



The Sound of Freedom

ISBN 978-1-78849-125-9
eBook ISBN 978-1-78849-199-0

Ann Murtagh

Historical note from the author

The Sound of Freedom is a fictional story, but it is based firmly on history. Here are some facts that are woven into the story, along with references for those who want to find out more.

Chapter 1

'Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland.'

This is the first line of the chorus of the 'Soldier's Song', composed by Peadar Kearney and Patrick Heeney in 1907. It later became a popular marching song for the Irish Volunteers. It was translated into Irish in the 1920s and used as the Irish national anthem from 1926.

historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/countdown-to-2016-a-soldiers-song-amhran-na-bhfiann/

'We're all under instructions from Dev not to have anything to do with the RIC and it's not sitting well with them.'

On 10 April 1919, at the third meeting of Dáil Éireann, the president of the Dáil, Éamon de Valera, advised the people of Ireland to avoid having any contact with the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) as they were 'the eyes and ears of the enemy'.

David McCullagh, *De Valera Rise 1882–1932* (Dublin, 2017), p. 159.

'If I was brave enough to take that paper, it would prove that I was ready to join the Volunteers.'

The Irish Volunteers were organised into units like an army, the smallest unit being the 'company'. They were closely linked to Sinn Féin.

Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2014), pp 35–7.

'I could be drilling with the men in the fields by Sunday.'

Local companies, such as the Glenidan Company, often drilled in the fields at night.

IMA, BMH, WS 1439, James Maguire.

... the cold air was filled with the clanging of Joe Lynch's hammer on the hoop of a barrel.

Joe Lynch was a cooper in the local area (Ankerland).

www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/5009029/4979045

Chapter 2

Sinn Féin members and supporters were well used to being called by the nickname 'Rainbow Chasers'.

'Rainbow Chasers' was the name given to members of the Sinn Féin party and its supporters by the Irish Parliamentary Party or Home Rule Party. The Sinn Féin party was in favour of setting up its own parliament or 'Dáil' in Dublin, independent of the United Kingdom. The Irish Party supported 'Home Rule'. This meant setting up a parliament in Dublin, with Ireland still being part of the United Kingdom.

Interestingly, in her essay, 'Prisoner into Politician. A Biographical Study of de Valera in 1917', Mary Bromage suggested that the term 'rainbow chasers' referred to all the colours on the republican flag.

The Review of Politics, vol. 11, No. 4 (Oct 1949), pp 433–48.

What about your good friend Seán MacDermott?'

Seán MacDermott (1883–1916) from County Leitrim, one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, was executed on 12 May 1916. Local man Patrick McCabe said in his Witness Statement that Seán MacDermott was recruiting men for the Irish Volunteers in Castlepollard in 1914.

IMA, BMH, WSI551 Patrick McCabe

‘And you were spotted in Granard last year with Michael Collins.’

Michael Collins (1890–1922) was Minister for Finance in the new Dáil. A police report noted that he was in Granard in April 1918.

granardmotte.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Michael-Collins-Granard-2.pdf

‘Tell us about Joe Kennedy and the meetings in Castlepollard.’

Michael J. Kennedy (1897–1965), known as Joe Kennedy, was a local Sinn Féin activist in Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath. He later went on to be a Fianna Fáil TD for Longford-Westmeath.

oireachtas.ie/en/members/member/Michael-J-Kennedy.D.1927-06-23/

Chapter 3

‘The Irish Republican Brotherhood.’ ‘Is that something new?’ I asked. ‘New? Not at all. It’s been around these fifty-odd years.’

The goal of the secret organisation known as the IRB was to set up a Republic of Ireland by the use of force. The members were known as Fenians back in the 1860s when they planned and carried out a rebellion in 1867, which failed. The IRB was active during the Land War in the 1880s and the members of its council organised the 1916 Rising.

Owen McGee, ‘The Irish Republican Brotherhood’ in J. Crowley and D. Ó Drisceoil (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), pp 128–33.

‘You know Mam’s favourite book in the parlour?’ ‘Knocknagow?’

Knocknagow by Charles Kickham was a popular book in Ireland from the time it was published in 1873. People liked it because it was about what mattered to them: tenant farmers (farmers who rented land), land agents (rent collectors) and landlords (land owners).

Charles Kickham was president of the IRB from 1873 to 1882.

John O’Beirne Ranelagh, *A Short History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 128.

‘Is Michael Collins in it?’

Micheal Collins was president of the IRB in 1919.

Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2014), p. 87.

‘Was she in Cumann na mBan?’

Cumann na mBan was a women’s organisation. They supported the Irish Volunteers. Their duties included looking after the Volunteers if they were wounded; passing on information and messages; and getting, storing or delivering arms and ammunition.

Marie Coleman, ‘Cumann na mBan in the War of Independence’ in J. Crowley and D. Ó Drisceoil (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), p. 400.

Chapter 4

Portland Maine, USA

Portland was a hub for people emigrating from Galway, especially the coastal area.

mainememory.net/sitebuilder/site/1124/page/1605/display

Chapter 5

I could hear Paddy Burke’s hammer striking the anvil.

Paddy Burke was a blacksmith in Castlepollard.

Census of Ireland 1911, 6 Chapel Street, Castlepollard.

A group of women huddled outside Gibney’s Bar and Hardware.

Thomas Gibney owned this business in the Square in Castlepollard in 1919.

Census of Ireland 1911, 38 The Square, Kinturk, Co. Westmeath. (Kinturk was an old name for Castlepollard.)

A dozen boys and girls waited outside the Commercial Hall for music.

The Commercial Hall of Castlepollard was built by Mr Michael Kennedy and opened in 1919.

Westmeath Examiner, 15 March 1919.

Chapter 7

‘I wonder if Chris was at the Gaelic League meeting in Delvin today.’

This outdoor Gaelic League meeting took place in Denis Hegarty’s field outside Delvin on Sunday, 27 April 1919.

Meath Chronicle, 10 May 1919.

Fr O’Flanagan, Vice-President of Sinn Féin, was much in demand as a speaker.

Fr Michael O’Flanagan (1876–1942) a native Irish speaker from Co. Roscommon, was vice-president of Sinn Féin in 1919 (a position he held jointly with Arthur Griffith).

Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913–1923* (London, 2015), p. 184.

It is true that the parish priest banned Fr O’Flanagan from giving a talk for the Gaelic League in the hall in Delvin, and hence it took place in a field.

Midland Reporter, 1 May 1919 and *Irish Independent*, 2 May 1919.

Dad had campaigned for local man Larry Ginnell in the elections before Christmas. He had been elected for Sinn Féin.

Laurence Ginnell (1852–1923) was elected for Sinn Féin for North Westmeath in the 1918 election. He had been an Independent and a member of the Irish Party before that.

For more background on Laurence Ginnell: rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/the-member-for-ireland-laurence-ginnell-and-1916

‘A letter came from Mam’s uncle in Argentina, this week.’

Westmeath people had been emigrating to Argentina since the 1830s.

westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/library/explorewestmeath/localstudies/argentinianconnection/

Chapter 8

Oliver and Joe were the two youngest and they sang ‘Dilín Ó Deamhas’.

This was a traditional Irish nursery rhyme/song.

Patsy gave a recitation of his favourite poem, ‘The Old Brown Horse’.

This was a popular poem, by American poet W.F. Holmes (1809–1894).

Peter sang the ‘Spailpín Fánach’.

This is a song from the late eighteenth century in which a wandering farm labourer tells about the hardship of his life. The ‘spalpeens’ used to gather at fairs and public places to be hired by the local farmers.

odonohoearchive.com/an-spailpin-fanach/

‘Did you hear they’re showing Knocknagow in the cinema in Oldcastle tomorrow?’

The Oldcastle Electric Cinema was opened by Charlie Fox in 1914.

The film *Knocknagow*, based on the book, was made by the Film Company of Ireland in 1918.

humphrysfamilytree.com/OMara/knocknagow.html

It was shown in the Navan Picture Palace in 1918 on 5 and 6 August.

Meath Chronicle, 27 July 1918.

‘My wee brother’s name is James, called after the great James Connolly.’

James Connolly (1868–1916) had lived in Belfast where he worked as a trade unionist from 1911 to 1914. He led the Irish Citizen Army as part of the Easter Rising in 1916 and was executed on 12 May 1916.

Anne-Marie Ryan, *16 Dead Men* (Cork, 2014), p. 210.

Chapter 9

The poor lad is in prison. He got into trouble with the police during the strike there after Christmas and ended up doing time.’

A strike by engineering workers looking for a shorter working week was organised in Belfast in January 1919. During the First World War, they had worked very long hours. But there was also another reason for a shorter working week: it would create jobs for soldiers coming back to Belfast after the war. The strike started on 25 January and lasted four weeks. The workers did not get their demands.

rte.ie/radio/radioplayer/html5/#/radio1/21511621

Faith of our Fathers, holy faith.

This was a Catholic hymn written in 1849 by Frederick William Faber.

Chapter 13

‘Regarding your letter of application, please come to the Saint Vincent de Paul Hall in Kells, Co. Meath.’

The St Vincent de Paul Hall in Kenlis Place, Kells, was built in 1914.

Meath Chronicle, 9 May 1914.

Five years later, it was still referred to as ‘the new hall’.

Meath Chronicle, 8 March 1919.

I whistled ‘God Save Ireland’ and walked across the yard to the rhythm of it.

This song was written by T.D. Sullivan in 1867 about three Fenians who were hanged in Manchester that year and became known as ‘The Manchester Martyrs’. They belonged to a group who tried to rescue two arrested Fenians from a horse-drawn police van. A policeman in the van was shot and killed as the men tried to open the van by blowing up the lock. The song ‘God Save Ireland’ became the unofficial national anthem of Ireland in the years before the 1916 Rising.

encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/god-save-ireland

Chapter 14

Six or seven years ago, when the vote wasn’t given to women, she took to breaking windows in Dublin Castle, she was that fed up of waiting.’

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877–1946) was a suffragette and Irish nationalist. Along with seven other women, she smashed windows in Dublin Castle on 13 June 1912 as part of a protest to get women the right to vote.

Margaret Ward, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Suffragette and Sinn Féiner* (Dublin, 2017), p. xxi.

Chapter 16

‘Captain Farrell?’ I repeated. ‘For God’s sake, boy, aren’t you with the Leinsters? Didn’t you come through the field of barbed wire?’

This refers to Captain Valentine Farrell of Moynalty, Co. Meath. He fought with the Leinster Regiment in the First World War.

Kevin Myers, *Ireland’s Great War* (Dublin, 2015), p. 173.

Chapter 17

The Spire of Loyd is an inland lighthouse outside Kells, built in 1791 by the first Earl of Bective in memory of his father.

Kells RIC Barracks

irishconstabulary.com/meath-t1641-s20.html

Chapter 18

... we could hear a man singing ‘A Nation Once Again’ as he was being escorted to a cell.

The lyrics were written by Young Irelander Thomas Davis, and published in the newspaper *The Nation* in 1844.

irishmusicdaily.com/a-nation-once-again-3

The following shops and businesses were all in Kells in 1919: **Nulty’s** (Census of Ireland 1911, 2 Newmarket Street, and *Meath Chronicle* 27 December 1919); **McEntee’s** (Census of Ireland 1911, 5 Newmarket Street); **Medical Hall** (Census of Ireland 1911, 4 Headfort Place) and **Headfort Arms Hotel** (Census of Ireland 1911, 6 Headfort Place).

The **billiards room** in the St Vincent de Paul Hall was completed early in 1914 before the hall was built.

Meath Chronicle, 28 February 1914.

Chapter 19

... outside McQuestions’ house at the corner...

The McQuestion family had a house at the corner of the Square in Castlepollard.

Census of Ireland 1911, 14 The Square, Kinturk, Co. Westmeath.

... Mrs Sheehy Skeffington in the Square in Castlepollard.

This reception took place in Castlepollard on 5 July 1919.

Jack O’Sheehan (1879–1967) and his wife Molly were there. An American journalist was also present, but I was unable to find out her name, so I made up the name Jacinta Malone. As a matter of interest, Jack O’Sheehan’s sister, Mary, was married to Arthur Griffith, vice-president of Sinn Féin.

Sources for the reception and the aeraíocht:

IMA, BMH, WS 1550, John Macken and IMA, BMH, WS 1551, Patrick McCabe

Westmeath Examiner, 12 July 1919

Midland Reporter, 10 July 1919.

Chapter 20

Stop right there! I am District Inspector Foley.’

This was the District Inspector of the RIC who was there on the day.

Westmeath Examiner, 12 July 1919.

... the Castlepollard Massacre people called it. People were fired on at a fair day.

Around two thousand people attended the fair in Castlepollard on 23 May 1831. Some fighting broke out and the police arrested one of the ringleaders. While they were trying to bring him to the barracks, he was rescued and carried off by the crowd. The police fixed bayonets, trying to clear the area. The people were slow to move and started throwing stones at the police who moved into the market house in the Square. Chief Constable Blake, the man in charge, read the Riot Act and sent out his constables again. When people in the crowd threw more

stones, he ordered his men to fire on the crowd. Thirteen people were shot dead and four others injured.

mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/6343/1/John%20Kenny%20mlitt.pdf

Connaught Telegraph, 8 June 1831; Micheál Ó Conláin, *The Castlepollard massacre, 1831* (Mullingar, 1981).

Chapter 21

The meeting in **Cushendall**, to which Hanna Sheehy Skeffington refers, happened the week before.

Irish Independent, 3 July 1919.

‘... up in the hills between Lough Glore and the White Lake.’

The secret location for the aeraíocht was in this area known as Johnstown, but the Brady family referred to in the story is fictitious.

For an account of the aeraíocht, refer to sources listed for chapter 19.

Chapter 22

‘She was a member of the Ladies’ Land League in Fore, back in the time of the Land War.’

Following bad weather in 1879, the potato crop was very poor. This meant that, in many cases, farmers on small farms couldn’t afford to pay the rent and were evicted from their land. The Land League was started by Michael Davitt to stand up for the rights of tenant farmers. Charles Stewart Parnell became its president. His sister Fanny started the Ladies’ Land League to help families who had been evicted. In 1882, the Ladies’ Land League in Fore organised a bazaar in the grounds of Fore Church at which a raffle for a silver watch took place.

Ann Murtagh, *The Portrait of a Tenant Community 1879–1882* (Dublin, 1999), p. 27.

Chapter 23

Joe Kennedy and **Hanna Sheehy Skeffington** both spoke at this illegal aeraíocht.

Sources for the reception and the aeraíocht: IMA, BMH, WS 1550, John Macken and IMA, BMH, WS 1551, Patrick McCabe; *Westmeath Examiner*, 12 July 1919, and *Midland Reporter*, 10 July 1919.

Chapter 26

‘**The Kiernans’ hotel?**’ asked Nan.

Michael Collins often visited the Greville Arms Hotel in Granard, owned by the Kiernan family. He was going out with family member Kitty Kiernan at this stage.

Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 345.

Chapter 28

‘... she ended up in the family way and had to go into a Magdalen Asylum.’

There was a Magdalen Asylum for unmarried pregnant girls/women in Galway.

historicgraves.com/graveyard/magdalen-laundry-forster-st-galway/ga-mlfs