property. These issues impacted on many people including those who were to become Irish Volunteers.

The idea behind the Irish Volunteer movement came from Eoin MacNeill whose thoughts on the matter were published in an editorial titled 'How the North began' in *An Claidheamh Soluis* on 1 November 1913. Therein he raised the possibility that Home-Rulers should follow the northern Unionist's template and use it for their own movement in the South.² At a public meeting at the Rotunda Hall, Dublin, on Tuesday 25 November the Irish Volunteer organisation was established.³ At the inaugural meeting two north County Dublin brothers, Thomas M. Kettle and Laurence J. Kettle, played important roles. The former assisted

¹ Pdraig Yeates, 'The Dublin 1913 lockout' in *History Ireland*, vol. 9, No. 2 (summer, 2001), pp 31-3, 35-6.

² *An Claidheamh Soluis* [*Gaelic League Weekly*] 1 Nov. 1913.

³ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Nov. 1913. Martin (ed.), *The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915, recollections and documents*, p. 155.

MacNeill with the editing of the manifesto, while the latter read the document in the Rotunda Hall. In regard to his reading the document, troublemakers caused such a din in the hall that it drowned out his speech. Bulmer Hobson referred to it as having created:

An unpleasant scene was created by an organised crowd from Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the transport workers union, who refused L.J. Kettle a hearing, on account of some episode in the then recent labour troubles in Dublin. Kettle read the manifesto, but the din created by the Liberty Hall men made his voice inaudible...nevertheless nearly 4,000 men signed the enrolment forms and became Irish Volunteers that night.⁴

Shouts of ‘God save Jim Larkin’ rang out, but in a minute of quietness, Kettle was heard to say that ‘this work we are engaged in tonight is a national work and this is not the place for the introduction of small quarrels’. Further raised voices asked ‘what about the labourers’.⁵ It seems that the troublemakers were members of the Irish Citizen Army and the rationale behind their actions had to do with a labour dispute between the speaker’s father, Andrew J. Kettle, a farmer in north County Dublin and his farm labourers.⁶ The above Kettle was no ordinary farmer and a notice of his obituary in September 1916 states that he had been ‘associated with the strenuous time that gave birth to the Land League...he threw all the energy of his prime into the fight for the emancipation of Irish farmers from the thralldom of a crushing system of landlordism’.⁷ His son, Charles Kettle, who farmed near Coolock, also had labour difficulties during the Larkinite-strike and was obliged to employ eight imported farm labourers in October 1913.⁸

When it comes to the aims and aspirations of the Volunteer movement, these were laid out in a single issue of the *Volunteer Gazette* published in December 1913.⁹ Prominent figures behind the movement were Patrick Pearse, Michael

⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 26 Nov. 1913. Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, pp 20, 26-28.

⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 26 Nov. 1913. Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, pp 20, 26-28.

⁶ Áine Ceannt, B.M.H. W.S. No. 624; cited in Ann Matthews, *Renegades; Irish Republican women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), p. 90. J.B. Lyons, ‘Tom Kettle, 1880-1916’ in *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 43, No. 2 (autumn, 1990), p. 94.

⁷ *Sunday Independent*, 24 Sept. 1916.

⁸ County-inspector’s confidential monthly reports (hereafter, CICMR), CO904/91, part iiv, Oct. 1913.

⁹ *Volunteer Gazette*, Dec. 1913; cited in Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, p. 39.

Davitt, Sean T. O’Kelly, James MacMahon, Michael J. Judge, Sean MacDiarmada, Bulmer Hobson and others.¹⁰ It was welcomed by some sections of the Irish populace and drew forth excited expressions of support from some quarters. Richard Mulcahy was one such man. He said that it was like ‘a complete and joyous bursting open of a door, not only to the complete Dublin populace, but to the complete body of the patient, silent, suppressed Nationalist element in Ireland awakening them to their strength and inviting them to instruction’. Mulcahy was born in 1886 at Waterford, before coming to Dublin in 1907, where he joined the Teeling Irish Republican Brotherhood circle in that city. As a fluent Irish speaker he was a member of the Keating branch of the Gaelic League, where he came to know Michael Collins, Cathal Brugha, among others.¹¹ Another expression of welcome came from Bulmer Hobson who felt that ‘the Irish Volunteer movement was the spontaneous creation of the Irish people themselves...the political leaders who had secured the adhesion of the great majority of the people of Ireland not only took no part in its inception, but were and remained, definitely hostile to it’.¹² The movement had its opponents and Eoin MacNeill stated that ‘Mr Redmond, in the early period of the Irish Volunteer organisation was content or had to content himself with the English attitude. He did what he could to discourage the Volunteer movement and to dissuade his supporters from supporting it. But Ireland was already growing restive in the parliamentary harness and disposed towards self-determination in spite of parliamentarian whip and reins and bit and blinkers’.¹³

An influential figure in the movement in north County Dublin was Thomas Ashe, who, like Mulcahy had come from outside County Dublin. Ashe was born in 1885 on a farm at Lispole, County Kerry. He was brought up in the Irish musical traditions and was fluent in the Irish Language. After completing his education at the De La Salle training college in Waterford in 1907, he subsequently came to work as the principal schoolteacher at Corduff National

¹⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 26 Nov. 1913.

¹¹ Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the founding of the Irish Free State*, pp xi, 2-3,5,7-8. Ronan Fanning, ‘Mulcahy, Richard’ in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009). Accessed from <http://dib.cambridge.org.jproxy.nuim.ie/quicksearch.do> (11 Oct. 2011).

¹² Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, p. 15.

¹³ Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, p. iii.

School, Lusk, in 1908.¹⁴ He became ‘indelibly linked to this area because of his subsequent political, military, musical and cultural activities. Ashe’s stay here was to last eight years except for a seven month break in the United States while engaged on fund raising for the Gaelic League’.¹⁵ By November 1913, the Irish Inspector-General, Colonel Sir Neville F.F, Chamberlain, claimed that:

The formation of an Irish Volunteer force throughout Ireland, in opposition to the Ulster Volunteers, has been suggested, and some meetings in furtherance of the scheme have been held, but no person of importance in the Nationalist organization appears to be identified with the movement, which, so far, has made no progress. However, supposing that it were ever intended to form such a force, and that funds were available for its equipment, the Gaelic Athletic Association could supply an abundance of first class recruits.¹⁶

It is notable that he saw the great potential of the Gaelic Athletic Association and in that he was somewhat prophetic. From photographs in the appendix, it can be seen that a number of men in the study area who played hurling and Irish football were also Irish Volunteers. Another photograph of some of the Skerries Volunteers in hurling garb is seen in the authors 2010 work ‘brothers in arms, Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers 1916’. Both the above men are seen in the photograph.¹⁷ While the inspector-general appeared to be well acquainted with the Volunteer movement, the same cannot be said about his subordinate, the Dublin County-Inspector Reginald Heard. It was April 1914 before he made any mention of the movement and by then Irish Volunteer companies had been formed at Clondalkin and Swords.¹⁸ In that same month the effects of the Larkinite-strike intensified in the metropolitan area and also in the wider county. Public meetings were held and one of these occurred at Swords on Sunday 15 March. James Connolly, and Countess Markievicz, among others

¹⁴ O’Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, pp 10, 21-25. C.J. Woods and William Murphy, ‘Ashe, Thomas (Tomas Aghas)’ in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009). Accessed from <http://dib.cambridge.org.jproxy.nuim.ie/viewReadPage.do?article=a0247&searchClicked=clicked&quickadysearch=yes> (10 Oct. 2011).

¹⁵ Sean O’Mahony, *The first hunger striker, Thomas Ashe, 1917* (Dublin, 2001), pp 5-6.

¹⁶ Inspector-general’s confidential monthly report (hereafter, IGCMR), CO904/91, part iiv, Nov. 1913. Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary; a short history and genealogical guide* (Dublin, 1997), p. 235.

¹⁷ Whearity, ‘Brothers in arms, Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers 1916’ in *Time & Tide* 7, p. 126.

¹⁸ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, Apr. 1914.

made speeches to an estimated gathering of 500 people there. Connolly stated that:

...There never were rebels in the country more rebellious than the members of the transport workers union. They had no respect for British laws. They claimed the right to own this country and all that was in it, and to have what they were able to produce by their labour. No matter what was in the Home Rule Bill they were not going to be content with it, and the workers of the North were not going to have an excluded Ulster; and if the government did exclude it the civil war from the Ulster Unionists which might be thus averted would be nothing to the fight which the labour forces would give them...¹⁹

Connolly spelled out his message in clear and unequivocal language while the Countess Markievicz began her speech in a gentler tone. She praised the workers of Dublin City and county for having ‘laid the corner-stone of an Irish Republic in which the country would belong to the workers, be governed by the workers and not by fat bullies of police who battened them off the streets and prevented them from striking for their legitimate rights’. Other speakers urged the workers to maintain their resolve in the labour dispute.²⁰

In April 1914 it was the case that:

...The County Dublin is at present in a peaceful condition. There are still some 120 labourers out of work. Although the strike has collapsed, the Irish Transport Union held several meetings during the past month. On the 12th April a public meeting was held at Lucan, and subsequently at Clondalkin. About 200 to 300 attended. The meetings were addressed by Capt. White, Countess Markievicz, P.T. Daly, and others. On the 19th April a large meeting was held at Swords, at which about 500 attended. It was addressed by Capt. White, James Larkin, Daly, and others. On the 24th April a meeting was held at Finglas at which about 100 attended. It was addressed by Frank Moss, J. McMullan, J. Casey, and others. The object of these public meetings is to try and infuse life into the members of the Transport Union’s members who are in fairly large numbers at these villages. Also to try and form branches of the Citizen army. A branch of the Citizen Army was formed at Swords consisting of 80 members. Frank Moss, the local Transport Union organiser is treasurer. A young man named Frank Carroll of Swords is secretary, and James Connor of Swords, an ex-soldier is drill instructor...during the last month two branches of the Irish National Volunteers have been formed. One at Swords where 55 members were enrolled, a young man named Richard Coleman is organiser. An ex-army man named John Whelan from the city attended on

¹⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 21 Mar. 1914.

²⁰ *Drogheda Independent*, 21 Mar. 1914.

two occasions for drill, when only 20 members turned up...a branch was formed at Clondalkin, 18 men were enrolled. The organisers are James Fox, a monitor in Clondalkin Monastery School, and William O'Byrne a railway clerk. The drill instructor is an ex-army man named Bosanic. Drilling was held on only one occasion when only a few turned up.²¹

A press report of 8 April states that 'the National Volunteer movement was extended to north County Dublin on Monday evening [6 April], last'. It was intended that Swords would be made the Irish Volunteer Headquarters for the north county area. When the inaugural public meeting was held at Swords, the Larkinites of the district held a simultaneous meeting as a demonstration against it. Despite their actions the organisers successfully formed a company in the town.²² When Thomas MacDonagh of the National University of Ireland spoke, he said that the movement was not established in opposition to the Ulster Volunteer Force and nor would it disband on the introduction of Home Rule. It would form a national army, which might subsequently be put at the disposal of the Irish Government. When he was asked to say when the Volunteers would get rifles, he said that 'it was not thought that the time had yet arrived for the arming of the Volunteers, but when the proper time did arrive rifles would be given to them'. Sir Roger Casement was unable to be there because of inclement weather. At the end of the meeting some fifty men indicated their interest in enrolling.²³ The chief organiser at Swords was Richard 'Dick' Coleman, a schoolteacher's son and an agent for the Prudential Insurance Company in the town.²⁴ Though the county-inspector described him as young, he was nevertheless aged twenty-three years in 1914.²⁵ On Sunday 12 April, the Swords Company held a drill session where twelve men turned up on time, a few more arrived late and all were drilled by Dublin men, F. McDonagh and M. McDunphy.²⁶ On 2 May a press report stated that 'the Volunteer movement at Swords is rapidly taking hold on the

²¹ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, Apr. 1914.

²² *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1914.

²³ *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1914.

²⁴ Ristead O'Colmain, 'Memories of 1916' in Bernadette Marks (ed.) *Swords voices*, vol.1, part 6 (1998), p. 31.

²⁵ Census of Ireland.

²⁶ *Irish Independent*, 14 Apr. 1914.

people'. In addition, the Swords Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army men drilled together on occasion at the local school yard.²⁷

In May the situation was that:

...The Irish Volunteer movement has not made much progress in this county up to the present. Only four branches have been formed up to this, viz., at Swords, Clondalkin, Lusk and Skerries. One of these at Clondalkin, has collapsed as no interest was taken in it, and on the last occasion the drill instructor attended only three or four men put in an appearance and the instructor left in disgust. The Swords branch was formed about a month ago, 55 were enrolled but only about 20 men attended for drill purposes. The Skerries branch was formed on 24th ult., when 105 were enrolled when some attempts at drill was carried on in the band room for a few minutes. A branch was quite recently formed at Lusk [there are several smudged words in this sentence] but nothing further has been done. No branch has as yet been formed in the Howth or Dundrum districts but it is probable that some will be established soon. Up to this no great interest has been taken in the matter in this county, and where branches are formed it has been done so as to be in line with the rest of Ireland. It cannot be said that the movement has the support of all sections of the Nationalists for in Swords the AOH [Ancient order of Hibernians] are not supporting it. On the other hand it cannot be said that any section of the Nationalists are opposed to it. The movement in this Co. has not the support of the R.C., Clergy so far, but if the movement takes on it will have their support. The force is only organised to the extent of enrolling members and marching and drilling to the extend of forming fours and so on. They have no arms, no persons of any influence have as yet taken part in the organisation of the force, and I don't think they will. The class of persons who are joining are workmen, and a few small farmer's sons, and shop assistants. Two more branches are likely to be formed soon in Rush and Garristown, but at present there are only three in the county.²⁸

The inspector appeared less than optimistic about the prospects for the Volunteer movement in County Dublin. Perhaps he based this on the fact that one company had already collapsed through apathy at Clondalkin. By the use of the word 'only' in relation to the Swords Company, it suggests that he saw the members there as being less than fully committed to the Volunteer cause. On the wider level Colonel Maurice Moore put it that 'companies were then springing up without any prompting from the central committee'. When notice of such corps came to the committee's attention an organiser was sent to put the corps on a

²⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 2 May 1914.

²⁸ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

proper footing and appoint a trained instructor.²⁹ On Tuesday 19 May, a public meeting to form a company was held at Lusk. It was well attended and afterwards the secretary Edward Rooney took the names of forty men for subsequent enrolment. After being drilled by A. Coleman from Swords, plans were made for further drilling at the 'Lough' on Friday evening.³⁰ While no details are found for the above instructor, he should not be confused with Richard Coleman from the same town. In regard to the Lusk Company, it seems that all was not right there and the county-inspector wrote somewhat cryptically that 'nothing further has been done'.³¹ This begs the question about whether the company there had subsequently lapsed. It might have been the case that the company was missing the energy and drive of Thomas Ashe, then absent from Lusk on a fund-raising mission for the Gaelic League in America. He left in the spring of 1914 and did not return until the autumn of that year.³²

When an exploratory meeting was held at Coolock on Sunday, 24 May, the Roman Catholic clergy urged local youths to join the Volunteer company there. When Prof. Thomas MacDonagh addressed the meeting he emphasised that the 'movement was free of sectarianism or party colour'.³³ In was the case that just outside the southern boundary of the study area at Clontarf and Drumcondra, two companies had formed on 1 December 1913.³⁴ This suggests that the formation process in the north county was lethargic in comparison, but when comparisons are made on a wider geographical scale, away from Dublin City, then a different picture emerges. In County Meath, the first company formed at Athboy on 17 March 1914.³⁵ In County Louth, the first company formed at Dundalk on 22 February.³⁶ Likewise, in County Clare, another formed on 17 March.³⁷ An exception to the above occurred in north County Monaghan, where a company

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 1 May 1914.

³⁰ *Drogheda Independent*, 23 May 1914.

³¹ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

³² O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 58.

³³ *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914; *Freeman's Journal*, 25 May 1914.

³⁴ *Irish Independent*, 2 Dec. 1913.

³⁵ *Meath Chronicle*, 21 Mar. 1914.

³⁶ IGCMR, CO904/92, part iv, Mar. 1914. *Dundalk Democrat*, 28 Feb. 9 May 1914; cited in Donal Hall, Raymond Gillespie (ed.) *World War 1, and nationalist politics in County Louth, 1914-1920* (Maynooth Studies in Local History, 2005), pp 13-15.

³⁷ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: provincial experiences of war and revolution*, p. xvi.

formed in January 1914.³⁸ There were extenuating circumstances in that case and the Monaghan County Council chairman, Mr Toal, said that the ‘act of forming the corps was forced upon them because of the opposition of the Protestants and Unionists towards Home Rule’. In north Monaghan, Protestants comprised twenty-five percent of the local population and Toal said that ‘they would not allow them [Protestants], to trample on them [Catholics], as they had done in the past’.³⁹ Notwithstanding the above, in regard to north County Dublin, it seems that the company formation process there was more in line with that found in rural areas, rather than that which pertained in the Dublin metropolitan region.

On the question of arms, or the lack of them, when the issue was raised at the Swords meeting, Thomas McDonagh stated that the time was not right. In Ulster, the situation was dramatically different, as the Ulster Volunteer Force under Sir Edward Carson, aided by Bonar Law, were importing arms on a hitherto unimaginably massive scale. This was despite the limitations imposed under the rules of the Arms Proclamation Act of December 1913, which banned the importation of arms into the country as a whole. The Volunteers in the South had to look on as the Ulster Volunteer Force broke the rules with impunity. The Volunteers were helpless when the so-called Curragh, County Kildare, incident saw sixty cavalry officers defy the government’s order to ‘coerce Ulster Unionists into accepting Home Rule’.⁴⁰ The fear of civil war breaking out over Home Rule caused northern Unionist, James Craig, to make plans to evacuate Ulster women and children in the event that civil war broke out in Ireland over Home Rule.⁴¹ On the nights of 24 and 25 April, up to 25,000 rifles were landed at Larne, Belfast, Donahadee and Bangor, from the steamer ‘Mountjoy’, the S.S. ‘Roma’ and the motorboat ‘Innismurray’.⁴² Alvin Jackson felt that it was ‘one of the defining

³⁸ *Dundalk Democrat*, 14 Mar. 1914; cited in Terence A. Dooley, Raymond Gillespie (ed.) *Inniskeen, 1912-1918; the political conversion of Bernard O’Rourke* (Maynooth Studies in Local History, 2004), p. 24.

³⁹ *Dundalk Democrat*, 24 Jan. 1914; cited in Dooley, *Inniskeen, 1912-1918; the political conversion of Bernard O’Rourke*, pp 25-6; cited in Ann Carville, ‘The impact of partition proposals on County Monaghan’ in *Clogher Record*, vol. ixv, No. 1 (1991), p. 48.

⁴⁰ Dooley, *Inniskeen, 1912-1918; the political conversion of Bernard O’Rourke*, p. 27.

⁴¹ Peter Cahalan, *Belgian refugee relief in England during the Great War* (London, 1982), p. 27; E. Moberly Bell, *Flora Shaw* (London, 1947), pp 278-9; cited in Peter F. Whearity, ‘Belgium refugees in Ireland during World War One’ in Séamus MacGabhann (ed.), *Riocht na Midhe*, vol. xx (2009), p. 253.

⁴² IGCMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

episodes in the Unionist epic'.⁴³ In the South, the Volunteers had to make do with wooden rifles, an act which left them open to ridicule within the communities in which they lived.⁴⁴ A photograph in the work of Constantine Fitzgibbon and George Morrison shows this to good effect with Volunteers drilling with hurley sticks and broom handles.⁴⁵

In an effort to get arms, Eoin MacNeill and Laurence J. Kettle established an Irish Volunteer equipment fund in April 1914.⁴⁶ Arms or equipment supplied to Volunteers had to be paid for and north County Dublin Volunteer Charles Weston remembered paying three old pence per week for his rifle.⁴⁷ The O'Rahilly stated that the Irish Volunteer movement was formed so that a possible Unionist Government in the future would not 'attempt to give Ireland, twenty years of resolute government'.⁴⁸ His comment clashed with that of McDonagh at the Swords inaugural meeting, where he said that the movement was 'not in opposition' to the Ulster Volunteer Force.⁴⁹ This demonstrates a dichotomy between the two men, and seems to suggest that the Irish Volunteer leadership had changed their attitude towards the need for arms and that it was the events at Larne which brought the change about.

By May 1914 the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Gaelic Athletic Association and other nationalist organisations had come in behind the Volunteer movement. However, it was held back by the lack of arms and organisation and thus confined its operations to drilling and enlisting new members. These were comprised primarily of farmers' sons, shop assistants and servant boys. The Roman Catholic clergy, professional men, county councillors and magistrates, among other classes were also then supporting the movement.⁵⁰ Notwithstanding the above, as 'the

⁴³ IGCMR, CO904/93, part iv, Apr. 1914. Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998; politics and war* (reprint. Oxford, 2005), pp 169, 237.

⁴⁴ McGarry, *The Rising; Ireland: Easter 1916*, p. 65.

⁴⁵ Constantine Fitzgibbon and George Morrison, *The life and times of Eamon de Valera* (Dublin, 1973), p. 46.

⁴⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 14 April 1914.

⁴⁷ Charles Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149.

⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 20 Apr. 1914.

⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1914.

⁵⁰ IGCMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

movement became successful some of those men who had stayed aloof from it then were greatly chagrined that they were not in positions of control'.⁵¹

Importantly, from the perspective of this study, it was not until May 1914 that an Irish Volunteer company formed at Skerries. Its coming was more than a month after that at Swords, which itself was five months after companies formed at Clontarf and Drumcondra. It has already been seen that the formation process was somewhat more akin to that happening in rural areas, nevertheless, there might have been other factors at play at Skerries. If the early months of 1914 are looked at, then it is seen that some issues there centred on a poor landlord-tenant relationship. The situation proved intractable despite the arbitration of William Field, M.P. and others in late January and early February of that year. The trouble had to do with demands for rent reductions, the sale of the town, the purchase price and the ability or willingness of the tenants to pay that price. It boiled down to the fact that the landlord wanted more than the tenants could or would pay.⁵²

One of those embroiled in the debate was Patrick Mathews, a primary mover in the subsequent Skerries Company's formation. He was a forty-six year old married man living at Church Street, Skerries and was a foreman stonecutter at a local quarry [Milverton].⁵³ In addition, he was a tenant of the Holmpatrick Estate and secretary of the Skerries Town Tenants Committee. In that capacity he wrote an open letter to the press on 13 February 1914, in which he sought to gain the attention of A.J. Kettle on the plight of the town tenants of Skerries. He compared the situation of town tenants in Ireland with that of tenant farmers during the previous three decades. The farmer's, according to Mathews, had been supported by the town tenants in the past and it was time for them to repay that debt. He seemed to believe that urban landlordism was worse than anything that the farmer's ever had to contend with. The nub of his letter was that in his view, it would be preferable to divert the energy used in building up the Irish Volunteer force and instead use it to assist the town tenants of Ireland.⁵⁴ The letter appears to have been a cry for help, perhaps through sheer exasperation with the never-

⁵¹ Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, pp 19-20.

⁵² *Drogheda Independent*, 31 Jan., 7 Feb. 1914. *Freeman's Journal*, 6 Feb. 1914.

⁵³ Census of Ireland.

⁵⁴ *Irish Independent*, 14 Feb. 1914.

ending situation at Skerries. Nevertheless it is difficult to see what he thought Kettle could do about it. Perhaps he had hoped that Kettle, as a former leading figure in the Land League, would bring his influence to bear in some quarters. For his part, Kettle was then a retired farmer and at eighty years of age, it might have been difficult for him to have done anything to ease the plight of the town tenants of Skerries, or Ireland, at that time.⁵⁵

It was proposed to hold a meeting to form an Irish Volunteer company at Skerries on Sunday afternoon, 10 May. The objective was to test the willingness, or otherwise, of the young men of the town and its environs to participation in the operation of an Irish Volunteer company in Skerries. If there was a positive response, then the Dublin committee would be contacted to assist with moving the situation further along. Patrick Mathews was one of the organisers behind it and was willing to put the Skerries Town Tenants Committee's league hall on Church Street, at the disposal of the meeting.⁵⁶ The question arises as to why Mathews, who was against the Volunteer movement only a few months previously, had subsequently made a *volte-face* on the matter. Bulmer Hobson had given a clue as seen earlier where he mentioned that certain parties were afraid that the movement was getting beyond their control. The county-inspector's report for May supports this idea. He stated that 'Up to this, no great interest has been taken in the matter [of the Irish Volunteer movement], in this county and where branches are formed it has been done so as to be in line with the rest of Ireland'.⁵⁷ Bulmer Hobson points out that when MacNeill and Sir Roger Casement met Redmond in London for talks, that it was clear that the latter wanted 'homage and obedience from them'. A letter from Redmond to MacNeill on 16 May 1914 stated that:

It is clearly in the interests of the country that the Volunteer movement should be a united one, and under a single guidance...I consider the matter extremely urgent, as members of our party in various parts of the country are being pressed by their constituents to assist in the formation of Volunteer bodies under a local county authority, and it will be necessary for us to take action without much further delay either in conjunction with you or otherwise.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Census of Ireland.

⁵⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 9 May 1914.

⁵⁷ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

⁵⁸ Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, pp 95-6-7.

In Skerries, it may simply have been the case that Mathews and his cohorts had to act then or stand back and watch others take control of the situation. Support for this argument comes from a press report on 9 May, which stated that open letters had been appearing in the press from Skerries residents complaining about the tardiness in getting a company for the town.⁵⁹ Though this author made a search, no such letters were found and thus their existence must be in doubt. A second meeting was held on Sunday, 24 May (Empire day), and presided over by Patrick J. O'Driscoll, a local insurance broker. Over 300 people attended the public meeting at the Square, close to the Holmpatrick Monument in the centre of the town. O'Driscoll said that had the government prevented, as it should have done, the arming of the Ulster Volunteer Force, then there would be no need for the Irish Volunteer movement in the South. But the 'jellyfish government' had failed to act in time and therefore the Irish people 'would be the greatest fools if they didn't make efforts to defend themselves and be prepared for any emergency that might arise'.⁶⁰ The above speech seems to have more than an element of the Larne gun-running about it and the danger posed by the Unionists in the North. O'Driscoll was a County Cork born, forty-nine year old man, married to a Canadian woman. Before coming to Skerries to live and work as an insurance manager, he had spent an indefinite period of time in New South Wales, Australia some thirty years previously. He then lived for a time in Dublin City before coming to Skerries. He was a member of the United Irish League and acted on occasion as chairman of the North Dublin United Irish League Executive. He was also a fervent supporter of the policies of John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party.⁶¹ His knowledge of the wider world and about Home Rule enabled him to write a letter to the press on 28 April 1914, which stated:

Sir, the London correspondent of the *Irish Times* mentioned today that Lord Rosebery emerged from his retirement last week; and made a capital speech on the advantages of life insurance, also that some people have attributed to his lordship the striking letters on home rule which recently appeared in the *Times*. I should like, with your permission, to ask when and where did Lord Rosebery retire from political life. He is now, we are told, only 67, two years younger than when Disraeli was when he formed

⁵⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 9 May 1914.

⁶⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 25 May 1914. *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914. *Irish Times*, 25 May 1914.

⁶¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 10 Dec. 1913, 24 Apr. 1914. Census of Ireland. *Irish Times*, 30 Aug. 1915.

his famous cabinet. Did he not retire just prior to the general election of 1906, and did he not announce then at Bodmin (in reply to the late prime minister's speech at Stirling), that his retirement was due to the fact the Liberal party 'had raised the banner of Home Rule in too pronounced a manner'? Did not Mr Joseph Chamberlain also reply without delay to Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's Stirling speech, and say: 'After such a speech every vote given to a Liberal candidate during the coming election, will be a vote for Home Rule'? Did not all the Tory papers endorse this, in the face of such simple facts, which can be easily verified by reference to the press files of the time, how can it be contended, with any show of reason, that Home Rule is becoming law behinds the backs of electors. The Liberals have never once lowered their home rule banner, and hence Lord Rosebery remains 'in his lonely furrow'. Signed, P.J. O'Driscoll, Skerries, 27 April 1914.⁶²

It can reasonably be suggested that, because of O'Driscoll's personal history, that he was something of an outside broker for change within the more locally based community of Skerries. Yet for all that, his political views seemed to differ little from those espoused by Mathews, who lived all his life in that town. Returning to the Skerries Volunteer meeting, a *communiqué* of regret came from J.J. Clancy, M.P. who was unavoidably detained at the House of Commons awaiting the passage of the Home Rule Bill. He stated that he admired the spirit shown and wished the Skerries men great success. Regrets also came from the Rev R. Smyth, C.C. and Michael Dunne, J.P. and a member of Dublin County Council.⁶³ Another attendee, Laurence J. Kettle, told the gathering that:

...The Volunteer movement was essentially a movement not of oratory but of action. The voice of this movement was the tramp of marching men and the crack of rifles... Yet the Volunteers were not formed in any aggressive spirit, they were essentially an army of national defence... You will be told, in fact you have been told already, that England will not allow us to have a national army in this country. England's international position is not too strong, her domestic position, her industrial position is unstable and threatening; she is menaced from outside with attack by another power, she is menaced with disruption from within. She is proposing now to trust us with the governing of this country, and she has got, whether she likes it or not, to trust us all the way. She has got to give that final proof of her trust, by trusting us with the gun; and so long as you are not trusted with the gun, which is the hallmark and proof of the free man, I would not give a snap of my fingers for the trust that is reposed in you. English statesmen are not blind. They can see as far into a stone wall

⁶² *Irish Independent*, 28 Apr. 1914.

⁶³ *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914.

as the next man, and they can see that a prosperous, self-governing, self-reliant, self-protecting Ireland will not be a source of weakness to England, but on the contrary, a bulwark of strength to her...⁶⁴

After men such as Patrick J. Kettle, J.P; James A. Glennon, a thirty-six years old publican and grocer; Patrick Mathews and others had spoken, the meeting ended with 200 men enrolling in the company.⁶⁵ In relation to the meeting the county-inspector in his May report, gave an estimate of 105 men having enrolled there.⁶⁶ This shows a significance difference in the estimated membership at the Skerries Company, but little can be done about it here.

It seems that no Catholic clergymen had attended the Skerries meeting for reasons unknown. Nonetheless, at least they had been invited, unlike the Protestant and Methodist ministers who seemingly were not. Had it not been that the Rev Richard J. Shegog, a fifty-six years old rector of Skerries, had sent a postcard to his fellow clergyman the Rev Dudley Fletcher of Coolbanagher [County Roscommon], the matter would have rested there. Fletcher had got himself into trouble with his two churchwardens for having attended an Irish Volunteer meeting at Mountmellick in May 1914. When the churchwardens subsequently called a meeting to have the clergyman censured, Fletcher, in defending himself read the content of the postcard to his parishioners. It went ‘brother parson, it is time that our voices were raised in protest against the anti-patriotic and slavish tradition and superstition in politics, to which our people have been so long in subjection’.⁶⁷ Whether Shegog’s words of support saved the day or not, is not known, but Fletcher did retain his ministry. In the same month he received support for his actions at Mountmellick from the Irish Volunteers in Queen’s County [Laois].⁶⁸ One wonders what would have been the reaction if the Skerries rector had been invited to participate in the Volunteer movement in his own parish.

In June, James Larkin’s Irish Transport Workers Union candidates in the local government elections were all defeated. The Irish Volunteer movement was also

⁶⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 May 1914. *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914.

⁶⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 May 1914. *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914. Census of Ireland.

⁶⁶ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

⁶⁷ *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914. Census of Ireland.

⁶⁸ IGCMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

about to undergo profound change, as evidenced from the content of an address by the provisional committee:

Fellow countrymen, the call to arms of the Irish Volunteers has been answered in every part of Ireland. Our young men have everywhere made common cause and come together on the common meeting ground for all Irishmen—the national army. The Volunteers are the nucleus of a permanent defence force, an army and a possession of the whole nation, and the necessary guardians of its liberties, both now and hereafter. It remains to complete the arming and equipment of the Volunteers. At this moment it is the urgent duty of every Irishman and woman to give his or her aid to the arming of the national defence force. There are tens of thousands of persons in Ireland, each of whom could defray the cost of equipping one Volunteer; and who should recognise that their country has this claim upon them, and that the claim is urgent. Signed Eoin MacNeill and Laurence J. Kettle; joint secretaries.⁶⁹

By 15 June, the Irish Parliamentary Party had ‘in dramatic fashion’, taken charge of the movement which then became known as the National Volunteers. As David Fitzpatrick put it, up till then both the United Irish League and the Irish Parliamentary Party had been ‘suspicious and resentful’ of the movements success and in the end their ‘vampire urge prevailed’.⁷⁰ The provisional committee’s stance was published on 11 June, which read:

...Since the holding of a general convention of the Irish Volunteer movement has not been found practicable at so early a date as contemplated, and in order to give representation to local Volunteers in the central administration, and to expedite it as a permanent national defence force on a military basis, fully armed and equipped, the Provisional Committee has decided to increase its number by the addition of representations from the Volunteers in every county in Ireland. Each company of Irish Volunteers existing at the date of this order is empowered, at the first convenient meeting from among their own number, to select a delegate. In each county on June 28th or 29th, 1914, a meeting of the delegates so elected by companies of the country will be held, and may select one of their number for co-option on the provisional Committee... We are glad to recognise that the time has come when the Irish Parliamentary Party, with Mr John Redmond at its head, have been able, owing to the development of the Irish Volunteer organisation on sound and well-defined national lines, to associate themselves by public declaration with a work which the nation has spontaneously taken in

⁶⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 6 June 1914.

⁷⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: provincial experiences of war and revolution*, p. 88.

hands. Signed Eoin MacNeill, and Laurence J. Kettle, hon. secretaries of the Provisional Committee.⁷¹

In a letter to the press on 4 July, Redmond stipulated that no time should be lost in order to:

...extend and perfect the organisation of the Volunteers and to take the necessary steps for their proper equipment. I am sure we have all reason to congratulate ourselves that all misunderstanding has now disappeared, and that all Nationalists can act cordially together in support of this movement. It has the fullest support and sympathy of myself and my colleagues in the Party. Personally I regard the movement as full of the highest possibilities for the future of our country. I will be glad at all time to place my services at the disposal of the re-organised Provisional Committee. Signed, very truly yours, John E. Redmond.⁷²

In June, a company was formed at Garristown, where the organisers were R.J. Rooney, J.P. (chairman), A. Mooney, D.C; R. Wogan, D.C; Dr N.P. Kirby and others.⁷³ Another company was already in existence prior to 10 June at Santry and associated with it was Gerald Tench, a forty-seven year old solicitor, residing at Santry Demesne. Another man involved with the company was simply referred to as Mr Lawless.⁷⁴ However, another source allows him to be identified as James V. Lawless of Cloghran.⁷⁵

A Volunteer Company had also formed at Balbriggan on 4 May and when this is added to the others which formed prior to a nominal take-over date of 11 June, then this brings the number to six. The table below shows that of the three companies for which data was available, that the Skerries Company was the largest in numerical terms by a wide margin, even when the lower estimate is used.

⁷¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 June 1914.

⁷² *Southern Star*, 4 July 1914.

⁷³ *Irish Independent*, 3 June 1914.

⁷⁴ *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1914. Census of Ireland.

⁷⁵ Autographed letter by J.V. Lawless, dated Sept. 1914 (NLI. MS 41,652/1).

Table 1

Irish Volunteer companies formed in north County Dublin up to 11 June 1914			
	Company name	No. Members	Company formation date
1	Swords	50 ⁷⁶ 55 ⁷⁷	Monday 6 Apr. 1914 ⁷⁸
2	Balbriggan	5 ⁷⁹	Sunday 4 May 1914 ⁸⁰
3	Lusk	40 ⁸¹	Tuesday 19 May 1914 ⁸²
4	Skerries	105 ⁸³ 200 ⁸⁴	Sunday 24 May 1914 ⁸⁵
5	Garristown	No details	Before 3 June 1914 ⁸⁶
6	Santry	No details	Before 10 June 1914 ⁸⁷
Total number of known members (using lowest figures), was 200			

The next part of the study will look at the changes brought about as a result of the Irish Parliamentary Party's takeover.

⁷⁶ *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1914.

⁷⁷ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, Apr. 1914.

⁷⁸ *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1914. CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, Apr.-May 1914.

⁷⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 9 May 1914.

⁸⁰ *Drogheda Independent*, 9 May 1914.

⁸¹ *Drogheda Independent*, 23 May 1914.

⁸² CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 23 May 1914.

⁸³ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

⁸⁴ *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914.

⁸⁵ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914. *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914.

⁸⁶ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914. *Irish Independent*, 3 June 1914.

⁸⁷ *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1914. *Freeman's Journal*, 13 June 1914.

Chapter Two

The National Volunteer movement

According to the inspector-general, Sir Neville F.F. Chamberlain, when it came to the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Party had ‘stayed aloof from it and tried to discourage it’ and the Roman Catholic clergy had acted similarly. This situation also pertained in County Meath.¹ It looked for a time that the extreme elements, which included a section of the Ancient Order of Hibernians [the Hibernian Rifles], the Irish American Alliance and Sinn Fein, would take control of it. However, the Curragh incident and the Ulster Volunteer Force gun-running changed everything.² Eoin MacNeill gives an insight of how he saw the situation then, when he wrote that:

...Mr Redmond, in the early period of the Irish Volunteer Organisation, was content, or had to content himself with the English attitude. He did what he could to discourage the Volunteer movement and to dissuade his supporters from supporting it. But Ireland was already growing restive in the parliamentary harness and disposed towards self determination in spite of the parliamentary whip and reins and its blinkers... The Irish Volunteers have been proscribed by a proclamation of the English Viceroy, Field-Marshal Lord French...the Defence of the Realm Act, made a new class of criminals under English law, despite ordinary crime being low in Ireland.³

The aspect of ‘criminality’ is important because it is doubtful that the Volunteers themselves would have seen their actions as criminal. By the time that Redmond took control of the movement it ‘was a late and desperate move, for while the Irish Party sympathizers were well represented in the ranks of the Volunteers, the organizational structure was already under the influence of the Irish Republican Brotherhood... Redmond’s nominees were middle-aged and uninterested and seemed to have cut a poor figure when compared with the active younger zealots of the original committee’.⁴ Only one nominee John P. Gaynor, B.L. was domiciled in north County Dublin at Finglas.⁵

¹ Dooley, ‘Alexander ‘Baby’ Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916’ in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 207.

² IGCMR, CO904/93, part iv, June 1914.

³ Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, p. iii.

⁴ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998; politics and war* (Oxford, 1999), pp 167-8.

⁵ *Southern Star*, 4 July 1914.

In June 1914, elections of Volunteer officers in Dublin City and county took place for the first time.⁶ In addition, the city and county organisation committee authorised by the newly formed provisional committee issued stipulations in regard to all Volunteer companies and battalions. These were to be established within their own districts, with recruits being locally sourced and where possible to be drilled by ex-army or other qualified men.⁷ An example of a company which was formed under these rules was seen at Balbriggan. At a meeting there on Sunday, 14 June, it was proposed that the company would have the support of the local branches of the Irish National Foresters, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Balbriggan Town Commercial Club. It was intended to elect a temporary committee to be ready for an anticipated enrollment of up to 600 men.⁸ Whatever about the last mentioned figure, which seemed optimistic in the extreme, it nevertheless transpired that on an unknown date at the Town Hall, a large but unspecified number of men enrolled.⁹

On the national stage, the proposed introduction of the Government of Ireland (Amendment), Bill, which would pave the way for the partition of Ulster, caused a stir amongst certain sections of the Irish populace.¹⁰ Bulmer Hobson stated that when Redmond was put under pressure by Prime Minister Asquith he agreed to partition Ireland. He said that ‘it was a pitiful business, an Irish leader, steadily ignored the means ready to his hand to put pressure on the weakest of governments, was himself subjected to pressure from them at the dictation of Sir Edward Carson...The scheme to partition Ireland was announced in the English Parliament on 9 March 1914’.¹¹

Another Volunteer company was formed at Donabate on Sunday 21 June, where the Rev F.F. Boylan, C.C. chaired the meeting. He said that ‘the Volunteer movement was an essential outcome of the times’ and not as some English newspapers had suggested a follow on from the Volunteer movement in the north. It ‘represented Grattan's times’ and it mattered not whether their elected representatives

⁶ Heuston, *Headquarter Battalion, army of the Irish Republic, Easter Week, 1916*, p.1.

⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 June 1914.

⁸ *Drogheda Independent*, 13 June 1914.

⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 20 June 1914.

¹⁰ Dooley, *Inniskeen, 1912-1918; the political conversion of Bernard O'Rourke*, p. 27.

¹¹ Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, p. 71.

operated 'in College Green or Westminster'. Home Rule was here now and not one acre should be excluded from that bill. P.J. Kettle reminded the gathering that Grattan's mistake was the disbanding of the Volunteers of that time and therefore he warned against the same thing happening again. In relation to arms, he stated that 'if that right was denied them, then they would seek to arm themselves in the same way that the Orange men in the North did'. Was this an early indication of what was to come at the Howth and Rathcoole gun-runnings in July 1914? It certainly seems so. When Frank Lawless of the Swords Sinn Fein Party spoke, he said that it was important not only to have arms, but to be able to use them should the need arise. Having formed a company, the meeting ended and drill commenced immediately afterwards.¹² The above event is an example of where a Catholic priest was not afraid to publicly support the formation of a Volunteer Company, not only by taking the chair, but also by his openness in freely expressing his views in an open forum. Such a thing would have been unheard of only a few weeks previously. By this time, Catholic support for the Volunteer movement extended to the highest echelons in the church as evidenced by the archbishop of Tuam, County Galway, Dr Healy, coming in behind it.¹³

It was mentioned earlier that north County Dublin men of influence had begun to take an interest in the movement and these were Prof. Kettle, Dublin; Dr Kirby, Ballyboghil; R.J. Rooney [farmer] Wyanstown, Lusk; Thomas Corcoran, publican, Blanchardstown; W.S. Lawless, farmer, Cloghran, Santry; Dr R. May, Balrothery and William Bannon, town clerk, Balbriggan, among others. In June, the strength of the Volunteer movement in County Dublin was twelve companies and 743 members. These were drilled by ten ex-army and two civilian instructors.¹⁴ The situation in County Meath, because of its larger geographical size, is not directly comparable with that of County Dublin. Nevertheless another difference between them was that in

¹² *Drogheda Independent*, 27 June 1914.

¹³ IGCMR, CO904/93, part iv, June 1914.

¹⁴ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, June 1914.

Meath, the Volunteers were not answerable to any central authority and ‘its members were inclined towards sedition and disloyalty’.¹⁵

In north County Dublin, when a company was formed at Lusk on Friday 3 July, Francis J. Biggar (a Belfast solicitor) gave ‘a spirited address’ to the large attendance.¹⁶ Biggar (or Bigger) was a friend of Thomas Ashe and had visited him at his home at Corduff on occasions in the past. Among other distinguished visitors to his home in the past were Eamonn de Valera, Maud Gonne MacBride, William Bulfin, Roger Casement, and Claude Chevasse.¹⁷ On Sunday, 5 July, at St Margaret’s a company was formed. In a communiqué of regret, J.J. Clancy, M.P. expressed his pleasure that ‘you have determined to join the rest of the metropolitan county in this great new movement, the result of which has been already to show the world that the spirit of Irish Nationality is alive as ever amongst them and that they are determined not to lose by apathy or indifference in this great crisis, the right to self government, which has now been virtually regained by the efforts of the Irish Parliamentary Party’.¹⁸ It is somewhat curious that Clancy saw apathy as a threat, despite the strong advance of the Volunteer movement since Redmond took it over. Perhaps his concern was for the safe passage of the Home Rule Bill then proceeding to implementation stage at the Westminster Parliament. Meanwhile, the St Margaret’s Company, though barely formed, had managed to obtain twenty up-to-date rifles by unknown means.¹⁹

In July at Balbriggan, the temporary committee was planning to hold a monster meeting on Sunday, 5 July, to officially launch the company there. It has already been seen that a company had been formed there earlier, the criteria being that members had enrolled then. The situation in that town appears to indicate that the organisers were at pains to have the company officially sanctioned by the Irish Parliamentary Party, as soon as possible. Perhaps as an inducement to attract a large attendance, it

¹⁵ IGCMR, CO904/93, part iv, June 1914; cited in Dooley, ‘Alexander ‘Baby’ Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916’ in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 205.

¹⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 4 July 1914.

¹⁷ O’Mahony, *The first hunger striker, Thomas Ashe, 1917*, p. 8.

¹⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 July 1914.

¹⁹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 July 1914.

was proposed to hold a Feis in the afternoon of the same day, where Dr Douglas Hyde, head of the Gaelic League was invited to oversee that event and also attend the Volunteer meeting.²⁰ Contingents of National Volunteers had come from Skerries, Swords, Lusk, Balrothery and from County Meath (Stamullen, Gormanstown, and Julianstown), some accompanied by their bands. Such was the size of the attendance that by 12.45 a.m. when Dr Robert May took the chair, an estimated two thousand people had gathered in the Square in the centre of the town. On the speakers' platform were; J.J. Clancy; Michael J. Judge, Commander-in-chief of the National Volunteers, Dublin; P. Cooke, J.P. Skerries; Michael Ennis, D.C. Naul; Dr Douglas Hyde, Thomas Wade, D.C; Patrick Mathews, D.C. Skerries, among others. Clancy readily accepted accolades awarded to himself, John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party, in relation to the attainment of Home Rule. He also intended as a means of supporting the Volunteer cause to visit in the near future, every part of north County Dublin, where he hoped to find a Volunteer force well drilled and armed in each district. The situation changed when Michael Judge remarked that:

...They [members of the Provisional Committee] were entitled to a little mention from the member [of parliament] for north Co. Dublin while speaking on a Volunteer platform. Mr. Clancy had proposed to support the demand for an immediate withdrawal of the Arms Proclamation Act, and he asked the people of north Dublin to keep Mr. Clancy to his promise and to see that he and his colleagues in the Irish Party would leave no stone unturned to secure for the Nationalists of Ireland the same rights which Ulster had enjoyed for the last two years. Ireland had the right to arm her National Volunteers. As a matter of fact she was arming them in spite of coastguards, policemen, submarines, and cruisers. That was not the trouble, but the fact that they had to pay war prices for the rifles, to pay for one the price of two. And down in the North the fact that they were armed was realized, and he could tell them that Orangemen would make no demonstration on the 12th July of this year, and neither would they start a Provisional Government, for the arms of the Irish Volunteers would prevent them. When the men and women of Ireland, he said, had raised a fund sufficiently large to equip the Volunteers with rifles, bayonets, and ammunition then Ireland would be a Nation, and no power on earth, not even that of the British Empire, would be able to deprive her of her native Parliament.²¹

²⁰ *Drogheda Independent*, 4 July 1914

²¹ *Drogheda Independent*, 11 July 1914.

When Judge finished speaking, he was immediately lambasted by Patrick Mathews from Skerries, for his perceived attempt to ‘disparage the sterling work done by Mr Redmond and the Irish Party in Parliament’. He further stated that no man should go upon a Nationalist platform, particularly in north County Dublin and speak as he had done in relation to Clancy ‘who gave up his whole life and sacrificed his professional career to the cause of making Ireland a Nation’. It seems that Mathews was making a distinction between Clancy on the one hand as a Nationalist and Judge on the other as being something else [a Sinn Fein member perhaps].

Not content to let the matter rest, Clancy replied that:

Mr. Judge had ventured to do what no constituents of his ever did before, and that was to lecture him upon his duties. If I could not attend another public meeting, and if I was never to be elected again, I would not allow Mr. Judge, or any other person to lecture me. He asks me to take care that I will fulfill my promise. You require no guarantees from me, and if you did require them, I would not give them, because, if my character for the last thirty years is not sufficient to satisfy you that whatever I promise to do I will do, then nothing will be sufficient, and you will get nothing more from me. Let there be no mistake about this movement at all. I heard the statement that it was a non-political movement. If it was a non-political movement then I would not be in it. I say that it is a political movement, and nothing else, and that the object of the movement is to allow the national leaders, those who are elected by the people of Ireland, Mr. Redmond and his colleagues, to be able to say to the world. See the force with which we are backed. I will do my duty without being lectured by anyone, and the first time you find me going back on my word, then I have no right to object if you come to me and say, you have failed to fulfill your duty, but until my constituents come and tell me that, I will go straight ahead and mind no one.²²

Despite the fractious inter-personal relations on the speaker’s podium, it transpired that at the meeting’s end, an unspecified number of men enrolled in the company.²³ While the Balbriggan meeting was undoubtedly a huge event, it was not unique. Other large meetings occurred around that time. Prior to 14 July, at Navan, a National Volunteer Convention saw hundreds of delegates from all corners of County

²² *Drogheda Independent*, 11 July 1914.

²³ *Drogheda Independent*, 11 July 1914. *Irish Times*, 6 July 1914. *Irish Independent*, 6 July 1914. *Freeman’s Journal*, 6 July 1914.

Meath gather together in the Volunteer cause. Another event at Lucan, County Kildare, was attended by contingents of 200 Volunteers from Blanchardstown, 100 from Newcastle, 50 from Chapelizod, 150 from Celbridge, 60 from Leixlip and an unspecified number from Lucan itself.²⁴ Here is seen a rare example of where Volunteer companies participated outside their own county, in that a Blanchardstown contingent attended at an event in County Kildare. It will be seen later that a similar situation occurred in another part of the north County Dublin, at Naul.

On Sunday, 19 July, at Naul, a meeting was held to form a Volunteer company there. James Ennis, J.P. was in the chair and Nicholas Markey, J.P. attended along with many others. The meeting was focused on having the company officially launched on the following Sunday, 26 July, where guest speakers from Volunteer headquarters were expected to be on hand. It was also expected that the Balbriggan Company would be there to support the launch. In regard to the last named company, it was stated that its 'war chest' was in a healthy state. In addition, at a meeting on Sunday, 12 July, at Balbriggan, 114 men enrolled and subscriptions were received from ninety-four paid up members. The company's money was lodged with the local Northern Bank, under an account named 'the Balbriggan Corps of the Irish National Volunteers fund'.²⁵ Another company had formed prior to 25 July, at Balrothery, where the organiser was F. Owens, D.C. Instructors Russell and Donnelly drilled the company's fifty members at the village Green.²⁶

When it comes to the participation of Volunteers from the north County Dublin at the so-called Howth gun-running, a press report claims that a contingent of seventy to eighty strong had gone by train from Skerries to Raheny, where they met other contingents from Lusk, Swords, St Margaret's and Donabate.²⁷ Bulmer Hobson, who led a column of city Volunteers out to Howth on that day, made two points of interest here. One was that the authorities had been misled into thinking that arms were to be landed on fishing trawlers and were thus out-manoeuvred. The other aspect was his

²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 14 July 1914.

²⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 18, 25 July 1914.

²⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 25 July 1914.

²⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 July 1914. *Irish Independent*, 27 July 1914. *Irish Times*, 27 July 1914.

estimate that there were at Raheny ‘about 100 Volunteers from Swords and Lusk there’.²⁸ He made no mention of the Skerries contingent being there, but it was probable that he was too busy to take particular note of individual contingents and simply lumped them all in together in his mind. There is ample evidence to support the Skerries men’s participation on the day and that they carried their arms home safely with them that evening. In addition, the Volunteers of the north county carried a ‘green flag bearing the emblem of the gold harp proper’.²⁹ Moving on to the arrival of the city men at Raheny, when the north county contingents fell into line, all marched together to the coastal village of Howth. On its outskirts, the pace of some elements within the column picked up to a brisk or even running pace and those from Skerries were among the first to obtain arms.³⁰ This is alluded to in *The [London], Times* which reported that ‘the guns were packed in straw and in a very brief time each of the volunteers possessed a rifle. The others were put on motorcars and whisked away to various parts of the country. Some of them it is said were taken as far as Skerries’.³¹ Christopher Fox estimated that about thirty rifles had been obtained by Skerries Volunteers, but he qualified the figure by stating that it was a guess.³²

The county-inspector’s report for July is informative and he stated that:

...On Sunday, 26th July, gun running was carried out on an extensive scale at Howth. A large body of Volunteers, numbering about 1,200, marched into Howth at 12.45 p.m. and took possession of the East Pier. Most of these, in fact all, except about 150 from Co. Dublin, marched out from the City of Dublin and belonged to the Dublin City branches. Several persons from the city took an active part and Laurence J. Kettle, Michael Dunne and others from the county also took a prominent part in the gun running. A yacht laden with arms (German Mauser rifles), arrived at the pier head at the same time as the Volunteers. The arms were promptly landed and a rifle handed to each Volunteer. They were supplied by companies. Those companies holding possession of the entrance to the pier were relieved by those who had obtained arms. Three motor cars whose numbers were taken by the police for identification, were also filled with arms and it is believed, some ammunition.

²⁸ Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, pp 147-8.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 27 July 1914. *Irish Independent*, 27 July 1914.

³⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 July 1914. *Irish independent*, 27 July 1914.

³¹ *The Times*, 27 July 1914.

³² Christopher Fox, ‘Recollections of Skerries in 1916’ in *Time & Tide 6*, vol.6 (Skerries Historical Society, 2008), p. 135

The Volunteers, when all the arms were taken off the yacht, quickly fell in and marched towards Dublin. The Howth and Raheny police consisting of a head constable and eleven men accompanied the whole contingent until the Volunteers were stopped by the Dublin police at Clontarf. When the Volunteers marched on to the pier at Howth, four companies quickly formed up and took possession of the entrance to the pier. Head Constable Walton, and the police attempted to get on to the pier, but they were not allowed, and having regard to the overwhelming force, the police did not attempt to force their way. Seeing that the police, owing to their numbers, were powerless to prevent the actual landing of the arms. I did not allow them to interfere in any way with the Volunteers. I directed them to count the number of rifles and note the number and marks on motor cars carrying arms from the pier, and note as many persons as possible, especially those taking a prominent part, for identification purposes, and accompany the main body in whatever direction they went. So as to ascertain their destination. The Volunteers carried away 864 rifles from the pier. In all, in my opinion, about 1,000 rifles were landed. Fifty-four were given to members in the County Dublin (50 to Skerries branch, 2 to Howth, and 2 to Swords)...³³

While neither the vessel which transported the arms nor those in charge of it were mentioned in the above report, it is well-known that it was Erskine Childers, his wife Molly and Mary Spring-Rice, who ran the gauntlet through the English Channel and the Irish Sea, on their sailing yacht 'Asgard' to bring the desperately needed arms to the Volunteers of Dublin City and county.³⁴ In his July report, the inspector mentioned that 150 Volunteers from his jurisdiction were active at Howth. However, when he came before the Royal Commission of inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Howth and Batchelor's Walk, which began on 5 August 1914 at Dublin's Four Courts, he gave a dramatically higher figure of 250. The inquiry produced two command papers, a commissioner's report [Cd. 7631] and a report of the minutes of the inquiry [Cd.7649]. It is seen there that the county-inspector had ordered some of his constables to follow any Volunteers who broke away from the main party on their return to the city. He did this because he knew that contingents

³³ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, July 1914.

³⁴ Martin (ed.), *The Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915: recollections and documents*, p. 19.

from Skerries and other (unidentified), places were at Howth that day.³⁵ He seemed inordinately well informed about the Volunteers from Skerries and it might have had to do with the almost constant police reports crossing his desk in relation to landlord and tenant troubles at that town. Whatever the case might have been, the photograph at Plate 1 shows the Skerries Volunteers parading through the town after the Howth gun-running.³⁶ Local man Paddy Halpin, recalled seeing them parading in the town in August. In addition, a caption on the photograph also gave that date. Halpin, mentioned that the Volunteers were ‘all were agog with their new toy, the German Mauser rifle’.³⁷ From a count of the rifles displayed in the photograph, a figure of thirty-four rifles results. Details of the arms obtained by the Volunteers of north County Dublin are seen at Chart 1.

While the Skerries men were all ‘agog’ with their Mausers, the situation at Lusk was dramatically different in that they got no rifles at Howth. This is all the more remarkable when it is considered that about 90 men or nearly 150, depending on the source used, represented Lusk on that day. These were comprised of contingents of the National Volunteers and the Hibernian Rifles, but the proportion of either is not stated.³⁸ The Hibernian Rifles were the military arm of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. With regard to the number of Lusk Volunteers at Howth, a press report gives two pieces of information. Firstly, when the Lusk Company marched to Rush on Sunday, 23 August, the number participating was eighty men. Secondly, they marched carrying the same flag as had been used at Howth.³⁹ In any case, the Lusk

³⁵ *Royal commission into the circumstances connected with the landing of arms at Howth on July 26th, 1914. Minutes of evidence with appendices and index*, ii, 8, 830 [Cd. 7649], H.C. 1914-16, xxiv, 830, 863. Accessed from British Parliamentary Papers (B.P.P.).

<http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.jproxy.nuim.ie/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=hcpp&id=1914-018912&source=&pagenum=1&resultNum=79&entries=91&queryId=.%2Fsession%2F12969050878606&backto=FULLREC&fromSearchHistory=&searchWithin=skerries&showall=&enlarge=&gotoFirstHit=Y&SEARCHSTRING=skerries&submitButton=Search> (4 Feb. 2011). The above source is also available at (Fingal Local History Studies Library, Swords, County Dublin; Ref. FX00016631).

³⁶ Whearity, ‘Matthias Derham, Irish Volunteer, 1883-1959’ paper No. 239, read to Skerries Historical Society in 2003, p. 17. Fox, ‘Recollections of Skerries in 1916’, in *Time & Tide* 6, p. 134.

³⁷ *Irish Times*, 27 July 1914. *Weekly Irish Times*, 1 Aug. 1914. Paddy Halpin, ‘Memories of the monument’ paper No., 138, read to Skerries Historical Society, in 1948, p. 5.

³⁸ Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149.

³⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 29 Aug. 1914.

contingent at Howth also stood out because it was accompanied by their parish priest, the Rev Fr Thomas Byrne. Though the priest was then sixty-eight years old he appeared to have been an irrepressible character. Seemingly unperturbed by his townsmen not having gotten arms, when the main body of Volunteers began to leave Howth, he mounted a tramcar and congratulated them on their collective achievement in successfully getting the arms away. They in turn cheered the priest as their ‘venerable saggart aroon’.⁴⁰ While it was Byrne who gave Thomas Ashe the job of principal schoolteacher at Corduff National School, in 1908, nevertheless the pair held divergent political views. It was stated by Sean O’Luining that Ashe ‘would brook no interference from any clergyman in his politics’ while for his part, Byrne referred to Ashe as ‘a modernist and an anti-cleric’.⁴¹ From this it can be seen that the ingredients for inter-personal conflict within the Lusk Volunteer company were already in place. Though as Ashe was in America for much of 1914, it might have allowed Byrne to have a free run at running the Lusk Volunteer Company as he saw fit.

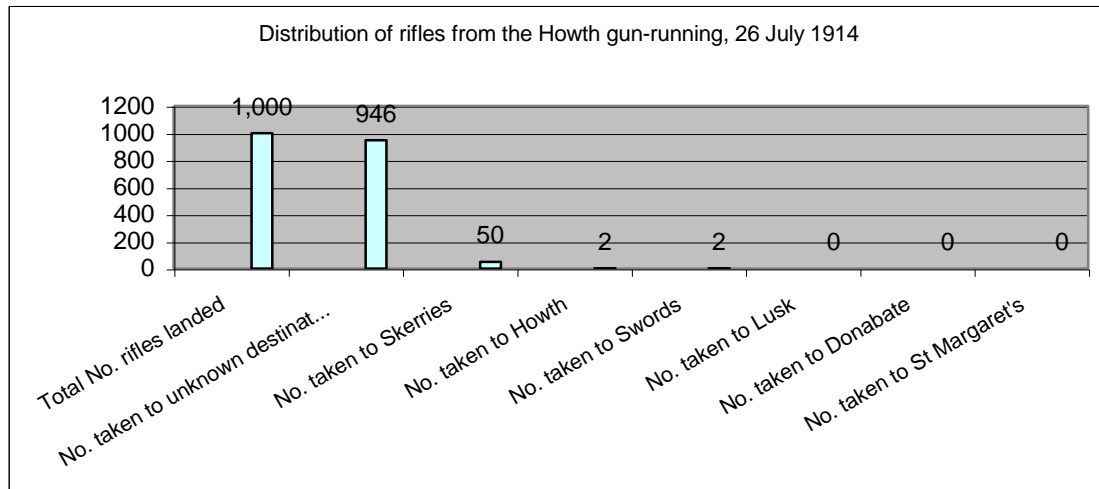
On the chart below can be seen that the Swords contingent got two rifles. These were obtained by the ‘local cycle section’ and when the rifles were brought home that evening it created quite a stir amongst a town thronged with people enjoying a sports meeting. Part of the shock was the news of an arms landing at Howth, about which little was known prior to the cyclists bringing the news. Later that evening, a rumor spread of the Howth arms having been captured by the military near Dublin. When a dispatch rider corroborated the story at eight o’clock, the Swords cycle corps, along with cars carrying local Volunteers, all headed towards the city. However, when it was learned on the way that a mistake had been made, they all returned home satisfied that the arms had not been lost to the authorities. It was stated that ‘intense excitement prevailed throughout north County Dublin’ that night because of the successful event at Howth.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Irish Independent*, 27 July 1914. Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149. Census of Ireland.

⁴¹ O’Luining, *I die in a good cause; Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 38.

⁴² *Irish Times*, 27 July 1914.

Chart 1



On 1 August 1914 a further arms shipment was landed at Kilcool, County Wicklow. Though this shipment had no direct effect on the Volunteers of north County Dublin, it did add to the general euphoria surrounding the arms importations. This was indicated four days later at Rialto, South Circular Road, where Irish Volunteer leader, Captain Eamonn Ceannt, while holding up an imported rifle, stated that ‘we can land them in the daylight or in the night, at any time we like and where we like in spite of the vigilance of the authorities’.⁴³ Sinn Fein Party leader, Arthur Griffith felt that the attainment of the arms had ‘not only satisfied the individual need, but also brought an increased respect and confidence in the individuals own ability’. He stated that the contingents from Swords, Lusk, St Margaret’s and Skerries comprised about twenty-five percent of all the participants and took away ‘a portion of the spoils of the day’.⁴⁴ Griffith did not mention the participation of either the Donabate or Howth contingents.

While the Howth gun-running was a massively important event, it was not the only thing happening on Sunday, 26 July, in north County Dublin. Some of this

⁴³ *Irish Independent*, 5 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁴ Arthur Griffith, ‘Bringing in the guns’ in Martin, *The Howth gun running and the Kilcoole gun running, 1914*, pp 152-3.

activity centred on the official formation of a National Volunteer company at Naul, a village whose geographical location placed it in the furthest corner of the county. (See Map1). On the day of the meeting 150 men left Balbriggan, headed by the St Patrick's brass band for the hour-long march to Naul. They were seen off by Rev V. O'Sullivan, C.C; Mr O'Neill, acting Protestant rector; T. Dowling, district inspector; William Young, chief coastguard and several local police constables. Mid way in their journey, near the townland of Dalahasey, they were joined by eighty Volunteers coming from an adjoining road (these were possibly from the Balrothery Company). When the column neared Naul, contingents from County Meath, numbering fifty men from Gormanstown, 200 from Stamullen and Julianstown, joined along the column, some with their bands. At the meeting were J.R Rooney, M.P; Gerald Tench, D.C. and a solicitor and Dr Robert May, Balbriggan. The meeting was adjudged to have been a success and at its conclusion about 140 men enrolled.⁴⁵ An important aspect of what happened at Naul was that National Volunteers from County Dublin and Meath were co-operating together in Volunteer activities. This cross-county interaction involved route marches, drill sessions and so on. Only a few examples of this activity were seen, as at Balbriggan, Naul and at the other end of the north county at Blanchardstown, where the company there engaged on occasion with its counterparts in County Kildare. An indication that such cases were few was seen when a National Volunteer meeting occurred at Ratoath in early August, that not a single representative contingent from County Dublin was there.⁴⁶ When all the participants at Howth are coupled with all those at Naul, it can be stated that on Sunday, 26 July, a total of about 1,680 National Volunteers were active in north County Dublin on that day, but in two different geographical locations. The figures, when broken down into its constituent parts, shows that 1,200 participants were active at Howth and another 480 at Naul. Of the latter figure, no less than 250 had come from County Meath companies. As the Naul Company was only being formed, no Volunteers from that

⁴⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 1, 8 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 15 Aug. 1914.

parish were included in the above calculations, but if they had been, then the figure would have been even higher.

In August 1914, events outside Ireland were taking centre stage. Nonetheless a Volunteer company was to be formed at Rush and a meeting was to occur on Saturday, 1 August, to make plans and enroll members. A second meeting was held on Sunday 2 August and presided over by Rev Byrne, P.P. and also present were Fr MacSweeney, Fr Hickey [Skerries], T.P. O'Brien, Ancient Order Hibernians organiser and [Michael] Smithwick from Skerries, among others. Contingents from Lusk, Skerries and Donabate showed their support. The Skerries men made a good impression with their newly acquired Howth Mauser rifles. The Lusk Black Raven pipe band, the Rush fife and drum band and a boys bugle band were also there. Two sets of enrollment figures are found. One source gives a figure for 100 on the first meeting, while another states that when drill took place on the next Tuesday, 4 August, 250 men had enrolled.⁴⁷ Of all the companies examined in the course of this study, the Rush Company grew the most quickly, having gone from a standing start to attaining 250 members in a matter of only a few days.

On 3 August in the House of Commons, John Redmond stated 'I say to the government that they may tomorrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. I say that the coast of Ireland will be defended from armed invasion by her armed sons and for this purpose armed Nationalist Catholics in the South will only be glad to join with armed Protestant Ulstermen in the North'.⁴⁸ The inspector-general claimed that while the speech was 'well received...it was not followed by any practical measures for defence and a feeling of distrust set in pending the disposal of the Home Rule Bill'.⁴⁹ The speech was overshadowed by the declaration of war between Britain and Germany on 4 August. Though that declaration was to have profound implications for Europe and the world, from an Irish perspective the

⁴⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 1 Aug. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 8 Aug. 1914. *Irish Independent*, 5 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁸ J.B. Lyons, *The enigma of Tom Kettle* (Dublin, 1983), p. 267.

⁴⁹ IGCMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914.

outbreak of hostilities had immediate implications for the progression of the Home Rule Bill. Bulmer Hobson wrote that:

The outbreak of the European War brought about a strange and difficult situation for Ireland, and one which profoundly affected the Irish Volunteers. The Liberal Government delayed the final passage of the Home Rule Bill of 1914, afraid to keep its pledges to Mr Redmond in face of the threats of Sir Edward Carson and his following in Ulster...the Buckingham Palace Conference of 21 July was to iron out the difficulties over Home Rule...In September 1914 the...Bill was suspended until after the war...⁵⁰

In Ireland, another consequence of the war was the lifting of the Arms Proclamation Act, but the first to take advantage of it was the Ulster Volunteer Force who landed arms soon after at Belfast.⁵¹ The war allowed the Irish Republican Brotherhood to set its plans for a Rising into motion, but first it had to ‘get enough guns to challenge superior British firepower’.⁵² That however, was easier said than done and it has already been seen here that despite the arms landings at Howth and Rathcoole that some Volunteers, as at Lusk, were still without rifles. The war had also removed from the local and the national scene many Volunteer company instructors. Examples of this were seen at Balbriggan, where P. Doran had gone. Others to go were Jack Donnelly from Balrothery and James Gosson from Skerries. All these had gone off to the war by mid- August. In the case of Gosson, when he left on Wednesday, 12 August, his popularity was such that over 100 members of the company, including its secretary, Patrick Mathews, turned out to wish *adieu* to the man who led them at Howth and helped them claim their rifles.⁵³ The loss of instructors caused a ‘falling off in drilling in both the Ulster and the Irish Volunteer forces’. This was attributed partly to the loss of drill instructors and partly to fear and apprehension among the Volunteers ‘lest they might be required to enroll for war service in the army’. Furthermore ‘all classes displayed a strong patriotic and anti-German feeling and joined irrespective of creed and politics in giving a hearty send

⁵⁰ Hobson, *A short history of the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916*, p. 179.

⁵¹ IGCMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914.

⁵² J.J.Lee, ‘1916 as virtual history’ in *History Ireland*, p. 5.

⁵³ *Drogheda Independent*, 8, 15 Aug. 1914.

off to the reservists when they left to join the colours'.⁵⁴ Not everyone was pleased with such displays of affection towards departing soldiers. Thomas Ashe, in a letter to an unidentified person, made known his abhorrence that 'the Volunteers everywhere in the garrison centres are parading the military to the railway stations and...that the Irish girls are seeing the soldiers off and reckon it as an honour to do so'.⁵⁵ Though instructors had taught Volunteers the rudiments of the 1911 British Infantry Manual, according to Thomas MacDonagh, in some cases they taught Volunteers 'to march to English music-hall songs'.⁵⁶

On Monday, 10 August at Malahide, a public meeting was held at the Carnegie Free Library and presided over by Rev J.J. Nolan, P.P. from Swords. A temporary committee was elected and members were to enroll at a drill session on the next Saturday, at the Carnegie grounds. When a subscription fund was opened, sizable sums came from Dr Colohan (five guineas), M.J. Moran (three guineas), O.D. McKenna (three guineas), Messrs John Fairtlough, John Reid [company secretary], J.A. O'Neill and Edward McMahan (one guinea each), and Michael Howard who gave 2s. 6d.⁵⁷ The sums were on a scale not seen elsewhere in the north county at that time. In August, the county-inspector reported that 'local gentry have begun to support and subscribe to the Volunteer movement including some Protestants'.⁵⁸ While the inspector might have been alluding to the gentry at Malahide, nevertheless, when three contributors were looked at, all turned out to have been Roman Catholics. The men were Michael James Moran of Church Street, who was born in County Leitrim and owned a drapery business in Malahide; Michael Howard of New Street, who was a farmer-victualler in the town and John Reid of Church Street, who was a local building contractor.⁵⁹ Though taking cognisance of the danger of making

⁵⁴ IGC MR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914.

⁵⁵ Letter from Thomas Ashe to unknown recipient, dated 24 Aug. 1914 (NLI. Thomas Ashe, MS47716).

⁵⁶ Geraldine Dillon, 'Irish Republican Brotherhood' in *University Review*, vol. 2 No. 9 (spring, 1962), p. 35.

⁵⁷ *Irish Independent*, 12 Aug. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 15 Aug. 1914.

⁵⁸ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914. Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 206.

⁵⁹ Census of Ireland.

assumptions from such a tiny sample, but it does allow it to be said that it was not only Protestants who gave financial assistance to the Volunteer movement at that time. It appears to have been the case, according to Terence A. Dooley, that after the outbreak of the First World War, Southern Unionists withdrew support from the Volunteer movement after they realised the ‘ulterior motives of the Volunteer organisation’. At the same time, gentry like lords Gormanston and Fingall came in behind the movement after Redmond’s speech in support of the war effort, but by September these had also distanced themselves from it because they saw it as ‘purely a political party’.⁶⁰ J.J. Clancy, M.P. had already argued that it was the case at the 5 July meeting at Balbriggan.

By the end of August, there were thirty-two National Volunteer companies with 4,226 members in County Dublin, outside of the metropolitan area. The membership was comprised of ‘young farmers sons, clerks, shopkeepers assistants, factory hands and labourers’.⁶¹ Chart 2 and Table 2 provide details about the sixteen National Volunteer companies in the north county, but due to a paucity of information the total membership figure is unavoidably grossly understated. Despite this, the figure comes to 1,335 men. From the table and chart it can be seen that the Skerries Company no longer had the largest membership, but instead shared third place along with Blanchardstown. Balbriggan had by then taken over the premier position with a remarkable 350 members.

⁶⁰ Dooley, ‘Alexander ‘Baby’ Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916’ in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 206.

⁶¹ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914.

Table 2

Irish National Volunteer companies formed after 11 June 1914			
	Company name	No. Members	Company formation date
1	Swords	50 ⁶² -55 ⁶³	Monday 6 Apr. 1914 ⁶⁴
2	Balbriggan	Large unspecified No. ⁶⁵ 200 ⁶⁶ 350 ⁶⁷	Sunday 4 May 1914 ⁶⁸
3	Lusk	40-80 ⁶⁹	Tuesday 19 May 1914 ⁷⁰
4	Skerries	105 ⁷¹ -200 ⁷²	Sunday 24 May 1914 ⁷³
5	Garristown	No details	Before 3 June 1914 ⁷⁴
6	Santry	No details	Before 10 June 1914 ⁷⁵
7	Coolock	No details	Before 13 June 1914 ⁷⁶
8	Donabate	No details	Sunday 21 June 1914 ⁷⁷
9	St Margaret's	No details	Sunday 5 July 1914 ⁷⁸
10	Blanchardstown	200 ⁷⁹	Before 12 July 1914 ⁸⁰
11	Balrothery	50 ⁸¹	Before 25 July 1914 ⁸²
12	Howth	No details	Before 26 July 1914 ⁸³
13	Naul	140 ⁸⁴ -150 ⁸⁵	19 July 1914 ⁸⁶
14	Balscadden	No details	Before 28 July 1914 ⁸⁷

⁶² *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1914.

⁶³ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, Apr. 1914.

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1914. CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, Apr., May 1914.

⁶⁵ *Irish Times*, 6 July 1914. *Irish Independent*, 6 July 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 11 July 1914.

⁶⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 7 July 1914.

⁶⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 8 Aug. 1914.

⁶⁸ *Drogheda Independent*, 9 May 1914.

⁶⁹ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 23 May 1914.

⁷⁰ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 23 May 1914.

⁷¹ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914.

⁷² *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914.

⁷³ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914. *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1914.

⁷⁴ CICMR, CO904/93, part iv, May 1914. *Irish Independent*, 3 June 1914.

⁷⁵ *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1914. *Freeman's Journal*, 13 June 1914.

⁷⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 June 1914.

⁷⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 27 June 1914.

⁷⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 10 July 1914.

⁷⁹ *Irish Independent*, 14 July 1914.

⁸⁰ *Irish Independent*, 14 July 1914.

⁸¹ *Drogheda Independent*, 25 July 1914.

⁸² *Drogheda Independent*, 1 Aug. 1914.

⁸³ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, July 1914.

⁸⁴ *Drogheda Independent*, 1 Aug. 1914.

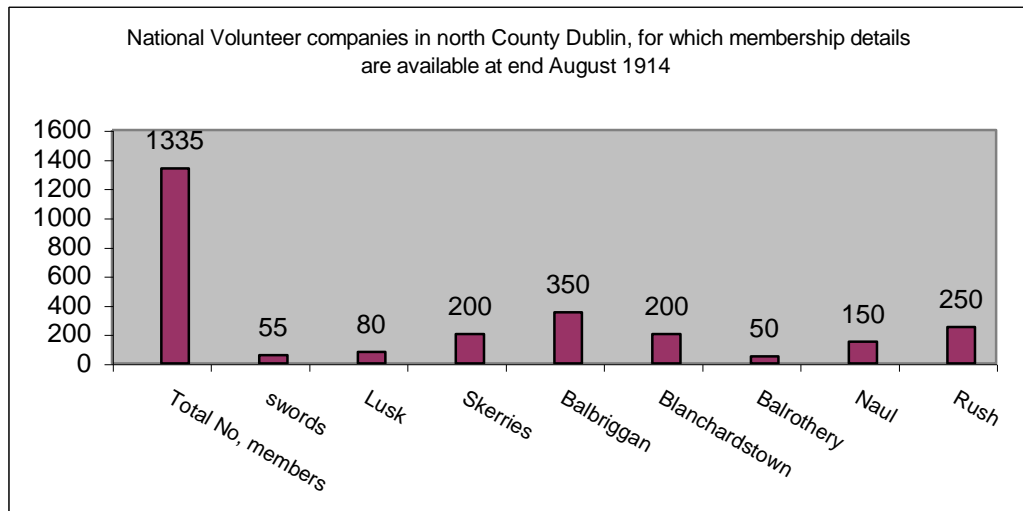
⁸⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 15 Aug. 1914.

⁸⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 25 July 1914.

⁸⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, I Aug. 1914.

15	Rush	100 ⁸⁸ -250 ⁸⁹	Sunday 2 Aug. 1914 ⁹⁰
16	Malahide	No details	Saturday 15 Aug. 1914 ⁹¹
Total No. Volunteers (where details are known) 1,335			

Chart 2



The next part of the study will look at the break-up of the National Volunteer movement, otherwise known as the Redmondite-split.

⁸⁸ *Irish Independent*, 5 Aug. 1914.

⁸⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 8 Aug. 1914.

⁹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 5 Aug. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 8 Aug. 1914.

⁹¹ *Drogheda Independent*, 15 Aug. 1914.

Chapter Three

The Redmondite-split and its aftermath

An important event in the evolutionary path of the Volunteer movement was the splitting apart of the uneasy alliance between the Volunteers formerly under MacNeill and Redmond. An indication of this was seen from a letter dated 12 August 1914 from Patrick Pearse to Joseph McGarrity in Philadelphia, whereby the former complained about being constantly undermined by Redmond's nominees and let down by a 'weak MacNeill'.¹ Another unhappy letter writer was Thomas Ashe, then in America raising funds for the Gaelic League. The League's New York office was at 624 Madison Avenue and Ashe was working in that and other states in New England.² While there, he was on friendly terms with John Devoy, Roger Casement and, by letter, with Joseph McGarrity.³ In the letter to an unknown recipient on 24 August 1914 he complained about the falling away of the daily use of the Irish language (as evidenced by the 1911 census returns), and about the takeover by John Redmond of the Irish Volunteer movement. These events were making his job of raising funds from Irish Americans ever more difficult. Despite Ashe's concerns, by the time that he wrote his letter the situation in Ireland and also in north County Dublin was already undergoing change. The county-inspector's August report stated that there was:

...some dissention exists among the Swords branch of Irish Volunteers. A split having arisen between the Sinn Fein portion of the branch, and the Redmondite portion, which is considerably stronger. Although the latter are far more numerous, still all the officers elected are Sinn feiners. This is due to the fact that the appointments were made at a time when the Redmondite members were not eligible to vote, as they had put in less than 12 drills. The actual split occurred on Sunday 28th Aug., when the Redmondite's demanded a fresh election of officers. This was refused and the Sinn Feiners drilled separately from the others.⁴

Though the split at Swords was the earliest seen in County Dublin, it was not an aberration. At Dundalk, County Louth, a split had occurred a month before

¹ Letter from Patrick Pearse to Joe McGarrity, 12 Aug. 1914 (NLI. Bulmer Hobson papers, MS.13162); cited in Martin, *The Howth gun-running, and the Kilcoole gun-running, 1914; recollections and documents*, pp 190-2.

² Letter from Thomas Ashe to unknown recipient, dated 24 Aug. 1914 (NLI, MS 47716); cited in O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, pp 65-6.

³ O'Mahony, *The first hunger striker; Thomas Ashe, 1917*, p. 8.

⁴ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914.

John Redmond spoke at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, on 20 September 1914.⁵ Thus, the Dundalk split happened a week before that at Swords. When it comes to why some Volunteer companies split early, a strong clue is provided by the inspector-general's August report where he wrote that it was the inability of some Sinn Fein members to accept Redmond as the head of the movement. He pointed to splits at Magherafelt, County Derry and at Enniscorthy, County Wexford. These had refused to countenance Redmond as their leader and had split before the end of August.⁶ The important point here is that the commonly held view that Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge had brought about the split on the national level, was not necessarily so in some localised cases.

On the matter of arms, when the National Volunteers of Balbriggan, went on a route march to Gormanstown in early September, only John Gibson had a rifle.⁷ This indicates that the promises made by J.J. Clancy, at an already mentioned meeting at Balbriggan on 5 July, rang hollow two months later. Notwithstanding this, there were arms available in the north county if one knew where to look for them. For example, when a taxi-car crashed on Friday, 4 September, on the road to Swords, it was laden down with rifles and bayonets. The crash occurred at the bottom of a hill about one and a half miles from Swords [the only place which fits that description was known as Pinnock Hill, a notorious accident black-spot to the south of the town]. The car laden with arms had crashed into three others, two of which had stopped to help another car which had broken down. The taxi was travelling at 'great speed' and hit into the cars and was itself destroyed. One of the parked cars belonged to Mr Hely-Hutchinson, Donabate, while another was owned by James Griffin from Skerries. It was reported that the arms were destined for the Irish Volunteers of Swords.⁸ With regard to the arms, the inspector-general stated that a cargo of forty rifles had been sent on that same Friday from Dublin, to the Volunteers of the above town.⁹ Swords Volunteer, Michael McAllister, recalled seeing a number of Lee-Enfield type rifles coming to

⁵ Hall, *World War I, and the nationalist politics in County Louth, 1914-1920*, p. 8.

⁶ IGCMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug., Sept. 1914.

⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 12 Sept. 1914.

⁸ *Sunday Independent*, 6 Sept. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 12 Sept. 1914. *Weekly Irish Times*, 12 Sept. 1914.

⁹ IGCMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914.

Swords at some time before the 1916 Rising, but he could not remember specific details.¹⁰ Despite this, within days of the forty rifles arriving at Swords the Volunteers of Lusk came into the possession of sixteen rifles while another twelve went to the Volunteers at Rush.¹¹ Whether these arms were part of the consignment at Swords, cannot be affirmed. Two press reports indicate that a shipment of rifles had landed at Dublin's North Wall Dock on Thursday, 3 September, and had been imported by John Redmond, Prof. Kettle and John O'Connor, M.P. However, these arms were allegedly intended for the National Volunteers in the North.¹² From this it might have been the case that the crashed taxi was on its way to the North and that the Swords, Lusk and Rush Volunteers got their rifles because of the crash and not for any other reason. In any case, the rifles were primarily old Italian, Martini-Henri, Lee-Enfield and old German Mauser types.¹³

In September, the county-inspector reported:

...I beg to state that as far as ordinary crime is concerned, the County Dublin is in a peaceable condition. The Irish [National] Volunteer movement is still very strong throughout the county, though there has been a decrease in the membership of 277, during the month. There are 33 branches in the county...there has been a great falling off in enthusiasm during the month, a few route marches have been carried out, but very little drilling compared to last month. This, however, is chiefly due to the absence of their drill instructors... some dissension exists among a few branches, viz; Swords, where a large number of the members are Sinn Feiners; St Margaret's, where a split has recently arisen between Mr. L. J. Kettle, and Mr. [Michael] Dunne and Lusk branch where a split has been in existence for some time...¹⁴

When Redmond made his speech at Woodenbridge, on 20 September, exhorting Volunteers to enlist in the army, it seemed to have been the last straw for some elements in the provisional committee. Within days they issued a manifesto and ejected Redmond's nominees from the committee. For his part, Redmond urged the loyal members of the committee to form a governing body to

¹⁰ Michael McAllister, '1916 contemporary account of some events in Fingal' in *Old tales of Fingal*, p. 57.

¹¹ IGCMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914.

¹² *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Sept. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 5 Sept. 1914.

¹³ IGCMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914.

¹⁴ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914.

run the organisation themselves.¹⁵ Redmond's Woodenbridge speech drew support from the Balbriggan Volunteer company, the Balbriggan Town Commissioners and the Balrothery Board of Guardians.¹⁶ In Skerries, the National Volunteer company's members, Patrick Mathews and P.J. O'Driscoll, also lent their support for Redmond's policies.¹⁷

On the same afternoon as Redmond was talking at Woodenbridge, there was Volunteer activity at the Demesne field, Swords. The demonstration there was stated to have been an effort to bolster the Volunteer movement in the Swords district. Support had come from Volunteer contingents at Garristown, Lusk, Skerries and Santry. Other contingents representing Volunteers from A Company, Fourth Battalion and F Company, First Battalion, Dublin Regiment, had marched from Dublin for the event. The programme of activities included drill, shooting, tug-of-war, battalion drill and was overseen by Brigadier-General Kerrigan from Volunteer headquarters. Each company, under the command of its captain was put through its paces.¹⁸ The county-inspector reported that the organisers were the Sinn Fein section of the Swords Company and the event was attended by 'several branches of the Irish Volunteers in north Dublin and branches from the city, but that...the Redmondite portion of the Swords branch had marched to Lusk to show their disapproval'.¹⁹ A week later, on Sunday, 28 September, when the National Volunteers from Rush met those at Skerries, both companies were determined to remain under the control of Redmond and the Irish Party. Some of the Rush contingent were armed with modern magazine type rifles and all were met at Skerries by Michael Smithwick.²⁰ The last named man lived at Skerries and worked for the Revenue Commissioners.²¹ Despite the uncertainty all around, the Skerries Company held a musical concert on Thursday, 24 September, in the town to bolster its equipment fund. Madam Florac and her dance troupe provided the

¹⁵ *Sunday Independent*, 27 Sept. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914.

¹⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 26 Sept. 1914.

¹⁷ *Irish independent*, 24 Sept. 1914.

¹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 21 Sept. 1914; *Drogheda Independent*, 19, 26 Sept. 1914.

¹⁹ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914.

²⁰ *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914.

²¹ Paddy Halpin, 'D.P. Moran's views on Skerries' paper No. 108, read to Skerries Historical Society, in 1975.

entertainment. The lady was well known within entertainment circles in Dublin and also taught dancing and singing at Skerries.²²

In September, the county-inspector stated that ‘...of late, since the issue of the manifesto by the Sinn Fein minority of the provisional committee, there has been considerable dissension in the Sinn Fein Party and they are doing all they can to spread dissension and disunion among the ranks and are showing open hostility to the Redmondite section and endeavouring by all means in their power to prevent enlisting in the British Army’.²³ Other events happening included inspections and parades as at Blanchardstown on Sunday, 6 September, where fifty Volunteers, four of whom were armed, were inspected by the Rev J. Marron, C.C. At Balbriggan on the same day, seventy-five Volunteers, two of whom were armed, were inspected by William Hamilton [a forty-nine years old salt refiner in the town]. On Sunday, 13 September, forty-four Volunteers of the Swords Company, half of whom bore arms, were inspected by Patrick Connor [two men answer to Connor’s description, but the more likely man was a twenty-seven years old, dairyman and cattle dealer from Swords east]. At Lusk, on Sunday 20 September the company’s 110 Volunteers, thirty-seven of whom had arms, were inspected by Colonel Maurice Moore.²⁴

While it was the case that some Volunteer companies had split in August, Joost Augusteijn, when putting a date on the split nationally, decided on 24 September 1914.²⁵ Of the total figure of about 181,000 Volunteers, about 170,000 remained loyal to Redmond as National Volunteers, while about 11,000 reverted to being Irish Volunteers under Eoin MacNeill.²⁶ Though there was a huge disparity in the size of the two forces, it was suggested by Sean O’Luining that while Redmond got ‘the vast majority, it nullified their effectiveness that they had no national objective in view. Without this they lacked cohesion and earnestness’. In regard to the Irish Volunteers ‘though small their number was, they were under

²² *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914.

²³ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914.

²⁴ IGCMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914. Census of Ireland.

²⁵ Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 233.

²⁶ F.X. Martin, ‘Writings of Eoin MacNeill’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 6 (Mar. 1948), pp 227-8. Martin, *The Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915; recollections and documents*, p. 178.

the virtual command of men who had a clear objective, an Irish Republic and were determined to achieve it'.²⁷

When the Lusk Company met on 30 September, the secretary, Thomas Jenkinson, was directed to write to the Irish Parliamentary Party outlining their plans to adopt their policies.²⁸ Jenkinson was twenty-one years old and lived at Newhaggard, Lusk. He was an assistant clerk at the Balrothery Poor Law Union and his father worked as a land steward.²⁹ It was around that time Thomas Ashe had returned from America and Sean O'Mahony wrote that 'he immediately immersed himself in Volunteer activities'.³⁰ It might have been at the last mentioned meeting, or an earlier one, where he walked out and brought several other men with him.³¹ Afterwards, he formed a half company of Irish Volunteers at Turvey, Donabate, where the twelve members received training in signalling, morse code and flag techniques. Charles Weston recalled that the breakdown of the Lusk split was that about fifty percent for Redmond and MacNeill and with the remainder opting out altogether.³² At Rush the situation was that the 200 Volunteers there met in early October and decided to remain loyal to Redmond.³³ Similarly at Balbriggan, the company supported Redmond and felt that the provisional committee's actions would lead to dissension within the Volunteer ranks.³⁴ When the Santry Volunteers met prior to 3 October, Michael J. Judge urged the members to follow MacNeill, but a majority left the hall in support of Redmond. Later, in March 1915, at a meeting at Santry, Gerald Tench, when referring to the split in the previous year, lamented that 'he deplored the split and stated that if Emmet and Mitchell were alive to-day, they would follow Redmond's Volunteer policy'. Laurence Kettle, at the October, 1914 meeting, at Santry, told them that the 'Volunteers were simply concerned with rendering themselves efficient as a national army and asserted that the man who refused to

²⁷ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 71.

²⁸ *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914.

²⁹ Census of Ireland.

³⁰ O'Mahony, *The first hunger striker; Thomas Ashe, 1917*, p. 8.

³¹ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 71.

³² Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149.

³³ *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914.

³⁴ *Drogheda Independent*, 3, 17, 24 Oct. 1914.

support the movement was a traitor to his country'.³⁵ At Garristown, on Sunday, 11 October, 1914, the members unanimously decided to follow the Irish Party.³⁶

While the above companies seem to have made their decisions without rancour, that was not the case at Swords. The secretary of the National Volunteer company there, Patrick Dunne, wrote to the Irish Parliamentary Party in October, stating that 'Redmond's action was a noble stride to free the majority from the unwise rule of the minority, this little handful that had taken a mean and cowardly action and Ireland, united Ireland, in the ranks of the Volunteers, will avenge this attempted betrayal'.³⁷ The common factor between Dunne and Kettle is that both appear to have seen the actions of the break away group as having betrayed their country. Dunne's letter drew a response on 5 October, from Frank J. Lawless, secretary of the Irish Volunteers at Swords, to the effect that:

...the members of the Swords Corps (affiliated), of the Irish Volunteers desire to express our cordial approval of the actions of the Provisional Committee in deciding to adhere to the constitution of the Volunteers as enacted at the inaugural meeting in the Rotunda Rink in November last, and we pledge to them our loyal support in any future action that it may take to maintain that constitution inviolate. Furthermore. We protest against the resolution which has already appeared in the press purporting to come from a body which has never received official recognition from the Provisional Committee and is consequently not entitled to speak in the name of the Volunteers at all.³⁸

Lawless had been successful in the Local Government elections in June 1914 for the electoral division of Swords-west.³⁹ When it comes to details of the split at Swords, primary source information is sparse, but Ristead O'Colmain estimated that seventy-five members took Redmond's side and another twenty men set up a new company under their Captain Richard Coleman.⁴⁰ Without a primary source little more can be said about the above. The county-inspector's report in October shows that:

³⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct. 1914. *Irish Independent*, 8 Mar. 1915.

³⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

³⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914; cited in Bernard Howard, 'The British Army and Fingal, during the great war' in *Fingal Studies*, p. 20.

³⁸ *Leitrim observer*, 10 Oct. 1914.

³⁹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 13 June 1914.

⁴⁰ Ristead O'Colmain, 'Memories of 1916' in *Swords Voices*, p. 31.

...The Irish volunteer movement is still strong throughout the county, but there has been a considerable falling off in membership and a greater falling off in enthusiasm. During the past month two branches, Baldoyle, and Cabinteely have altogether collapsed, and several others have decreased in membership. The total number of branches in the county is 31; with a total membership of 3647...the great majority are in favour of Mr. J. Redmond's policy. There are only 200 including Sinn Feiners, and others opposed to him...Some of the branches however, are still fairly active such as Swords, Skerries, and Lusk...Dissension exists among several branches. Swords where there is a fairly strong Sinn Fein element. Lusk, where there is a split among themselves. St Margaret's, and a few others...The Skerries Town Tenants branch held a public meeting on the 18th Oct. to protest against rents being increased on tenants in Skerries, and also the action of Lord Holmpatrick in railing in a portion of the sea shore for building purposes.⁴¹

Notwithstanding the confused situation then pertaining in north County Dublin, there were still Volunteer events unfolding in the area. This was seen at Lusk on Sunday, 4 October, 1914, where a National Volunteer inspection parade encompassing between 500 and 600 was held. Importantly, the nine companies were members of the 'Fingal Brigade' and these were, Balbriggan, Lusk, Rush, Skerries, Malahide, Swords, Raheny, Donabate and Coolock. The Lusk event was overseen by Colonel Maurice Moore, inspector-general and Major J. Crean, chief-inspecting officer of the National Volunteers Dublin, with assistance from the Rev Thomas Byrne, P.P. The Rush Company brought 160 Volunteers and their fife and drum band with them, while the Skerries Company was headed by a 'decorated scroll inscribed with the fundamental principals of the Irish Volunteer movement and which was to secure and maintain the rights and liberty's common to all the people of Ireland'. The Balbriggan Company had marched from the schoolyard, Chapel Street, under the command of Captain Domigan. In addition, its two sections A and B were led in the first instance by Sergeant Donnelly and in the second by Sergeant Smith. In the wider sense the Fingal Brigade was constituted as follows, the First Battalion was based at Coolock and included companies from Skerries, Rush, Balbriggan and Lusk; the Second Battalion was based at Castleknock and included companies from the Swords district; the Third Battalion took in Balrothery East; while the Fourth Battalion took in Balrothery

⁴¹ CICMR, CO904/95, part iv, Oct. 1914.

West and Nethercross.⁴² The aspect of the name ‘Fingal Brigade’ is important as it came at a later time to represent not the National, but rather the Irish Volunteer movement in north County Dublin.

As October 1914, wore on, there were still a few companies yet to decide on their future plans with regard to opting for Redmond or MacNeill. One such company was at Skerries and when it met on Friday, 23 October, to decide its future, it was the last company in north County Dublin to do so. The meeting was chaired by M.J. Clarke, J.P. and also in attendance were ninety-three members. Though several fine orators made their cases in favour of Redmond, or for MacNeill, it seems that their arguments were wasted on people ‘with minds fully made up’. A ballot resulted in sixty men opting for Redmond, thirty-one for MacNeill and two undecided. Importantly, of the original fourteen working members of the committee, ten had opted for MacNeill. Having decided to go their separate ways they also agreed that ‘should a spirit of rivalry exist, that it would be a healthy one and in no way encourage local bitterness’.⁴³ An influential figure at the meeting in the Band Room was local man, Thomas Hand, who voted for the provisional committee. He was thirty-six years old, married and worked as a quarry labourer and later as a van man selling locally produced bread. He was a member of the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association and a local organiser for the Irish Transport Workers Union. He was also secretary of the Dr Grimley branch (No. 414) of the Irish National Foresters. He participated at the Howth gun-running in July, 1914.⁴⁴

It has already been mentioned that when the Rush and Skerries Companies had met near the end of September, they had pledged to maintain their *status quo*, but from Table 3 it can be seen that the former had subsequently split three weeks in advance of the latter. This indicates the magnitude of the delay at holding the decisive meeting at Skerries. The cause of the perceived slowness could

⁴² *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct. 1914. *Irish times*, 3 Oct. 1914. *Irish Independent*, 5 Oct. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 3, 10 Oct. 1914.

⁴³ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁴⁴ Letters from Mathew Bissett and Matt Derham, circa. 1953-1954 to the Department of Defence, pensions section in regard to a pension entitlement for Thomas Hand; killed in 1920 by the Black and Tans. Now held in (Cathal Brugha Military Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin; file No. D.P., 23925); cited in Whearity, ‘Thomas Hand, 1878-1920, Irish Volunteer’ in *Time & Tide* 4, pp 46-9, 60. Census of Ireland.

tentatively be laid at the door of the then latest outbreak of trouble between the landlord and tenants at Skerries. Whether that was the case, or not, the seriousness of the situation there caused William Field, M.P. to state that in Skerries ‘the curse of slumdum must be ended’. Another mediator was Couglan Briscoe, T.C. [head of the National Town Tenant’s League] from Dublin.⁴⁵ Field, in January 1915, was chairman of the National Town Tenants League Committee.⁴⁶ Despite their intervention, the heightened tensions led to the Holmpatrick Monument being tarred on Sunday night, 18 October, 1914. The cause was due to ill feeling between tenants and the landlord. The ‘tablet stones were badly damaged and the inscription destroyed. The monument was erected by the tenantry over thirty years previously to the father of the present holder of the title’.⁴⁷ (Plate 1 shows the monument).

Further information about Skerries after the split comes from David Patrick (D.P.) Moran, editor of the *Leader* who wrote:

...The Volunteers of the town have been split up. We are sure that good feeling and humour will prevail in Skerries between the Irish and the Woodenbridge [National] Volunteers. At the meeting at which the division took place, about 60 voted with Woodenbridge, and about 30 voted for in-Ireland-for-Ireland. Since then we believe the minority have gained many new recruits while the majority also claim new blood. Be that as it may, how many of the Woodenbridge Volunteers of Skerries, intend to join the British Army. The question is asked not in a way of rubbing it in, but as a question which must be asked. We see that Mr. M.J. Cooke, J.P., was elected president of the Skerries branch of the Woodenbridge Volunteers, and he is a genial man. However, he is beyond recruiting age and has family responsibilities as well. He is all right as a Woodenbridge Volunteer for no one would suggest that he join the soldiers, but what of the younger men? The secretary of the Woodenbridge Volunteer branch at Skerries, Mr. J[ames] E[dward], Reynolds is, we should say, eligible for the English Army, and he will probably be asked by many of his friends to show reason why, being a Woodenbridge Volunteer he should not enlist. Every member of the Woodenbridge branch at Skerries, who is eligible, is fair game for the same question to be asked. In three months probably many of those eligible, but who have no intention of enlisting, will have dropped out. Possibly some will then join the other Volunteers in the town.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ CICMR, CO904/95, part iv, Oct. 1914. *Irish Independent*, 19 Oct. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 17 Oct. 1914.

⁴⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 2 Jan. 1915.

⁴⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914. *Irish Independent*, 19, 20 Oct. 1914.

⁴⁸ *Eire-Ireland*, vol.1, No. 3 (7 Nov. 1914), p. 2. Halpin, ‘D.P. Moran’s views on Skerries’ p. 7.

With regard to Moran, Paddy Halpin gives the information that he and his family had holidayed at Skerries every year since 1911 and they were also there during July 1914.⁴⁹ Therefore it could be surmised that Moran had more than a passing knowledge of the people mentioned in his article.

The inspector-general's October report, showed that by then the National Volunteer movement had already begun to decline and on the national level 'there was no drill worth mentioning...and general apathy seems to have set in'. While the vast majority of members are supporters of Mr. Redmond's policy but the 'response to appeals made by him...for recruits for the Irish Brigade of Lord Kitchener's army has been so far very poor...and Redmond's urge to National Volunteers to enlist is ignored'.⁵⁰ In regard to the slow enlistment, Eoin MacNeill at the first Irish Volunteer Convention in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on Sunday, 25 October, 1914, stated that 'not one of the companies which went with Redmond had subsequently offered its services to the war office'.⁵¹ Was this the reason that Moran was keenly interested in the Woodenbridgers of Skerries, it certainly seems that it could have been the case.

In the table below, details of when individual companies in north County Dublin split are shown. It will be seen that the Skerries Company was the last in the north county to split.

⁴⁹ Halpin, 'D.P. Moran's views on Skerries', p. 7.

⁵⁰ IGCMR, CO904/95, part iv, Oct. 1914.

⁵¹ *Irish Times*, 26 Oct. 1914.

Table 3

National Volunteer companies at the time of the Redmondite-split			
No.	Company name	Date of split	Other details
1	Swords	28 Aug. 1914 ⁵²	Majority for Redmond. ⁵³ 75 for Redmond, 15 for MacNeill. ⁵⁴
2	Balbriggan	28 Sept.	All for Redmond. ⁵⁵
3	Lusk	30 Sept. 1914. ⁵⁶	Majority for Redmond, minority for MacNeill. ⁵⁷
4	St Margaret's	Sept. 1914. ⁵⁸	No details
5	Raheny	Prior to 3 Oct. 1914 ⁵⁹	All for Redmond. ⁶⁰
6	Santry	Prior to 3 Oct. 1914 ⁶¹	Majority for Redmond. ⁶²
7	Rush	Prior to 3 Oct. 1914. ⁶³	All for Redmond. ⁶⁴
8	Garristown	11 Oct. 1914. ⁶⁵	All for Redmond. ⁶⁶
9	Naul	17 Oct. 1914. ⁶⁷	All for Redmond. ⁶⁸
10	Baldoyle	No details	Collapsed in Oct. 1914. ⁶⁹
11	Skerries	23 Oct. 1914. ⁷⁰	60 for Redmond, 31 for MacNeill, 2 neutral. ⁷¹

On 26 December, a writer using the *nom-de-plume* Sentinel wrote in the press:

⁵² CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914.

⁵³ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Aug. 1914.

⁵⁴ *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914. McAllister, '1916 contemporary account of some events in Fingal', in *Old tales of Fingal*, p. 56. O'Colmain, 'Memories of 1916' in *Swords Voices*, p 31.

⁵⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914.

⁵⁶ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914. *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914. Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149.

⁵⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 3 Oct. 1914. Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149.

⁵⁸ CICMR, CO904/94, part iv, Sept. 1914.

⁵⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct. 1914.

⁶⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct. 1914.

⁶¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct. 1914. On 8 Sept. 1914, two members were expelled from the Santry Company because they had joined another unit. Autographed letter by J.V. Lawless (NLI. MS 41,652/1).

⁶² *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct. 1914.

⁶³ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct 1914.

⁶⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Oct 1914.

⁶⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁶⁶ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁶⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁶⁸ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁶⁹ CICMR, CO904/95, part iv, Oct. 1914.

⁷⁰ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁷¹ *Drogheda Independent*, 24 Oct. 1914.

Brother Volunteers, it is with a sad heart that I view the present condition of the Volunteer movement in north County Dublin. Our streets no longer resound with the tramp of marching men. The Balbriggan and Rush Corps, at one time 200 strong each, are no longer to be seen. Skerries are reputed to have two corps, but in reality they are only in name. Swords also had two independent corps. Lusk, once the bright spot of north County Dublin, but now fast becoming notorious for its domestic squabbles...also has two corps. In these towns the movement is coming quietly to an inglorious end... who is to blame? Can the movement be saved? In those towns where there are two corps, their continued separation is mainly the outcome of personal animosities of some leading lights, who regard the movement from a narrow parochial standpoint...to move forward we must be united, and as we are at present no progress can be made when small towns like Swords, Lusk and Skerries are divided into two camps. Each side finds it difficult to see how it differs from the other. In reality there is no difference, for 'Ireland a Nation' must be the fundamental principle of all... I do not sign my name, for it is best that an appeal like this should be considered and given a fair trial on its merits, and not those of the writer, whose name might make the reader prejudiced or biased in giving due thought to what is a heartfelt appeal for the Irishmen of north County Dublin to become indeed Irishmen all.⁷²

The writer appears to have taken a rather pessimistic view of the situation and seems prepared to have written off the future of certain companies before they had even begun their re-incarnation either under Redmond or MacNeill. His assertion that the two Skerries Volunteer companies then existed in name only, will be seen here to have been erroneous as both continued as viable units into the future. The county-inspector's January 1915 report, states that:

...A large contingent of the city Sinn Fein section proceeded to Rush and Lusk, railway station, where they detrained, and were met by contingents from Lusk, Donabate, Swords, and Skerries in the County Dublin. 100 had bicycles, and 250 were on foot. Those on bicycles went on to Skerries, where they stacked their bicycles and scattered on the different roads leading out of Skerries, to attack the 250 on foot who were the invading party. Subsequently the various contingents returned home. When about to leave Skerries in the evening, some Redmondite Volunteers shouted up Redmond, which was replied to by the Sinn Feiners by up the Kaiser. Beyond this nothing occurred.⁷³

⁷² *Drogheda independent*, 26 Dec. 1914; cited in, Howard 'The British Army and Fingal, during the great war' in *Fingal Studies*, p. 18.

⁷³ CICMR, CO904/96, part iv, Jan. 1915.

By the end of January 1915, there began the process of selecting officer staff for the First and Second Battalions of the Irish Volunteers in Dublin City for the first time. Piaras Beaslai made a reference to Thomas Ashe in that he was ‘already the leading spirit of the Fifth, or Fingal Battalion’.⁷⁴ However, Richard Mulcahy made the point in his article ‘The work of Thomas Ashe’ in *An tOglach* that prior to Ashe’s prominence that there was already a strong leadership in the north county in the guise of Frank Lawless and Dr Richard Hayes.⁷⁵ It has already been mentioned that Ashe was in America for much of 1914 and therefore the vacuum left by his absence would understandably have been filled by others in the north county area. The Irish Volunteer movement developed further as stated below:

...By the spring of the following year [1915]. The Irish Volunteers in Dublin had stabilized the form of organization they were to maintain unchanged up to the time of the Easter Rising. From the beginning, the companies of the Volunteers were formed by districts. In the course of time the companies were grouped into battalions, by the early part of 1915 these had been fixed as four in the city, numbered 1st to 4th and one in the county, the 5th, known more usually as the North County Battalion, and later, as the Fingal Battalion. The five battalions constituted the Dublin Brigade...a meeting of the Captains of 1st Battalion of the Irish Volunteers at the end of January 1915, elected [Edward] Ned Daly Commandant. About that time Thomas Ashe was elected in the same way Commandant of the North County Battalion. Thomas MacDonagh became Commandant of the 2nd Battalion. Eamon De Valera was elected for the 3rd Battalion in March. Eamonn Ceannt was chosen by the 4th Battalion Captains. At the time of the Rising, MacDonagh was Brigade Commandant, and De Valera was Brigade Adjutant.⁷⁶

There appears to be some confusion as to when Ashe took over the command of the Fifth Battalion and from the available sources it could have been at any time between early 1915, as related above and in late October of that year, to just before the Rising, or even on the day of the first muster of the Fifth Battalion on Easter Sunday, 23 April. The Irish Volunteers in 1915 were

⁷⁴ *Irish Independent*, 14, 15 Jan. 1953.

⁷⁵ *An tOglach*, vol.1, No. 6 (Dec. 1962), p. 1.

⁷⁶ Heuston, O.P. *Headquarters Battalion, Easter Week 1916*, p. 1. O’Mahony, *The first hunger striker; Thomas Ashe, 1917*, p. 8. Joseph Lawless (Col.), ‘Fight at Ashbourne’ in *Capuchin Annual*, p. 307. O’Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, pp 75,77.

preoccupied with manoeuvring, learning first-aid, intelligence gathering, signalling and other useful military skills.⁷⁷

In February, 1915, County Dublin was said to have been a peaceable place except for:

...some unpleasantness arose between the people at Skerries and Lord Holmpatrick's agent regarding his power to enclose certain lands along the seashore at Skerries. With the object of testing the landlord's rights the villagers assembled in open daylight and tore down the paling, which had been erected round the disputed lands by the agent. Civil proceedings against the ringleaders followed. And the people thereupon held a public meeting to rouse public opinion on the matter and to collect funds to pay for the defence of the persons on whom writs had been served. No further action, however, appears to have been taken in the matter and matters soon settled down.⁷⁸

The dispute as seen above at Skerries, was not just about a piece of common land, but also had to do with the necessity for access to sand and seaweed for the manuring of the agricultural land in the vicinity of the town. The landlord charged a fee for the removal of both of those commodities and the costs associated with their purchase was also a bone of contention among the tenants. In any case, the dispute cannot be seen in isolation, as it undoubtedly had a negative effect on all the residents of the town. In this regard it can be expected that Volunteers of both persuasions were also tenants. One such man was Patrick Mathews, who was involved with the Skerries Town Tenants Committee and with the National Volunteers at the same time. He had to speak out on behalf of town tenants in the face of an intransigent landlord and his agent while acting as secretary of the aforementioned Volunteers. It could be asked whether the situation at Skerries had made the Volunteers there more radical in their actions than Volunteers elsewhere in the north county, but from the evidence seen thus far, the answer would be no. However, whether the county-inspector would have agreed with that summation is open to conjecture because it was he who had to deal with the constant stream of police reports landing on his desk from Skerries. In February, 1915, he reported that he was concerned about court cases then coming up which might 'raise some

⁷⁷ *Dublin Brigade review* (National Association of the Old I.R.A., Dublin, 1939), p. 13.

⁷⁸ Brendan Mac Giolla Choille, *Intelligence notes, 1913-16: preserved in the State Paper Office* (Dublin, 1966), p.141.

friction in the neighbourhood. At present the ill feeling is entirely towards the agent [George Fowler from Kells, County Meath] as the landlord is at the front'.⁷⁹ Lord Holmpatrick was then at the war front, but he was not the only man there with associations with Skerries. A press report of 23 January, 1915, points to some thirty men from Skerries 'fighting on land and sea at that ... moment'.⁸⁰ D.P. Moran, according to Paddy Halpin, held strong negative views about Holmpatrick. In a September, 1911, issue of the *Leader* under the title 'Merry Skerries', he wrote disparagingly that 'Holmpatrick owns the whole town, but did little for it except draw rents'. He has 'not put one brick on top of another up till then. When leases expire the landlord raises the rent and as he owns the whole place he therefore can squeeze the people there very tightly'.⁸¹

From the perspective of the country at large the National Volunteers were:

...Never very enthusiastic about the movement, the leaders of the National Volunteers, once removed from the stimulus caused by the association with the extremists who were keen on getting arms, soon grew apathetic, so that it might in truth be said that during 1915, and certainly in the early months of 1916, the Irish (or Sinn Fein), Volunteers formed the only live organisation in the country. Defections from the ranks of the National Volunteers to the Irish Volunteers were frequent. Many National Volunteers quitted altogether.⁸²

In March 1915, there were moves made to 'drill and smarten up the different contingents that will attend the [National Volunteer] demonstration in the Phoenix Park on the coming Easter Sunday'. In an effort to prepare for the event a parade was held at Lusk on Sunday, 21 March, where contingents from Swords, Lusk, Rush, Skerries and Garristown attended and were inspected by Major Crean at Murtagh's field.⁸³ On Easter Sunday, 4 April, 'large contingents of the Redmondite sect from the County Dublin attended demonstration and parade...in the Phoenix Park...most of them made a good display'.⁸⁴ Also there was Captain James Edward Reynolds of the National Volunteers of Skerries, which was

⁷⁹ CICMR, CO904/96, part iv, Feb. 1915. *Drogheda Independent*, 2 Jan., 27 Feb. 1915. *Weekly Irish Times*, 26 June 1915.

⁸⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Jan. 1915.

⁸¹ D.P. Moran (ed.), 'Merry Skerries' in the *Leader* (n.d.), Sept. 1911; cited in Halpin, 'D.P. Moran's views on Skerries', pp 3, 5-6.

⁸² John F. Boyle, *The Irish rebellion of 1916: a brief history of the revolt and its suppression* (London, 1916), p. 40.

⁸³ CICMR, CO904/96, part iv, Mar. 1915. *Drogheda Independent*, 27 Mar. 1915.

⁸⁴ CICMR, CO904/96, part iv, Apr. 1915.

aligned with Clondalkin in A Company, Sixth Battalion.⁸⁵ On Easter Monday, about 800 Sinn Feiners [Irish Volunteers], from Dublin City, met up with contingents from Swords and St Margaret's and undertook military manoeuvres at Finglas. They had with them a motorcar, a few motorcycles and about fifty men on bicycles.⁸⁶ It was suggested by Sean O'Luing that such activities might have been a rehearsal for the task the Irish Volunteers were assigned to a year later in the Rising.⁸⁷ The number of Irish Volunteers in County Dublin in May 1915, was stated to have been ninety-nine. When a demonstration of Irish Volunteers occurred at Rogerstown Strand, Rush, on Sunday, 9 May seventy-seven of them were participants in the event along with others from Dublin City. The details were that forty men had come from the city, thirty-five from Lusk, twelve from Skerries and thirty from Swords. All except the city contingent were under the command of Richard Coleman. As no seditious literature had been handed out, therefore the watching police took no action.⁸⁸

On the European war front, the need for manpower continued to grow and the possibility was raised about extending forced conscription to Ireland. As the prospect was anathema to a wide section of the Irish populace moves were made to circumvent its introduction here. One such intervention was an anti-conscription conference at City Hall, Dublin, on 20 July, 1915. In attendance was Patrick Mathews from Skerries and he voted to fight against any efforts to bring conscription to Ireland.⁸⁹ In a letter to the press on 7 August, Mathews wrote of his pleasure that at the meeting were representatives of Nationalist organisations such as the United Irish League, the National Directory, Gaelic Leaguers, Irish Volunteers, National Volunteers, Town Tenant Leaguers, Labour men and Sinn Feiners. In the letter he declared himself a lifelong supporter of the United Irish League, the Land League and the National League.⁹⁰ In response to the above, a person using the *nom de plume*, *Pro Patria*, wrote on 9 August, 1915:

⁸⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 5, 6 Apr. 1915.

⁸⁶ CICMR, CO904/96, part iv, Apr. 1915.

⁸⁷ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 75.

⁸⁸ CICMR, CO904/97, part iv, May 1915. Bairbre Curtis, 'Fingal and the Easter Rising 1916' in *Fingal Studies*, No.1, p. 40

⁸⁹ *Irish Independent*, 21 July 1915. *Weekly Irish Times*, 24 July 1915.

⁹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 7 Aug. 1915.

Sir, Mr Mathews's letter in your issue of Saturday is an amusing apology for the attempt recently made by a meeting in the City Hall, to dictate and direct the trend of public opinion in Ireland. The treatment meted to this resolution by the public and representative members at the Boards of Guardian's meetings, etc., throughout the country shows plainly that Irish Boards are about fed up with snowball resolutions...as to the representative composition of the meeting that is a matter of opinion, and the many public boards of Ireland have not been backward in expressing theirs. It would be interesting to know who or what Mr. Mathews represented, certainly not Skerries, for he had no mandate from the Skerries people to express their views on matters outside the purview of the Balrothery Rural District Council, for which board he is one of the local representatives. For the repeated statements of members of the Irish Party, its opposition to conscription is evident, and no snowball resolution, even though its source is a coterie in the City Hall, Dublin, is going to embroil the country.⁹¹

Notwithstanding the views espoused by Mathews, or *Pro Patria*, in relation to conscription it did not prevent the city and county of Dublin Recruiting Committee from holding a recruitment rally at Skerries on Sunday, 29 August, 1915. The outside event took place adjacent to the Holmpatrick Monument and was chaired by Lord Chief Justice Molony. Also there were Corporal Issy Smith, V.C; E.H. Andrews, J.P; Lieutenant Maurice Healy; Thomas L. Plunkett, D.L; A. Beattie, D.L; J. Brady and Captain Gratten-Doyle, J.P. and chairman of the Tyneside Irish Brigade Committee. Musical accompaniment was provided by the Royal Irish Regiment band. Regrets for non-attendance came from the Rev Canon Dolan, P.P. [Skerries], The O'Mahony and Mr Comiskey, J.P. from Balbriggan. Molony appealed to the gathering to be aware of the crisis in the war and the necessity for new recruits to come forward. His message was directed at local farmers and their sons and said that those at home 'needed to fill the gaps left by their brave countrymen who had fallen in defence of Irish homes'. Healy took a more direct approach by suggesting that he had already heard excuses from Irish men elsewhere that 'it was not Ireland's war' that England had not been kind to Ireland in the past and so on. He spoke about the '250,000 Irish men then fighting at the Dardanelles, for Serbia, Belgium, France and Russia'. Yet he said that while Irish men were fighting with the 'Inniskillings, Munsters and Dublin's that others here in Skerries could continue to play golf and cricket, and would not go

⁹¹ *Irish Independent*, 9 Aug. 1915.

into training to help the fighting men'.⁹² There appeared to have been no mention of those men from the district who had already laid down their lives for the war. One of these was the former drill instructor of the Skerries Volunteer company Private James Gosson of the Second Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers.⁹³ He was a married man, and been attached to a machine gun section in Flanders, when on 4 May 1915, he lost his life. His brother Joseph, also single, was a private in the army and he too was killed in Flanders a month before James.⁹⁴ The Commonwealth War Graves Commission states that James was thirty-two years old and his brother was thirty-six years. The pair are remembered at Saint Sever, Rouen and at Wimereux Communal cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.⁹⁵ While the loss of two lives was a tragedy for their family, nevertheless such events were commonplace at that time. D. George Boyce termed it 'a people's war with people from the same family, the same street and the same factory' all joining together as recruits in the Great War.⁹⁶

On the Irish Volunteer calendar, one of the most important events in 1915 was the death in America in June of the former Fenian, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. Such was the importance to the movement that his body was repatriated and laid out at Dublin's City Hall for three days before being buried. The removal to Glasnevin cemetery, Dublin, occurred on 1 August. The funeral procession was one of the biggest ever seen in Ireland with an estimated 10,000 people lining the route to the burial ground. The event brought the Irish and National Volunteers together publicly for the first time since the Redmondite-split.⁹⁷ With regard to the participation of Volunteers from north County Dublin, the county-inspector seemed to have had prior knowledge. Otherwise how can it be explained that he was able to report in July that twenty Volunteers would attend from Swords, six from Howth, forty-five from Rathfarnham and twenty more from Lucan.⁹⁸ The

⁹² *Irish Times*, 30 Aug. 1915. *Irish Independent*, 27, 30 Aug. 1915.

⁹³ *Irish Independent*, 7 May 1915.

⁹⁴ Howard, 'The British Army and Fingal during the Great War' in *Fingal Studies*, p. 22.

⁹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 7 May 1915. Details of the war deaths of James and Joseph Gosson, Skerries (Commonwealth War Graves Commission). Accessed from <http://www.cwgc.org/search/SearchResults.aspx?surname=gosson&initials=&war=0&yearfrom=1914&yearto=1915&force=Army&nationality=6&send.x=38&send.y=10> (4 Mar. 2011)

⁹⁶ D. George Boyce, *Nineteenth Century Ireland; the search for stability* (Dublin, 2005), pp 284-5.

⁹⁷ *Dublin Brigade review*, p. 13. *Irish Times*, 2 Aug. 1915.

⁹⁸ CICMR, CO904/97, part iv, July 1915.

Lusk Black Raven piper's band was in attendance.⁹⁹ James Crenigan confirms that he witnessed its participation as he was also there.¹⁰⁰ From an extant photograph of the band in circa. 1912 (see Plate 4), it can be determined that at least five of the members seen in it were also Irish Volunteers. The significance of Rossa's death in relation to the Irish Volunteer movement, according to Owen Dudley Edwards was that it was 'an overture for the Easter Rising in the following year'.¹⁰¹

On 29 October, 1915, at Balbriggan, an indoor meeting was held in the Town Hall for the purpose of forming an Irish Volunteer company there. The meeting was chaired by Dr Richard Hayes and also present were The O'Rahilly and Dillon Cosgrove from Dublin. While those in the hall were endeavouring to get on with their business, outside the venue there were National Volunteers in the Square holding a demonstration against it. They were aided by a band and all the demonstrators 'cheered for the King and booed the Irish Volunteer organisers'.¹⁰² The meeting was deemed a failure by Charles Weston.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, according to the county-inspector, a company was established there on 31 October.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps there was more than a grain of truth in what Weston said, as thereafter nothing further was heard of the company. In an effort to form a company at Malahide, on 11 December, Thomas Ashe went there to meet people and came away with the names of twelve men who professed an interest in it, but again nothing happened subsequently. On the next day Ashe drilled a contingent of Irish Volunteers from Swords, in a field at Turvey [Donabate].¹⁰⁵

Details of the state of the Irish and the National Volunteer movements as they were in north County Dublin, after the Redmondite-split, can be seen on the table below.

⁹⁹ *Southern Star*, 7 Aug. 1915.

¹⁰⁰ Crenigan, B.M.H. W.S. No. 148.

¹⁰¹ Owen Dudley Edwards, 'Rossa, Jeremiah O'Donovan (bap. 1831, d. 1915), Irish Nationalist' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Accessed from <http://www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/article/46330?docPos=1> (29 Jan. 2011)

¹⁰² CICMR, CO904/98, part iv, Oct. 1915.

¹⁰³ Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149; cited in Curtis, 'Fingal and the Easter Rising, 1916' in *Fingal Studies*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ CICMR, CO904/98, part iv, Nov. 1915.

¹⁰⁵ CICMR, CO904/98, part iv, Dec. 1915.

Table 4

County Dublin Volunteer membership figures for the period beginning July 1914, until Apr. 1916 (Information taken from R.I.C., monthly confidential reports for County Dublin)				
National Volunteer membership			Irish Volunteer membership	
Month	No. Companies & members	Monthly change in companies & members	No. Companies & members	Monthly change in companies & members
July 1914	(22) 2130	None		
Aug.	(32) 4226	(+10) + 2096	Swords split, 28 Aug.	
Sept.	(33) 3949	(+1) -277	Lusk, & St Margaret's split	
Oct.	(31) 3647	(-2) -302	Skerries split, 23 Oct. Baldoyle collapsed, no date.	
Nov.	(31) 3547	(0) -272		
Dec.	(30) 3369	(-1) -178		
Jan. 1915	(29) 3224	(-1) -145		
Feb.	(29) 3177	(0) -47		
Mar.	(29) 3037	(0) -140		
Apr.	(29) 2978	(0) -59		
May.	(28) 2778	(-1) -200	(2) 99	
June	(28) 2758	(0) -20	(2) 98	(0) -1
July	(28) 2747	(0) -11	(2) 98	(0) 0
Aug.	(28) 2716	(0) -31	(2) 98	(0) 0
Sept.	(28) 2700	(0) -16	(2) 113	(0) +15
Oct.	(28) 2684	(0) -16	(2) 98	(0) -15
Nov.	(28) 2580	(0) -104	(4) 187	(+2) +89
Dec.	(28) 2554	(0) -26	(4) 186	(0) -1
Jan. 1916	(28) 2531	(0) -23	(4) 186	(0) 0
Feb.	(27) 2368	(-1) -163	(4) 186	(0) 0
Mar.	(27) 2361	(0) -7	(4) 186	(0) 0
Apr.	(26) 2213	(-1) -148	(4) 186	(0) 0
May	(26) 2213	(0) 0		

The next part of the study will look at the cataclysmic events surrounding the 1916 Rising.

Chapter four

The 1916 Rising in north County Dublin

Dublin Castle authorities stated in their intelligence notes that in 1916, County Dublin began peaceably, but there was a concern over the extent of anti-British sentiment amongst a proportion of the people there. In addition, while the Irish Volunteer numbers were then low, they nevertheless exerted a big influence on the labourers and shop boys in the county and thereby attracted their loyalties.¹ In the general sense, apart from the Sinn Fein element, the people of the county were ‘a law abiding lot, who were on good terms with the police’. In regard to the Volunteers, those of the National variety were not very active at the beginning of the year but the Irish Volunteers or Sinn Feiners, as the county-inspector was wont to call them, were ‘fairly active’. An example of this occurred on Sunday, 2 January, where Patrick Pearse, after carrying out manoeuvres at Rathfarnham then went to Clondalkin where he urged people to form an Irish Volunteer company there.² On 9 January, nearly 240 Irish Volunteers converged on the Santry district to hold sham battles there. Similar activities occurred near Finglas on 16 and 23 January.³

The county-inspector reported that in March, 1916, that the National Volunteers ‘exist only in name’ while the Irish Volunteers were of ‘very little account...’. The latter movement had only four companies at Rathfarnham, Swords, Lusk and Balbriggan, with a combined membership of 186 men...⁴ However, the inspectors estimate is seriously at odds with the longstanding account by Joseph Lawless. The situation according to him was that prior to the Rising, the Volunteers of north County Dublin were organised as the Fifth Battalion of the Dublin Brigade consisting of ‘four companies located at Swords, Lusk, Skerries and Saint Margaret’s, each with a nominal roll of about thirty men’.⁵ As it has already been seen here that there were viable Irish Volunteer companies at St Margaret’s and Skerries and as the company at Balbriggan

¹ Mac Giolla Choille, *Intelligence notes, 1913-16*, p. 205.

² CICMR, CO904/99, part iv, Jan. 1916.

³ CICMR, CO904/99, part iv, Jan. 1916.

⁴ CICMR, CO904/99, part iv, Mar. 1916.

⁵ Lawless, ‘Fight at Ashbourne’ in *Capuchin Annual*, p. 307.

seemed to have faded away, therefore the account as given by Lawless is deemed the more plausible and will be used in this study.

On St Patrick's Day, 17 March, 1916, a large Irish Volunteer demonstration took place in the vicinity of College Green and Dame Street, Dublin. Thomas Ashe and a number of north county Volunteers participated on the day.⁶ The county-inspector stated, however, that only a few Volunteers accompanied Ashe at the event.⁷ In any case, Sean O'Luing claimed that preventing the passage of a police car carrying British Headquarter staff in Dame Street 'was the first act of the rebellion'.⁸ From the information in *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook* it seems that the most important aspect of the day was not the disruption to vehicular traffic, but rather that it was the first time that the Irish Volunteers acted publicly as a body in an urban area in broad daylight.⁹

On the day that the Rising was to begin, Easter Sunday, 23 April, 1916, a spanner was thrown into the works by Eoin MacNeill, when he issued a countermanding order forbidding it from going ahead. The order stipulated that 'owing to the very critical position, all orders given to Irish Volunteers for tomorrow Easter Sunday, are hereby rescinded and no parades, marches, or other movements of Irish Volunteers will take place. Each Volunteer will obey this order strictly in every particular'.¹⁰ It appears that MacNeill's order had reached the Dublin Volunteers in time to prevent them from mustering on that Sunday, but outside the city, some Volunteers did turn out in some places.¹¹ In north County Dublin the Irish Volunteers had mobilised at midday on Easter Sunday, at Rathbeale Cross, Swords. Of the 120 men who turned out, the largest contingent had come from Skerries. Charles Townshend points out that James Crenigan gave a figure of some 200 Volunteers mustering on that Sunday, but that he too prefers the lesser figure of 120 men as put forward by Joseph Lawless. Notwithstanding the foregone, the figure of 200 is seen again, but his time is attributed to

⁶ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause: a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 75.

⁷ CICMR, CO904/99, part iv, Mar. 1916.

⁸ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause: a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 75.

⁹ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 7.

¹¹ Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion*, p. 139.

Christopher Moran, Swords.¹² In relation to the larger figure, it is difficult to see that being the case as it has already been explained by Lawless that the combined strength of the four companies in the Fifth Battalion had, in his opinion, no more than 120 men at best. In the confusion following MacNeill's order, the men spent the rest of the day at the farm of Frank Lawless at Saucerstown, Swords. It was late that evening when it was confirmed that everything was off and, when the Volunteers were sent away near midnight, they were told to 'guard your arms as you would guard your lives, you never know the moment you may be called on to use them'.¹³ From Map 1 it can be seen that the Skerries men had the longest journey to reach their homes, a not inconsiderable twenty-one kilometres and in the dark of night.

When the situation changed over night the news was disseminated widely. In the case of the Volunteers of north County Dublin, the news was carried by Molly Adrien, who cycled from Dublin City to the home of Joseph Lawless at Saucerstown, arriving there at seven o'clock on Easter Monday morning. She had carried the order from Pearse to 'strike at one o'clock today'. The message had been carried by Lawless's aunt, who was a Cumann na mBan member from Oldtown, County Dublin.¹⁴ An obituary of her death in July 1949 shows that she had a 'distinguished record with that organisation during Easter Week, 1916'. She had carried dispatches between and the General Post Office and Thomas Ashe, 'all that week'.¹⁵ For her efforts, O'Luing described her as 'a heroine ranking with the bravest'.¹⁶ Her name is also mentioned on the General Post Office Garrison Roll of Honour.¹⁷ A memorial on a bridge near her home at

¹² Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149. *Townshend, Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion*, pp 139, 215. McGarry, *Rebels; voices from the Easter Rising*, p. 269.

¹³ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, pp 76-7.

¹⁴ Lawless, 'Fight at Ashbourne' in *Capuchin Annual*, p. 308. Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149; cited in O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 77; cited in Whearity, 'The life and times of Mary 'Molly' Adrien, 1873-1949, Cumann na mBan Volunteer 1916' paper No. 260, read to Skerries Historical Society, in 2006, p. 14. (Also read at Oldtown, in Nov. 2006). Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 208.

¹⁵ *Irish Press*, 20 July 1949.

¹⁶ Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149. O'Luing, *I die in a good cause: a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 81.

¹⁷ John O'Connor, *The 1916 Proclamation* (revised ed. Dublin: Minneapolis, 1999), p. 60.

Oldtown states ‘In remembrance of Molly Adrian [sic] and comrades, late old I.R.A. Fingal Brigade, 1916-1921’.¹⁸

On the second mobilisation on Easter Monday, at Knocksedan, Swords, the turnout was about half that of the previous day. The mobilisation point is commemorated by a plaque erected in 1991 (see Plate 5). On the second occasion, the main absentees were the Skerries contingent which had gone from being the largest on the previous day, to perhaps there being none there at all on the Monday.¹⁹ Ashe, it seems, held out hope that the Skerries contingent would arrive later, perhaps that day or the next.²⁰ The collapse in the level of support as seen at Knocksedan was not an aberration, but rather, according to Ernie O’Malley it was part of a situation replicated elsewhere. Such was the effect of MacNeill’s countermanding order that O’Malley estimated that nationally, the number of Volunteers who mobilised had declined from about 3,000 on Easter Sunday, to little more than 1,500 on the following day.²¹

Skerries Irish Volunteer, Matt Derham, in a note left in his family’s possession, provides some details of his involvement and by implication, that of seven others from that town, in the events of Easter Week 1916. According to his daughter-in-law, Mrs Lillie Derham, the note was written by him in the 1940s and had not been seen outside the family home until it was made available for a research paper on Derham’s life in 2003, carried out by this author.²² The content, including the names of the seven other Skerries men is seen below:

Easter week 1916: Seamus [James McDonnell], Terry [Sherlock], Tom Hand; Jem Kelly; Pete Gibbons; Jack McGowan and Joe Thornton. Mobilised Easter Sunday at 4.30 at Crossroads, Rathbeale, Saucerstown, Swords, with amassed Fingal Brigade, was on duty until 10.30 withdrew to Mr Frank Lawless’s yard and dismissed at 12.30 [a.m.] and sent home. Monday, got garbled accounts of the happenings in the city, but nothing definite until some residents of there, returning by the last train, told me about the post office [General Post Office], being occupied, went round to

¹⁸ The wall plaque was erected at an as yet unknown date. For further details of her life see Whearity, ‘The life and times of Mary Molly Adrien (1873-1949) Cumann na mBan Volunteer 1916’.

¹⁹ Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149. McAllister, ‘1916 contemporary account of some events in Fingal’, p. 57.

²⁰ Townshend, *Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion*, p. 216.

²¹ Ernie O’Malley, *The singing flame* (re-print. Dublin, 1979), p. 131.

²² Whearity, ‘Matthias Derham, Irish Volunteer, 1883-1959’ paper No. 239, read to Skerries Historical Society, in 2003.

the Volunteer who had rifles and ammunition. The railway arch at Skerries, the only direct exit from the town, was then already guarded from the evening. However, I got the boys who had rifles and we succeeded in running the guards for the rifles and ammunition on the countryside of the railway, stored in an old farmhouse. We were told by the country people that there was no possibility of going the roads in the area as any person crossing had been held up by the military and police. We decided to send on scouts without arms in two directions to locate the brigade, as they were supposed to be about Killeek, or Santry. The scouts got in touch with the Volunteers but did not return, but on the Tuesday afternoon I received a message to hold on in Skerries until Wednesday, as the brigade were coming to attack the military wireless station at Skerries. Wednesday, received a message that the attack on the wireless [station] was off, that the brigade went west to Garristown. Under cover of evening I got out of Skerries and proceeded to form up with the remaining Volunteers and arranged to go singly and meet at Killeek next morning. Four of us met there and could not find the brigade or any trace of them. We cycled for hours without getting in touch and decided to go into the city and see if we could get in touch with the city forces. We were held up at the metal bridge in Drumcondra, so we detoured down Clonliffe Road to the North Strand. We got held up there by soldiers and retreated back to the metal bridge and as curfew was on, we left the city again and cycled through Fingal, without getting in touch with the Volunteers. We went through Oldtown, Ballyboughal, Garristown, and towards evening we met a man, an overseer on the roads who told us that there was fighting going on in the direction of Ashbourne, we proceeded hence, only to get in touch with the Volunteers, after the fight [the battle of Ashbourne], was over. Signed, Matthias Derham, 72 Church Street, Skerries. Address in 1916, Hoar Rock, Skerries.²³

While much of the above is self-explanatory, nevertheless there are aspects which need further consideration here. The first point raised is whether the news to remobilise on the Easter Monday had reached the Volunteers of Skerries. To begin with, from Derham's account of having to frequent the railway station seeking news from Dublin, it strongly suggests that it had not. Furthermore, while Joseph Lawless relates using Thomas Ashe's motorcycle to bring the news to Lusk and to St Margaret's, however, no mention was made of his having gone to Skerries.²⁴ It was already mentioned that Ashe, on the Easter Monday, had expected the Skerries Volunteers to return and this seems to confirm that the

²³ Derham's note is in the possession of his daughter-in-law Mrs Lillie Derham, Church Street, Skerries; cited in Whearity 'Brothers in arms, Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers 1916' in *Time & Tide* 7, pp 128-9.

²⁴ Lawless, 'Fight at Ashbourne' in *Capuchin Annual*, p. 308.

message to do so did not reach them. It is very difficult to decipher from Derham's note, the individual movements of the eight Skerries men. In this regard, all that can be done is to try to read between the lines to tease out some further information. For a start, Derham wrote that unarmed scouts went on ahead in two different directions. Given the probability that these went in pairs, rather than singly, then four, including Derham had remained behind. It seems that Jack McGowan, one of the Skerries scouts was sent home on the Thursday because of his young age.²⁵ Apart from age, another reason used by the leaders of the Fifth Battalion to send men home, according to Noel Tier, had to do with their perceived lack of commitment to the Rising.²⁶ In McGowan's case, it was just his age that was the problem as he was only fifteen and a half years old at the time of the Rising.²⁷ Following his early departure, it is surmised that the other scouts, thought to be three, had stayed with the battalion. When it comes to the possible four that left Skerries on the Wednesday, all that can be added to Derham's account is that he himself was one of them. In different circumstances, the so-called 1916 Garrison Rolls of Honour, held in the National Museum of Ireland, might be looked to for help. In this instance such a search would be futile, as it would not provide information as to when, in chronological terms, any particular Irish Volunteer joined a garrison, which in this case was the Ashbourne Garrison. Notwithstanding the above, it is nevertheless reasonable to state that some Skerries Volunteers were active with the Fifth Battalion during certain parts of Easter Week. However, a salient point made by Matt Derham was that some of them, probably four, had joined on the Friday evening, after the battle of Ashbourne had ended. Taking cognisance of the already mentioned departure of McGowan, probably the best that can be said here is that perhaps three men had been active with the battalion right through that week, including the event at Ashbourne with four more joining on the Friday evening of 28 April, 1916.

²⁵ Joseph Lawless, B.M.H. W.S. No. 1043; cited in Joseph, E. A. Connell, *Dublin in rebellion; a directory 1913-1923* (Dublin, 2009), pp 391-2.

²⁶ Noel Tier, 'The 5th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne, Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 to Sunday 30 April 1916', in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 182.

²⁷ Census of Ireland. Whearity, 'John 'Jack' McGowan, 1900-1922, Irish Volunteer' paper No. 255, read to Skerries Historical Society, in 2006, p. 11.

While McGowan suffered the indignity of being sent home, he was not the only one. Joseph Lawless's brother Colm, like McGowan, was considered too young to fight. On the other hand, Volunteer Bill Norton was despatched home because he was too old.²⁸ Garrisons elsewhere seemed less picky about age and a press report gave details of a fifteen-year-old lad, having received the last rites in the General Post Office. In addition, 'scores of lads of this age were induced to go out at the word of command'.²⁹ Despite his apparent unsuitability for participation with the above battalion, McGowan's relative youth did not prevent his then being a leader of the Skerries Irish Volunteer company. He shared the leadership role with another youth, John Sherlock, who was barely three years McGowan's senior.³⁰ The aspect of youth involvement in the Rising and the reasons for it will be considered later in the study. From the events of 1916 in north County Dublin, as told by O'Luing, it will be seen that that an indeterminate number of Skerries men were mentioned by him. He stated that:

...Ashe led his men across the roads and fields of Fingal in an act of challenge to an empire. In his small army were Fingal's best and bravest sons, the McAllister's of Turvey, their cousins the Weston's, and their cousins, the Kelly's; four Lawless's shouldered their guns and marched; there were the Taylor's and the Wilson's and the Doyle's, who in the person of Paddy Doyle maintained the link with 1798; the Black Raven bandsmen were there; there was 19-year old Thomas Rafferty...there were Jack Crenigan and the Rover John McCann, described by his comrade John McAllister, as the bravest man a country ever had, Captain Richard Coleman led the Swords Company; there were men from Skerries, and St Margaret's. Thirty turned up at Knocksedan, but many more joined during the day, until by evening there were between sixty and seventy men under Ashe's command. Their weapons were oddly assorted. They had twelve or fifteen modern service rifles, a dozen Martini single-shot rifles, some Howth Mausers, twenty or thirty shotguns and some revolvers. Their ammunition supply was less than plentiful. They all had bicycles...Ashe had his motorcycle, Dr. Hayes his car. A bread van was commandeered later at Swords...Ashe's task was to disrupt and destroy enemy communications in north County Dublin. His first step was to make the

²⁸ Connell, *Dublin in rebellion; a directory, 1913-1923*, pp 391-2. Noel Tier, 'The 5th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne, Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 to Sunday 30 April 1916', in *Riocht na Midhe*, p.182.

²⁹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 29 Apr. 1916.

³⁰ Thomas Hand personal papers (Cathal Brugha Military Archive, file No. D/P. 23925); cited in Whearity, 'Thomas Hand, 1878-1920, Irish Volunteer' in *Time & Tide 4*, pp 47-9; cited in Whearity, 'John 'Terry' Sherlock, 1897-1920, Irish Volunteer' paper No. 228, read to Skerries Historical Society, in 2002, p. 7.

important Great Northern Railway between Dublin and Belfast impassable by blowing it up at Rogerstown Bridge.³¹

In the above, the difference as between sixty and seventy men is not very satisfactory, but are other sources any better? To begin with, Charles Weston gave a figure of about sixty-three men, while James Crenigan put the figure at sixty.³² After twenty had gone to support Dublin City garrisons, and after the arrival of some stragglers, Joseph Lawless gave a subsequent figure of forty-five men.³³ Sean O'Mahony gave a slightly higher figure of about fifty.³⁴ Of the men who joined on the Tuesday, three of them were Patrick Grant, Thomas Maxwell and Richard Mulcahy.³⁵ Another straggler was Jerry Golden.³⁶ While all were important members of the battalion, Mulcahy was to play a pivotal role as second in command to Ashe. At first glance, it might seem surprising that a Waterford born man (b.1886) was immediately appointed to such a responsible position within the battalion. It had to do with the fact that he and Ashe were friends. It was Mulcahy's work as a post and telegraphs technician which brought him to live and work in Dublin City in 1907. The friendship between the two men came from their participation in the Keating branch of the Gaelic League and a close-knit Irish Republican Brotherhood circle in the city.³⁷

The situation which faced the Fifth Battalion from Tuesday evening and the low number of men available to it caused a dilemma as to how to proceed. It was decided to abandon the methodologies as espoused by the 1911 British Infantry training manual. In its stead, what Joseph Lawless called 'a scheme made to fit the numbers available and the tactical requirements of our mission' and which he felt was 'quite sound from a tactical viewpoint' was brought into play. The policy was to:

...to divide the entire force into four more or less equal sections of ten to twelve men, each section under command of an officer, and with the

³¹ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause: a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 80.

³² Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149. Crenigan, B.M.H. W.S. No. 148.

³³ Lawless, 'The battle of Ashbourne' in *Dublin's fighting story; told by the men who made it, 1913-1921* (Tralee, 1949), pp 60-61.

³⁴ O'Mahony, *The first hunger striker, Thomas Ashe*, 1917, p. 9.

³⁵ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause: a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 80.

³⁶ Townshend, *Easter 1916, the Irish Rebellion*, p. 216.

³⁷ Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy, and the founding of the Irish Free State*, p. xi, 2-3, 5.

remaining four senior officers constituting the Headquarters and Command Staff'...The rearmost section was similarly arranged as a rearguard, while the Commanding Officer with his Staff moved normally with the main body, which was the section between...The Commander and Staff of the column were a fortunate combination, and were largely, if not entirely responsible for the successful exploits of the unit, including the Ashbourne battle. Thomas Ashe, the Commander, was a fine physical specimen of manhood, courageous, and high-principled. Something of a poet, painter and dreamer, he was perhaps in military matters somewhat unpractical.³⁸

The radical measures taken onboard in that week proved well worthwhile. However, Lawless in the above account seems to be denigrating Ashe's military prowess, in favour of that of Mulcahy. Was that a fair and accurate assessment of Ashe's worth? And one wonders whether such a charge would have been publicly made had Ashe still been alive to answer it. What were the views of other interested parties? To begin with, Charles Townshend, states that Ashe was not one of the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood group, who planned the Rising, but he was in favour of using physical force when required. He also accepted that 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity' which Townshend stated was an 'old Fenian doctrine'. Townshend, while apportioning credit for the exploits of the Fifth Battalion states that Ashe was 'the only commandant to achieve military success in the Rising'. He nevertheless ascribes the use of guerrilla tactics to Mulcahy.³⁹ While O'Luing mentions Mulcahy's name several times in his work, nowhere is it suggested that Ashe required his services to hide his own inadequacies in a military sense.⁴⁰ Likewise, Sean O'Mahony, in a biography of the man, saw no need to describe any weaknesses along military lines in Ashe's

³⁸ Lawless, 'The battle of Ashbourne' in *Dublin's fighting story; told by the men who made it, 1913-1921*, pp 60-61. Lawless, 'Fight at Ashbourne' in *Capuchin Annual*, pp 307-15. O'Mahony, *The first hunger striker, Thomas Ashe, 1917*, pp 9-10. Noel Tier, 'The 5th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne, Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 to Sunday 30 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, pp 182-3.

³⁹ Charles Townshend, 'Ashe, Thomas (1885-1917), schoolteacher and Irish Republican' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004-2005). Accessed from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/75/101075338/> (13 Oct. 2011). Townshend, 'The republican army and the development of guerrilla warfare, 1916-1921' in *The English Historical Review*. vol. 94, No. 371 (Apr. 1979), p. 320.

⁴⁰O'Luing, *I die in a good cause: a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, pp 80, 87-8, 124, 136.

character as put forward by Joseph Lawless.⁴¹ Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, in her biography of Mulcahy, apportioned the credit for what she calls ‘the Fingal Volunteers’ relative success between Ashe and Mulcahy. She mentions having a conversation with Denis McCullough, who said ‘that Mulcahy was the only one to come out of 1916 with a military reputation’.⁴² Michael Foy wrote that ‘Ashe took the credit for Ashbourne when it was really Mulcahy who deserved it’.⁴³ The above named McCullough was a contemporary of Bulmer Hobson and like him, was a founding member of the ‘Fenian-linked Dungannon Clubs’ in the North of Ireland.⁴⁴ Perhaps it is difficult to determine what particular aspect of any deed, where two people participated as partners, can be ascribed to either partner. In any event, it was Ashe who bore the responsibility for the Fifth battalion’s actions during the Rising and not Mulcahy, who at all times was his subordinate.

The county-inspector’s report for April 1916 stated that:

...Up to Easter Sunday 23 April, Co. Dublin was quiet. On that day a party of 5 armed men arrived at the De Selby Quarry Works, near Brittas [County Wicklow] held up the caretaker and took away from the magazine 25 lb [11.36 kilograms], gelignite in a motorcar to Dublin. Next day [Monday] 24 April the Rogerstown Railway Bridge was blown up. This is in Donabate & district & on the main line to Belfast. The conflagration had then commenced. On 26 April the police in the barracks at Swords and Donabate were overpowered & surrendered. At Donabate the police returned the fire. Constable Thorpe [could be Sharpe] was slightly wounded in the hand. At 2 am. On the [Wednesday] 26 April the police barracks at Garristown was raided but the arms & ammunition had been withdrawn. The barracks at Swords & Donabate were re-occupied on 3 May & the Garristown Barracks on 5 May. The rebels were from Swords & Donabate side. Their instructions were believed to be to march to Howth to cut the cable to Holyhead. There were 20 military [smudged word], and 8 police [available], but I arranged to evacuate the police barracks if necessary and co-operate with the military. Howth was not attacked. It is believed that the sight of two destroyers hurrying up the coast with troops from Kingstown to Skerries & Balbriggan caused the rebels to turn west, where they encountered the Meath police under C.I. [County-Inspector], Gray.⁴⁵

⁴¹ O’Mahony, *The first hunger striker, Thomas Ashe, 1917*, pp 9-10.

⁴² Richard Mulcahy papers (U.C.D.A. Mul. P7/D/14.); cited in Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy, and the founding of the Irish Free State*, p. 15.

⁴³ Michael Foy, *Michael Collin’s intelligence war: the struggle between the British and the IRA. 1919-1921* (Stroud, 2008), pp 8-9.

⁴⁴ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1797-1998; politics and war* (reprint. Oxford, 2005), p. 186.

⁴⁵ CICMR, CO904/99, part iv, Apr. 1916. Mac Giolla Choille, *Intelligence notes, 1913-16*, p. 233.

Much of the information in the above report is already in the public domain, but there are a few aspects which have not been seen heretofore. To begin with, the use by the inspector of the words ‘the conflagration had then commenced’ is interesting. This somewhat emotive expression is not usually found in police reports and leaves the way open to interpretation. To begin with, the question can legitimately be asked as to what area he was referring to? Was it in his jurisdiction in north County Dublin? Or did he mean the whole of the county, including the metropolitan area, or was he referring to an even wider, but indeterminate area? In the whole of County Dublin, including the city, did any other event produce a louder bang than that experienced at Rogerstown railway bridge located between Rush and Lusk. The explosion occurred at 2.30 pm. on Easter Monday afternoon. The quantity of explosives is put at forty pounds by Charles Townshend.⁴⁶ However, it will be seen below that there was 60 pounds of explosives available but whether all of it was used on the bridge is not known here. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, under the heading ‘the storm breaks’ states, that from about noon on Easter Monday, when the General Post Office and other important buildings in Dublin were commandeered by Patrick Pearse *et. al.* that their taking over occurred with relatively little opposition from any quarter. A fire at the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park was not reported to the Central Fire Station at Tara Street until 3.58 pm. Furthermore, when attempts were made to damage rail lines and bridges at Blanchardstown and Cabra, these took place on the Monday night and Tuesday respectively.⁴⁷ From this, it appears that the explosion at Rogerstown was possibly the opening salvo, munitions wise, of the 1916 Rising. Meanwhile, at noon on Easter Monday 24 April, Pearse, as commandant-general, commander-in-chief of the army of the Irish Republic and president of the provisional government, declared Ireland a Republic. James Connolly, who was in charge of Volunteers in the Dublin districts, declared that ‘communications with the country is largely cut, but reports to hand shows that the country is rising. Bodies of men from Kildare and Fingal have already reported in Dublin’.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Townshend, *Easter 1916, the Irish Rebellion*, p. 216.

⁴⁷ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 7-10, 31, 34.

⁴⁸ *Weekly Irish Times*, 29 Apr. 1916.

Details of the proclamation of the Republic appeared in *Irish War News* published on Tuesday 25 April.⁴⁹

In relation to the details pertaining to the explosion at Rogerstown, Charles Weston said that plans made, prior to MacNeill's countermanding order, to set the explosives on Easter Saturday, in readiness for the next day, were then not allowed by Ashe.⁵⁰ Michael McAllister gave the view that the explosion only succeeded 'in dislodging a length of rail'.⁵¹ Dr Richard Hayes put the partially successful attempt down to an insufficiency of explosives.⁵² Those involved on the demolition party were, Joseph Lawless, John Devine, Thomas Weston, John Hynes and John ['Rover'] McCann.⁵³ When the Balrothery Rural District Board made an award for malicious damage to the bridge, it allocated a sum of 250 pounds sterling to the Great Northern Railway Company who owned the line.⁵⁴

Another important aspect of the county-inspector's report was his perception that the police barracks at Howth, where his office was located, was to be attacked by members of the Fifth Battalion. What would have been the consequences of such an attack, apart from those pertaining to the barracks at Howth and the personnel associated with it. To begin with, such an attack would have required an indeterminate amount of time. This could have changed the chronological timeframe whereby the protagonists, who encountered each other at the Rath Cross, Ashbourne, on Friday 28 April, might not have met when they did, if at all.

With regard to the gelignite taken from the de Selby Quarry at Brittas and taken to Dublin, at first glance it could be interpreted that the county-inspector had made a mental connection between it and the explosives used at Rogerstown railway bridge. However, whether that was what he thought or not, as the case might have been, in actual fact it could not have happened that way, as the explosives used at the bridge were collected two days earlier than that removed at the de Selby Quarry. In regard to the explosives used, Frank Lawless, as quartermaster of the Fifth Battalion, collected it on Good Friday, when he and his

⁴⁹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 29 Apr. 1916. *Irish War News, the Irish Republican*, vol. 1, No. 1 (25 Apr. 1916).

⁵⁰ Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149. Townshend, *Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion*, p. 216.

⁵¹ MacAllister '1916 contemporary account of some events in Fingal' in *Old tales of Fingal*, p. 58.

⁵² Richard Hayes (Dr), B.M.H. W.S. No. 97.

⁵³ Lawless, 'Fight at Ashbourne' in *Capuchin Annual*, p. 308.

⁵⁴ *Irish Times*, 25 May 1916.

son Joseph went to Kimmage, County Dublin, to get a variety of military supplies. Among the materials brought back to their Saucerstown farm, were twenty single-barrel shotguns, buckshot, sixty pounds of gelignite, detonators-fuse and field dressings.⁵⁵ While it was not stated where in Kimmage they got the material, it was likely to have been at Larkfield, the home of the mother of Joseph Plunkett. It was used as a base for the manufacture of explosives, for the storage of weapons, the training of Volunteers and as a refuge for Irish Volunteers on occasion.⁵⁶ It was also used as a clearing place for rifles after the Howth gun-running in July 1914.⁵⁷ In relation to the field dressings, Joseph Lawless stated that these also came from Kimmage. In this, he might have been mistaken as evidenced by a Bureau of Military History witness statement by [Dr], Nancy Wyse-Power. In it, she declares that she and a coterie of women were engaged in the winter of 1915 and spring of 1916, in making field-dressings for the north County Volunteers. Furthermore, on the night of Good Friday 1916 the ladies had worked late to finish a batch of dressings at their workroom at 2 Dawson Street, Dublin. The medical dressings of iodine and bandages were brought to Wyse-Power's home at 3 Wellington Place, and collected by Frank Lawless on the following morning.⁵⁸ The workroom used was situated in the then headquarters of the Irish Volunteers.⁵⁹

Earlier in the study, it was seen that three men were sent home by the leaders of the Fifth Battalion because of their age. With the exception of one man, the issue centred on their relative youthfulness. This was an important aspect during the Rising and Joost Augusteijn provides details on that matter in a general way. He relates that recent historiography shows that the involvement of Volunteers in

⁵⁵ NLI. Sources database (The 1916 Rising: personalities and perspectives, an online exhibition, 7.12. Ashbourne, County Meath). Accessed from <http://www.nli.ie/1916/pdf/7.12.pdf> (6 Feb. 2011); cited in Lawless, 'Fight at Ashbourne' in *Capuchin Annual*, p. 307; cited in Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 208.

⁵⁶ Lawrence W. White, 'Plunkett, Joseph Mary' in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge University press and the Royal Irish Academy). Accessed from <http://dib.cambridge.org.jproxy.nuim.ie/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a7389&next=next> (15 June 2011)

⁵⁷ Conor Kostick and Lorcan Collins, *The Easter Rising; a guide to Dublin in 1916* (Dublin, 2000), p. 137.

⁵⁸ Nancy Wyse-Power (Dr), B.M.H. W.S. No. 541; cited in Whearity, 'The life and times of Mary 'Molly' Adrien, 1873-1949, Cumann na mBan Volunteer 1916' paper No 260, pp 13-14.

⁵⁹ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 7.

general had to do ‘with social context and coincidence [rather], than with an exceptional ideological commitment’. He felt that the twentieth century popularity with militarism was an aspect that caused youths to become soldiers and Volunteers ‘in great numbers throughout the Western World’. Peter Hart puts it that the ‘mobilisation and activities of the Volunteers in the early period showed many similarities with traditional youth culture’.⁶⁰ He thought that such youthful engagement with the Volunteer movement was not confined to the rebellion, but was a feature in the later struggle when the ‘enemies of the Irish Republican Army were struck by the extreme youth of its Volunteers’.⁶¹

Youthful participation on the local level was seen at Skerries, where the editor of the *Leader*, D.P. Moran, while on holidays there in July 1914, saw that it was commonplace to see adult males and youths marching separately through the town. The latter acted as though they were *bona fide* Volunteers. The lads took these activities seriously and Moran remarked that it was not always the oldest or biggest youth in the group who gave out the orders. Moran mentioned what he perceived as Royal Irish Constabulary harassment of the men, who preferred to march late at night. The police imposed an eleven-thirty p.m. curfew on the men’s singing, even though the nearby carnival amusements could play their deafening music until well after that hour. It was not only Skerries men who engaged in route marches around the town, but summer visitors also participated. Moran was impressed by the youths and equally by their adult male counterparts. He stated in the 18 July, 1914, issue of *The Leader*, that the dramatic rise of Volunteerism generally, had ‘astonished a great part of two hemispheres’.⁶²

It should be noted that Skerries, being a seaside town, would, in common with other such places, see its population increase dramatically during the summer months. A letter in the press dated 15 July 1914, saw James McDonnell complain that where youths marched with adult Volunteers it sometimes caused disruption within the ranks, in Skerries and elsewhere in County Dublin. He suggested that such ‘small fry’, with the exception of boys judged to be large for their age,

⁶⁰ Joost Augusteijn, ‘Motivation: why did they fight for Ireland? The motivation of Volunteers in the revolution’ in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish revolution, 1913-1923*, p. 103.

⁶¹ Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies; violence and community in Cork, 1916-1923*, p. 165.

⁶² *The Leader*, 18 July 1914; cited in Elizabeth Balcombe, ‘When marching men sang, the peeler and the Goat’ in *Skerries News*, vol. 12, No. 3 (Apr. 2000).

should be confined to a boy's brigade until they had matured enough to drill properly.⁶³ From this, it can be seen that McDonnell was willing to accept youths, provided they looked older than their age. On the same subject, John F. Boyle suggested that 'many young men and boys had become used to participating in mock operations and [when the real thing came along], that they fought with zeal and fidelity and obeyed their leaders'.⁶⁴ This was the situation at Skerries where it has already been seen that two leaders of the Volunteer company, there, were relatively young men, John Sherlock and Jack McGowan.⁶⁵

F.X. Martin provides an account of events in north County Dublin, to the effect that:

...Outside the capitol city, the only successful offensive action was in north County Dublin, by the men of the Fifth Battalion, Dublin Brigade, under the command of Thomas Ashe. But it was on a very modest scale consisting of the capture of four small police barracks and the ambushing of a column of motor-cars bringing R.I.C., reinforcements to the barracks at Ashbourne. To describe, the ambush as 'The battle of Ashbourne', as is done for example by Desmond Ryan in *The Rising*, is sheer exaggeration. The activity in north County Dublin was subsidiary to events in the city, and in military terms, had very little importance for the future. It brought Thomas Ashe to the fore of the national movement: when he died the following year in Mountjoy Jail, killed in fact by mal-administered forcible feeding while on hunger-strike, he was President of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. Secondly, the mobile column and the attacks on police barracks in north County Dublin set an example for the type of warfare which was to be used during the war of Independence, 1919-21, to cripple British control throughout the country...a more impressive show of force was made by the Volunteers in County Wexford, but they were given no opportunity to test their strength in battle...⁶⁶

Despite what Martin had to say about the battle of Ashbourne, more recent opinion takes a different view. Terence A. Dooley wrote that the battle was probably the 'most significant event of the Easter Rising outside of Dublin'.⁶⁷ Charles Townshend put it that the event at Ashbourne was significant not only for its success during Easter Week but also because it was 'the forerunner of the

⁶³ *Drogheda Independent*, 18 July 1914.

⁶⁴ Boyle, *The Irish Rebellion of 1916: a brief history of the revolt and its suppression*, p. 120.

⁶⁵ Thomas Hand papers (Military Archive, Cathal Brugha, file No. DP 23925).

⁶⁶ Martin, '1916: myth, fact, and mystery' in *Studia Hibernica*, No. 7 (1967), pp 91-2.

⁶⁷ Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 207.

[guerrilla], methods to be adopted in a later and very different republican insurgency'.⁶⁸ Noel Tier wrote that outside of Dublin, that 'the fight at Ashbourne was the largest and more importantly, it was one of the only successful ones'.⁶⁹

When Pearse brought the Rising to an end at two o'clock on Saturday 29 April 1916 with an unconditional surrender, he ordered that outlying commanders were to comply with its terms. Such rebel units were seen in counties Dublin, Meath, Louth, Galway, Wexford, Clare and Kerry.⁷⁰ Despite the order, Richard Mulcahy made it known that he and the Fifth Battalion Volunteers were not going to give themselves up as 'mere rowdies'.⁷¹ At Newbarn, near Kilshlaghan (see Map1) the Volunteers under Ashe were brought into Swords and from there to Richmond Barrack on Sunday evening, 30 April. Head Constable Kelly of Balbriggan and Sergeant Reilly of Swords, with assistance from a company of lancers, brought them into custody.⁷² The county-inspector's report for April 1916 saw him state that on Sunday 30 April 'this band of rebels, which then consisted of 32, surrendered... and were taken to Dublin. There have been many arrests and surrenders and the rebels are, or will be dealt with under the field general court-martial'.⁷³ In regard to the timing of Ashe's surrender, Ronan Fanning suggested that the Fifth Battalion was the last group to surrender.⁷⁴ That accolade however, according to a press report, belongs to the Irish Volunteers at Irishtown in Dublin City, who were surrounded by a 'close cordon in place' up to 5 May 1916.⁷⁵

As might be expected, the Ashbourne victory came at a price. In a communication, General J.G. Maxwell, commander-in-chief of the military forces in Ireland, stated that Royal Irish Constabulary Inspectors Gray, Smith and eight constables had lost their lives and another fourteen were wounded.⁷⁶ With regard

⁶⁸ Townshend, *Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion*, p. 215.

⁶⁹ Noel Tier, 'The 5th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 April to Sunday 30 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 180.

⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 22 July 1916.

⁷¹ Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy, and the founding of the Irish Free State*, p. 16.

⁷² Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149. Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 218.

⁷³ CICMR, CO904/99, part iv, Apr. 1916.

⁷⁴ Ronan Fanning, 'Richard Mulcahy' in, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* online. Accessed from <http://dib.cambridge.org.jproxy.nuim.ie/quicksearch.do?jsessionid=DC0A73EE763D8BBE620BD A2AFB0A906D> (6 Mar. 2011)

⁷⁵ *Weekly Irish Times*, 27 May 1916.

⁷⁶ *Irish Times*, 22 July 1916.

to county-inspector Gray, Terence A. Dooley provides details of his slow death, as he only succumbed on 10 May. He was a fifty-eight years old widower. Details of other casualties of the battle are also found in this 2003 work.⁷⁷ On the rebels side John Crenigan and Thomas Rafferty lost their lives and five more suffered injuries.⁷⁸ Dr Hayes attended to the wounded of both sides [assisted by Molly Adrien].⁷⁹ When the Ashbourne event was raised at the House of Commons on 1 June 1916 [Viscount], Herbert Samuel stated that the Royal Irish Constabulary had been forced to surrender having exhausted their ammunition and then having been overpowered by about 300 rebels.⁸⁰ It has already been seen that nothing like that figure was involved on the rebel's side.

With regard to events at Skerries during Easter Week, the *Weekly Irish Times* of Saturday 29 April provides details under the heading 'Rebels foiled at Skerries' which states that:

...Of the outlying portions of County Dublin affected by the late rising, Skerries had not the least exciting experience. On Easter Monday a war demonstration had been advertised, with Mr John Clancy, KC, member for North Dublin, in the chair, and speakers from the Recruiting Department. When the occupants of the platform had taken their places word reached the local committee that the bridge at Donabate had been just blown up, that the train bringing the chairman and speakers was held up, and that the Sinn Feiners were out. Notwithstanding this grave news, it was decided not to alarm the audience, but to hold the meeting. Mr Battersby, KC, was accordingly moved to the chair. Local speakers-Captain Taylor, Mr Fitzpatrick, and Mr Malone, with Lieutenant Clancy; took the place of the absentees, and certificates were given to the relatives of Skerries soldiers; one hundred in all; and the meeting passed off successfully. On Tuesday, 25th April, the police got word that the Marconi station recently erected by the Admiralty was to be attacked and some of the principal houses raided. There was consternation at this report, as the wireless operators were unarmed, and there were only seven soldiers to guard the station, while the police force, under Sergeant Burke, to whose energy and ability throughout the week a warm tribute must be paid, was wholly inadequate to protect the town. So great was the alarm that some of the townsfolk left their houses, and paced the shore as the safest place in case of a raid. The attack, however, did not come off; but on Wednesday morning,

⁷⁷ Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, pp 194-229.

⁷⁸ Lawless, 'Fight at Ashbourne' in *Capuchin Annual*, p. 316: Ryan, *The Rising; the complete story of Easter Week*, p. 225.

⁷⁹ Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 216.

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 2 June 1916.

information was received of the capture in succession of Swords, and Donabate, where a second attempt was made to blow up the railway, and at Lusk, which had the reputation of being a hot-bed of Sinn Feiners, and it was definitely stated that the rebels were on their way to Skerries. Preparations were at once made to receive them. Captain Battersby, on sick leave, wounded, took command of the small force in charge of the wireless station. Miss Battersby, with the assistance of Miss McGusty and the Misses Clifford and Dr Healy, organised a Red Cross hospital in the Carnegie Library. People from the village gathered on the hill above the Marconi station in order to see the coming fight, when a destroyer was seen steaming at a great pace from Lambay Island. As she drew nearer, it was seen that she was crowded with soldiers. A rush was made by the townsfolk to the harbour, and in a very few minutes boatloads of military were quickly rowed to the pier, and two hundred men of the North Staffordshire's, under the command of Captain Clay, were landed and marched to the wireless station, where they entrenched in the ditches surrounding the station. The town was saved, and in the offing, two gun-boats patrolled, their guns being within reach of the coast roads by which the rebels were expected to arrive. On Thursday, 27th April, the Stafford's dug themselves in, put up barricades of carts and sandbags on all the roads leading into Skerries, and made every preparation for a siege. The Harristown and Ashbourne rebels were stated to have joined the Lusk contingent, but if this were so they must have received news of the military force which had landed and of the guns of the warships trained on the town and roads and come to the conclusion that discretion was the better part of valour, as the next news was that they had returned to Dublin. The scare was subsequently at an end. The North Staffords remained some time in Skerries, and nearly twenty persons were arrested and sent to Dublin.⁸¹

Daire Brunicairdi adds further information about the scene at Skerries to the effect that on Tuesday night 25 April:

...The Rear Admiral at Larne had signalled Kingstown that information had been received that the W/T [wireless] station at Skerries would be attacked that night. At 2 am. On Wednesday *Boadicea 11* was ordered to proceed there at full speed and render any assistance possible; she could use her gun, but was not to land any men. She arrived at 1 p.m. and signalled that the W/T station was guarded by seven soldiers armed with rifles and ten operators. She also signalled that Portrane and Donabate post offices and Donabate railway station had been destroyed. At one stage it was reported 800 rebels were only a few miles away, on their way from Donabate to Rush... considering that Ashe had divided his total force into four sections of ten or twelve men each, this may give an idea of the effectiveness of his mobile type of operation. He had intended to capture the W/T station, but the sight of *Boadicea 11* in the harbour

⁸¹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 29 Apr. 1916. *Irish Times*, 10 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 40.

changed his mind. Later on Wednesday evening, when *Dee* completed guarding the advance on Dublin, she embarked 170 troops and took them to Skerries. This effectively secured Skerries from attack.⁸²

The above demonstrates that pandemonium existed for a few days at Skerries. One aspect has to do with the military response to the perceived threat to the town and whether it was justified or not, as the case might have been. In answer to this hypothetical question it could be argued that if the military authorities believed that the rebel threat was as large as that mentioned by Brunicairdi, then perhaps the response was a reasonable one. In addition, the protection of the newly erected wireless station was also uppermost in the minds of the self same authorities. When Christopher Fox proffered an explanation for the military response and its associated panic amongst the townspeople, he suggested that it had to do with a ‘sighting of the funeral of a Lusk Volunteer killed at Ashbourne’.⁸³ A big problem with his postulation is that the scare amongst the townsfolk began on the Tuesday, while the death of Thomas Rafferty did not occur until three days later, on the Friday of Easter Week. The authorities seemed convinced that an attack on Skerries was imminent, but was that fear a realistic one?

It was the case that damaging communication links by cutting telegraph wires and attempting to cut the rail links between Dublin and Belfast was part of Ashe’s plans. In this regard, Skerries had the Marconi wireless station, which was an important link in the communication chain. Paddy Halpin made much of the importance of that station and in addition, he stated that a message sent from Skerries was ‘the first intimation the British Government in London had of the Rising’ in Dublin.⁸⁴ It was already seen that a mock attack on Skerries was part of Ashe’s November 1914 manoeuvres at the so-called ‘battle of Broadmeadow’.⁸⁵ The relative importance of the wireless station from the military perspective can be gauged by the fact that it was guarded up to the Rising by seven armed soldiers. Then, when the sea-borne North Staffordshire’s were landed, many of them made immediately for the Marconi station and dug trenches

⁸² Daire Brunicairdi, *The seahound: the story of an Irish Ship* (Cork, 2001), pp 41-2.

⁸³ Fox, ‘Recollections of Skerries in 1916’ *Time & Tide* 6, p. 138.

⁸⁴ Paddy Halpin, ‘Some early memories’, p. 18.

⁸⁵ Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149.

to protect it. In addition, the adjacent Derham's red shed was commandeered and made into a fortress by local blacksmiths, Willie Manning and Willie Carton. The roads serving the town were guarded and a seven a.m. to seven p.m. curfew brought in under martial law was imposed on the townspeople.⁸⁶ It was stated that soldiers remained on in the town for an indeterminate time afterwards. A press report of 8 July tells that Private Dellowze of the Royal Irish Regiment was shot and fatally injured on a military rifle range in the town. He later died at the King George V. Hospital in Dublin.⁸⁷ The incident suggests that there was a military presence in Skerries at least up to the 8 July or even longer.

Desmond Ryan wrote that the 'loyalists' of Skerries had been thrown into a panic at the prospect of a rebel attack.⁸⁸ But who were these loyalists? To begin with, Captain [T.S.Frank], Battersby and his family were almost certainly loyalists, as evidenced by his having on 29 April 1914, given an address to the annual general meeting of the South County Dublin Unionist Registration Association. At the meeting, he railed against Home Rule on the grounds that it would 'be disastrous to the social and commercial well being of the country, a danger to the civil and religious liberties of the people and a menace to the empire'. He also proffered apologies for the non-attendance of another loyalist, Lord Holmpatrick.⁸⁹ The Battersbys had homes at 45 Upper Mount Street, Dublin and at Shenick Lodge, Skerries.⁹⁰ The connection with the town of two prominent men such as T.S.F. Battersby, a magistrate and Lord Holmpatrick, the proprietor of the town, both with property to protect, might have been the catalyst for the impressive military presence in the town in Easter Week 1916.

The next chapter will look at the aftermath of the Rising in north County Dublin.

⁸⁶ Fox, 'recollections of Skerries in 1916' in *Time & Tide* 6, p. 138.

⁸⁷ *Irish Times*, 8 July 1916.

⁸⁸ Ryan, *The Rising; the complete story of Easter Week*, p. 219.

⁸⁹ *Irish Times*, 30 Apr. 1914.

⁹⁰ *Weekly Irish Times*, 4 Sept. 1915.

Chapter five

The aftermath of the Rising

After the rebellion was crushed, the military, working in conjunction with the local Royal Irish Constabulary, began to arrest Sinn Feiners, Irish Volunteers and others who were thought to have participated in any way in the rebellion.¹ General, Sir John Maxwell oversaw a series of executions, beginning on 3 May and only ending after fifteen leaders of the insurrection had been put to death on 12 May. The following men were executed, P.H. Pearse, Thomas J. Clarke, Thomas MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett, Edmund Kent, Edward Daly, Michael O'Hanrahan, William Pearse, John McBride, Cornelius Colbert, Michael Mallin, J.J. Heuston and Thomas Kent. When John Dillon of the Irish Parliamentary Party and an M.P. spoke in the House of Commons on 11 May, despite his plea for clemency for those leaders yet to be executed, his request was turned down.² Afterwards, he warned that there would begin a 'letting loose a river of blood...you had the majority on your side...and now you are washing out our whole lifes work in a sea of blood'.³ The long drawn out process of the executions brought about at first an almost imperceptible change in the national public opinion towards those who participated in the rebellion.⁴ Not all minds were changed and the county-inspector's April report stated that 'at first the attitude of the people was sullen, but I am told it is improving as the result of bitter influences and having more time to think, and that people of all classes are coming to see that the insurrection was a highly criminal act and that the fate it has received was deserved'.⁵ It has already been mentioned here that it is improbable that the participants in the Rising saw themselves as criminals. The military did see it that way and the treatment of the arrested persons after the general surrender demonstrates this aspect. Charles Weston told about his being marched with many others to the North Wall Dock, Dublin, to be put onto a 'cattle boat' and sent to Knutsford Prison in Cheshire. There he was put into a

¹ *Irish Times*, 22 July 1916.

² *Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook*, pp 62, 64. Brian Barton, *From behind closed doors; secret court martial records of the 1916 Easter Rising* (reprint. Belfast, 2003), p. 258.

³ Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916; the Irish Rebellion*, p. 269.

⁴ Dooley, 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 219.

⁵ CICMR, CO904/99, part iv, Apr. 1916.

single cell with a stool, but no bed, or blankets. His exercise was restricted to a half hour a day and the food was poor and insufficient in quantity. He was not even allowed to talk during the exercise period as he was subject to solitary confinement.⁶

In 1936, Augustine Birrell, the former chief secretary of Ireland stated that ‘as a rebellion it was a ridiculous failure from the first, but as an event in Irish history it was horrible and heartbreaking and...a supreme act of criminal folly on the part of those who were responsible for it...it was really nothing more than a Dublin row’.⁷ The Rising itself cost, in human terms, by 20 May 1916, the lives of 300 soldiers, police and civilians and nearly 1,000 wounded.⁸

After the general surrender as ordered by Pearse, the majority of those arrested were taken into custody under the Defence of the Realm Act. This allowed for the arrests of people without the need for the military authorities to issue charges against them.⁹ The authorities furnished details of those arrested along with details of which place of detention they went to, primarily in the *Irish Times* and the *Weekly Irish Times*. In 1917 these newspaper reports were collated and published in *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*. In regard to the deportations from north County Dublin, all were males. The majority were processed for internment in Richmond Barracks, but some men from Skerries, went to England from Arbour Hill prison. In any case, the arrested men sent for internment went mainly to Knutsford, Stafford, Wakefield, Wandsworth, Perth, Glasgow, Woking and Lewes.¹⁰ Though no men from north County Dublin were executed, some did get death sentences, but in all cases these were commuted to periods of penal servitude. The 114 men arrested men will be the focus from this point onwards. They have been ascribed to their normal places of domicile in the individual towns and villages in north County Dublin. From the table below it can be seen that sixteen places were represented by arrested men sent for internment in England. Skerries, with twenty arrested men, represented seventeen and a half

⁶ Charles Weston, B.M.H. W.S. No. 149.

⁷ Augustine Birrell, *Things past redress* (London, 1937), p. 219; cited in Martin, ‘1916: myth, fact and mystery’ in *Studia Hibernica*, p. 7.

⁸ *Weekly Irish Times*, 20 May 1916.

⁹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 29 Apr. 1916.

¹⁰ *Irish Times*, 11-16, 18, 25-26 May 5, 16 June 1916. *Weekly Irish Times*, 20, 27 May, 10, 24 June 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 69-86.

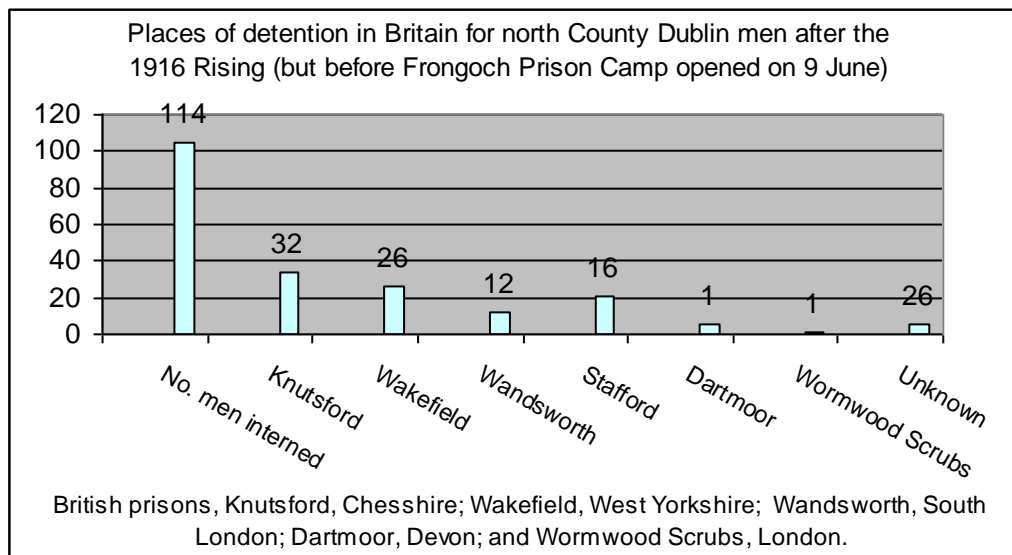
percent of the whole number of men. With regard to size, Lusk had the largest number arrested, with twenty-six men and closely followed by Swords, with one less.

Table 5

Places in north County Dublin from where arrested men came from after the Rising						
Lusk (26)	Swords (25)	Skerries (20)	Castleknock (7)	Donabate (5)	Artane (5)	Howth (4)
Finglas (4)	Sutton (3)	St Margaret's (3)	Baldoyle (3)	Cloghran (3)	Ashtown (2)	Blanchardstown (2)
Balbriggan (1)	Malahide (1)					
Total No. men (114)						

The places of detention to where the arrested men of north County Dublin went to and how many were incarcerated in any one prison, are seen in the table below.

Chart 3



With regard to those arrested generally, it is difficult to distinguish who had been Irish Volunteers and who were not. The *Daily Mail* on 14 May reported that:

...The constabulary are grabbing at anybody they think they would like to have out of the way, whether there is any evidence against the man or

not... It must be remembered that the Irish Nationalists have for a generation regarded the police force as an instrument of oppression, and the sudden activity of the force after the years of Mr. Birrell's don't lock them up policy has roused something of the old bitterness. The unauthorised execution of Mr. Sheehy-Skeffington has served to influence this feeling, and the curious situation has arisen that, while the Sinn Fein Rising was not a Nationalist rebellion, and was a defiance of the Nationalist party, there is now a widespread Nationalist sympathy with persons arrested as Sinn feiners.¹¹

With the arrested men out of the way the county-inspector in his May report stated that 'the whole county [Dublin] is peaceable and recovering slowly from the rebellion...the Irish Volunteers are believed to have ceased to exist and they must have been practically wiped out. With regard to the National Volunteers, these still exist as hitherto, but are quite inactive'.¹²

As all the arrested men encountered in this study were Roman Catholics, therefore no mention of that aspect will feature in any table. Details of the age profiles of the arrested men are seen in Table 6, where it can be seen that Skerries had both the youngest, at thirteen years (Joseph Shiels) and the oldest (William Ganly) at sixty-four years, of all the men arrested men examined. Swords had the largest concentration of men who were less than thirty years of age, with eighteen men, while Lusk had sixteen and Skerries, had twelve. When it came to the number of men aged thirty years and over, Lusk had seven and Skerries had eight, while Swords had five. In relation to age profiles, when Peter Hart examined this aspect in his work *The I.R.A. and its enemies; violence and community in Cork* he arrived at an average age for Irish Volunteers in the period 1917 to 1919 of twenty-four years.¹³ While his work and that undertaken here in regard to age profiles, are not directly comparable, nevertheless, in the absence of an alternative to compare with, it can be seen from the table below that the average found in this study, at twenty-seven years was three years higher than that found by Hart.

¹¹ *Sunday Independent*, 14 May 1916.

¹² CICMR, CO904/100, part iv, May 1916.

¹³ Hart, *The I.R.A., and its enemies; violence and community in Cork, 1916-1913*, p. 172.

Table 6

Age profiles of north County Dublin men arrested after the Rising						
Places for which details are available	No. men with details	Age of youngest man	Age of oldest man	Average age	No. aged under 30	No. aged 30 & over
Artane	3	25	45	32	2	1
Ashtown	1	32	32	32		1
Baldoyle	1	24	24	24	1	
Castleknock	4	21	47	28	3	1
Cloghran	3	22	36	29	1	1
Donabate	5	21	35	28	3	2
Finglas	1	24	24	24	1	
Howth	3	21	24	22	3	
Lusk	23	18	34	26	16	7
Malahide	1	25	25	25	1	
Skerries	20	13	64	30	12	8
St Margaret's	2	23	25	24	2	
Sutton	2	25	32	28	1	1
Swords	23	16	45	26	18	5
No. Places with details 14	Total No. 92	Youngest man 13	Oldest man 64	Average age 27	Total No. 64	Total No. 27

Two other important aspects had to do with the marital status and occupations of the arrested men. In the former case, details can be found in Table 7 where the most striking feature seen is the preponderance of single men with eighty-three of these, while there were nine married men. The situation at Lusk demonstrates this to full effect, where, of the twenty-four men for whom details were available, all were single. Skerries had a more mixed profile in the martial status stakes with seventeen single and three married men.

Table 7

Marital status of north County Dublin men arrested after the 1916 Rising			
	Places with details available	No. Married men	No. Single men
1	Artane	1	2
2	Ashtown		1
3	Baldoyle		1
4	Castleknock	1	3
5	Cloghran	1	1
6	Donabate		5
7	Finglas		1
8	Howth		3
9	Lusk		24
10	Malahide		1
11	Skerries	3	17
12	St Margaret's		2
13	Sutton		2
14	Swords	3	20
No. places 14		No. married men 9	No. single men 83

The occupational status of the arrested men is seen at Table 8 and where it can be determined that three work types led the field. There were twenty-seven labourers, while skilled men and farmer's with their sons had twenty-two and twenty-one respectively. Of the large number of men without work details, it is probable that many of these would be in the category of labourers. There were about twenty-six work types identified in the study, but two types were poorly represented (only four shop assistants and no factory workers were found). The absence of the latter workers is somewhat strange in view of there being plenty of factory work in the textile industries at Balbriggan. The occupation of the sole arrested man from Balbriggan is not known. Bairbre Curtis, in her work *Fingal and the Easter Rising 1916* also points to there being a preponderance of labourers amongst the Volunteers from Fingal at that time.¹⁴

¹⁴ Bairbre Curtis, 'Fingal and the Easter Rising 1916' in *Fingal Studies*, p. 44.

Table 8

Occupational profiles of north County Dublin men arrested after the Rising						
Places with details	No. men with details	Skilled	Farmers & sons	Teachers	Professional	Labourer
Artane	5	3			1	1
Ashtown	2				1	1
Baldoyle	1	1				
Castleknock	1					1
Cloghran	3	2			1	
Donabate	5	2	3			
Finglas	1	1				
Howth	1			1		
Lusk	23	3	6	1	1	12
Malahide	1					1
Skerries	17	6	4	1	2	4
St Margaret's	2		2			
Sutton	2	1			1	
Swords	20	3	6		4	7
No. Places 14	Total No. 84	Total No. 22	Total No.21	Total No.3	Total No. 11	Total No.27

After a time, when the authorities began to select from amongst the ordinary arrested prisoners as to who should be released and who should be retained, they were very much dependent on local knowledge held by the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police. Both these forces collated what they knew about individual arrested persons and made it available to the Dublin Castle authorities. They, in turn, classified it into three categories, A, B and C. and details of how the system was implemented is described in a minute sent from the Irish under secretary on 23 November, 1916, to the Irish Office, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W., London. It went to:

the Chief Secretary, before he left for London, directed me to supply him with certain particulars regarding the men residing in areas under my jurisdiction who are now interned in Frongoch. He desired that the men should be placed in three categories, setting forth the degree of danger which would be involved by releasing these individuals from internment...Class A, consists of men who organised and who would if released continue to organise. In my opinion it is very desirable that these

men should not be released at present. Class B, consists of men who deserve punishment, but who are not so important as men in class A. Most of them took an active part in the rebellion, and possibly the question of their release might well be delayed for some little time; each case could thereby be gone into again by the local police; their release depending on the state of the war, and also whether there would still be any possibility of the Germans landing arms or men in this country. Class C, could now perhaps be released provided each person gives the usual undertaking and finds two sureties...¹⁵

Having completed the work of classifying the prisoners, the resulting number in class A, was 147 men, in class B, it was eighty, while in class C, it was only forty-seven prisoners. It can be seen in the table below what the pertinent details were for those men from north County Dublin whose names were listed. Also found there are the police remarks, if any, about individual prisoners. Three tables are set out beginning with A, category and ending with C. In all cases the first entry will pertain to any Skerries men who were involved. After those tables will be found another table which condenses the numerical details as to how many men were in each category and from where they lived within the north county. while at first glance the information in the table might seem to be a lot, if it is considered that only thirty-five men had such details out of a total of 114 arrested men from the study area, then the amount of information seems a lot less in comparison. In addition, it will be apparent that no mention of one of the primary movers within the Fifth Battalion, Richard Mulcahy, will be found there. He seems to have gone completely under the radar as far as the police authorities were concerned.

¹⁵ R.I.C. list of interned rebels 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P.16627/18).

Table 9¹⁶

Category A prisoners from north County Dublin after the Rising 'Includes leaders, organisers, local leaders, and local organisers, who are prominent extremists and most disloyal'			
Prisoner No.	Name of prisoner & occupation	Address of prisoner	Police remarks
16	James McDonald [McDonnell], chemist	Skerries	'Active local organiser of Irish Volunteers, who appeared to have plenty of money, but had no employment. Surrendered with the other rebels after Ashbourne to the police'.
14	James Rooney, farmers son	Lusk	'Active organisers of the Irish Volunteers, whom they collected and led to attack police barracks. Took part in the battle of Ashbourne'.
15	Edward Rooney, farmers son	Lusk	Same as above.
17	Joseph Lawless, farmers son	Swords	'Active local Irish Volunteer organiser. Prominent in attacks on police barracks and was at the battle of Ashbourne'.
18	Edward Lawless, farmer	Swords	'A prominent Irish Volunteer. Went to Dublin with a party of rebels and surrendered to the rebels [sic], there. Two boxes of dynamite found at his house'.
19	John Kelly, labourer	Swords	'An active Irish Volunteer. Took a leading part in the well known Larkin strike some years ago. Went with a party of rebels to Dublin and surrendered there'.
20	Peter Kelly, clerk in Land Commission	Swords	'An active Irish Volunteer. Took part in the attack on police barracks at Swords and Donabate'.
21	Bartle Weston, stonemason	Donabate	'Prominent Irish Volunteer and assisted in organising. Took part in the attack on police barracks, railway station and post office'.
22	Charles Weston, stonemason	Donabate	'A prominent Irish Volunteer and assisted in organising. Took part in attack on police barracks, railway station and post office. Also took part in attack on Swords Barracks'.
23	Bernard McAllister, farmer	Donabate	'A leader in the attack on Donabate Barracks'.
No. men (10): No. places represented (4)			

¹⁶ R.I.C. list of interned rebels 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18).

Table 10¹⁷

Category B prisoners from north County Dublin after the Rising 'Includes rebels who either took an active part in the rebellion, or who are well known to be extremists of some importance'			
Prisoner No.	Name of prisoner & occupation	Address of prisoner	Police remarks
28	James Kelly, grocers assistant	Skerries	'Took part in attacks on police barracks and in the Ashbourne battle after which they surrendered when the rebellion collapsed'.
10	John Rafferty, stableman	Lusk	'Took part in the battle of Ashbourne and surrendered to the police subsequently at Newbarn; after the surrender of the leaders in Dublin'.
11	John McCann, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
12	Richard Aungier, a	Lusk	Same as above.
13	Richard Kelly, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
14	John Devine, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
15	James Masterson,	Lusk	Same as above.
16	Joseph Kelly, ward master	Lusk	Same as above.
17	Thomas Kelly, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
18	Patrick Doyle, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
19	Patrick Brogan, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
20	James Gough, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
21	Thomas Seaver, van driver	Lusk	Same as above.
26	Matthew Kelly, farmer	Lusk	Same as above.
27	Patrick Sherwin, labourer	Lusk	Same as above.
25	James Connor, labourer	Swords	Same as above.
29	Joseph Taylor, butcher	Swords	Same as above.

¹⁷ R.I.C. list of interned rebels 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18). Patrick Brogan brought home from Knutsford Prison the words of a little song made up by the Irish Prisoners while interned there. While it is not known whether Brogan himself was the author of the song, but in any case, his son Thomas passed it on in correspondence with this author. The words, or rather what part of it that Thomas remembered is seen in the appendix.

30	Christopher Taylor, drapers assistant	Swords	Same as above.
23	Patrick Grant, motor mechanic	Baldoyle	Same as above.
No. men (19): No. places represented (4)			

Table 11¹⁸

Category C prisoners from north County Dublin after the Rising 'Includes persons who are not of much importance, who either took part in the rebellion, or had come under notice prior to it'.			
Prisoner No.	Name of prisoner & occupation	Address of prisoner	Police remarks
43 on D.M.P. list	Joseph Derham, clerk in Land Commission	Skerries	'Left his lodgings at 26 North Frederick Street [Dublin], on Monday evening and was in the general surrender at the end of that week'. ¹⁹
2	Thomas Taylor, publican	Swords	'Irish Volunteer, but not very dangerous. No evidence of his connection with the actual rebellion'.
3	James Rickard, labourer	Swords	'Irish Volunteer. Did not take part in the actual fighting, but looked after the food supplies'.
4	Thomas Weston, mason	Swords	'Irish Volunteer, but not very dangerous, Was at Ashbourne'.
5	William Doyle, labourer	Swords	'Not dangerous. Was at the attack on Swords Barracks'.
6	Thomas Maxwell, labourer	Baldoyle	'Not dangerous. Was a city Irish Volunteer and surrendered after Ashbourne'.
No. men (6): No. places represented (3)			

In percentage terms, the thirty-five men from the study area who were categorised in the three classes is as follows; the ten men in category A, represents nearly seven percent of the national figure of 147 in that class; the nineteen men in category B, represents nearly twenty-four percent of the national figure of eighty in that class; and the six men in category C, represents nearly thirteen percent of the national figure of forty-seven in that class. In the case of civil servants, two of which are seen in the tables above, if they were identified by the authorities as having participated in the rebellion, they would be subsequently

¹⁸ R.I.C. list of interned rebels 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18).

¹⁹ D.M.P. list of interned rebels 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18); cited in Whearity, 'Brothers in arms; Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers, 1916' in *Time & Tide* 7, pp 134-5.

dismissed from their posts.²⁰ In the case of Joseph Derham, who was a category C prisoner and number forty-three on the Dublin Metropolitan Police list, after being offered his release under the terms of a bail bond and having refused it, he was sacked from his Land Commission job. He had been in the General Post Office garrison during Easter Week 1916.²¹

The table below provides a summing up of the numerical details of the police categorisation. It will be seen that the aforementioned Derham was the only man from the north county found on the Dublin Metropolitan Police list, all the others being on the Royal Irish Constabulary list.

Table 12

Classification of arrested north County Dublin men on R.I.C. and D.M.P. lists 1916			
Places	Class A	Class B	Class C
Baldoyle		1	1
Donabate	3		
Lusk	2	14	
Skerries	1	1	1 (on D.M.P., list)
Swords	4	3	4
Total No. places, 5	Total No. in class, 10	Total No. in class, 19	Total No. In class, 6

While the above dealt with ordinary arrested men, there was another list for sentenced prisoners known as the commuted sentence (CM.), list of interned prisoners. This list had to do with those prisoners who were initially given death sentences at their court-martials, but then had their sentences commuted to penal servitude. Details about the following men are found there; Thomas Ashe, Lusk, prisoner number one, a teacher, who got a death sentence, but it was commuted to life in penal servitude.²² Richard Coleman, Swords, prisoner number twenty-four, an insurance agent, got a death sentence, but it was commuted to seven years penal servitude.²³ James Crenigan, Swords, prisoner number thirty-three, a labourer, got two years penal servitude, but it was reduced to one year.²⁴ James

²⁰ *Irish Times*, 19 May 1916.

²¹ Details about Joseph Derham in a letter, No. 315091/8, dated 21 Nov. 1916; also in letter No. 316211/4, dated 11 Dec. 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18); cited in Whearity, 'brothers in arms; Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers 1916' in *Time & Tide* 7, p. 135.

²² Thomas Ashe, No. 1, on CM. list of 1916 internees (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 19265/16).

²³ Richard Coleman, No. 24 on CM. list of 1916 internees (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 19265/16).

²⁴ James Crenigan, No. 33 on CM. list of 1916 internees (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 19265/16).

Marks, Swords, prisoner number 108, a labourer, got a death sentence, but it was commuted to three years penal servitude.²⁵

Ordinary prisoners were being released from May and the table below provides details of the twenty-two north county men who got their freedom in the period up to 7 June 1916. The nine men from Skerries represent nearly forty-one percent of the whole twenty-two released then.

Table 13

No. North County Dublin men released up to 7 June 1916		
	Places of origin	No. Men released and details
1	Artane	(1) Up to 7 June; John Joyce. ²⁶
2	Balbriggan	(1) Up to 2 June; James Madigan. ²⁷
3	Castleknock	(1) Up to 12 May; T. Bennet. ²⁸
4	Donabate	(2) Up to 22 May; Edward Collins and Daniel McAllister. ²⁹
5	Finglas	(2) Up to 12 May; J. Moloney and Michael Tanning. ³⁰
6	Howth	(3) Up to 22 May; Gerard, Kenneth and Kerry Reddin. ³¹
7	Skerries	(4 men) Up to 22 May; Anthony Duffe, John Sherlock, Michael Lacey and Michael Shanley. (3) Up to 2 June; Robert Derham, Denis Maguire and Peter Keane. (2) Up to 7 June; John H. Reynolds and Joseph Shiels. Total No. (9) ³²
8	St Margaret's	(1) up to 22 May ; Richard Duke. ³³
9	Swords	(2) Up to 29 May ; Patrick Manning and T. Ryan. ³⁴
No. Places represented (9): No. Men (22).		

Many of those not released up to the above dates, were subsequently transferred to Frongoch Prison camp, after it opened to receive Irish political prisoners on 9 June 1916. When it comes to determining who was interned there, Sean O'Mahony's work *Frongoch; university of revolution* is a good starting

²⁵ James Marks, No. 108 on CM. list of 1916 internees (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 19265/16).

²⁶ *Irish Times*, 14 June, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 91. Census of Ireland.

²⁷ *Irish Times*, 9 June, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 91.

²⁸ *Irish Times*, 25 May, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 87. Census of Ireland.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 30 May, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 88-9. Census of Ireland.

³⁰ *Irish Times*, 25 May, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 87-8.

³¹ *Irish Times*, 30 May, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 89. Census of Ireland.

³² *Irish Times*, 30 May, 9, 14 June, 1916. *Weekly Irish Times*, 3 June, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 89-91.

³³ *Irish Times*, 30 May, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 89. Census of Ireland.

³⁴ *Weekly Irish Times*, 10 June, 1916. *The Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 90.

point.³⁵ Nonetheless the name of Joseph McGuinness, Cross Street, Skerries is not found there. He was released on 21 July 1916.³⁶ In the light of this, the figure provided by O'Mahony (926), from the whole of County Dublin, can be increased by a factor of one to a new figure of 927. from the work of this study it can be determined that of the 114 arrested men from north County Dublin, that seventy-six of them were interned in Frongoch. The table below provides details of the number from each place and where available, release details are also given.

Table 14

North County Dublin men released from Frongoch 1916		
	Places of origin	No. men interned and release details where available
1	Artane	(5) On 21 July; Patrick Langare and John Joyce. ³⁷ On an unknown date, Owen McDermott, John Murphy and Peter
2	Ashtown	(1) On an unknown date, Thomas Robinson. ³⁹
3	Blanchardstown	(2) On an unknown date, Michael and Peter McNulty. ⁴⁰
4	Baldoyle	(3) On an unknown date, Patrick Grant, Joseph McDonagh and James Gough. ⁴¹
5	Castleknock	(6) On an unknown date; Thomas Carty, Michael Dowling, Patrick English, John and Patrick Mooney and Robert O'Driscoll. ⁴²
6	Cloghran	(2) On an unknown date, Patrick Ryan and James O'Connor. ⁴³
7	Donabate	(3) On an unknown date, Bernard McAllister, Bartle Weston and Charles Weston. ⁴⁴
8	Finglas	(3) On an unknown date, Joseph Lyons, Richard McKee and Brian O'Higgins. ⁴⁵

³⁵ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 174-96.

³⁶ Art O'Briain Papers, 1916 (NLI. MS8442-8445, correspondence relating to Irish political prisoners in Britain).

³⁷ Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 182, 184.

³⁸ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 176, 185, 188.

³⁹ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 193.

⁴⁰ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 186.

⁴¹ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 181, 185.

⁴² O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 176, 178-9, 187, 190.

⁴³ (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 177, 193.

⁴⁴ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 185, 195.

⁴⁵ Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 185, 191.

9	Lusk	(21) On 21 July; Patrick Caddell, John Hynes, John McNally and Francis Murphy. ⁴⁶ On an unknown date (probably Dec. 1916), Richard Aungier, Patrick Brogan, Daniel Brophy, John Devine, Joseph Kelly, Mathew Kelly, Thomas Kelly, John McCann, John Rafferty, Edward and James Rooney, Thomas Seaver, Patrick Sherwin, Dick Kelly, James Masterson, Patrick Doyle and Joseph Clarke. ⁴⁷
10	Malahide	(1) On 21 July, James O'Connell. ⁴⁸
11	Skerries	(10 men) On 21 July; Joseph Beggs, Thomas Hand and Joseph McGuinness. ⁴⁹ On 26 July; Thomas O'Reilly. ⁵⁰ On 27 July; Peter Gibbons and Matt Derham. ⁵¹ On 31 July; William Ganly. ⁵² Circa. 10 Nov. Joseph Thornton, ⁵³ and Joseph Derham (this man got temporary release but might not have gone back). ⁵⁴ In the general release in Dec. 1916, James McDonnell was probably released. ⁵⁵
12	St Margaret's	(1) On 15 July, Thomas Duke. ⁵⁶
13	Sutton	(2) On an unknown date, Thomas Maxwell. In Dec. 1916, Richard Mulcahy. ⁵⁷

⁴⁶ (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 15564/16). (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18). Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). Joseph Murray, a copy of a list of prisoners in north camp Frongoch, 1916 (NLI. MS. 1650). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 176, 182.

⁴⁷(NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 15564/16). (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18). Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). Copy of a list of prisoners in north camp Frongoch, 1916 (NLI. MS. 1650). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 174-6, 178-9, 181, 183, 186, 193.

⁴⁸Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 190.

⁴⁹ (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 15564/16). Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 174, 181.

⁵⁰ Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 192.

⁵¹Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 178, 180.

⁵² Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 180.

⁵³ Joseph Thornton, letter No. 316062/s, dated 8 Nov. 1916, and letter No. 316062/10, dated 9 Nov. 1916, from under secretary, Dublin Castle, in regard to the terms of a bail bond (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18).

⁵⁴ D.M.P. list of interned prisoners 1916, J. Derham, letter No. 315,091/5, dated 9 Nov. 1916, from under secretary, Dublin Castle (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18); cited in Whearity, 'Brothers in arms, Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers 1916' in *Time & Tide* 7, vol.7, pp 135-37. O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 178.

⁵⁵ James McDonnell (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18). Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). Copy of a list of prisoners in north camp Frongoch, 1916 (NLI. MS. 1650). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 195.

⁵⁶ Art O'Briain papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 15564/16). O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 179.

⁵⁷ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 186-7. Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary; General Rich Mulcahy, and the founding of the Irish Free State*, p. 21.

14	Swords	(16) On 21 July; Thomas Duff, Christopher Moran and Edward Stafford. ⁵⁸ On 27 July; Patrick Early. ⁵⁹ On unknown date (probably Dec. 1916), William Doyle, Edward Lawless, Joseph Lawless, Peter Moran, Christopher Nugent, Peter Kelly, Joseph Kelly, Christopher Taylor, J. Taylor, Thomas Taylor, Thomas Weston and James Rickard. ⁶⁰
Total No. places represented 14: Total No. men 76		

The Skerries figure, of ten men, represents more than thirteen percent of the whole number of seventy-six. No details about the release of Skerries man James Kelly are found, but as he was a category B, prisoner, he was likely to have been held in Frongoch up to the time of the general release in December 1916. Because his details are not confirmed, his name is not counted with those in the table above.

At this point in the study, a few examples of personal experiences of north county arrested men will be examined. To begin with, Thomas Hand wrote several letters to his wife Rose, the mother of his four children, living at their home at Milverton, Skerries. He wrote on notepaper embossed with the heading ‘for God, for King, for Country, Y.M.C.A., H.M. Forces on active service’. His prison details were ‘prisoner reg. No. 450 C, Thomas Hand, Irish prisoner, Wakefield, c/o chief postal censor, London’. An extract from his undated letter went ‘Dear wife... I hope that you and the children are real well and that you are not worrying about me. I am in the best of health and spirits, as are all the boys. Mr Ganly stands the prison well, if old in years he is as young in spirits as any of the men...Your fond husband Tom’.⁶¹ Another undated letter from Wakefield went ‘Dear wife, hope you are well, as for myself, I am quite well and in good cheer, and looking forward to the brighter days. All the boys from Skerries are here. You need not send anything to me...I will finish now, asking you to keep

⁵⁸ (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 15564/16). Art O’Brian papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O’Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp179, 187, 194.

⁵⁹ Art O’Brian papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). Copy of list of prisoners in Frongoch, 1916 (NLI. MS. 1650). O’Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 179.

⁶⁰ (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. 16627/18). Art O’Brian papers, 1916 (NLI. MS. 8442-8445). O’Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 179, 184, 187, 189, 191, 193-5.

⁶¹ Prison letters of Thomas Hand 1916 to his wife Rose (Kilmainham Jail Archive).

up and say a prayer for your ever loving husband Tom'.⁶² Hand wrote again on 18 June:

Dear wife, just a line hoping the children are well and you also as this leaves me...we cannot write more than one letter weekly. I had a parcel from...it came here from Wakefield...tell them not to send stamps or paper as no Irish papers are allowed in here. We are allowed all the letters sent to us...We have a good time here, have control of the camp, our own cooks and postmen, and several committees who manage all the affairs of the camp. We are up at 6 o'clock in the morning and out until 8 pm in the evening, and then we go to bed at ten o'clock. The weather here is lovely; there are nearly 400 men and more coming...love Tom.⁶³

Hand was in north camp, Frongoch, and, while he wrote that conditions were relatively good there, he was undoubtedly comparing it with his former place of detention at Wakefield, where the conditions were more severe. He wrote again in an undated letter 'dear wife...we are permitted to write two letters per week...all the boys from Skerries are here except Joseph Thornton and Joseph Derham... there is a full crowd here now over 1,000 men...Your fond husband Tom'.⁶⁴ Though the above letter was not dated, it can nevertheless be given an approximate date due to the fact that the prison only reached that capacity in July 1916.⁶⁵ Hand's fellow townsman, Matt Derham, wrote home on 26 June, but his letter had to do with some house-building work left unfinished after his arrest took him abruptly away from it after the Rising. He reassured a Mrs Monks of Strand Street, that the work would be completed to her satisfaction on his release.⁶⁶

From the tone of the above letters, it is remarkable that neither man sought to portray himself as a victim of an injustice. Their concern was directed to those at home rather than their own plight. This stoical attitude was also seen in a letter from Michael Collins, then in Frongoch, to Sean Deasey. He wrote 'I am here and that's the thing that matters. Prating about home, friends and so on doesn't alter the fact that this is Frongoch, an internment camp and that I'm a member of

⁶² Prison letters of Thomas Hand 1916 (Kilmainham Jail Archive).

⁶³ Prison letters from Thomas Hand (Kilmainham Jail Archive).

⁶⁴ Prison letters from Thomas Hand (Kilmainham Jail Archive).

⁶⁵ Brian Barton, *From behind a closed door; secret court martial records of the 1916 Easter Rising* (reprint. Belfast, 2003), p. 61.

⁶⁶ Whearity, 'Brothers in arms, Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers, 1916' in *Time & Tide* 7, pp 131-2.

the camp. There's only one thing to do while the situation is as it is, make what I can of it' ...⁶⁷

In one of his letters, Hand mentioned another townsman William Ganly, who was 'the first president of the general council in Frongoch. Sean O'Mahony referred to him as 'a veteran Nationalist from Skerries...who was appointed at the first meeting of the council on 11 June'.⁶⁸ From the extant minute book of the aforementioned general council, it can be seen that Ganly chaired the first meeting on 11 June and it was then that he was elected its president. On 17 June he stated that the function of the council was to look after the 'wants and comforts of the Irish prisoners of war at Frongoch'. Ganly chaired meetings through June and into early July.⁶⁹ By then a military council had been formed and it usurped the powers of the council, which then went into a decline. The last meeting was held on 10 July with Ganly in the chair.⁷⁰ Ganly led an interesting life, but it is a largely unrecorded one. He was born in County Westmeath in circa. 1852, but subsequently spent many years in the Argentine, South America. By 1901, he and his County Westmeath born wife and Argentine born adopted son had come back to Ireland to live at Adelaide Road, Glasthule, Dublin.⁷¹ Prior to 1907 they had gone to live in County Longford and in William Bulfin's published account *Rambles in Eirinn* he mentioned his going 'on to Granard next day, more hills, more woods, more pleasure. I met William Ganly of Irish Ireland fame and passed a night under his hospitable roof at Creevy House'. Bulfin was editor and proprietor of the *Southern Cross* newspaper, Buenos Aires, Argentina.⁷² While living there Ganly led a busy political life until, according to Marie Coleman '...in Longford divisions began to emerge within the United Irish league at the height of the ranch war in mid-1907, with the defection of William Ganly, a leading figure in the league in north Longford, to the nascent Sinn Fein organisation'. He did share in some of the successes of the Sinn Fein movement

⁶⁷ Letter from Michael Collins to Sean Deasey, undated; cited in Rex Taylor, *Michael Collins; the big fellow* (reprint. London, 1965), pp 52-55.

⁶⁸ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, p. 47.

⁶⁹ Frongoch minute book, original held at O'Connell Schools Archive, Dublin, but accessed on microfilm at the N.L.I., P.1638; cited in O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 47-52.

⁷⁰ O'Mahony, *Frongoch, university of revolution*, pp 48, 52.

⁷¹ Census of Ireland.

⁷² William Bulfin, *Rambles in Eirinn* (reprint. Dublin, 1996), p. 423. Martin, *The Howth, gun-running, and the Kilcoole gun-running, 1914*, p. 150.

in that county.⁷³ Perhaps because of the political strife he endured there, by 1911, he had left County Longford to live at 3 St Columba's Road Upper, Drumcondra.⁷⁴ By circa. 1914 he was living and farming at Baldungan, Skerries. Information from an obituary states that:

The death of Mr William Ganly on November 17th 1931, removes a prominent Skerries resident from our midst. He was chairman of the Balrothery Board of Guardians, and was one of our local representatives on the Rural District Council up to its dissolution...he was active in public affairs...as chairman of the local Improvements Committee. Most of his life was spent in the Argentine, South America...he took a keen interest in politics and local government affairs, and was a vehement defender of his convictions...⁷⁵

Another man who appeared sanguine about his internment was Thomas Ashe. From Mountjoy Jail on 13 May 1916, he wrote to his sister Nora to the effect that 'I am sure you are very much troubled over me for the past few weeks. I expect you know before this of my presence here. The term looks long, but I am facing it in a most optimistic mood. Prison life, so far anyway, is not as bad as one views it from the outside. Be sure and write home as soon as you get this. They must be in a queer state. Let them go on with their business as if nothing happened to me. That is exactly how I look at it'.⁷⁶ The above seems to suggest that a certain attitude prevailed among some of the arrested men and this helped them to cope with confinement. On the other hand, Collins stated that while 'the internees faced their imprisonment with an air of dourness, though some...who were innocent of any part in the Rising, gave way to despair'. He related that many of those who did not fare well were family men, some of whom suffered from loneliness, from their having been abruptly separated from their families.⁷⁷

The experiences of Dr Richard Hayes and Joseph Kelly who both worked at the Balrothery Union are interesting. The union's minutes of 6 May 1916 states

⁷³ Marie Coleman, *County Longford, and the Irish revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2003), pp 18-21, 24, 68, 71, 74.

⁷⁴ Census of Ireland.

⁷⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 28 Nov. 1931.

⁷⁶ O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 94.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *Michael Collins; the big fellow*, p. 54.

that the men had ‘gone missing from their jobs’.⁷⁸ A press report on 27 May states that:

The Local Government Board wrote, noting an entry contained in the minutes to the effect that Dr Richard Hayes, Medical Officer of the Lusk dispensary district, had absented himself from duty without leave during the previous fortnight and had been suspended from office by the guardians. It appears from the official statement published and verified by the military authorities that Dr Hayes has been convicted by Court-martial, due to his having taken part in the recent rebellion, and has been sentenced to 20 years’ penal servitude; and the L.G.B. [local government board], so as to terminate his connection with the M.O. [medical officer], of the Lusk dispensary district, have issued instructions removing him from office. As regards ward master, Joseph Kelly, who has also been reported for absenting himself from duty, the L.G.B., informed the guardians that he is at present detained in Knutsford Detention Barracks, and on receiving further particulars they will again address the guardians on the subject. A sealed order from the L.G.B. signed by Sir H.A. Robinson, announced Dr Hayes dismissal.⁷⁹

It appears that there was scant sympathy for the doctor’s predicament, whatever about the other man. When one guardian asked what would happen if Dr Hayes turned up, another replied that ‘Hayes has ceased to exist as far as our union is concerned’. Dr Healy of Skerries was asked to do *locum tenens* [substitute doctor], in his colleague’s absence and it was intimated that a permanent position might open up later when the position of Hayes became known.⁸⁰ At first glance it could be thought that the board’s treatment of the two men was somewhat harsh, but their attitude was a reflection of the common mood after the collapse of the Rising.

Perhaps something of the aforementioned attitude prevailed at Skerries, at least in some quarters. The circumstances centred on an allegation raised in the British House of Commons, on 29 June 1916, by a Mr Byrne, to the effect that he asked:

the under-secretary of the state for war if he can state what part Lord Holmpatrick took in the Curragh revolt two years ago; if he can say whether Lord Holmpatrick took an active part in inciting the military against the Government at that time; if he is aware that Lord Holmpatrick is evicting some of his tenants; and if he is aware that the reason given is

⁷⁸ Balrothery Boards of Guardians minute book (NAI. BG, 40, A.139, Apr.-Sept. 1916), p. 85.

⁷⁹ *Drogheda Independent*, 27 May 1916.

⁸⁰ *Drogheda Independent*, 27 May 1916.

because their sons took part in the rising and that the Government desire them to be punished.

[Mr Tennant replied], I know nothing about the matters referred to in the first two parts of the question, but it is, I think, common ground that it is undesirable to rake over the events at the Curragh of two years ago. The relationship between Lord Holmpatrick and his tenants is, obviously, not a matter with which the War Office has anything to do.⁸¹

In relation to the alleged attempt at evicting tenants, as no further information could be found at this time, then there the matter must rest. However, it seems that it was a regular occurrence in the town that whenever the tension was raised above a certain level, the Holmpatrick monument was targeted and damaged, usually with having tar daubed over it. This happened in October 1914 and a court case was still going on in March 1916, at the Quarter Sessions Court at Balbriggan.⁸² The monument was again tarred on the night of 14 June 1915, and the railings were also interfered with. Three men were charged on this occasion, James Landy, Edward Brady and Joseph Beggs. The first mentioned was acquitted and the other two got off under the First Offenders Act, but with a reprimand. It was said that the gravity of the offence was ‘accentuated by the fact that it was committed when Lord Holmpatrick is wounded at the front [war front]’.⁸³ The aforementioned Beggs was one of those arrested at Skerries, after the collapse of the Rising and had gone to Wakefield on 6 May, and remained there until he was released on 21 July 1916.⁸⁴ He later found himself in Frongoch and got a mention in the press for having played a football game there on 16 July. He and a number of County Dublin prisoners, one of whom was Dan Brophy from Lusk, played against a team of Wexford prisoners in a mock championship. In the event the Dublin side won the match.⁸⁵ While the game itself could be seen as a frivolous affair, it does however, show that the inter-county rivalry which applied in such games at home, also pertained in Frongoch.

⁸¹ *Hansard, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates* (written answer to do with the military service of Lord Holmpatrick, HC Deb, 29 June 1916, Vol. 83, C1042W). Accessed from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written-answers/1916/jun/29/lord-holmpatrick> (15 June, 2011)

⁸² *Sunday Independent*, 5 Mar. 1916.

⁸³ *Irish Independent*, 30 June 1916.

⁸⁴ *Irish Times*, 16 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 79. (See Table 14).

⁸⁵ *Anglo-Celt*, 29 July, 1916.

With regard to Holmpatrick and whether he had evictions on his mind in regard to tenants with sons interned, then one of them might have been the Beggs family who lived at Hoar Rock, Skerries.⁸⁶ In relation to Holmpatrick's army career, details in a letter written by a Private Smith, who was stationed at the Curragh in May 1914, is informative. According to Smith, H.W. Holmpatrick (1886-1941), had been a lieutenant, then a captain, before becoming a special reserve officer acting as adjutant of the 16th Lancers, where he saw service in the European war in 1914. He resigned his commission on 19 May, but returned to the job in August 1914. In March of that year, as a colonel, he was one of those who refused to act against the Unionists in Ulster [the Curragh incident].⁸⁷

On Monday 9 July 1917, the tragic death, by drowning, of the widow of Thomas MacDonagh, occurred on a beach over-looking Shenicks Island, Skerries. Her husband was one of those executed after the collapse of the Rising. Muriel MacDonagh was thirty-one years old and a mother of two young children, who then became orphans. She was a sister of Grace Gifford, widow of Joseph Plunkett, who was also executed for his part in the Rising. On the day after her death, a special Mass was celebrated in the towns Roman Catholic Chapel. Among those who came from the city, where she had lived, was the Rev Fr Albert, A.S.F.C. who officiated at the ceremony. Afterwards, her coffin, draped in the Sinn Fein colours, was carried to the train station by Irish Volunteers from Skerries and Lusk. It was stated that more than 1,000 people walked in the procession to the station, from where the body was removed to the Pro-Cathedral, in Dublin. On the Thursday her remains were buried in Glasnevin Cemetery. That event was hugely supported with thousands turning out to pay their respects. Mrs MacDonagh, prior to her unfortunate accident, had been on holiday at Skerries, and had intended to stay there for the month of July. On holiday with her, were the widows of James Connolly, Joseph Plunkett and Mrs Eamon Kent.

⁸⁶ Census of Ireland.

⁸⁷ Ian F.W. Beckett (ed.), *The army and the Curragh incident, 1914* (2 vols. Army Records Society, London, 1986), ii, 112, 361, 404.

As is well known, these men were also executed in the days after the rebellion was quashed.⁸⁸

Another tragedy occurred on 25 September, when Thomas Ashe died as a result of being force-fed while he was on hunger strike.⁸⁹ Though his death was tragic and he was deeply mourned. It nevertheless presented the Irish Volunteer movement with an opportunity similar to that which occurred after the death O'Donovan Rossa. The arrangements surrounding his lying in state at the City Hall, Dublin and his subsequent removal, on 30 September, for burial in Glasnevin cemetery, was the responsibility of his erstwhile friend and Fifth Battalion colleague, Richard Mulcahy.⁹⁰ The Irish Volunteers fired rifle shots over the grave, before Michael Collins, in an oration, stated that 'nothing additional remains to be said. That volley which we have just heard is the only speech which is proper to make above the grave of a dead Fenian'.⁹¹ According to Michael Hopkinson, the 'Dublin Brigade's excellent handling of Thomas Ashe's huge funeral procession...raised the movement's profile and led to its renaissance'. Nevertheless, the new leaders would have to come 'from the individual areas or localities'.⁹² In the case of Skerries, not only did the men who returned from internment take up from where they had left off, but in addition, they were joined by other men who had been too young to participate in the Rising. Importantly, these new people were unhesitatingly willing to carry on the fight for Irish freedom into the next stage of the so-called revolutionary period.

⁸⁸ *Irish Times* 10 July 1917. *Irish Times*, 13 July 1917. *Weekly Irish times*, 14 July 1917. *Nenagh Guardian*, 14 July 1917. Mary Josephine MacDonagh, MS 33,567(10); 'news clippings etc., in envelope inscribed Sr Francesca (i.e., Mary Josephine MacDonagh), 1917'; regarding the drowning of Mrs Muriel MacDonagh, widow of Thomas MacDonagh, at Skerries.

Elizabeth Balcombe, 'day of the drowning' in *Skerries News*, vol.18, No.3 (Apr. 2007), p. 24.

⁸⁹ Death of Thomas Ashe (Cathal Brugha Barracks, Military Archive, A/list, index files. A/0232/1, group vi. Fingal brigade casualties 1917-1921). O'Mahony, *The first hunger striker; Thomas Ashe* 1917, p. 22.

⁹⁰ O'Mahony, *The first hunger striker; Thomas Ashe*, 1917, pp 22-3, 25. Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (reprint. Dublin, 2004), p. 97.

⁹¹ O'Mahony, *The first hunger striker; Thomas Ashe*, 1917, p. 25.

⁹² Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 98.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this thesis was to chart the formation and the subsequent development of the Skerries Irish Volunteer Company and then to place it in its proper context within the Volunteer movement in north County Dublin as a whole. As to the Volunteers themselves, it was decided to examine them as members as a community of interest, bound together by their shared ideals and visions for a better Ireland.

Regarding the Irish Volunteer movement, it was the case that in the study area, as elsewhere, it got a guarded welcome when it was established on 25 November 1913. Certainly there were effusive demonstrations of warmth shown towards it by some sections of the populace. Nevertheless, it was shunned for a long period of time by the Irish Parliamentary Party and its leaders, but principally by John Redmond M.P. The Roman Catholic Church, perhaps taking its cue from the Irish Party, also stayed apart from it until well into 1914.

Soon after its formation, there was a flurry of company formations within the metropolitan area, with two companies formed at Clontarf and Drumcondra as early as 1 December 1913. Away from the urban area, the situation was radically different and this included north County Dublin, where the formation process was much delayed. It was not until April 1914 that Swords got a company and another month before Skerries got its company in late May. The situation at the last mentioned place appeared to have extenuating circumstances which delayed its progress by an indeterminate amount of time. The primary movers there were supporters of Redmond and in addition there was a long-standing fractious relationship between the proprietor of the town, Lord Holmpatrick and his town tenants. The troubled relationship continued throughout the period under study here and would have had an indeterminate but important influence on the Irish Volunteers in the town, as many, or all of them, were tenants of the Holmpatrick Estate.

In any event, once the Skerries Company got up and running it attracted a large membership from the start, though there were two somewhat different estimates to contend with. In any event, in the period up to June 1914, of the six companies

which had formed in the north county under the banner of the Irish Volunteers under Eoin MacNeill, the Skerries Company was the largest. It prospered under Redmond as a National Volunteer company and its greatest achievement during that period was its attendance at the Howth gun-running where it came away with a disproportionately large number of German Mauser rifles. This was all the more remarkable when the Swords contingent only got a few and the Lusk men got none at all on that day.

With the outbreak of the First World War, the Skerries Company, in common with others in the study area, lost the services of its drill instructor to the war. Their loss had a detrimental effect on the training of the Volunteers. When Redmond's Woodenbridge speech in September 1914 brought about the so-called Redmondite-split, Volunteer companies everywhere had to decide on their futures. The choice was between either remaining loyal to Redmond as National Volunteers, or to go with MacNeill as Irish Volunteers. Amongst the eleven National Volunteer companies identified in the north county who had to decide, the Skerries Company was the last to do so. It was not until late October that the members met to decide and after taking a ballot, two thirds opted for Redmond and the rest for MacNeill. Importantly, among those who chose to return to being Irish Volunteers, were a substantial number of those who had been on the original committee at Skerries. At the time of the Redmondite-split, the largest company, membership wise, was, by a wide margin, at Balbriggan, with the Skerries Company having slipped down to joint third place with that at Blanchardstown.

Before the 1916 Rising, the Skerries Irish Volunteer company was aligned with those of Swords, Lusk and St Margaret's in the Fifth Battalion of the Dublin Brigade. On Easter Sunday when the battalion mobilised at Rathbeale Cross near Swords, the largest contingent had come from Skerries.¹ As is well known, Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order completely ruined the plans for the Rising on that day. On the second mobilisation on the Easter Monday at Knocksedan, the numbers from the previous day was halved. On this occasion the Skerries contingent was conspicuous

¹ Weston, W.S. No. 149.

by its absence, however, it appears that the message to return had not reached Skerries. When word did come to them on the Tuesday, it stipulated that they remain in situ for a possible attack on the Marconi wireless station in the town. By Wednesday, when further news was received that the attack was off, a small body of Volunteers under Matt Derham, left Skerries under cover of darkness with the objective of joining up with Thomas Ashe and the Fifth Battalion. Information in a letter by Derham shows that a few Skerries men had connected with the battalion early in Easter week, while he and a few more became attached on the Friday evening after the so-called battle of Ashbourne was over.

On Easter Monday when the battalion attempted to blow up the railway bridge at Rogerstown, situated between Rush and Lusk, the noise of the explosion was such that the county inspector for Dublin reported that ‘the conflagration had commenced’. From the words used, he might have been intimating that the Rogerstown event was the opening salvo, munitions wise for the Rising. It certainly was the case that no other incident was found which surpassed it as an awakening call, noise wise, to begin the Rising. The explosion of up to forty pounds of high explosives went off at around two o’clock in the afternoon and the resultant bang would have been heard several kilometers away. It seems as if the aforementioned inspector had heard it at his Howth office a few kilometers to the south.

At Skerries, the loyalists of the town were seriously concerned about the threat of a rebel attack on themselves and their property. Their frantic calls for help produced a rapid response and there ensued from Wednesday-Thursday onward, an almighty show of military force to protect what was then only a small seaside village of less than 2,000 souls. Nevertheless the town had an important military asset in the guise of a Marconi wireless station and its protection was paramount in the minds of the military authorities. In the event, within hours of the call for help, gunboats patrolled the coast with their big guns trained on the roads around. 200 soldiers of the North Staffordshire Regiment were landed on the harbour quay and these rushed to the radio station, where they dug themselves in and fortified it against any possible attack. Possibly as a consequence of the military might brought to the town, no such attack

materialised, either on it, or on the radio station. It had been the case, however, that when Thomas Ashe carried out manoeuvres at the River Broadmeadow in early November 1914, that a mock attack on Skerries had been an integral part of those military type exercises.

After the general surrender as ordered by Pearse, the military made wholesale arrests countrywide. This study has identified 114 men from north County Dublin who were arrested and included amongst these were men from Skerries. There were no women arrested from within the study area. The body of arrested men was used as a data-set from which further information could be derived. In conjunction with the census returns of Ireland, details such as age, marital status, religion, and occupational profiles of the group were produced. It was seen that there was a preponderance of young single men in the group; that all were Roman Catholics; that labourers predominated amongst the more than twenty-six work types, but that there were no factory workers among them. The group also included skilled and professional men, including carpenters, stonemasons, farmers and their sons, doctors and schoolteachers. With regard to the age profiles it was found that the youngest and the oldest men arrested had come from Skerries. When the 114 men were assigned to the places where they lived, then Lusk had the largest number, closely followed by Swords and then Skerries, but with other places trailing far behind.

Though the majority of arrested men from the country as a whole were prepared for deportation at Richmond Barracks, Dublin, nearly half of those from Skerries had instead passed through Arbour Hill prison. Amongst the six prisons favored by the authorities, those at Knutsford and Wakefield took the majority of those sent from north County Dublin. Those who received commuted death sentences, like Thomas Ashe, might have gone with him to Dartmoor Prison on 23 May.

Soon after the great body of arrested persons had gone to England, the military authorities in Ireland set about collating information held by the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police. This was done so as to determine which prisoners were the most dangerous to the peace of the realm. By November 1916 the gathered material from the Royal Irish Constabulary resulted in a list of 274

persons. Importantly, arrested men from the north county and from Skerries, were mentioned on those lists.

It soon became obvious to the military authorities that many men were innocent of any wrongdoing and had been caught up in the general round-up after the collapse of the Rising. With regard to the interned men of interest here, the first releases occurred in the period up to 12 May. By 7 June, nearly half of those from Skerries were released. When it comes to Frongoch, the earliest release of a prisoner from the study area occurred on 15 July and then others followed on 21, 26, 27 and 31 July. A number of Skerries men were amongst these releases. In November, two Skerries men got out, one on a temporary release on compassionate grounds and the other purchased his freedom through the mechanism of a bail-bond. Those prisoners deemed the most dangerous were in the A, category and these had to wait until the general release in December 1916 for release. Included amongst them was at least one Skerries man. With regard to the sentenced men, such as Ashe, who were interned in other prisons, these were not released until June of 1917 when another general release occurred. After the return of the former internees, it became apparent that 'their spirit was not broken and drilling, training and meetings began at their old haunts'.²

While the men came home to a more welcoming and understanding Ireland, nevertheless there were still segments of the populace, which saw them in a different and more negative light. A strong indication of the former was seen at a National Volunteer Convention in the Mansion House, Dublin, in August, chaired by Col. Maurice Moore, where on the agenda was a proposal to re-unite with the Irish Volunteers.³ An example of the latter attitude was seen at Skerries, where it appears that such a welcoming environment was not shared by all those there. It was not the townspeople there who took such a view, but rather the proprietor of the town Lord Holmpatrick. In a question raised at the House of Commons, it was alleged that he was intimidating those of his town tenants who had sons involved in the Rising. The

² *Dublin Brigade Review*, p. 16.

³ *Irish Times*, 6 Aug. 1917.

allegation, suggested that some tenants would be evicted. What was clear however, was that the under secretary in the House of Commons was not interested in finding out the truth of the matter itself and therefore it could be said that Holmpatrick got off the charge lightly.

In July 1917, Mrs Thomas MacDonagh, widow of the late Thomas MacDonagh who was one of the rebel leaders executed after the Rising, had tragically and accidentally drowned while holidaying in Skerries. At a Mass, on the following day, the Rev Fr Albert, A.S.F.C. from Dublin, officiated and afterwards, her coffin, draped in the Sinn Fein colors, was carried by the Irish Volunteers of Skerries and Lusk, to the train station for its dispatch to Dublin. The removal arrangements and procession was one of the largest ever seen in the town. From Map 2 it can be seen that the procession route from the Catholic Church in the center of the town to the train station was a relatively long one.

In September 1917, the death of Thomas Ashe, at the Mater Hospital, Dublin, struck a tragic blow to the Volunteer movement both nationally and locally in his adopted place of north County Dublin. Nonetheless, the circumstances of his remains lying in state at Dublin's City Hall and its subsequent removal to Glasnevin cemetery provided a propaganda coup for the Irish Volunteer organisation nationally and 'all battalions turned out in style for his funeral'. In addition, conventions were held in Croke Park. The subsequent death of Richard Coleman at Usk prison in 1918, further raised the tempo of the re-organised Volunteer movement and brought the 'Dublin Brigade once again out on public parade'. This was the 'last parade before the second stage of the fight began in earnest'.⁴

In the case of Skerries, after the return of the interned men, some of them began their Volunteer activities again, seemingly from where they had left off. A brief insight was given by one of those who came into the Irish Volunteers in Skerries at that time. The youth concerned was James Murray, aged nineteen years in 1917, who in his own words stated that he was 'the man in the gap'. He was later to become an officer in the re-formed Skerries Volunteer company in early 1918, rising to section

⁴ *Dublin Brigade Review*, p. 17.

commander, company adjutant and lieutenant with the combined companies of Rush and Skerries. A Sinn Fein Club had been established in Skerries in the previous year and its officers were John Terry Sherlock, Jack McGowan and Matt Derham.⁵ On the wider scene, 1917 saw a re-organisation of the Volunteer movement and Richard Mulcahy was an important part of that by becoming the Dublin Brigade Commandant, until 1918, whence he became chief-of-staff.⁶

The on-going commitment to the Irish Volunteer, Irish Republican Army movement by the Skerries men continued, but by July 1922, three of those whose names appeared in this study were dead because of it. John Sherlock was killed at Skerries by the Black and Tans on 27 October 1920;⁷ Thomas Hand, killed at Skerries by the same force on 5 December 1920;⁸ and John McGowan, killed as an irregular in Dublin City on 1 July 1922.⁹ Matt Derham had to flee to America for more than a year to escape the attentions of the Black and Tans.¹⁰ One of the primary movers in the initial start-up of the Skerries Company, Patrick Mathews was shot on the night of 22 November 1920, by the Black and Tans and left for dead. After leaving his home, that same force went to nearby Rush and after finding John ‘Rover’ McCann at his home, they took him out and shot him dead.¹¹ In relation to the three who died at Skerries, Plate 6 shows a commemorative postcard issued circa 1950 in conjunction with the erection of a limestone memorial in the town in their honour.

With regard to the main achievement of the Fifth Battalion, in which a number of Skerries men participated, i.e. the battle at Ashbourne, this is commemorated by a large and impressive memorial monument at Rath Cross, Ashbourne, erected in April 1959. The names of Volunteers, John Crenigan and Thomas Rafferty, who were killed in the battle, are mentioned there.¹² The National Graves Association states

⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 26 Mar. 1954. *Fingal Independent*, 26 Mar. 2004. Census of Ireland.

⁶ *Dublin Brigade Review*, i.

⁷ Whearity, ‘John Terry Sherlock, Irish Volunteer, 1897-1920’.

⁸ Whearity, ‘Thomas hand, 1878-1920, Irish Volunteer’ in *Time & Tide 4*.

⁹ Whearity, ‘John Jack McGowan, 1900-1922, Irish Volunteer’.

¹⁰ Whearity, ‘Brothers in arms, Matthias and Joseph Derham, Irish Volunteers’.

¹¹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 Nov. 1920. Whearity, ‘John Jack ‘Rover’ McCann (1886-1920): Irish Volunteer, in *Fingal Studies*, p. 68.

¹² *Drogheda Independent*, 2 May, 1959.

that Rafferty, from Lusk, was aged twenty-two years when he died. He was a member of the Lusk Black Raven piper's band [formed circa. 1910 by Thomas Ashe] and he also played hurling for the Lusk team. His body lies at St MacCullins cemetery, Lusk. Meanwhile, Crenigan, from Roganstown, Swords, was aged twenty-one and is buried at Killossory cemetery, Kilsallaghan, Swords. Another Volunteer, Peter 'Cooty' Wilson, from Swords, who was killed in the Mendicity Institute, is buried at Dr Steeven's Hospital, Dublin. He is remembered there and also by a memorial plaque on a bridge leading to the Rathbeale Road at Swords.¹³

On the subject of memorials, Terence A. Dooley, mentions in his 2003 work 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle of Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' that there is no memorial to the eight Royal Irish Constabulary dead, nor to the three the civilians who got caught up in the fight and also lost their lives as a result.¹⁴ While it is probable that many people today would agree with the view that all the participants in an event such as occurred at Ashbourne, should be remembered. Nevertheless at the time of its erection and subsequent unveiling by the President of Ireland, Sean T. O'Kelly, it was clearly stated that the Ashbourne Monuments function was to commemorate the battle from the perspective of the Fifth Battalion and the two Irish Volunteers who died there, but no one else. The wording on a stone plinth confirms this and went:

Erected by the members of the Fingal Brigade old I.R.A. to commemorate the victorious battle, which took place near Ashbourne [on], 28 April 1916, where Volunteers John Crenigan & Thomas Rafferty gave their lives. Designed from the poem 'Let me carry your cross for Ireland Lord'. Composed by their leader commandant Thomas Ashe.¹⁵

In any event, the mores and values of today cannot be superimposed on those of yesteryear, as the circumstances would undoubtedly have been different. It was mentioned in the study that the second mobilisation point for the Fifth Battalion on

¹³ National Graves Association. Accessed from <http://www.nga.ie/search.php> (2 Aug. 2011). Census of Ireland, 1911.

¹⁴ Dooley 'Alexander 'Baby' Gray (1858-1916) and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916' in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 222.

¹⁵ Details from the stone plinth at the monument at Rath Cross, Ashbourne.

Easter Monday 24 April, was at Knocksedan Bridge near Swords. That place must have had an ongoing significance to the men who mustered there, as a memorial wall plaque was erected there in 1991. (See Plate 5).¹⁶

The aspect whereby the actions of the Fifth Battalion under the command of Thomas Ashe, were remembered while those of other Irish Volunteers elsewhere were more or less forgotten, was touched upon in the study. The answer seemed to center on the event now known as the battle of Ashbourne. It was seen that because Volunteers as at Meath and Louth, did not have such an event to sustain itself in the memory, that therefore their actions in Easter Week 1916 have been lost in the public consciousness. This is certainly not the case with the exploits of the Fifth Battalion, particularly when it comes to the engagement between it and the Royal Irish Constabulary on 28 April, 1916. Contemporary accounts can be found in newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* of 3 May 1916 among others, along with personal accounts of participants from the likes of Colonel Joseph Lawless, Michael McAllister and Charles Weston, *et. al.* However, these factual accounts though invaluable, nevertheless have a weakness in that there are invariably short on analysis, providing instead factual narratives about the actual events themselves. While this is to be expected, nevertheless, for modern appraisals of the Ashbourne event, one must look to the work of the above mentioned Terence Dooley and the more recent work of Noel Tier ‘The 5th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne, Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 to Sunday 30 April 1916’.¹⁷ Other published works on the subject of the Ashbourne fight are now readily available and the two mentioned above are examples of this.

In the fight itself, while it might have been the case that the police were caught off-guard, it nevertheless has to be borne in mind that the Royal Irish Constabulary

¹⁶ Photograph of Sean McCann, youngest son of John ‘Rover’ McCann, unveiling a plaque at Knocksedan Bridge in 1991. The photograph is in the possession of Sean’s wife Teresa McCann, Little Strand Street, Skerries. Sean was the third son of the Rover but because he was born in the weeks following his father’s death, he did not get the chance to know him.

¹⁷ Terence A. Dooley, ‘Alexander ‘Baby’ Gray (1858-1916), and the battle at Ashbourne, 28 April 1916’ in *Riocht na Midhe*, p. 222. For a more recent account, see Noel Tier, ‘The 5th battalion, Irish Volunteers, in Ashbourne Co. Meath and surrounding areas, Monday 24 April to Sunday 30 April 1916’ in *Riocht na Midhe*, pp 180-88.

had long been an armed military-type force. Their combatants in the Fifth Battalion were not a trained force by comparison. Furthermore, while the policemen were led by professional career men, the Volunteers followed a schoolteacher (Ashe), a telecommunications engineer (Mulcahy), a doctor (Hayes), farmers (Frank and Joseph Lawless), a stone mason (Charles Weston), to name just a few. In addition, the bulk of the rank and file was made up of ordinary workingmen whose only experience prior to the Rising was of rifle target practice and of hunting wildlife in the north county Dublin countryside. Despite this handicap they emerged with an unlikely victory on the day.

Each year, the members of the Fingal Old I.R.A. Commemoration Society, 1916-1921, gather at the monument to pay their respects to Crinigan and Rafferty.¹⁸ Sadly, no one gathers in the area to remember the dead Royal Irish Constabulary and civilians, but maybe someday in the future they will.

¹⁸ *Fingal Independent*, 18 April, 2003.

Appendix

Plate 1, National Volunteers parading at the Square, Skerries, 1914 ¹

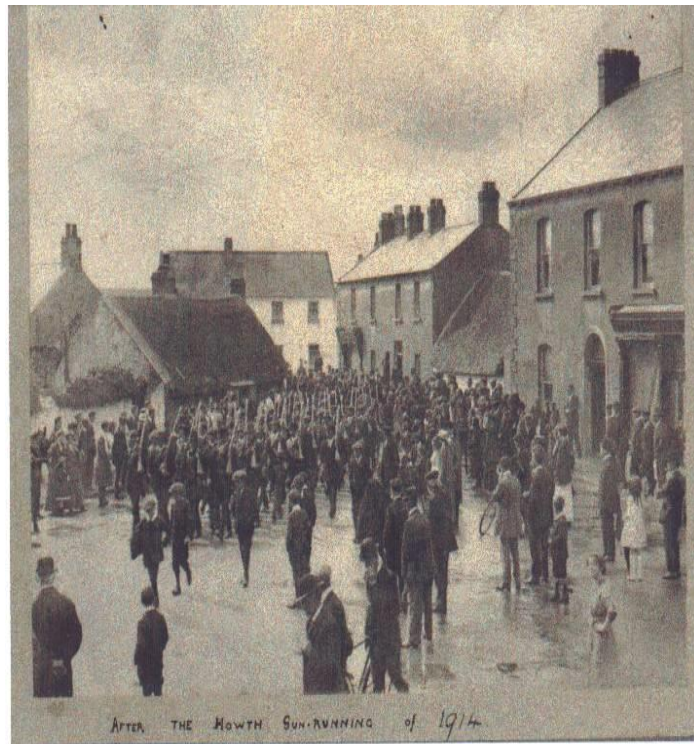


Plate 2, Holmpatrick Monument, Strand Street, Skerries (looking south).²



¹ Photograph in the possession of Mrs Lillie Derham, Church Street, Skerries; cited in Whearity, 'Matthias Derham, Irish Volunteer, 1883-1959' paper No. 239, read to the Skerries Historical Society, in 2003; cited in Fox, 'Recollections of Skerries in 1916' in *Time & Tide* 6, p. 134.

² Photograph of the Holmpatrick Monument, Strand Street, Skerries, circa, 1880-1914. (NLI. Call No. L_CAB_07352). Accessed from http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/L_CAB_07352 (9 June 2011)

Plate 3, Round Towers Lusk hurlers, circa. 1906.³



The above photograph, from left to right (top row), F, Carton, John Maypothor, Tom Sweetman, Dick Carton, James Williams, Dick Kelly, Dan McCann, and Dick Donnelly, (Middle row), John 'Rover' McCann, John Monks, Edward Rooney, Richard Aungier, John Kelly, Breen Mahony, and James Connelly, (bottom row), John Dennis, Matt McCann, John Rooney, Tommy McArdle, Michael Doyle, and James Rooney.

³ Photograph in the possession of Lennie Martin, Rush, County, Dublin. Whearity, 'John Jack 'Rover' McCann (1886-1920): Irish Volunteer' in Joseph Byrne (ed.) *Fingal Studies*, p. 54.

Plate 4, Black Raven piper's band, circa. 1912⁴



The band members were Joseph Clark, Patrick Doyle, Thomas Ashe, John Rooney, Nicholas Meehan, Matt McCann, James Sheridan, John Clarke, Richard Aungier, Richard McArdle, Jack McNally, and Matt Kelly.

⁴ Photograph of the Black Raven pipers band, Lusk, circa. 1912. The photograph is in the possession of Mrs Margaret McCann-Moore (Chairperson of the Loughshinny and Rush Historical Society), Quay Road, Rush, County Dublin.

Plate 5, Memorial erected at Knocksedan Bridge, Swords, in 1991⁵



Knutsford song

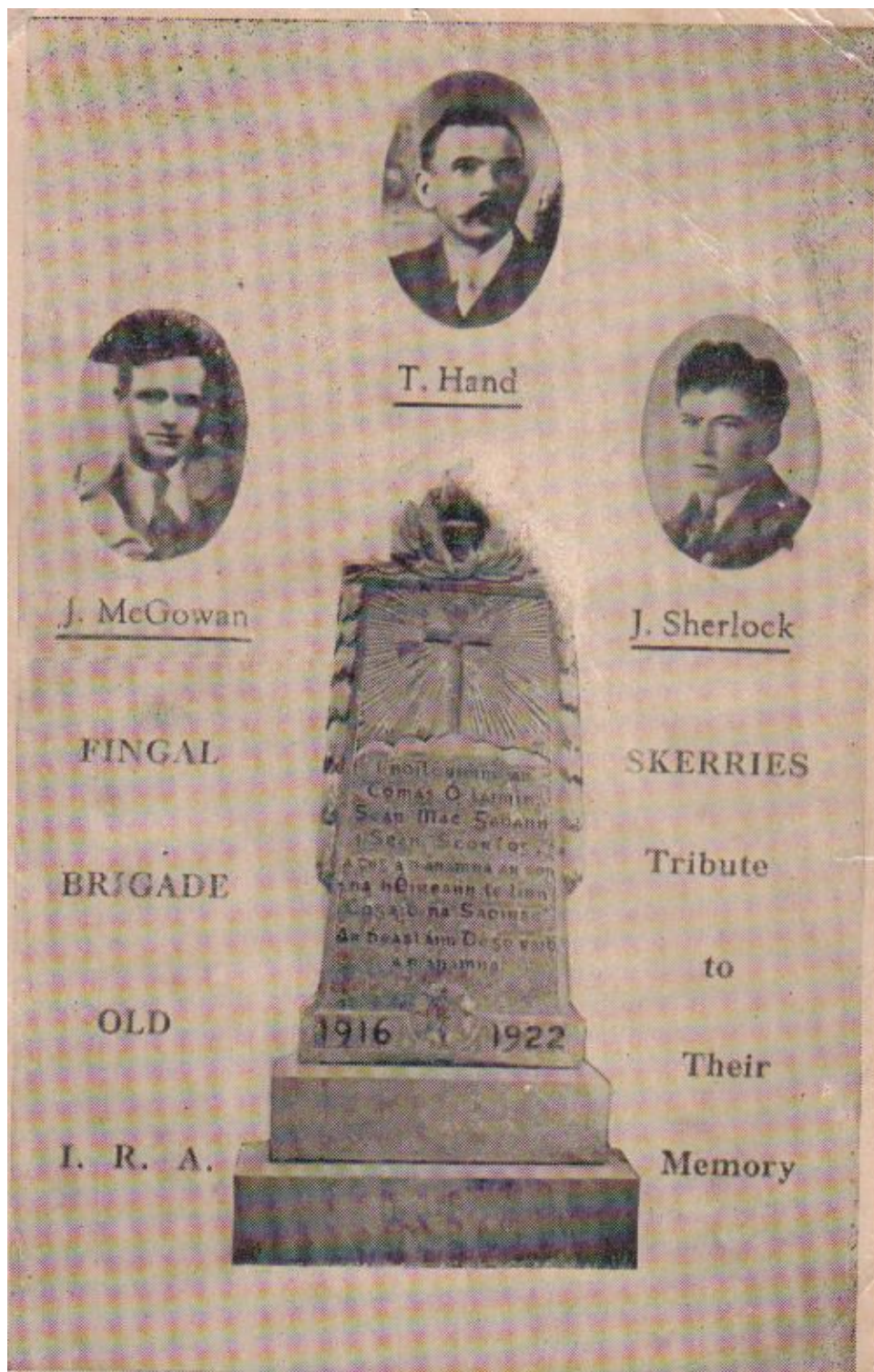
Patrick Brogan from Collinstown, Lusk, according to his son Thomas, brought home from Knutsford Prison, the words of a little song that they used to sing in the prison to pass the time. The words went as seen below:

In knutsford Jail we're lodging, for being rusty with the King. [chorus],
toor a loura lay. An hour a day for exercise, we're marched around a ring.
Toor a loura loura lay. If you happen to be talking, while round the ring
you're walking, you're marched up to your cell without delay. And next
up comes a soldier and his face is growing bolder and he shouts without a
rally, take in you're Tay. Toor a loura loura lay.⁶

⁵ Photograph of Sean McCann, youngest son of John 'Rover' McCann, unveiling a plaque at Knocksedan Bridge in 1991. The photograph is in the possession of Sean's wife Teresa McCann, Little Strand Street, Skerries.

⁶ Words of the Knutsford song were provided to this author by Thomas Brogan, formerly of Lusk, but thereafter at 45, North Priory, Navan Road, Dublin 7. The material came into the author's possession as a result of an exchange of correspondence in Feb. 2003.

Plate 6 (Three townsmen who died for Ireland)⁷



⁷ *Irish Independent*, 30 Oct. 1950. Postcard associated with the erection of a memorial to the above men on Sunday 29 Oct. 1950, in the author's possession.

Plate 7, Irish Volunteers fire volleys over the grave of Thomas Ashe at Glasnevin cemetery on 30 September 1917.⁸



A caption on the above photograph states that a volley of gunfire was provided by the Irish Volunteers. Immediately afterwards, Michael Collins delivered an oration, saying ‘nothing additional remains to be said. That volley which we have just heard is the only speech which is proper to make above the grave of a dead Fenian’.⁹

⁸ Photograph of Thomas Ashe’s interment in Sept. 1917 (Fingal County Library and Archive); cited in Askaboutireland. Accessed from, <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/looking-at-places/fingal/fingal-people/thomas-ashe/> (30 Sept. 2011).

⁹ O’Mahony, *The first hunger striker; Thomas Ashe*, 1917, p. 25.

Data-set of details for the 114 men arrested in north County Dublin after the 1916 Rising.

Artane (5)

On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; John Murphy, 31 Kilmore Cottages, an estate manager.¹⁰ On 3 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Peter Christie, a house painter, aged forty-five years and married.¹¹ On 6 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; John Joyce, Kilmore Road, a gardener, aged twenty-six years and single; Patrick Lamgare [or Lanigan] Kilmore Road, a labourer; and Owen McDermott, a carpenter, aged twenty-five years and single.¹²

Ashtown (2)

On 6 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; Thomas Robinson, 2 Park View, a clerk.¹³ On 8 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison, Robert O'Driscoll, a labourer, aged thirty-two years and single.¹⁴

Balbriggan (1)

James Madigan was sent on an unknown date, to an unknown place.¹⁵

Baldoyle (3)

On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; J. Gough, New Road; and J. McDonough, 18 Station Road.¹⁶ On 3 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Patrick Grant, GNR. Cottage, a motor mechanic, aged twenty-four years and single.¹⁷

¹⁰ *Irish Times*, 12 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 72. Census of Ireland.

¹¹ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 73. Census of Ireland.

¹² *Irish Times*, 14 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 76. Census of Ireland.

¹³ *Irish Times*, 14 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 76. Census of Ireland.

¹⁴ *Irish Times*, 15 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 79. Census of Ireland.

¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 9 June 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 91. Census of Ireland.

¹⁶ *Irish Times*, 12 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 71-2. Census of Ireland.

¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 73. Census of Ireland.

Blanchardstown (2)

On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; M. McNulty, the Mill; and Patrick McNulty, the Mill.¹⁸

Castleknock (7)

On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; A. Dowling, Main Road, no details, J. Dowling, Main Road, no details; Christopher Duffy, River Road Cottage, a labourer, aged forty-seven years and married; Patrick English, Dunsink Cottage, aged twenty-two years and single; John Mooney, River Road Cottage, aged twenty-one years and single; and Patrick Mooney, River View, aged twenty-three years and single.¹⁹ T. Bennet to England on an unknown date.²⁰

Cloghran (3)

Received a penal sentence, James V. Lawless, an assistant secretary at Dublin County Council, aged thirty-six years and married. Got a death sentence, but commuted to ten years.²¹ On 8 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; P. Ryan, Collinstown, a postman, aged twenty-two years and single.²² On 13 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; James O'Connor, Rickardstown, an apprentice and single.²³

Donabate (5)

On 3 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Bernard McAllister, a farmer's son, aged twenty-one years and single; Bartle Weston, Turvey, a stonemason, aged thirty years and single; and Charles Weston, stonemason, aged twenty-one years and single.²⁴ On 13 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; Edward Collins, Corballis, a farmer's son, aged thirty-four

¹⁸ *Irish Times*, 12 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 72. Census of Ireland.

¹⁹ *Irish Times*, 12 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 71-2. Census of Ireland.

²⁰ *Irish Times*, 25 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 87. Census of Ireland.

²¹ *Irish Independent*, 19 May 1916. *Nenagh Guardian*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland.

²² *Irish Times*, 15 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 79. Census of Ireland.

²³ *Irish Times*, 20 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 82. Census of Ireland.

²⁴ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 74-5. Census of Ireland.

years and single; and Daniel J. McAllister, Staffordstown, a farmer's son, aged thirty-five years and single.²⁵

Finglas (4)

On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; Brian O'Higgins, no details are known.²⁶ On 3 May, went from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Richard McKee, Finglas Bridge, a compositor, aged twenty-four years and single.²⁷ With no details, J. Moloney; and M. Tanning, went to England on unknown date and place.²⁸

Howth (4)

On 8 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; Gerard Reddin, Rock field, aged twenty-one years and single; Kenneth Reddin, Rock field, aged twenty-two years and single; and Thomas Reddin, Rock field, aged twenty-four years and single.²⁹ On 13 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; Barth Bowen, Melrose, a science teacher.³⁰

Lusk (26)

Thomas Ashe, a principal schoolteacher, aged thirty-one years and single, got a death sentence, but commuted to penal servitude for life. Went to Dartmoor Prison on 23 May.³¹ On an unknown date, went to England, Richard F. Hayes, a medical doctor, aged thirty-four years and single, got penal servitude for twenty years;³² Thomas Peppard, labourer, aged twenty-two years and single, got a death sentence, but commuted to three years penal servitude;³³ William Meehan, a

²⁵ *Weekly Irish Times*, 20, 27 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 81-2. Census of Ireland.

²⁶ *Irish Times*, 12 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 72. Census of Ireland.

²⁷ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 74. Census of Ireland.

²⁸ *Irish Times*, 25 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 88. Census of Ireland.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 15 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 79. Census of Ireland.

³⁰ *Weekly Irish Times*, 20, 27 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 81. Census of Ireland.

³¹ CM. List of Irish prisoners 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. No. 199265/16). *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland. O'Luing, *I die in a good cause; a study of Thomas Ashe, idealist and revolutionary*, p. 95.

³² Richard Hayes (Dr), photograph (NLI. MS 32695/1 (23)). *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 66. Census of Ireland.

³³ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland.

shoemaker, aged twenty-four and single, got a death sentence, but commuted to three years.³⁴

On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Patrick Carroll, Collinstown, a farmer, aged thirty-three years and single; Dan Brophy, a labourer, aged twenty-four years and single; Matthew Kelly, Back Lane, a labourer, aged thirty-two years and single; John McNally, a farmers son, aged twenty-one years and single.³⁵ On 3 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Patrick Brogan, Collinstown, a labourer, aged twenty-six years and single; John Devine, a labourer, aged thirty-four years and single; Thomas Kelly, Corduff, a labourer, aged nineteen years and single; Joseph Kelly, Corduff, a workhouse ward master, aged twenty-five years and single; Jack McCann, Back Lane, a labourer, aged thirty years and single; James Masterson, a labourer, aged twenty-four years and single; James Rooney, a farmer's son, aged eighteen years and single; Edward Rooney, a farmer's son, aged thirty-one years and single; Richard Rungien, a carpenter, other details unknown; Thomas Seaver, a farmer's son, aged twenty-one years and single and John Rafferty, Main Street, a groom, aged twenty-four and single.³⁶ On 6 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; John Hynes, Commons, a labourer, aged twenty-three years and single.³⁷ On 8 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison, Patrick Sherwin, Newhaggard, a labourer, aged twenty-five years and single.³⁸ On 13 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; Francis, Murphy, an apprentice fitter, aged eighteen years and single.³⁹ On unknown dates, went to England; John Menally, other details unknown; and Patrick Caddell, farmer, thirty-three years and single.⁴⁰ Details for Dick, Kelly and James Gough, are not known.⁴¹

³⁴ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland. MacGiolla Choille (ed.), *Intelligence notes, 1913-1916*, pp 262-4. Bernadette Marks, 'More history uncovered' in Bernadette Marks (ed.), *Swords voices*, Vol.1, pt., 10 (2003), p. 19.

³⁵ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 70. Census of Ireland.

³⁶ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 73-5. Census of Ireland.

³⁷ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 76. Census of Ireland.

³⁸ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 79. Census of Ireland.

³⁹ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 82. Census of Ireland.

⁴⁰ Art O'Briain papers (NLI. MS 8442-8445). Details of Irish prisoners, 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.P.R. 15564/16). Census of Ireland. O'Mahony, *Frongoch; university of revolution*, pp 176, 181.

⁴¹ Joseph Murray, a copy of a list of prisoners in north Camp, Frongoch 1916 (NLI. MS. 1650). Census of Ireland. O'Mahony, *Frongoch; university of revolution*, p. 183.

Malahide (1)

On 3 May, went from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; James O'Connell, 9 Parnell Cottages, a labourer, aged twenty-five years and single.⁴²

Skerries (20)

On 3 May to Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Matthias Derham, Hoar Rock, a carpenter, aged thirty-two years and single; Joseph Kelly, a grocer's assistant, aged thirty-nine years and single; and James McDonnell, Little Strand Street, a druggist, aged forty-eight years.⁴³ On 6 May, from Arbour Hill Prison to Wakefield Prison; Joseph Beggs, the Square, a fishmonger, aged twenty-seven years and single; Robert Derham, Hoar Rock, a motor mechanic, aged twenty-three years and single; William Ganly, Baldungan, a farmer, aged sixty-four years and married; Peter Gibbons, Baldungan, a farmer, aged forty-one years and married; Thomas Hand, Milverton, a van man, aged thirty-seven years and married; Peter Keane, Strand Street, a schoolteacher, aged twenty-five years and single; Joseph McGuinness, Cross Street, a boot maker, aged twenty-five years and single; Thomas O'Reilly, North Bank, a baker, aged twenty-four years and single; J.H. Reynolds, Balbriggan Street, a warehouse man, aged twenty-four years and single; Michael Shanley, Hoar Rock, a van man, aged twenty years and single; John Sherlock, Town Park, a labourer, aged eighteen years and single; Joseph Shiels, Cross Street, a clerk, aged thirteen years and single; Michael Lacey, Strifeland, a blacksmith, aged twenty-five years and single; and Dennis Maguire, Strifeland, a farmer's son, aged forty years and single.⁴⁴ On 9 May, one man went from Richmond Barracks to Wandsworth Prison; Joseph Derham, a clerk in the Land Commission, aged twenty-nine years and single.⁴⁵ On 13 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; Joseph Thornton, a farmer's son

⁴² *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 74. Census of Ireland.

⁴³ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 73-4. Census of Ireland.

⁴⁴ *Weekly Irish times*, 20 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 77-8. *Sunday Independent*, 14 May 1916: Census of Ireland. David Fitzpatrick, 'Skerries and the Rising of Easter Week' paper No., 13 read to Skerries Historical Society, in 1949.

⁴⁵ *Irish Times*, 16 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 79. Census of Ireland,

and seed merchant, aged thirty-five years and single.⁴⁶ Another Skerries man, whose details are sparse, was fifteen-year-old Anthony Duffe.⁴⁷

St Margaret's (3)

On 9 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wandsworth Prison; Thomas Duke, a farmer's son, aged twenty-three years and single; Richard Duke, farmer's son, aged twenty-five years and single; and Thomas Riley, Ivy Cottage, no details.⁴⁸

Sutton (3)

On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; M. Nolan, Burrow field.
⁴⁹ On 3 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Richard Mulcahy, Bay View, a post and telegraph technician and single; and Thomas Maxwell, a gardener, aged twenty-five years and single.⁵⁰

Swords (25)

Went to England on unknown dates, James Crenigan, aged sixteen years and single, got two years penal servitude with one year remitted.⁵¹ Was one of those subjected to court-martial in Richmond Barracks on 4 May.⁵² Richard Coleman, an insurance agent, aged twenty-five years and single, got a death sentence, but commuted to three years.⁵³ James Marks, aged twenty-one years and single, got a death sentence, but commuted to three years.⁵⁴ Joseph Norton, a labourer, aged thirty-eight years and single, got a death sentence, but commuted to three years.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ *Weekly Irish Times*, 20, 27 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 82. Census of Ireland. Thornton's name is found for a second time in the *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 86, and states that he went from Richmond Prison to Knutsford on 16 June 1916.

⁴⁷ Census of Ireland, 1911. *Irish Times*, 30 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 89.

⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 16 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 79-80. Census of Ireland.

⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 12 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 72. Census of Ireland.

⁵⁰ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 74. Census of Ireland.

⁵¹ Crenigan, W.S. No. 148. CM. List of Irish prisoners 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. No. 19265/16). *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland.

⁵² Details about James Crenigan (PRO. W.O. 71/351); cited in Brian Barton, *Behind a closed door; secret court martial records of the 1916 Rising* (reprint. Belfast, 2003), pp 237, 258.

⁵³ CM. List (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. No. 19265/16). *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland.

⁵⁴ CM. List (NAI. C.S.O.R. P. No. 19265/16). *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland. MacGiolla Choille (ed.), *Intelligence notes, 1913-1916*, pp 262-4. Marks, 'More history uncovered' in *Swords voices*, p. 19.

⁵⁵ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland.

James Wilson, a labourer, Balheary, seventeen years and single, got two years penal servitude.⁵⁶ William Wilson, Balheary, aged twenty-four years, got a death sentence, but commuted to three years.⁵⁷ Frank J. Lawless, aged forty-five years and married, got a death sentence, but commuted to ten years.⁵⁸ On 1 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; Edward Lawless, a farmer, aged thirty-nine years and married; and Joseph Kelly, Commons West, Swords, a labourer, aged twenty-five years and single.⁵⁹ On 3 May, from Richmond Barracks to Knutsford Prison; William Doyle, Lissenhall, a farm labourer, aged twenty-eight years and single; and Edward Stafford, a butcher's assistant, aged nineteen years and single.⁶⁰ On 8 May, from Richmond Barracks to Stafford Prison; Peter Moran, Forest-little, a farmer's son, aged twenty-seven years and single⁶¹ On 9 May, from Richmond Barracks to Wandsworth Prison; Thomas Duff, a farmer, aged forty-five years and married; Patrick J. Early, a farmers son, aged twenty-six years and single; Peter Kelly, a clerk in Land Commission, aged twenty-nine years and single; Christopher Moran, a clerk in the Land Commission, aged nineteen years and single; Christopher Nugent, aged nineteen years and single; Joseph Taylor, aged twenty years and single; Thomas Taylor, aged twenty-seven years and single; and Christopher Taylor, shop assistant, aged twenty-two years and single.⁶² On 2 June, from Richmond Barracks to Wakefield Prison; James Rickard, aged nineteen years and single.⁶³ Went to England on unknown dates; T. Ryan, Kilsallaghan, blacksmith, aged thirty-nine years and single; Thomas Weston, stonemason, aged twenty-three years and single; P. Manning, Kilsallaghan;⁶⁴ Joseph Lawless, aged eighteen years and single.⁶⁵

⁵⁶ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland. Marks, 'More history uncovered' in *Swords voices*, p. 19.

⁵⁷ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland. Marks, 'More history uncovered' in *Swords voices*, p. 19.

⁵⁸ *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 64. Census of Ireland.

⁵⁹ *Irish Times*, 11 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 70. Census of Ireland.

⁶⁰ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 5. Census of Ireland.

⁶¹ *Irish Times*, 15 May 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p.79. Census of Ireland.

⁶² *Irish Times*, 11, 13, 15, 16 May 1916: *Leitrim Observer*, 19 Mar. 1932: *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 70, 73-5, 78-80. Census of Ireland.

⁶³ *Irish Times*, 5 June 1916. *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, p. 85. Census of Ireland.

⁶⁴ Letter from Mrs Weston, Danestown, Swords, dated 11 Dec. 1916 (NAI. C.S.O.R.P. No. 16627/18. Letter No. 316211/4). *Irish Times*, 25 May 1916: *Sinn Fein rebellion handbook*, pp 87-8, 90.

⁶⁵ Joseph Lawless, W.S., No. 1,043.

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