



Newtownmountkennedy & District Tidy Towns

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Heart of History
1798 Festival of Remembrance

The 225th Anniversary
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Cille Mannáin



Origins of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland

Dr. Ruan O'Donnell

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The origins of the tumultuous Great Rebellion of 1798 were both national and international. Dramatic changes in political thought and practises were well reported in the Irish print media of the 1770s and at a time when popular literacy and the regional newspaper market was rapidly expanding. Improved education, transport infrastructure, technology all played parts in the rapid modernization of the country. The population surged from the mid-1700s due to its relatively healthy mixed diet and conditions of everyday life. Matters proved that substantial elements of the new generations were receptive to the core philosophical ideas of the European Enlightenment which questioned the legitimacy of monarchy, hereditary entitlement and religious intolerance.

The last decades of the 1700s in Ireland witnessed increased social interaction between the majority Christian denominations and the then ruling 'Established' Anglican faith (Church of Ireland) which derived its 'official' status by virtue of 'penal laws' imposed by the pre-democratic parliamentary forums of London and Dublin in the aftermath of the Williamite Wars (1690-91). Into the 1770s around 3% of the population, COI members who owned valuable property, commanded 100% of political authority. They were further bolstered by the 'tithe' which taxed non-Protestants to support the COI hierarchy. This aggrieved Catholics, who numbered approximately 80% of the population as well as 'Dissenting' Presbyterians and non-conformist Protestants (i.e. Society of Friends and Methodists). By the 1770s laws imposed to minimize challenges to Williamite era power structures seemed archaic to progressive Protestant reformers Henry Grattan and Henry Flood. Grattan, an MP for Dublin and later Wicklow, lived at Tinnahinch, Enniskerry.

Ireland possessed a 'Patriot Party' led by such figureheads prior to the success of the very similar American coterie of the same name in 1783 when revolutionary warfare severed thirteen linked colonies from the British Empire. Irish migrants were the largest foreign-born participants in the conflict and the exploits of George Washington's rebel armies were assiduously reported in the media. One of Washington's three aide-de-camp was his Wicklow born neighbour and friend John Fitzgerald of Alexandria, Virginia. Pro-American sentiment in Ireland was so alarming to London that companies of 'Volunteers' were raised to dissuade the France allies of Philadelphia from mounting an opportunist invasion. Yet the Volunteers, once embodied, issued political statements influenced by Grattan's reformists.

An intimidated Imperial Parliament in Westminster ceded significant civil rights to Irish Catholics by 1783, not least qualified entitlement to the franchise, access to university education, consideration for military command and acceptance of weapons possession. The push for full 'emancipation' of the majority faith, however, was not entertained in London and a cause for concern in its Dublin Castle base given that any subsequent shift to democratic systems along the lines achieved on the opposite side of the Atlantic would almost certainly invert the political order. Separation of Church and State, moreover, refuted the authority claimed by the monarchy since the reign of Henry the Eighth. Irish

and British conservatives maintained the feudal concept that land ownership essentially bound the social elite to good governance. Raising Crown subjects to active citizenship entailed the operation of Democracy which for most European powers was a dangerous experiment.

Yet the American Republic was not only brought into being by popular forces but quickly stabilized without a descent into the chaos predicted by foes. Much worse for the those who wished to stem the transatlantic tide, the French monarchy, most powerful of all in the western world, succumbed to revolution in July 1789. This altered the course of global history. Arguments that an overwhelmingly Catholic population in a large country could not administer itself without the whip hand of aristocracy rang hollow. Repeated efforts by foreign powers from April 1792, not least Britain, failed to eradicate the perceived menace. A massive French army dedicated to principles of citizenship, meritocracy and professionalism threatened disaster for the old powers as Paris mounted counter-offensives.

Unsurprisingly, the stunning achievements of the French found favour in Ireland where matters were minutely documented in broadsheets and pamphlets. Many Irish intellectuals who sympathised with American grievances regarding taxation without representation, religious discrimination and lack of national self-determination naturally hailed events closer to home. A hybrid of American and French democracy, adapted to suit Irish conditions on the ground, was an obvious solution to inherited and generally unwanted social divisions. The first and second anniversaries of the French Revolution were publicly celebrated in Dublin and Belfast. It was no coincidence that the Society of United Irishmen was co-founded in both cities in October/ November 1791 by a small group radical professionals and merchants with Church of Ireland and Presbyterian but also Catholic heritage. Leading figure Theobald Wolfe Tone declared from the outset that the path to democracy in Ireland would necessitate the breaking of 'the connection with England'. An early adherent, William Michael Byrne, lived at Park Hill in the Glen of the Downs.

Tone, William Drennan, Thomas Russell, WJ MacNeven, Samuel Neilson, Thomas Addis Emmet and others did not necessarily envisage armed revolution in 1791 but Britain's hostility towards France led to its declaration of war in February 1793 and pro-democratic discourse became treasonous. Government preparations to resist invasion extended to the raising of the Irish Militia; an ambitious task that stimulated violent countermeasures by the illegal 'Defenders' in many counties in 1793. They were the first mass based republican organization in Irish history and were soon courted as allies by the exasperated United Irishmen. Hopes that democracy could be peaceably attained were dashed in March 1795 when the liberal Lord Lieutenant William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, a man with extensive south Wicklow estates, was recalled to London for his support of Catholic Emancipation. By then the United Irishmen had negotiated an alliance with Paris that envisaged French military aid for a revolutionary thrust. Ahead of arrest, Tone went to America in May 1795 to lay the ground for this strategy. While he intrigued in Philadelphia and later Paris, the United Irishmen underwent exponential growth with hundreds of thousands committing themselves by an illegal oath to 'unite Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter [Presbyterian].'

Dublin Castle was by no means oblivious to the manifesting threat posed by the United Irishmen and from late 1796 raised the Irish Yeomanry, a type of low-grade militia capable of policing their home districts. The surprise appearance of a French invasion fleet off the coast of Cork in December 1796 signalled that the moment of truth was nearing, even if severe weather prevented a landing. The spring of 1797 witnessed the violent 'dragooning' of Ulster and the often brutal use of the military to disarm civilians spread into the Midlands and East Coast in the course of the year. Suspected United Irishmen in the Yeomanry were flushed out whenever detected and thousands of untried men were dispatched to the Royal Navy and foreign service battalions of the army. Leinster was subjected to severe repression under coercive legislation in the early months of 1798. Fearing that their capacity to support French allies was being steadily eroded, the Military Committee of the Supreme Directory of the United Irishmen took the difficult decision to mount an insurrection prior to invasion.

While much of the political leadership of the organization had been rounded up in March 1798, not least William Michael Byrne, key figures such as 'Citizen Lord' Edward Fitzgerald and Samuel Neilson in Dublin and Henry Joy McCracken in Belfast, remained at large. The underground militants attempted to spark a national revolt in Dublin on 23 May 1798 which they hoped to capture by surprise mobilization. This was to be immediately supported by uprisings across the country to tie down city garrison forces and buy time for the French to arrive in sufficient strength to deter British reinforcement. Matters went awry from the outset when a last-minute warning enabled Dublin Castle to turn out its men ahead of the rebels, although skirmishing commenced in the capital and its environs.

The non-arrival of the city mails misled Kildare rebels into believing that all had gone according to plan and a substantial turnout ensued. Several small towns were overrun and only a series of checks and minor counter-attacks kept the pikemen from pressing into County Dublin. On the night of 23-24 May, the Great Rebellion gradually flared and spread into Carlow and the Wicklow borderlands. Unfortunately for the United Irishmen, it was soon apparent that the city had not fallen to republicans and that the French were not on Irish shores. For this reason the provincial level commanders in Ulster, Munster and Connaught declined to deviate from the original battle plan. Yet thousands of rebels were in the field whom, if incapable of overrunning Dublin, were nonetheless the most significant manifested threat to British authority in living memory. London was obliged to urgently commit reinforcements to Ireland at a time when a French descent on the English coast was much feared. Due to its proximity to Dublin and strong United Irishman presence, Wicklow was the site of bitter contest in the summer of 1798.

The Battle of Newtownmountkennedy, 30 May 1798

On 24 May 1798 the United Irishmen were repulsed with heavy loss from Ballymore Eustace, Stratford on Slaney, Dunlavin and Baltinglass while Kildare Town and Ballitore were overrun. In Meath, Dunboyne, Ratoath and Dunshaughlin were attacked as rebels stirred in the Barretstown area of Kilkenny. Major engagements took place on 25 May at Hacketstown and Carlow Town with many lesser actions on both sides of the Kildare/ Dublin border. Meath rebels congregated at Tara Hill were heavily assaulted and dispersed on 26 May while Rathangan in Kildare was captured. North Wexford rebels routed a company of the North Cork Militia at Oulart Hill on 27 May leading to substantial further mobilization of the United Irishmen. Prisoners were executed in Carnew, as had occurred in Dunlavin, in a cold-blooded massacre by vengeful and probably nervous Crown forces. Dublin Castle, however, had weathered the initial storm and the quiescence of Munster enabled the transfer of most of its reserves to Leinster the same day. Ulster remained dormant but deemed too volatile to have the military redeployed south.

In a disastrous turn of fortune, Kildare rebels who had negotiated generous terms of surrender were attacked at the Gibbet Rath on 29 May obliging many to remain under arms just as rebel fortunes in Wexford were buoyant following their seizure of Enniscorthy. This presented a major problem for the Government as the Wicklow mountains and coastal strip could not be easily defended in a sector where 14,000 men had taken the oath of the United Irishman. It transpired that Ulster did not rise until early June but it was deemed imperative in the last days of May that the southern approaches to the capital be secured before the North Wexford and South Wicklow rebels pressed northwards. Wicklow Town was deemed undefendable, and Bray was by no means a formidable obstacle if Newtownmountkennedy fell. Disrupting rebel formations in the area, therefore, was prioritized on 29 May when a series of skirmishes took place in the Roundwood/ Clohogue sector between pro-Government forces under Thomas Hugo and local rebels headed by Joseph Holt of Mullinaveigue. Holt, a Protestant farmer and cloth assessor, had intended moving 600 Ballinacor men down to Newtownmountkennedy on 30 May to assist in the capture of the town but was prevented from doing so by the events of the previous day.

The Battle of Newtownmountkennedy was disproportionately significant in that it was the only one fought in the first week of the Rebellion within a day's march of the city's southern approaches. The market town comprised the major road route to the capital and linked also to the alternate route via Roundwood to the heart of the south Dublin mountains. While lightly equipped rebels could traverse the uplands with speed and mobility, the army required surfaced road networks to move the artillery, cavalry and munitions necessary to defeat the insurgency. In late 1797 and early 1798, Thomas Archer of Mount John and other loyalist magistrates had endeavoured to root out the followers of William Michael Byrne of Park Hill and townsman Richard O'Reilly. Byrne, a national level leader, was expelled from the Newtownmountkennedy Cavalry when under suspicion. Eyewitness accounts collected by Luke Cullen of Bray and later versions

preserved by the Irish Folklore Commission attest to the extremity of the period.

The town possessed a relatively strong garrison headed by Captain John Burganey and his forty 'Ancient Britons', a mainly Welsh recruited light 'fencible' unit of horse mobile infantrymen. The Britons had gained a ferocious reputation during the 'dragooning' of County Down in 1797. Lieutenant Ferguson commanded twenty members of the Antrim Militia, a regiment containing numerous United Irishmen. Captain Robert Gore led forty Newtownmountkennedy Yeoman Cavalry who had been placed on full time duty. In expectation of a rebel attack, an additional forty 'supplementary' yeoman infantry were hastily equipped with weapons seized from the United Irishmen. Armstrong's Hotel in the centre of the linear town was used as the headquarters of men who knew from intelligence that a major assault was imminent. Such tensions may have contributed to the fatal shooting from a room in the premises of an innocent pedestrian on the morning of the battle. Later that day rebel companies camping in Duran Wood and the Devil's Glen manoeuvred without interference to surround the town.

It is believed that an obscure if important United Irishman named Manren led the bulk of 1,000 plus rebels who attacked Newtownmountkennedy from both ends after 1.00 PM on 30 May 1798. The Newcastle contingent under Thomas Maguire arrived late to the fray and Joseph Holt's Ballinacor contingent failed to materialize from the mountainside. Notwithstanding their lack of co-ordination, the determined rebels under Manren seized and burned the vacated cavalry stables and menaced the town's barracks and magazine. An evidently desperate Burganey directed the deliberate firing of several dwellings to create a smokescreen and in the course of the contest his HQ in Armstrong Hotel HQ went up in flames. Inattention at the guardhouse enabled a group of prisoners to make good their escape, although two less fortunate men in their company were subsequently executed.

Matters became more acute when Maguire of Ballydonagh led the Newcastle men into the town from the Kilcoole end. The Britons and Newtownmountkennedy Cavalry were motivated to charge the pikemen resulting in the death of Burganey and wounding of Captain Robert Gore and Lieutenant Graves Archer. With much of the town burning, the pinned garrison could not permit the magazine to fall into rebel hands. At least two Antrim Militiamen perished defending the magazine and others probably died of wounds sustained in close-quarter combat. The mounted yeoman dispatch rider sent to Wicklow Town to raise the alarm was intercepted and killed although his Briton bodyguard completed the assignment. Lord Shannon was informed of ten pro-Government fatalities. Rebel losses were estimated at between thirty and forty dead and almost certainly would have been higher had not the timely reinforcement of the Newcastle men enabled Manren's followers to evacuate their wounded.

It was notable that the garrison did not attempt to pursue and re-engage the rebels who, while checked in a near run contest, were certainly not routed. Major Joseph Hardy, commanding officer of the Antrim Militia in Wicklow, paid the United Irishmen a private tribute when he reported that Newtownmountkennedy had been 'retaken' from the rebels. In all probability, the unusual harshness of the ensuing days reflected orders

to ensure that the rebels did not regroup and resume their offensive. Elements of the Fifth Dragoon Guards and Dunbartonshire Fencible Infantry were diverted from their march to Wexford to assist in mopping up operations in Dunran Wood and the Devil's Glen. The bruised garrison of Newtownmountkennedy, meanwhile, ranged across the Downs, Killiskey, Callowhill, Ballyduff and adjacent townlands attacking those deemed to be disloyal to the Crown. United Irishman Michael Neil of Grange, Upper Newcastle, was among the most prominent fatalities.

Many rebel veterans of the Battle of Newtownmountkennedy fought in Arklow on 9 June 1798 where the Government inflicted a narrow yet decisive blow on the North Wexford/ South Wicklow insurgents. The dispersal of the main rebel army at Vinegar Hill/ Enniscorthy on 21 June delivered momentum to Dublin Castle shortly following the containment of the dangerous flaring of revolution in Ulster. Holt and other Wicklow rebels were central to the heavy ambush of the Britons at Ballyellis outside Carnew on 30 June 1798 and a guerrilla war centred on the county's uplands continued long past the French incursion in Connaught in late August/ September. While not remotely the deadliest of battles during the Great Rebellion, events in Newtownmountkennedy on 30 May 1798 were strategically important and viewed as such by contemporaries.

The Hidden Origins of the United Irishmen

Rory Delany, Unitarian Church Dublin

'A Deeper Silence' by ATQ Stewart (faber and faber 1993) bears the subtitle 'The Hidden Origins of the United Irishmen'. It is often said and written that the American Revolution was the inspiration for the United Irishmen but it could equally be said that the American Revolution was inspired by a much earlier British and Irish radical dissenting tradition. In 'A Deeper Silence', Dr Stewart traces some of the roots of the United Irishmen back to the dissenters of the revolutionary period of the mid 1600's. A chapter of Dr. Stewart's book, 'Ministers of Grace', is devoted to the ministers of a congregation of dissenters that had its Meeting House in Wood Street in Dublin. Ministers and lay members associated with that congregation and with its sister congregations feature strongly throughout the book.

St. Stephen's Green Unitarian Church is the direct descendant of the Wood Street Meeting House which is considered to have been the home to the original congregation of dissenters in Dublin. The present-day St. Stephen's Green congregation also includes in its ancestral lineage the congregations of Cook Street, Mary's Abbey, Strand Street, New Row and Eustace Street Meeting Houses. The church records, registers, memorials, portraits, windows, artefacts (and even some bank accounts!) connect us with stories of religious and political dissent in Dublin that take us back from the present day through the tumultuous events of the 1790's to the even more tumultuous events of 150 years earlier.

The stories relate to the civil and religious upheavals in England in the 1600's; the political rise and fall of the non-conformists; the dissenting presence in Dublin; the heresy trial and imprisonment of a dissenting minister for expressing Unitarian views; the connections between Dublin and Belfast dissenters; the age of enlightenment; the emergence of 'New Light' thinking in Presbyterianism, the United Irishmen; and to Liberal Unionism in the 19th century.

All of these stories and the people who feature in them are interconnected over the course of two centuries by bonds and ties of religion, family, business and politics. Primarily though, the story to be related is that of some of the early dissenters in Dublin, describing who these people were and highlighting some traces of them that can still be seen in the city today.

In reality, some of the 'hidden origins' of the United Irishmen have only ever been half hidden and they can be brought into full view by those who are prepared to join the dots. However, the joined dots will present a challenging picture for those who have a fixed view of who the 'goodies and baddies' in Irish history were.

Identity and Trauma in the Growth of Republics

by Therese Hicks

Our second talk looked at the topics of identity and trauma. For most of human history, people have understood themselves as part of a group rather than as individuals. For the past six or seven thousand years, these groups were hierarchically organised. The leaders and their families were considered to be inherently superior to those beneath them in the hierarchy, and they enjoyed respect and rights which the rest of the group were not given. However, due to the destruction of those groups, most notably by the expansion of the Roman empire two thousand years ago, some members of those societies began to question the notion that some people were inherently superior to others.

One such questioner was Jesus in Palestine, who said that all people should be respected and treated with love. His follower, Paul, took this further and said that all types of people were equal before God. Due to its radical challenge to European society at the time, it has taken centuries for this point of view to be adopted by a significant portion of the population. This has been accomplished by the breaking down of people's group identity, which is one of the effects of war, where one society is obliterated by the other.

Such a dramatic event has two effects. It leaves the defeated group with a greatly reduced sense of group identity. It also traumatises them to the point of suffering from poor mental health. On the other hand, the long dormant seeds within Christianity and Roman law have, over centuries promoted an understanding of respect for human individuality and human rights.

These convictions were championed by various parties and leaders from the 1500s onwards and have led to the evolution of a republican form of government and the overthrow of monarchies. Republics, initially dominated by the wealthy and men, have slowly provided an environment in which people have been able to heal from the trauma of war and defeat. People's identity expanded from being parochially based, to that of being a citizen of their nation-state. More recently, people are recognizing that they are citizens of the planet.

Where people are still treated poorly, or have not healed from the effects of trauma or inherited trauma, their identity as an individual is insecure. In order to compensate for the vulnerability of being an individual, they will fall back to needing to be seen as superior, and attempt to bully those around them, not respecting the rights of other individuals. This can take the form of misogyny, xenophobia, racism and other forms of bigotry. Governments must ensure the security of their people and enforce laws equally across society in order to reduce such insecurity. This will allow for greater acceptance and respect for universal human rights.

Ireland's people have been undergoing this process of acquiring a national identity since the 1600s. In the 1641 rebellion the unifying identity was being Catholic, but even that wasn't enough to maintain a united front against the English. In the 1798 rebellion, however, the unifying identity was being Irish, and both Catholics and Protestants rallied to the cause. British military might nevertheless overcame them. It is an important historical event which was an early expression of the island's population understanding themselves as Irish, and cooperating across many social boundaries to demand respect from Britain. This makes it an anniversary worth celebrating.

Prominent Landowners and Power brokers of the period.

Philip Emmet. Altidore

Sir Thomas Wentworth

Thomas Wentworth was Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1632 - 1640.

He greatly improved the financial position of both King and Anglican Church. However his policies and actions alienated all sectors of Irish society, the Gaelic Irish, the old English and the new English.

Wentworth purchased the Newcastle Estate on 20th March 1640.

This brought his extensive land acquisitions to about 20% of County Wicklow. On 3rd April 1640, Wentworth returned to England as Charles II's Chief advisor. The power struggle between King and Parliament had reached crisis point, which led to Wentworth being attainted for treason & executed in front of an estimated 100,000 people, on 12 May 1641.

(1641 Rebellion, Confederate Wars, Wars of the 3 Kingdoms incl. English Civil War)

The wars, famine and plagues of the period 1641 -1652 left this country devastated. It is estimated that the population of Ireland fell by 500,000 or by 25%.

Following the restoration of Charles II, the Act of Attainder against Thomas Wentworth was reversed in 1662.

His son William the 2nd Earl of Strafford, regained his titles and his lands, including the Newcastle Estate which would remain in the family for the next 240 years.

William died in 1695 and is buried in Yorkminster, as he had no direct male heir his title Earl of Strafford became extinct.

He left his property to his nephew Thomas Watson-Wentworth.

2nd Marquis of Rockingham

Charles Watson Wentworth 1730–1782, 2nd Marquis of Rockingham, and owner of Newcastle, was twice Prime Minister of England, assuming office in 1765 and again in 1782.

He was opposed to the policies which led to the American War of Independence (1776-1782), and also to the war itself.

On returning to power in 1782, Charles initiated the peace talks with the American delegation led by Benjamin Franklin.

Charles died in office on 01 July 1782 and having no direct male heir his title became extinct.

He left his mansion and estates including Newcastle, to his nephew the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam. Charles' private secretary was the famous Irishman, Edmund Burke, whom he had introduced to politics.

The 4th Earl Fitzwilliam

In 1795 the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, owner of Newcastle, was appointed Viceroy of Ireland. His main aim was to introduce a Catholic Relief Bill which included Catholic Emancipation.

To help achieve this he sacked John Beresford, Commissioner of Revenue. He intended to do the same to John Fitzgibbon, Lord Chancellor, and other officials of the Castle Junta.

They were implacably opposed to any Catholic Relief which would undermine the Protestant Ascendancy.

Beresford and Fitzgibbon, appealed to William Pitt then Prime Minister and King George III.

Fitzwilliam was recalled, and the sacked officials reinstated.

Later that year, Fitzgibbon was made the Earl of Clare.

The dismissal of Fitzwilliam in 1795 after just 44 days in office, dashed the hopes of all those seeking constitutional reform through peaceful means.

The Castle junta of the Beresford-Fitzgibbon group were now in firmer control than ever.

On the day of Fitzwilliam's departure, Dublin was in mourning.

As a mark of respect to him, his horses were unyoked from his carriage, and it was pulled through the streets to the port, by the citizens of Dublin.

In contrast on the same day Fitzgibbon's carriage was attacked and he was forced to draw his pistol to defend himself.

In the same year 1795, the Orange order was formed in the North.

The United Irishmen resurfaced as a secret society, having been suppressed the previous year.

Lord Camden was appointed viceroy. Under the influence of William Pitt the Prime Minister and the Castle junta he pursued hard-line policies. Ireland was set on a tragic course.

If Fitzwilliam's bid to enact the Catholic Relief bill had been successful, could the 1798 conflict have been avoided.?

The Wentworth descendants - owners of Newcastle

The Wentworth ownership of Newcastle comprised, 2 Wentworths, 3 Watson Wentworths, and 4 Wentworth Fitzwilliams.

Their home at Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire was the largest privately owned house in the U.K. It has a frontage of 606 feet and 250,000 sq. ft of floor space.

Their Irish home at Coolattin in south Co. Wicklow, was also one of the largest private houses in Ireland.

In the 1880s their landed estate of 90,000 acres in Ireland, and 26,000 acres in England, had the 6th highest annual income in the U.K. and Ireland. (Top 20 in terms of size, but all good land)

While the Newcastle owners, first priority was always their self interest and looking after their Estate, when compared with their peers, they are generally seen as liberal,

progressive, benevolent, landlords.

The family long dominated the political scene in the County.

They encouraged farm improvements and kept a close eye on the running and management of their Irish Estates.

The family long fostered education on the Estate, and contributed to the schools and to teachers salaries.

They favoured interdenominational education rather than the religiously segregated schools preferred by the Catholic and Protestant Clergy.

They paid pensions to poor widows, contributed money, food and clothing for the poor at times of scarcity.

Their tenants enjoyed many of the benefits that the Land League would still be campaigning for in the latter half of the 19th century In times of crisis, they often granted reductions of rental arrears, usually on a case by case basis.

They made a major contribution to the rebuilding of Newcastle Church in 1782, The 6th Earl later donated the beautiful brass lectern still in use today.

They contributed to the rebuilding of Killadeas and Kilmurry churches after there destruction in 1798 – The requests for assistance coming through Lord Rossmore & Rev'd Brownrigg.

In 1809 the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam paid Thomas Archer a subscription of £10, towards funding the wall enclosing Killadreenan cemetery .

The 6th Earl Fitzwilliam donated the lands on which Newcastle Hospital or the National Hospital for Consumption was built. It was opened by Lady Aberdeen wife of the Viceroy in March 1896.

A short history of the Emmet Family now residing in Altidore, Newtownmountkennedy.

Philip Emmet. Altidore

Thomas Addis Emmet (1760 to 1827)

Thomas Addis Emmet was a prominent Dublin lawyer who was one of the leaders of the United Irishmen. In March 1798 he was arrested with other leaders and imprisoned by the authorities in Dublin and later in Fort George, Scotland. In 1802 on condition, they not return to Ireland they were released. After a period in Paris as the United Irishmen envoy and following the execution of Robert his younger brother in 1803 he sailed with his family for New York. After much opposition to him practising law, being an Irish revolutionary, from the ruling Federalist party he finally prevailed. He predominantly took on Irish immigrant and freed slave cases. He eventually became New York's first Attorney General. He died in 1827 in court.

A monument in his honour was erected at St Paul's churchyard near Wall Street in New York

Robert Emmet (1778 to 1803)

Robert, the younger brother of Thomas, was also an Untied Irishman. He lead a second rebellion in 1803. He had hoped to succeed by surprising and capturing Dublin Castle and spreading the rebellion to the whole country once Dublin was secure. Despite meticulous planning in the event, it failed terribly due to unexpected communication problems. It proved to be only a bloody skirmish. Robert was later captured, convicted of treason and sentenced to execution. On September 20th 1803 at the age of 25 he was hung and beheaded in Thomas Street, scene of the failed rebellion. Robert became respected and admired over generations of Irish revolutionaries because of his stirring and inspirational speech made at the end of his trial.

There were no Emmets living in Ireland after the revolution until Garland Emmet born in New York, Thomas Addis Emmet's great-great grandson bought land in Ireland after the establishment of the Free State in the 1920s. He bought Altidore Castle in the 1940s.

Altidore Castle and 1798.

Altidore at the end of the eighteenth century was owned by the Blachford Family. John Blachford was a noted botanist and agriculturist. He was married to Henry Gratton's daughter Mary Anne Gratton. There are no records extant of Altidore in the rebellion of 1798

Altidore was however purchased in 1834 by Reverend Lambert Watson Hepenstal who was the uncle of the infamous "Walking Gallows of 1798" Lieutenant Edward Hepenstal. Hepenstal was born and raised in Newcastle Co. Wicklow and a member of the notorious Wicklow militia. He was six foot five inches tall and known for his great cruelty by hanging many rebels over his long back. Hence the 'walking gallows'.

Kilmurray Church, Newtownmountkennedy

On the 28th of October, 2017, the Newtownmountkennedy/ Kilmurray historic church ruin was re-opening, after two years of stabilisation and conservation work.

This project was realised after five years of sustained fundraising by Newtownmountkennedy and District Tidy Towns, as well as by vital support from Wicklow County Council's "Buildings at Risk" fund, directed by county Heritage officer, Deirdre Burns.

Additional funds were awarded from the "Built Heritage Investment Scheme" of the Department of the Environment, and local contributions.

We would like to thank the many local people, who supported the project.

A word of thanks is also due to our biggest parish donor, who wishes to remain anonymous!

Local architect, and Tidy Towns member, Huw O'Toole, oversaw the works.

Conservation works included rebuilding the gothic arches, removing killing organic growth, resetting the bell cote, removing vegetation, crowning adjacent trees, resetting collapsing vault arches and flaunching the top of the perimeter walls. There is a planned Phase 3 to roof the small sacristy to provide shelter for visitors and users. Anyone interested should contact Newtownmountkennedy and District Tidy Towns.

History:

Kilmurray Church, dedicated to St Catherine, was built in the 760s on a serene site, overlooking Newtownmountkennedy and the Wicklow Coast.

The church served Newtownmountkennedy, Kilpeddar, Delgany, Roundwood and surrounding areas.

It is of rubble construction and was built in two phases.

Its eventual ruin.

The Wicklow Branch of the United Irishmen of 1798, numbered some 14,000 Volunteers, which came from the Roman and Anglican Catholic churches and the dissenter traditions.

The Battle of Newtownmountkennedy, which centred around the local barracks, was one of the initial conflicts of the 1798 rebellion. In the aftermath, the Yeomanry and Ancient Britons, went on a rampage of murder and destruction in the town and surrounding countryside. The ensuing outrages did not conclude in Wicklow until 1804 with the surrender of Michael Dwyer.

On the 23rd August 1799 the crown forces and militia set fire to Kilmurray church.

Local tradition has it, that Thady Byrne from Kilmurray, dashed into the burning church, broke open the tabernacle, took the chalice and escaped through the fire and smoke. This beautiful 360 year old chalice is still in use today in St Joseph's Church

Newtownmountkennedy.

Almost immediately after the burning the local people started the process of rebuilding the church.

In the 1820s, Lord Rossmore of Mountkennedy House, who was thought to be distancing himself from the atrocities of the Crown Forces, helped greatly to source funding to fully rebuild the church under the government redress schemes.

Kilmurray church however, started to decline, with the building of new churches in Newtownmountkennedy and Roundwood, in the 1860s.

Local lore cites another reason for the ultimate decline of the church.

At that time local farmers gave the priest barrels of oats (14 stone) or cocks of hay for his horse instead of money.

These donations were read out from the altar for all to hear, “Farmer A one cock of hay, Farmer B one barrel of oats” etc.

On one occasion a rather undiplomatic priest was being sarcastic and read out: “Farmer A one cock of rushes, Farmer B two cocks of rushes, Farmer C one cock of nettles and one cock of thistles”, and so on!

The parishioners were insulted and many never went back adding to the ultimate closure of the church.

Church contents were sold or given to other churches, and it fell into ruin. It is thought the bell went to Greystones.

The impressive cross over the high altar in St Joseph’s church came from Kilmurray. Its figure of Christ had a secret cavity in which the Blessed Sacrament was hidden during Penal Times.

Over the years the church became completely ruinous and covered with ivy.

Around 1970 Fr. Finn organized local people to remove the ivy. Oliver Martin built an altar and the Martin family have helped look after the church as a whole for many years.

An annual mass was celebrated until the ruin became unsafe for use by the public. It was then fenced off.

In 2012 Newtownmountkennedy and District Tidy Towns took on the challenge of stabilizing the ruin and making it safe for public assembly once again.

This work has now been completed, under the expert direction of architect Huw O’Toole, and Tidy Towns are proud to announce that this historic church ruin is now open again for public assembly!

Kilmurray Graveyard: The graveyard nearest the church, has many interesting old grave stones.

On the far side of the church, there is, surprisingly, just one stone, but there are very many people buried here in unmarked graves. Some were poor people from the locality, but there were many others!

According to Jack Douglas, who worked in his fields nearby, people who died in Newcastle Sanatorium were buried there during the 1920s and 30s.

He observed funerals, maybe one or two a week, from the hospital going up to Kilmurray. These were the smallest and saddest funerals, often with the undertaker driving and the priest sitting beside, and nobody at all following.

Mr. Thornton from Newcastle was the undertaker.

In those dark days there was a stigma attached to TB, and people did not talk about it, or about those lonely funerals.

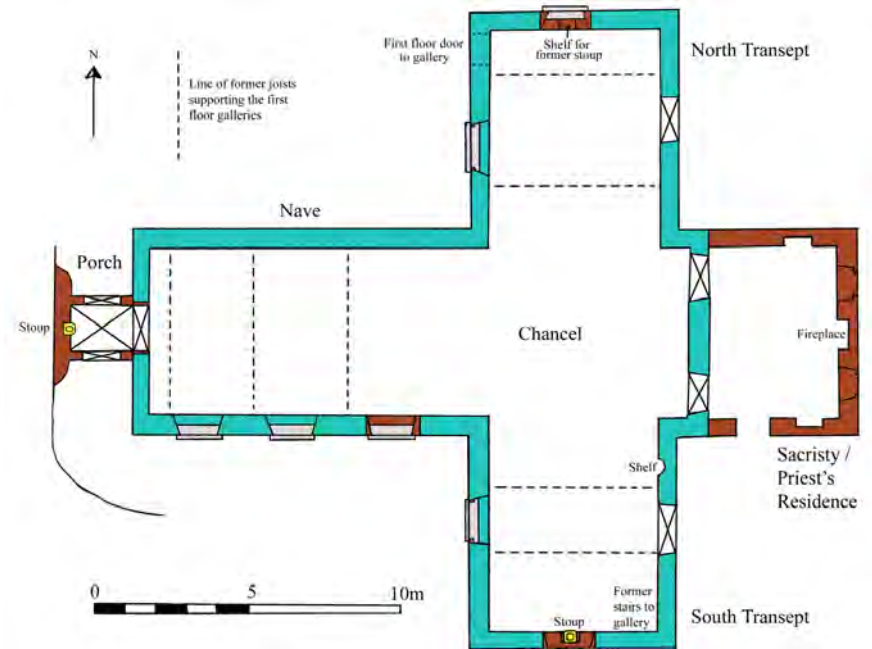
Newcastle Sanatorium was feared as the end of the road for many who entered there, until the great physician, Dr Noel Browne, who worked there and later became Minister for Health strove to eradicate the disease against much opposition and controversy. His ultimate success and influence is something we can all give thanks for.

The blessing of the graves was held in Kilmurray for the first time in many a year.

We offer our thanks to all contributors to the ruin in the recent and distant past.

The ivy has gone, the stones are re-set, the ruin is now a place of peaceful contemplation, under the shelter of stone walls and soft Yew trees.

Please respect and enjoy this beautiful peaceful park



Floor Plan of Church Ruins



Location of Church Ruins

① NEWTOWN-MOUNT-KENNEDY

NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY WAS A MARKET TOWN BUILT BY THE SURVIVORS OF NEAR BY NEWCASTLE ON LAND DONATED BY R KENNEDY, AND DATES FROM 1670.

IT HAD ONE LONG COBBLED STREET ON THE MAIN DUBLIN-WEXFORD ROAD!

IT HAD FINE STONE-BUILT DWELLINGS WITH SLATED ROOFS!

WITH INNS, SHOPS, BLACKSMITH, HARDWARE SADDLERY AND MILL FOR GRINDING CORN INTO FLOUR!



BY 1798 NEWTOWN HAD ITS MARKET HOUSE, ASSIZES COURT, YEOMANRY, MILITIA BARRACKS AND ORANGE LODGE.

WE CATERED FOR THE LORDS AND GENTRY!

AND PASSING TRAVELLERS!

LORD ROSSMORE WAS A LIBERAL AND FRIEND OF LORD EDWARD FITZGERARD - THE UNITED IRISH COMMANDER.



LOWER! BOW LOWER!

YES, ME! LUD!

② THE ASCENDANCY

THE ASCENDANCY ROSE TO POWER DURING THE PENAL LAWS. THEY WERE THE GREAT LANDLORDS WHO LEASED THEIR VAST ESTATES TO PROTESTANT TENANT FARMERS KNOWN AS THE GENTRY.

WE GREAT LORDS ROSE TALLY HOO OVER EVERY ONE ELSE!

BUT WE LARGE TENANT FARMERS PAID HIGH RENTS TO THE GREAT LORDS

AND LEASED OUR WORST LAND TO SMALL CATHOLIC TENANT FARMERS WHO PAID US A VERY HIGH RENT. THANK GOD!

TALLY HOOO!



BY 1780 CO WICKLOW HAD MANY PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL LANDLORDS SUCH AS EARL FITZWILLIAM, HENRY GRATTAN AND HOPTON SCOTT.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION OF 1777 WAS BASED ON FREEDOM AND ON THE RIGHTS OF MAN! I CAN'T FAULT THAT!

NOW OUR SMITH, THE COOPER, EVEN MY BUTLER WANT MORE MONEY!

-THE MILLAR TOLD ME TO GET STOPPED WHAT IS OUR WORLD COMING TO?



③ THE CROPPIE

CROPPIES WERE SMALL TENANT FARMERS, MOSTLY CATHOLIC, WHO GREW CORN AND POTATOES ON THEIR HOLDINGS. THERE WERE SUBSTANTIAL CORN MILLS IN KILMACROG, KILCOOLE AND NEWTOWN.



THANKS TO FOSTER'S CORN LAWS WE WERE WELL PAID FOR OUR GRAIN

ENGLAND HAD ITS INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND WAS AT WAR WITH FRANCE!

BUT CONTRACT CARTERS LIKE THE ARCHERS WERE PAID A BOUNTY TO BRING IT TO A PORT FOR EXPORT!

THE CROPPIE TENANT FARMERS HAD LARGE FAMILIES TO LABOUR, TILL, SOW, WEED AND HARVEST THEIR CROPS.

CROPPIES FLOCKED TO JOIN THE UNITED IRISHMEN WHO NEEDED AN ARMY OF STRONG YOUNG MEN.



WE ALSO CROPPED OUR HAIR SHORT IN FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY STYLE!

IF WE REBEL WE COULD BE FREE OF LANDLORDS!

IF WE WIN WE WILL OWN OUR OWN LAND

NO MORE TITHES TO THE PROTESTANT CHURCH. WE CAN BUILD OUR OWN!

(MK23)

④ YEOMEN AND MILITIA

THE YEOMANRY WERE A LOCAL POLICE FORCE LED BY A LEADING LORD OF THE ASCENDANCY, RECRUITED FROM HIS LOYALIST TENANTS WHO SUPPORTED THE ENGLISH CROWN, WERE CONSERVATIVE AND ANTI REPUBLICAN.



IF EVERY ONE WAS EQUAL WE WOULD HAVE NO KING, NO BISHOPS, NO ASCENDANCY. IT WOULD BE ANARCHY!

WHO COULD WE LOOK UP TO - A GODLESS REBEL?

LONG LIVE THE KING! DEATH TO ALL! REPUBLICANS!

THE MILITIA. EACH COUNTY HAD AT LEAST ONE STANDING MILITIA CORPS, LARGER COUNTIES HAD TWO, EXAMPLE - THE NORTH CORK CATHOLIC MILITIA WHO SLAUGHTERED UNITED IRISH IN WEXFORD. THE WICKLOW MILITIA WERE BASED IN WESTMEATH.



WE WERE PLACED IN A COUNTY FAR AWAY FROM OUR OWN!

AYE! WE CANNOT TRUST THE IRISH!

THE MORE BITTER THEY ARE THE BETTER!

BITTER PAPISTS AGAIN REBEL CROPPIES! I LOVE IT!

(MK23)

5 THE UNITED IRISHMEN

PRESBYTERIANS IN ULSTER ENGAGED IN FLAX GROWING AND LINEN MANUFACTURE, ENGINEERING AND TRADE WERE ALSO DISCRIMINATED BY THE PENAL LAWS, AND PAID HIGH TAXES, RENTS AND TITHES TO THE PROTESTANT CHURCH.



END THE PENAL LAWS NOW!
 NO TAXES WITHOUT PARLIAMENTARIAN REPRESENTATION!
 WHY PAY TITHES TO A CHURCH WE ARE NOT PART OF?
 WE WANT EQUAL RIGHTS WITH THE PRODS!
 OUR BROTHERS REVOLTED IN THE COLONIES.
 AND WON INDEPENDENCE!

IN 1791 ULSTER PRESBYTERIANS FORMED THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

IN 1792 THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE WAS FORMED IN DUBLIN.

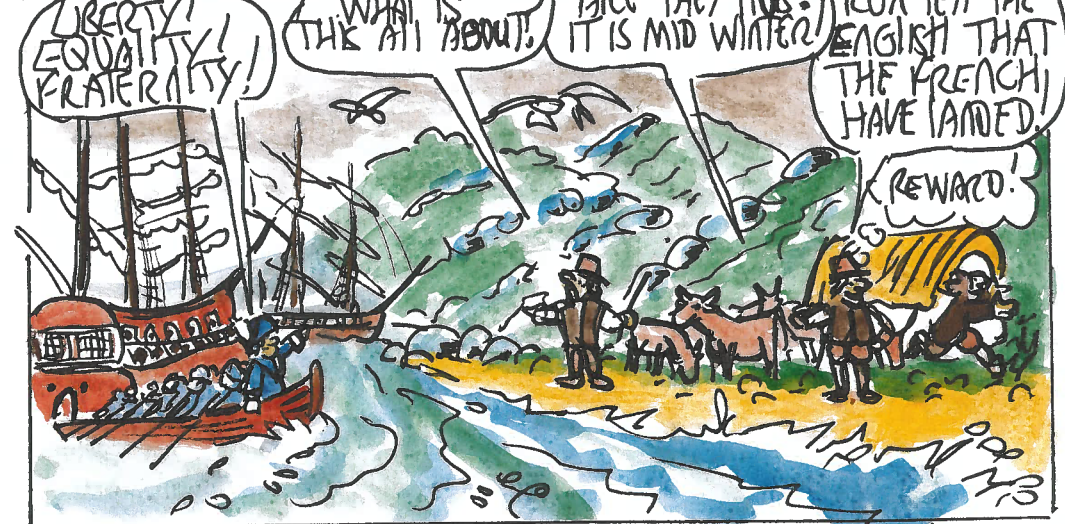
FAIR RENTS! FAIR TAXES! NO TITHES!
 DO WHAT THE AMERICANS AND FRENCH DID - REVOLUTION!
 LET CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS AND DISSENTERS UNITE AS ONE IN THE UNITED IRISHMEN!



MR 23

6 BANTLY BAY AND THE GROWTH OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN

IN 1796 REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE SENT 14,000 TROOPS IN 43 SHIPS UNDER THE COMMAND OF GENERAL HOCHÉ TO BANTLY BAY IN MID DECEMBER.



LIBERTY! EQUALITY! FRATERNITY!
 WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
 ARE THEY NUTS? IT IS MID WINTER!
 RUN TELL THE ENGLISH THAT THE FRENCH HAVE LANDED!
 REWARD!

WITH NO LOCAL IRISH SUPPORT THE FRENCH DEPARTED. THE ENGLISH WERE DULY ALARMED.

WE'LL COL. TONE SO NEAR ANY YET SO FAR!
 WE WILL BE BACK!
 IN 1797 MILITARY LAW WAS PROCLAIMED.
 FLOG 'EM! HANG 'EM! SHOOT 'EM!
 ROUND UP THE PAPIST REBELS!
 I AM OFF TO JOIN THE UNITED MEN.



MR 23

7 REVOLUTION

THE UNITED IRISH WERE SUPPRESSED IN PRESBYTERIAN DISTRICTS

THEY HUNG MURDO AND MCCRACKEN!

WE HAVE NO ONE LEFT TO LEAD US!

BUT SPREAD RAPIDLY THROUGHOUT THE CORN-GROWING COUNTIES OF WEXFORD, WICKLOW AND KILDARE.

WE CAN SOW OUR CORN IN APRIL!

FIGHT ALL SUMMER LONG AND BE HOME FOR THE HARVEST!



WICKLOW HAD 14,000 SWORN UNITED IRISH BY MAY 1798.

NEWCASTLE PARISH HAD 4,000 UNITED MEN, OVER 1,000 WERE TRAINED BY JOSEPH HOIT FROM ROUNDWOOD.

WEXFORD HAVE ONLY 10,000 MEN!

3P FOR A PIKE HEAD, 3P FOR MEMBERSHIP!

WE TRAINED IN THE DEVILS GLEN!

WE KNOW HOW TO THRUST AND PARRY IN FORMATION!



8 BATTLE OF NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY

THE UNITED IRISH REVOLUTION BEGAN ON 23RD MAY 1798.

THE BATTLE OF NEWTOWN WAS ON NIGHT OF 29-30 MAY.

WEXFORDS UNITED MEN WERE MOSTLY CATHOLICS!

WICKLOW HAD A MIX OF CATS, PRODS AND DISSETTERS!

1,000 PIKE MEN ASSEMBLED NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE TOWN!

WE REACHED THE MARKET HOUSE AND BURNT PART OF THE BARRACKS!



THE YEOMANRY UNDER CAPT ARCHER AND LT. BURGANEY OF THE WELSH YEACIBLES TOUCHED THE WEST SIDE OF THE TOWN TO HALT AN EXPECTED ATTACK BY HOIT'S ROUNDWOOD MEN.

FORM THREE LINES - ONE LOADING, ONE AIMING AND ONE FIRING!

RUN AT 'EM WHEN THEY ARE RE-LOADING!



9 MICHAEL NEILL

AFTER LT. BURGNEY'S FUNERAL IN NEWCASTLE, CAPT ARCHER AT THE HEAD OF THE NEWTOWN YEOMANRY HAD MICHAEL ARRESTED.

WHERE IS MICHAEL? TELL ME OR I WILL KILL YOUR FATHER!

I AM HERE!

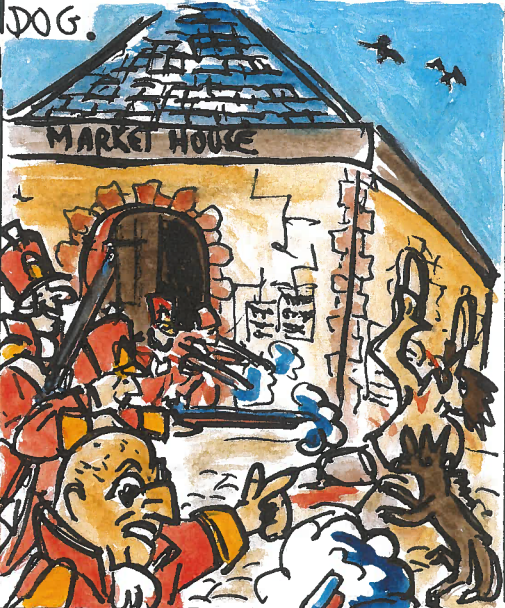
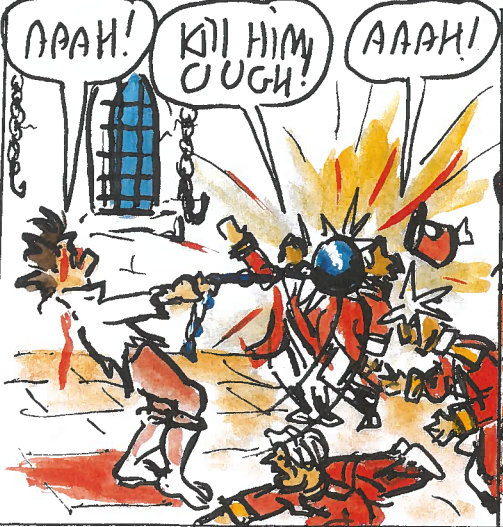
TAKE HIM TO THE MARKET HOUSE AND BREAK HIM!

TORTURE HIM! KILL HIM!



AFTER INTENSE TORTURE HE WAS CUT DOWN. HE ASKED TO SPEAK TO ARCHER, GROPING BLINDLY ON FLOOR HE SEIZED A BALL AND CHAIN

HE WAS DRAGGED OUT ONTO THE STREET AND SHOT ALONG WITH HIS DOG.



(MK223)

10 AFTER THE BATTLE

RETREATING REBELS GAVE STIFF RESISTANCE AT THE PASS OF DUNRAN AS THE WOUNDED WERE BROUGHT TO THE 'SAFETY' OF THE DEVILS GLEN.

30 REBELS WERE KILLED IN THE BATTLE ALONG WITH 9 MILITIA, YEOMANRY AND WELSH YEACIBLES.

THE SUN IS IN THEIR EYES, THE YEDS CANT SEE US!

AAH! I AM GOT!

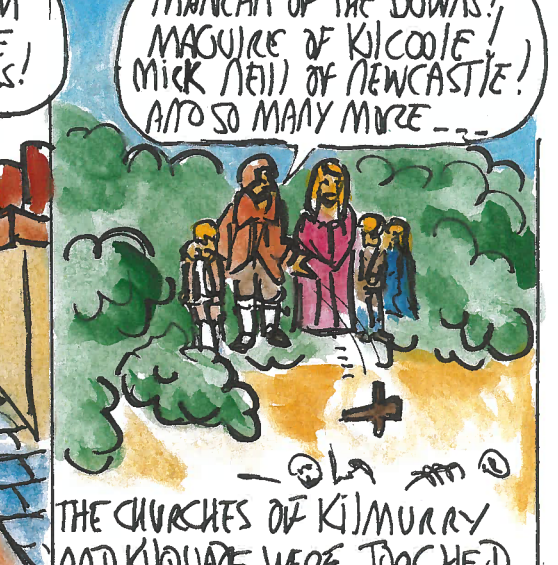
TAKE THE CROPPERS' LIVESTOCK. IT'S OURS THROUGH RIGHT TO ALLIAGE!



IN ALL, SOME 170 WOUNDED AND FATIGUED REBELS WERE CAPTURED, TORTURED AND EXECUTED. THEIR BODIES WERE DUMPED IN A SANDPIT AT KILLADREENAN.

DUMP HIM WITH THE OTHERS!

MANRAN OF THE DOWNS! MAGUIRE OF KILCOOLE! MICK NEILL OF NEWCASTLE! AND SO MANY MORE...



THE CHURCHES OF KILMURRY AND KILQUADE WERE TORCHED.

(MK223)



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for people



Forests for
nature



Forests for
climate

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Jacksmill is an intergenerational small farm and business. It has been in our family since at least 1870's. The O'Toole family has been in these parts for a thousand years.

There has been a sawmill here since at least the 1900's. My father and mother's business which comprised the sawmill, joinery shop and family farm closed in the mid 1990's.

We have re-purposed the buildings and land and called it after my parents Jack and Silvia, hence Jacksmill.

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Hub 13 with super speed fibre optic wi-fi opened in 2019 in the offices of the sawmill and joinery workshop. It was the first rural remote working hub in County Wicklow. We provide office spaces, dedicated desks, meeting rooms, creative studios and small workshops in a truly unique and beautiful setting

Jacksmill housed a lot of different trades, wheelwrights, coffin makers, farmers, joiners, steel-wrights heavy machinery and carpenters

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Jacksmill won for Newtownmountkennedy the nomination for Sustainable Digital Town award.

Winners announced 24th May.

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Best Wishes to

Newtownmountkennedy and District Tidy Towns for a successful

1798 Festival of Remembrance weekend.

From Michael & Carmel Byrne The Brooks, Newcastle Upper

Our farm was where Michael and Patrick Neill were born and reared. It was from here that they were dragged between two horses after the funeral of Capt. Burganey of the Ancient British Cavalry who was killed in the Battle of Newtownmountkennedy. At Newcastle Church of Ireland, the local Protestant women led by Mrs Jones stoned the troops and secured the release of Patrick aged 17. Michael was dragged to Newtownmountkennedy where he was tortured and killed 1st June 1798.

Their sister married a Byrne and we are direct descendants from that marriage.

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Newtownmountkennedy and District Tidy Towns 1798 Committee would like to say a huge thank you to all involved for such a massive effort to launch and make this festival a reality.

We express our gratitude to you all.

We especially want to thank all who contributed in art and written word and funding to this brochure.

Wicklow County Council have been a huge help and we appreciate all the effort of their staff.

To all involved we offer you our sincere thanks and appreciation, there are far too many to mention.

The ongoing input and appreciation of our local community is deeply felt and acknowledged.

Without it these events just do not happen.

The unspoken support of the TUAS and CE workers is deeply appreciated.

We wish to welcome all the new inhabitants of our town and hope they will join with local volunteer groups.



Please support Newtownmountkennedy Tidy Towns.
This is your town, please get involved.