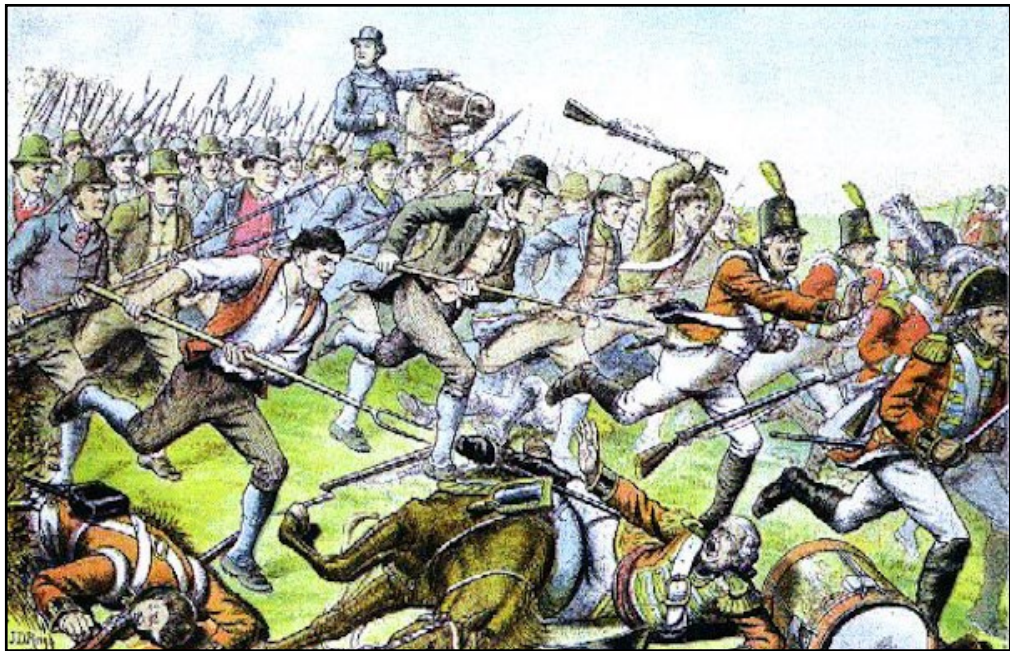


# Chapter 4 1793-1798

## Miley of the Spear



An image of 1798.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter discusses the brave actions of Myles Cullen in 1798, *Bliain na bhFrancach* (The Year of the French), when the Irish, with France's support, boldly attempted to end British rule and establish an Irish republic. Several events through the 1790s were pivotal to the rebellion of 1798, and these are also discussed, including the Society of United Irishmen, the Defenders, the Catholic Relief Act (1793), and the Irish Militia Act (1793), with specific reference to the Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes.

## David G Cullen

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The year 1798 holds great significance for many Irish. It was a year of intense political unrest, rebellion, and fierce battles, in various parts of Ireland, motivated by a desire to be free of British rule.

**For the people of the parishes, and more broadly in the west of Ireland, the rebellion of 1798 was called *Bliain na bhFrancach* – The Year of the French.**

For the people of the parishes, and more broadly in the west of Ireland, it was called *Bliain na bhFrancach* – The Year of the French. In May 1798, a small French fleet led by General Jean Humbert landed in County Mayo, marking the beginning of an Irish and French campaign against British forces. The arrival of the French sparked a wave of hope and excitement among the Irish, who saw them as great allies in their struggle against the British. The fight ended in September at the Battle of Ballinamuck in County Longford, where the combined forces were ultimately outnumbered with the French forced to surrender and the Irish slaughtered.

***Bliain na bhFrancach* holds a prominent corner in the Irish national historical consciousness, and 1798 is still commemorated some 225 years later. The most profound impact of 1798, though, was the effect it had on the lives and memories of the people of west Ireland.**

Despite the devastating loss, *Bliain na bhFrancach* left a lasting impact on the Irish nationalist movement and inspired future generations in their fight against British rule. It holds a prominent corner in the Irish national historical consciousness, and 1798 is still commemorated some 225 years later.<sup>2</sup>

The most profound impact of 1798 was its effect on the lives and memories of the people of west Ireland. They never forgot the loss of loved ones, honoured their brave men who fought and never forgot the French. For them, it is largely believed to be the most significant historical event before the misery of the great hunger in the mid-1800s.<sup>3</sup>

**Seventy-two years after *Bliain na bhFrancach* France was at war with Prussia<sup>1</sup>. The sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the brave people of '98 put their hands in their pockets to support the sick and injured of the French army. The many parishioners in the Geevagh parish, led by Parish Priest Dominick Noone, promptly contributed.**

Seventy-two years after *Bliain na bhFrancach*, France was at war with Prussia.<sup>4</sup> The sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the brave people of '98 put their hands in their pockets to support the sick and injured of the French army. The many parishioners in the Geevagh parish, led by Parish Priest Dominick Noone, promptly contributed.<sup>5</sup> The Geevagh list

included Cullens: Pat (Snr), Pat (Jnr), Terrence, Hugh, Pat, Martin, Pat, Thomas, Myles, Bryan, James, and John.



Below is the article from *The Sligo Champion* of 12 November 1870.

# The Sligo Champion

CIRCULATING IN THE COUNTIES SLIGO, LEITRIM, MAYO, ROSCOMMON, DONEGAL, FERMANAGH, GALWAY, LONGFORD, AND MONAGHAN.  
REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER.

SLIGO - SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1870. Price: Stampd 4d; Unstampd, 5d.

[VOL. 12 - NO. 11 - NEW SERIES] FIRE INSURANCE THE NEW TAILORING ESTABLISHMENT. CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.

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## AID FOR THE SICK AND WOUNDED OF THE FRENCH ARMY.

### CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE DISTRICT OF GEEVAGH.

|  | £     | s     | d.     |
|--|-------|-------|--------|
| Very Rev D Noon P P                                  | ...   | ...   | 1 0 0  |
| Rev A Hopkins C C                                    | ...   | ...   | 0 10 0 |
| Farrell Conlon                                       | ...   | ...   | 0 10 0 |
| John Conlon James Conlon Thomas Clarke               | 5s    | each. |        |
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| Patrick O'Rorke 3s 6d.                               |       |       |        |
| John M'Cawley Michael M'Cawley                       | 3s    | each. |        |
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| Conlon William Conlon Pat Curreen senior Thomas      |       |       |        |
| Flynn Pat Waters Bryan Donoghier Michael Gallaher    |       |       |        |
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| Mullany Pat M'Donogh Michael Hart Thady Brehony      |       |       |        |
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| John M'Loughlin Thomas M'Gauran Widow Fallon         |       |       |        |
| Pat Mullany Pat Conlon Thomas Gallaher Hugh Kelly    |       |       |        |
| Michael Conlon Thomas Conlon James Conlon Owen       |       |       |        |
| Colan John Conlon James Ryan James Conlon junior     |       |       |        |
| John Redican Thomas Verdon Michael M'Loughlin        |       |       |        |
| Bernard Lavin Michael M'Grath Thomas Tansey Thomas   |       |       |        |
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| John Keany Domnick M'Donogh                          | 2s    | each. |        |
| Domnick Lavin Mark Foley Peter Brehony James         |       |       |        |
| M'Loughlin Michael Lavin Michael M'Ternan Owen       |       |       |        |
| Lainz Thomas Conlon Thomas Gaffney William Hart      |       |       |        |
| Michael Donoghier Michael Conlon Bryan M'Manus       |       |       |        |
| Michael Fallon Thady M'Garry Barney Brehony John     |       |       |        |
| Conlon Peter Conlon Pat Flynn senior Peter Mullany   |       |       |        |
| Michael Conlon Bernard Hart                          | 1s 6d | each. |        |
| Michael Lavin Widow M'Donogh Bartly Keavney          |       |       |        |
| Widow Keany Widow Clerkin John Conlon Michael        |       |       |        |
| Flynn John Kearney Martin Kearney James Cawley       |       |       |        |
| James Conlon Terence Leydon Barney Conlon Michael    |       |       |        |

Cunane Thady Conlon Pat Brehony Bryan Brehony  
Peter M'Nella Widow Brehony John M'Dermott Mar-  
garet Brehony Ellen Monaghan John Conlon Pat Cur-  
reen junior Martin Curreen John Conlon Michael  
Curreen Bernard Curreen Myles M'Padian Michael  
Doherty Pat Daly Pat Nangle Michael Daly James  
Daly Pat Waters Michael Reilly Pat O'Rorke Mar-  
tin Fowell Michael O'Rorke Farrell M'Morrow Pat  
M'Loughlin Peter M'Donogh Michael M'Donogh Bryan  
Mulrery Pat M'Donogh Bryan M'Cormick James  
Brehony Martin Doud Pat Dyer Pat Fallon James  
Tighe Peter Flynn Pat Flynn Michael M'Cormick  
Frank Leydon Henry O'Rorke Thomas Foley Frank  
M'Padian Francis M'Donogh Peter Fallon Pat Fal-  
lon Michael Fallon Thomas Lavin Mrs Hammon Pat  
M'Greal Mathew Butler John Monaghan James  
M'Ternan Pat O'Brien John O'Connor Thomas Matti-  
moe Andrew Gaffney Michael Brehoney James Mul-  
lany Luke M'Gearty John Donoghier Denis Mullany  
John Byrne Pat Donoghier Martin M'Donogh Bryan  
Conlon Owen Clerkin John Foley Bartly M'Donogh

Michael M'Donogh Thomas Lavin James Mullany  
Owen Fivnan Michael Higgins Michael M'Morrow  
Thomas Hart Pat Fivnan John Hart John M'Manus  
Michael Hart Peter Gallaher Dominick Pye Bryan  
Nangle Thomas M'Manus Pat Clinton Thomas Cur-  
reen Peter Cairns John Simon Michael Duignan  
John Feeney Peter Cairns Thomas Simon Pat Gillo-  
ran Thomas Smyth Philip Cranna Michael Cranna  
James Meehan Bryan Brehony Michael Goramly John  
Gallaher Pat Clarke Francis O'Rorke Hugh M'Part-  
lon Michael Keavichan John Conlon James Conlon  
Peter Mattimoe John Hart Michael M'Donogh Widow  
Reynolds Thomas Mullany Thomas Flanagan James  
Mattimoe John Doulan James M'Vanama John  
Lyons John Conlon Michael Conlon Myles Daly John  
Daly Pat Conlon Martin Donohoe Pat Cullen senior  
Pat Cullen jun Thomas Lainz Robert Wallace James  
Nangle Thomas Nangle Pat Daly Pat Doherty Te-  
rence Cullen Hugh Cullen Farrell Rorke Mathew

Tighe Pat Bartly Michael Mattimoe Thomas Conlon  
Pat Cullen Martin Cullen Pat Cullen Thomas Cullen  
Myles Cullen Bryan Cullen James Cosgrove Thomas  
Daly Pat Gaffney Pat Gaffney Thomas Gaffney  
Rodger Gaffney Mathew Gaffney Michael Daly Fran-  
cis Cullen James Noone John Noone Widow Duignan  
Thomas Ryan sen. Thomas Ryan jun. Andrew Conlon  
and Owen Ryan 1s each.

Martin Doyle Martin Scanlin Thomas M'Donogh  
Dominick Conlon Pat Gallagher Widow Gallaher Pat  
Goramly John Keany James Clerkin Bridget Clerkin  
Bessy Clerkin Mary M'Partlon Margaret M'Donogh  
Ellen Meehan Ellen Mullany Michael Keany Pat  
M'Manus James O'Gara Joseph Carberry Myles Feeny  
James Cullen John Cullen Myles Kelly Widow Kelly  
James Gaffney Bartholomew Garaghty John Kelly  
Michael Lavin Pat Conlon John M'Manus John Clarke  
Myles Lavin Thomas Cawley Edward Moran Martin  
Carty James Fury Pat Reilly Michael Doud Frank  
Maguire Mrs Keavney Widow Partlon Pat M'Padian  
Michael Byrne James M'Nella John Cairns Thomas  
Fallon Bridget Fallon John Gaffney Mrs Flynn  
Bartly M'Keon Pat O'Rorke Michael Cairns Martin  
Conlon James Green Hugh Travers Thomas Fallon  
Pat Brehony Daniel Curran Pat Curreen Thomas  
Conlon Mrs Pat Curreen sen. Mrs Pat Curreen junior  
Catherine Gaffney Mary Conlon Michael Gillooly Thos  
M'Vanama Thomas Clements Pat Phillips John  
Feely James Cogan Pat Farrell Michael Conlon Ca-  
therine Daly Matthew Kildea Widow M'Manus Thos  
Mullany Pat Flynn Michael Conlon Michael Mullany  
Michael Tiernan Pat Gaffney and James M'Morrow  
6d each.

Making in all £21 5s which with £16 14s from the  
Highwood district makes a total of £37 19s from the  
parish.

Long after any living memory of *Bliain na bhFrancach*, the people of western Ireland, including the men and women of the parishes, held the events of 1798 firmly in their collective folk memory, *transmitted and transmuted through song, story, stone, and commemoration*.<sup>6</sup> In the 1930s, the Schools' Folklore Commission collected thousands of local stories and memories written by primary school students who interviewed the more venerable in their communities, usually their grandparents. On a Thursday summer evening on 2 June 1938, Glen Ballinashee teenager Tommy Cullen sat with his grandmother to carefully record in writing her story about a local legend, *Miley of the Spear*. Tommy, along with several others from his class had been chosen by their teacher, Mary O'Rourke, to complete this special project. This story was about a famous Cullen in his family, *Miley of the Spear*, and he was so excited about telling his classmates this story. What his grandmother proudly said is over the page.

This chapter discusses the brave actions of Myles Cullen in 1798, *Bliain na bhFrancach* (The Year of the French), when the Irish, with France's support, boldly attempted to end British rule and establish an Irish republic. Several events through the 1790s were pivotal to the rebellion of 1798, and these are also discussed with specific reference to the Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes, including the Society of United Irishmen, the Defenders, the Catholic Relief Act (1793), and the Irish Militia Act (1793).

## The Society of United Irishmen

**The victory for Washington did not go unnoticed in Ireland. For many Catholic and Protestant Irish, it demonstrated how to dismantle British rule.**

The American Revolutionary War was fought between 1775 and 1783. Of the 300,000 people of Irish descent living in the thirteen colonies, between 20,000 and 50,000 took up arms to

fight with the Continental Army, led by General George Washington, to gain independence from the British. Washington had strong support from European countries, especially France. The victory for Washington did not go unnoticed in Ireland. For many Catholic and Protestant Irish, it demonstrated how to dismantle British rule.

Fifteen years later, the French monarch, King Louis XVI, was under immense pressure. The French people demanded he address the massive disparity in the living conditions between the rich and poor. The King's inability to address social inequality and improve economic conditions paved the way for the storming of the Bastille<sup>8</sup> in July 1789. France quickly fell into a full-scale revolution resulting in the execution of Louis XVI and many influential aristocrats. A French republic rose from the ashes of the monarchy, and by 1804 France had a new emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte. The formation of a republic, underpinned by democratic principles, and led by a grassroots revolt, pricked the ears of revolutionaries and sounded alarm bells for the British in Ireland.



## *Miley of the Spear* <sup>9</sup>

*In '98, dark '98 when Erin fought so well,  
Among her heroes grand and great of one I'd like to tell.  
Myles Cullen was his proper name, but from what I did hear,  
They knew him best throughout the west as Miley of the Spear.*

*When at Killala in the West, the Frenchmen they did land,  
Bonfires blazed on every hill to hear the message grand.  
Of Erin's sons upon the run who then did volunteer,  
To go at once and join the French was Miley of the Spear.*

*From Castlebar until they reached Collooney grand and fair,  
Where'er the Frenchmen struck a blow, sure Miley, too was there.  
When Humbert's men retreated then and things were turning queer,  
One man who would not go from them was Miley of the Spear.*

*As back on Drumahaire the fell he told the sons of France,  
If they could reach the Longford hills it might be there only chance.  
For all O'Farrell's fighting clan was certain to appear,  
And that's our last and only plan says Miley of the Spear.*

*'Twas after fateful Ballinamuck where Ireland's flag went down,  
To reach his home a chance he took but foes did him surround.  
And near where old Drumshanbo lies a gibbet<sup>10</sup> did stand near,  
While death was ordered sure and fast for Miley of the Spear.*

*As on Mount Allen Bridge he stood his deeds recalled that day,  
The memories of the Slasher Grand, the Myles of famed Finea.  
He wisely put his trust in God for so it does appear,  
Twelve yeoman were made kiss the sod by Miley of the Spear.*

*But Miley reached Arigna's Glen where fond hearts did him hide,  
Old timers when they talked of him could not conceal their pride.  
By Old Kilronan Abbey Blest with Lassar's Well quite near,  
A hero calmly lies at rest, brave Miley of the Spear.<sup>11</sup>*

**Inspired by the revolutions in America and France, the United Irishmen believed Ireland could only be successful if it were governed based on principles of equality, fraternity, and liberty for all people, regardless of their religion or social class.**

In the late 1700s, most Irish were angry and resentful after a century of discriminatory laws and economic exploitation by the ruling British government and the Protestant elite.

Exorbitant farm rents made acquiring land almost impossible. Labourers

were very poorly paid, between sixpence and fourpence a day. Simple commodities, such as a two-pound bar of soap costing eightpence, were out of their reach.<sup>12</sup> Those lucky enough to have a farm struggled to provide for their families and deeply resented the Tithe they paid to a church that was not theirs. Their parish priest also added to the misery, with many requiring fees for marriages, baptisms, and funerals.

In response to this widespread discontent, prominent Catholic and Protestant Irish of influence, including Theobald Wolfe Tone, John Keogh, and Henry Joy McCracken, formed the Society of United Irishmen in 1791. Inspired by the revolutions in America and France, they believed Ireland could only be successful if it were governed based on principles of equality, fraternity, and liberty for all people, regardless of their religion or social class.

The publication in 1791 of Thomas Paine's political pamphlet, *The Rights of Man*, went seemingly hand in glove with the formation of the society. Paine, an astute political activist, and American Founding Father argued that all human beings were born with natural and inalienable rights, including the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He also argued these rights were best protected by a democratic government accountable to the people. Following suit, Wolfe Tone, in the same year, released his pamphlet, *The Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*. The pamphlet significantly contributed to the debate around the political rights of Catholics in Ireland, who were denied many of the fundamental rights enjoyed by their Protestant counterparts. He also contended the sectarian divide between Catholics and Protestants was a barrier to unity and progress. The pamphlet also helped to spark a broader movement for Catholic emancipation in Ireland. It roused support among Catholics and progressive Protestants, who saw the need for greater political rights and social justice in Ireland.

**The United Irishmen quickly gained support across Ireland, establishing branches in most major towns and cities. The organisation's membership was diverse, including Catholics, Protestants, and members from all classes.**

The United Irishmen quickly gained support across Ireland, establishing branches in most major towns and cities. The organisation's membership was diverse, including Catholics, Protestants, and members from all classes. The society's leaders travelled

across the country, delivering speeches and organising meetings to promote their cause. They campaigned for the rights of Catholics and the repeal of the discriminatory laws that oppressed them. With leading Catholic emancipists such as John Keogh in their ranks, the United Irishmen's arguments were central to the Catholic Relief Act of 1793. Under the Act, Catholics could vote, were given upgraded property rights, could hold arms under limited

circumstances, and were permitted to take some civil and military positions previously only available to Protestants. However, Catholics were still barred from holding high office, becoming judges, or serving in Parliament. On a practical level, the Catholic Relief Act did little to improve the lives of small farmers, cotters, and landless labourers.<sup>13</sup>

Many Protestant politicians and religious leaders argued strongly against the measures, claiming they would undermine Protestant authority and lead to uncertainty in Ireland. The loyalty of Catholics to the British Crown, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflicts with France, was also questioned.

## The Defenders

**While influential Catholics and Protestants argued their case for change in Ireland, a grassroots movement arising from the increasing discontent of Catholic tenant farmers gathered momentum in townlands across rural Ireland.**

While influential Catholics and Protestants argued their case for change in Ireland, a grassroots movement arising from the increasing discontent of Catholic tenant farmers gathered momentum in townlands across rural Ireland. Defenders, as

they became known, often organising in secret societies, sought to defend themselves and their communities.

**The relationship between the United Irishmen and the Defender movement was complex. Both shared similar goals but differed in how they sought to achieve them.**

The relationship between the United Irishmen and the Defender movement was complex. Both shared similar goals but differed in how they sought to achieve them. The United Irishmen

were politically oriented and included both Catholics and Protestants. They focused on promoting constitutional reform and independence through debate and political activism. On the other hand, the Catholic Defenders were localised in rural townlands. They engaged in more secretive and clandestine activities, including acts of self-defence and violence against perceived threats. Their actions were often driven by local farming grievances and aimed at protecting their communities against evictions, exploitation, and oppressive landlords.

**Defenders in and around the parishes were some of the best organised in Ireland. The rapid increase in men taking Defender oaths was remarkable, reflecting their desperate circumstances. They had little to lose. Defender-makers, primarily working in pairs, roamed the parishes' mountains, bogs, and glens from Lough Arrow to Lough Allen to administer oaths and seek allegiance to the Defender cause.**

Defenders in and around the parishes were some of the best organised in Ireland. The rapid increase in men taking Defender oaths was remarkable, reflecting their desperate circumstances. They had little to lose. Defender-makers, primarily working in pairs, roamed the parishes' mountains, bogs, and glens from Lough Arrow to Lough Allen to

administer oaths and seek allegiance to the Defender cause.<sup>14</sup> They also assembled small

gatherings in townlands. They spoke enthusiastically about the French forces that would shortly arrive to free them from their misery.

Over time, the lines between the United Irishmen and the Defender movement blurred in some areas, particularly in regions where farming grievances intersected with the broader nationalist cause.

## The Militia Act 1793

**To ensure each regiment was complete, the Militia Act included a conscription element where all eligible men between 18 and 45 in each parish were included in a ballot for service. The ballot proved highly unpopular in some counties, especially Roscommon. In March, April, May, and June of 1793, over 230 people across Ireland were killed in riots opposing the ballot.**

Clearly anxious by the threats posed by the United Irishmen and Defenders, the Irish Parliament looked to re-establish their Irish militia regiments to assist in dealing with the violence and disruption of Defender activity. The Militia Act of 1793 raised 38 regiments stationed across each county and the major cities of Dublin, Cork, and Limerick.

Many regiments had significant numbers of volunteering Catholics, though all officers were Protestants. To ensure each regiment was complete, the Militia Act included a conscription element where all eligible men between 18 and 45 in each parish were included in a ballot for service. The ballot proved highly unpopular in some counties, especially Roscommon. In March, April, May, and June of 1793, over 230 people across Ireland were killed in riots opposing the ballot.<sup>15</sup> Across counties Sligo, Roscommon, and Leitrim, local magistrates were expected to conduct the ballots from April 1793.

The conscription ballots were a moment of poorly considered policy.<sup>16</sup> With the Militia Act ratified immediately following the Catholic Relief Act, many Catholics saw conscription as a backhanded way of undermining their gains in the Catholic Relief Acts. There was widespread resentment about the compulsion and fear families would be left destitute after losing their men to militia service. Some historians draw a strong link between the ballot system and the increase in Defender violence in 1793.<sup>17</sup>

## The Parishes are Ablaze with Riots

*We have lived long enough on potatoes and salt. It is our turn to eat beef and mutton.*<sup>18</sup>

**Motivated by farming and labouring grievances, Defenders engaged in numerous bloody skirmishes with local militia and landowners. They petitioned to end the conscription ballots, increased pay for their labour, and yearly farm leases not to exceed ten shillings per acre.**

At a Defender meeting in Roscommon the farmer's lament above was typical of their mindset and defined Defender actions across the parishes during 1793. Motivated by farming and labouring grievances, Defenders engaged in numerous bloody skirmishes with local militia and

landowners. They petitioned to end the conscription ballots, increased pay for their labour,



and yearly farm leases not to exceed ten shillings per acre. Young men eagerly joined their fathers and uncles to don white smocks or another distinctive Defender garb to attack Protestant homes. They raided tree plantations to make pike handles, houghed livestock, and burned houses.<sup>19</sup>

By May 1793, Defender activity was reaching a peak,<sup>20</sup> with people's lives, whether Catholic or Protestant, being defined by anger, vengeance, fear, and turmoil.

In County Sligo, Defenders forcibly freed 16 prisoners, a parish priest was threatened for making a list of eligible men for the ballot, and eight houses in Ballyfarnan were attacked and raided for weapons.

The gaol at Carrick-on-Shannon was full of prisoners. Now armed, Defenders marched toward the village, intending to release all prisoners and threatening to burn the town. A troop of the 9<sup>th</sup> Dragoons intercepted them, and a bloody fight ensued, which saw nine Defenders killed and the remaining 115 arrested. The arrests did not subdue the Defenders, and they remained intent on regrouping to fight again to free their members. The people living in Carrick-on-Shannon were terrified, with the Protestant gentlemen of the area requesting the prisoners be released to calm the situation.

A Cullen man from Geevagh was one of ten who lost his life fighting alongside Defenders at *Battle Brae*, near Drumkeeran in Inishmagrath parish.<sup>21</sup> Defenders attacked the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment from either side of the road. Although the regiment of two sergeants and thirty-five armed soldiers managed to get the upper hand, Defenders armed with hammers, scythes, reaping hooks, and rusty blunderbusses<sup>22</sup> fought with courage and passion, even wrenching bayonets from the muskets of their foes as they attempted to reload their weapons.<sup>23</sup> Most surviving the battle escaped, with a handful taken prisoner. That night under darkness, Captain Vandeleur, with soldiers of the 8<sup>th</sup> Dragoons, scoured the area and entered houses, killing over 30 people, including many not associated with the attack.<sup>24</sup>

**Defenders destroyed the Protestant Church at Kilronan. Mr Tenison's house in Kilronan was also ransacked and burned to the ground. Aside from being a landlord to a handful of Cullen families, Tenison was one of the most significant Protestant landholders in Roscommon and owner of the Aughabehy colliery<sup>1</sup>. Tenison, with a party of soldiers, countered the attack by taking a handful of prisoners. This action only energised a mob of over 6,000 locals who killed several soldiers and rescued the prisoners.**

Defenders seized 70 stands of arms<sup>25</sup> at Castlerea, County Roscommon, while in south Roscommon, 12 cavalrymen were attacked, resulting in the death of seven Defenders. On 15 May, Defenders destroyed the Protestant Church at Kilronan. Mr. Tenison's house in Kilronan was also ransacked and burned to the ground. Aside from being a landlord to a handful of Cullen families, Tenison was one of the most significant Protestant landholders in Roscommon and

owner of the Aughabehy colliery.<sup>26</sup> Tenison, with a party of soldiers, countered the attack by

taking a handful of prisoners. This action only energised a mob of over 6,000 locals who killed several soldiers while rescuing the prisoners.<sup>27</sup>

Like all families, this must have been a treacherous and dangerous time for the Cullens in the parishes. On the one hand, their livelihoods depended upon men like Tenison for work and farming plots. On the other, the gravity of the moment demanded involvement. We will never know exactly how this situation unfolded, but the human condition is distinctive. Some fearing for their lives and families, would have kept their heads down, and got on with business the best they could. Others, particularly the younger men, would have taken the Defender oath and fought for the cause, thereby rendering the direct involvement of their families as well. Whatever the circumstance, it was an unpredictable and traumatic period where any instant could be your last.

**By 1795 counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo were in a state of absolute insurrection. Every Protestant home within a 65-kilometre radius of Carrick-on-Shannon had been raided for arms.**

The actions of Defenders through 1793, while violent, were very effective. They forced landholders to meet and agree to lower rents and increase wages to appease threats of further violence against them and

their livestock.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, fearing for their lives, middlemen acting on absentee landlords' behalf quickly acquiesced to Defender demands. They agreed to pay eightpence per day in summer and sixpence in winter for their labour and declared they would take no more than four guineas per acre of corn, three for wheat, and two for an acre of potatoes.<sup>29</sup> While these concessions brought a temporary break, they failed to curb the Defender movement, and by 1795 counties Leitrim, Roscommon, and Sligo were in absolute insurrection.<sup>30</sup> Every Protestant home within a 65-kilometre radius of Carrick-on-Shannon had been raided for arms.<sup>31</sup> In April 1795, Defenders confronted eleven revenue officers who had seized poteen<sup>32</sup> distilling equipment at Drumsna, County Leitrim, about 20 kilometres southeast of Arigna. The revenue officers sought refuge in a house. Defenders then set the house ablaze, killing them with pikes, scythes, and pitchforks as they tried to escape.<sup>33</sup>

The influential Catholic O'Reilly family became involved in Defender activity. They had owned the Arigna ironworks but sold their holding to their bank after becoming bankrupt. They deeply resented the Irish Parliament, which refused financial aid to enable them to keep the works. Consequently, Thomas O'Reilly became a United Irishman. He joined with local Defenders, seizing control of the Arigna Ironworks he once owned in June 1795 and oversaw the manufacture of 600 pikes to support the local uprising.<sup>34 35</sup>

The following account, written from a Protestant perspective, captures the turmoil of the time.<sup>36</sup>

*In the province of Connaught, particularly in the county of Roscommon, the defenders were terrific in the years 1794 and 1795. The mass of the people were furnished with pikes, and the houses of protestants were constantly plundered of arms. At last, many of the nobility and gentry assembled at Roscommon in the month of May, and resolved to lower rents, and to raise the wages of labourers, in hopes of allaying the dreadful spirit of outrage which actuated the people. They adjourned their meeting*

*for a week; but they soon discovered the folly of compromising with a mob in a state of insurrection, little short of open rebellion.*

*When they were approaching the town, on the day to which they adjourned, they saw numbers of people armed with pikes in all the adjacent fields, who pursued some of their philanthropic benefactors so closely, that they narrowly escaped into Roscommon.*

*A respectable protestant clergyman of the county of Roscommon informed me, that a body of pikemen rushed into his house in the night, and offered to swear him to be loyal; and on assuring them that he would be loyal to the king, they asked him, What king and on his saying King George, they cried out, No, no, a Roman king, meaning a popish sovereign; and they added, that they must have a king of their own.*

*A gentleman in the county of Roscommon informed me, that the defenders used frequently to send anonymous letters to persons, threatening them with destruction, unless they permitted them to cut trees and poles in their plantations, for the purpose of making pikes.*

*In the year 1795, so many protestant families fled to the town of Roscommon for protection, that they could scarce get accommodation there.*

**By this time the Defender and United Irishmen relationship had coalesced and strengthened.**

By 1795, the Defender and United Irishmen relationship had coalesced and strengthened. Given the level of Defender activity in the parishes, it

was no surprise the area was selected by Charles Teeling, the prominent Ulster United Irishman, to mount a recruitment drive. He held court with many across the parishes in May 1795.<sup>37</sup>

The Defender movement combined elements of Freemasonry moderated by Catholic principles to construct a *modus operandi* featuring clandestine meetings, hand signals, secret oaths, and memorised catechisms. Deep inside the pocket of a Defender hanged in April 1795 at Carrick-on-Shannon, the following catechism<sup>38</sup> was found:

*Are you concerned?*

*I am.*

*To what?*

*To the National Convention.*

*What do you design by that cause?*

*To quell all nations, dethrone all kings and plant the true religion that was lost since the Reformation.*

*What do you fall by?*

*Sin.*

*What do you rise by?*

*Repentance.*

*Where did the cock first crow that all the world heard?*

*In France.*

*What is your password?*

***Eliphismatis.***



**Many from the parishes were heavily involved with the Defender movement and would have whispered *Eliphismatis*, the secret code word of the Defenders in the area.**

Many from the parishes were heavily involved with the Defender movement and would have whispered *Eliphismatis*, the secret code word of the Defenders in the area.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, a familiar sketch in posters and Defender newspapers, including their publication in Boyle, County Roscommon, depicted a tree of liberty with branches representing some states in Europe, including Ireland. The branches had roses, some of them budding, some of them beginning to open, and at the top, a rose in full bloom representing France. The Tree of Liberty became a powerful metaphor for unifying Ireland and used by United Irishmen in the following catechism:

*What is that in your hand?*

*It is a branch.*

*Of what?*

*Of the tree of liberty.*

*Where did it first grow?*

*In America.*

*Where does it bloom?*

*In France.*

*Where did the seeds fall?*

*In Ireland.*

*When will the moon be full?*

*When the four quarters meet.*

The four quarters of the moon refer to the four provinces of Ireland.

**These catechisms and symbols make clear the influence of the American and French revolutions in underscoring the republic ideals of United Irishmen and Defenders alike.**

These catechisms and symbols make clear the influence of the American and French revolutions in underscoring the republic ideals of United Irishmen and Defenders alike.

The ideals were spread widely

through local papers, posters, pamphlets, and handbills. Frequent editorials about Catholic liberation expressed by United Irishmen in their Belfast newspaper, *The Northern Star*, also stirred a call to action. Although most people in Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes could not read English, those that could quickly relayed the messages to gatherings and meetings, especially after Mass. No doubt Myles Cullen and others from the Cullen family across the parishes were drawn into Defender actions.

**To counter Defenders, Protestants also organised a rival association, the Orangemen. They championed Protestant superiority, loyalty to the British Crown, and maintaining Ireland's prevailing social and economic circumstances.**

To counter Defenders, Protestants also organised a rival association, the Orangemen. They took their name from the Protestant William of Orange, who defeated the Catholic James II in 1691. They championed Protestant superiority, loyalty to the

British Crown, and maintaining Ireland's prevailing social and economic circumstances. The inevitable bloody conflicts between Defenders and Orangemen intensified an already explosive situation, which would have saddened Wolfe Tone, who had argued strongly that the divide between Catholics and Protestants was a barrier to unity and progress.

## The United Irishmen in France

### **Sean-Bhean Bhocht**

*O! The French are on the sea  
Says the sean-bhean bhocht;  
The French are on the sea,  
Says the sean-bhean bhocht;  
O! the French are in the bay,  
They'll be here without delay,  
And the Orange will decay,  
Says the sean-bhean bhocht.  
O! The French are in the bay,  
They'll be here by break of day,  
And the Orange will decay,  
Says the sean-bhean bhocht.*

In 1796, on behalf of United Irishmen, Wolfe Tone travelled to France intending to seek French support in the Irish rebellion against British rule. He met with French politicians and military leaders, including influential naval officers Pierre-Charles Villeneuve and General Lazare Hoche. He requested support for a French military intervention in Ireland to aid the Irish uprising. Wolfe Tone successfully negotiated, and France dispatched to Ireland the *Expédition d'Irlande*, a force of 14,000 French troops under the command of General Hoche.

The Armada of French ships skilfully avoided the Royal Navy and approached Bantry Bay, County Cork, in December 1796. The pending arrival of the French was greeted enthusiastically by Irish Catholics, with news quickly spreading aided by bonfires ablaze from hill to hill and songs such as Sean-Bhean Bhocht<sup>40</sup> (Poor Old Lady) quickly penned to herald their arrival. Much to the frustration of United Irishmen and the Irish community at large, unrelenting storms prevented the French ships from landing. A quick decision was taken to reassign the force to fight in other theatres of the French Revolutionary Wars.

Despite the failure of the French to arrive in 1796, the United Irish rebellion moved forward with limited successes in counties Kildare, Carlow, Wicklow, and Meath, but it was not until May 1798 when over 100 militia were slain at the Battle of Oulart Hill, County Wexford had United Irishmen with the support of Defenders achieved significant success.



*The Battle of Oulart Hill, May 1798.*<sup>41</sup>

After seizing control of County Wexford in May 1798, the United Irish soon forfeited their gains through bloody surrenders at the Battles of New Ross, Arklow, and Bunclody, concluding in a massive loss of life at the Battle of Vinegar Hill in Enniscorthy, County Wexford on 21 June 1798.

At the same time as the bloody routs in County Wexford, the Cloone area of County Leitrim, 25km southeast of Arigna, was in open rebellion with Defenders pitted against Orangemen. Between 600 and 700 Defenders, almost certainly with men from the parishes, had assembled in Cloone and began abusing the King, protesting against his government, and threatening yeoman.<sup>42</sup> Defender leaders offered a 100 guineas reward for the head of a soldier or Orangeman. A cavalry force arrived to assist the local yeomanry, and after engaging the Defenders, many were killed, and eight leaders were gaoled.

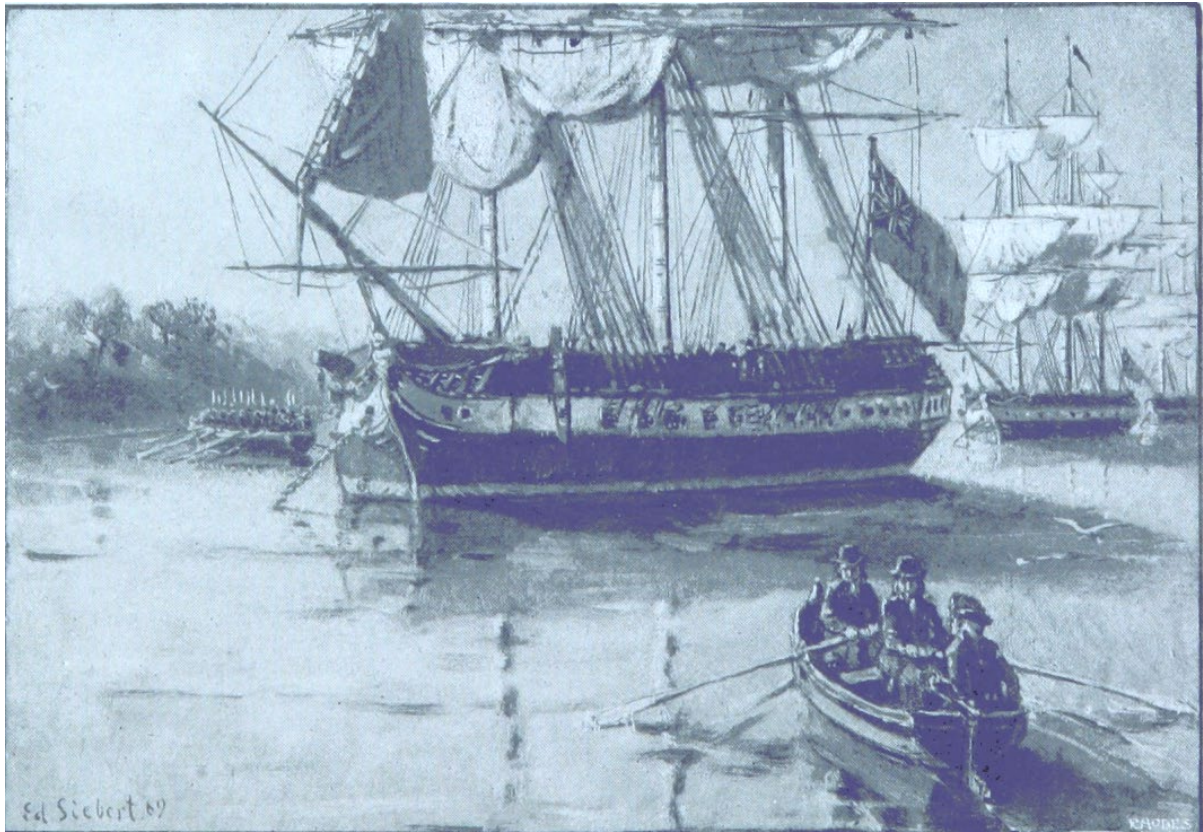
## **The French Arrive at Killala Bay**

Since the failed landing at Bantry Bay, talk of further French landings was rife across the country, much to the delight of Irish Catholics and, otherwise, the frustration of the British. Rumours persisted a French fleet had left La Rochelle in western France during July 1798 and was on its way to the Irish coast to revive the rebellion.

When three large warships flying British colours cast anchor 70 metres from shore at Killala Bay, County Mayo, on 22 August 1798 and began to unload people and supplies, Killala Protestants must have felt a sense of relief knowing their harbour was now safe and fortified by British warships. One can only imagine their shock as the Port Surveyor James Rutledge, accompanied by Edwin and Arthur Stock, sons of the Reverend Joseph Stock, Protestant Bishop of Killala, who had taken a small rowboat to greet the visitors, were helped aboard by an Irishman and men wearing the uniform of the French army,

*...one of whom stepped forward and informed them, in good Dublin English, and in the name of his superior, General Jean-Joseph Humbert, there present, that they were on board the French frigate Concorde, prisoners of war in the hands of France.*<sup>43</sup>





A depiction of Rutledge, along with Edwin and Arthur Stock on a small rowboat to greet the visitors.<sup>44</sup>

**Under the leadership of General Humbert, the town of Killala was immediately captured. Hundreds of local Defenders eager to resurrect the rebellion quickly supported the French forces. This newly formed Irish-French Army then captured nearby Ballina. Lord Cornwallis, the commander-in-chief of the English forces in Ireland, responded swiftly, dispatching soldiers to secure Castlebar, a key garrison town, against the pending attack from General Humbert and his men. The race to Castlebar was on.**

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General Humbert and his men. The race to Castlebar was on. The French, aided and supported by their Defender comrades, defeated a much larger and better-equipped English force to take Castlebar. In triumphant scenes, General Humbert raised a green flag with a picture of a harp and the words *Erin go Bragh* (Ireland until Eternity) and proclaimed the new Republic of Connaught. Many more Irish men excitedly flocked to join the French as news spread quickly with excited cries of *Erin go Bragh* from the Irish and *Vive la Republique Irlandaise* (Long Live the Republic of Ireland) from the French.

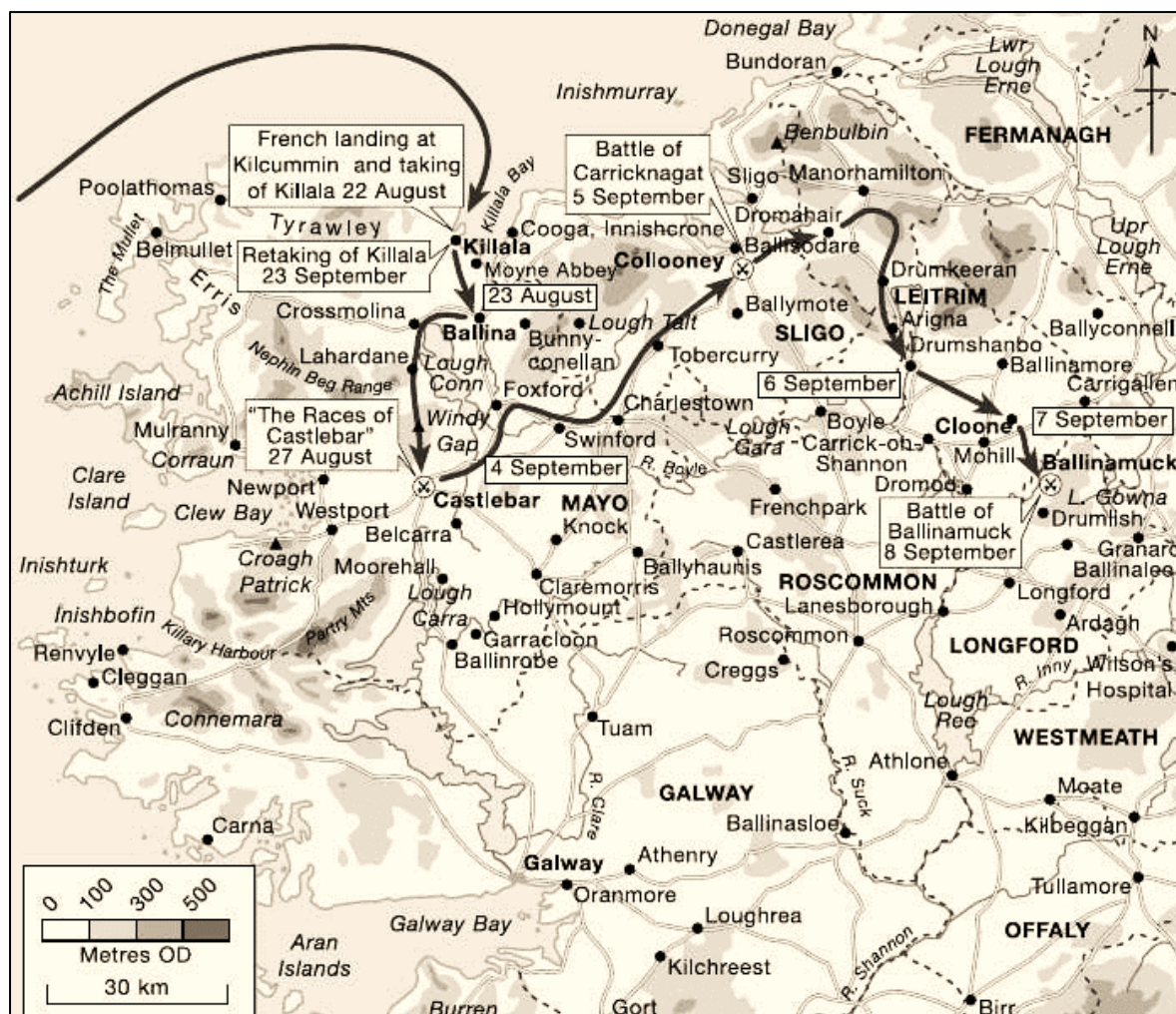
On 3 September, the combined forces made their way to Tubbercurry, County Sligo, and again defeated a larger English contingent. With the revolutionary force now nearby, dozens of Geevagh, Kilonan, and Inishmagrath men rushed to join Humbert and his men at Collooney, where they withstood an intense attack from British forces to prevail again.

During their Irish journey, the French soldiers were appalled by the living conditions and poverty of the people they had come to liberate. Captain Jobit noted the vast social injustice before his eyes where, in stark contrast to the native Irish, the Protestant community lived with privilege and wrote:

*We were astonished by the extreme poverty which appeared everywhere before our eyes, right from the beginning of our encounters with Ireland. Never has any country presented such an unhappy erspective; the women and children practically naked and have as their only shelter a small bad cottage which barely covers them from the ravages of the seasons. Moreover they share this primitive habitation with everything from the farmyard!*

*Their daily food is potatoes and sour milk, practically never bread and rarely meat...when we pass in front of their disgusting hovels where we would never enter except to glance at a repugnant object, they throw themselves in front of us, head in the mud, and recite long prayers for our success. All men and women wear, suspended around their necks, large, dirty, ugly scapulars<sup>45</sup> and rosary beads*

**Map 1 The route taken by the French in 1798<sup>46</sup>**





**At Drumkerran, Humbert and his men enjoyed their first hot meal since leaving Castlebar as women from nearby areas gathered to cook for them. General Sarrazin, second in command of the French force, noted the support given to them by local people between Drumkerran and Ballinamuck.**

As the French-Irish force moved eastward from Collooney to Drumkerran, many local men from the parishes joined Myles Cullen (*Miley of the Spear*), who was already with Humbert's men. There no doubt was some rejoicing from families as news quickly spread that at Drumkeeran, in Inishmagrath parish,

General Humbert rejected an offer from Cornwallis, delivered by an envoy, to surrender. Knowing their dangers would also have been a sense of trepidation for the brave men's families.

At Drumkerran, Humbert and his men enjoyed their first hot meal since leaving Castlebar as women from nearby areas gathered to cook for them. General Sarrazin, second in command of the French force, noted the support given to them by local people between Drumkerran and Ballinamuck:

*The country people always cooperated with us as helpers in our commissariat, and as guardians of our military stores. Whenever we halted we were immediately surrounded by local inhabitants who brought us milk, meat, potatoes etc. The women showed towards us the care which they have for children, brothers and friends. Our soldiers had nothing to do but to guard from attack. The French, who have had the opportunity to observe the Irish at close quarters, will never forget their friendly behaviour in every situation in which we found ourselves.<sup>47</sup>*

**Any who helped the French took a considerable risk and was likely to be executed immediately. In stark contrast, the British received no support, with local Catholics even hiding their farm animals in mountain booley to ensure they could not steal them for food.**

Any who helped the French took a considerable risk and was likely to be executed immediately. In stark contrast, the British received no support, with local Catholics even hiding their farm animals in mountain booley to ensure they could not steal them for food. In a twist of sweet

irony, the only food the British soldiers could muster were potatoes they dug from roadside fields.

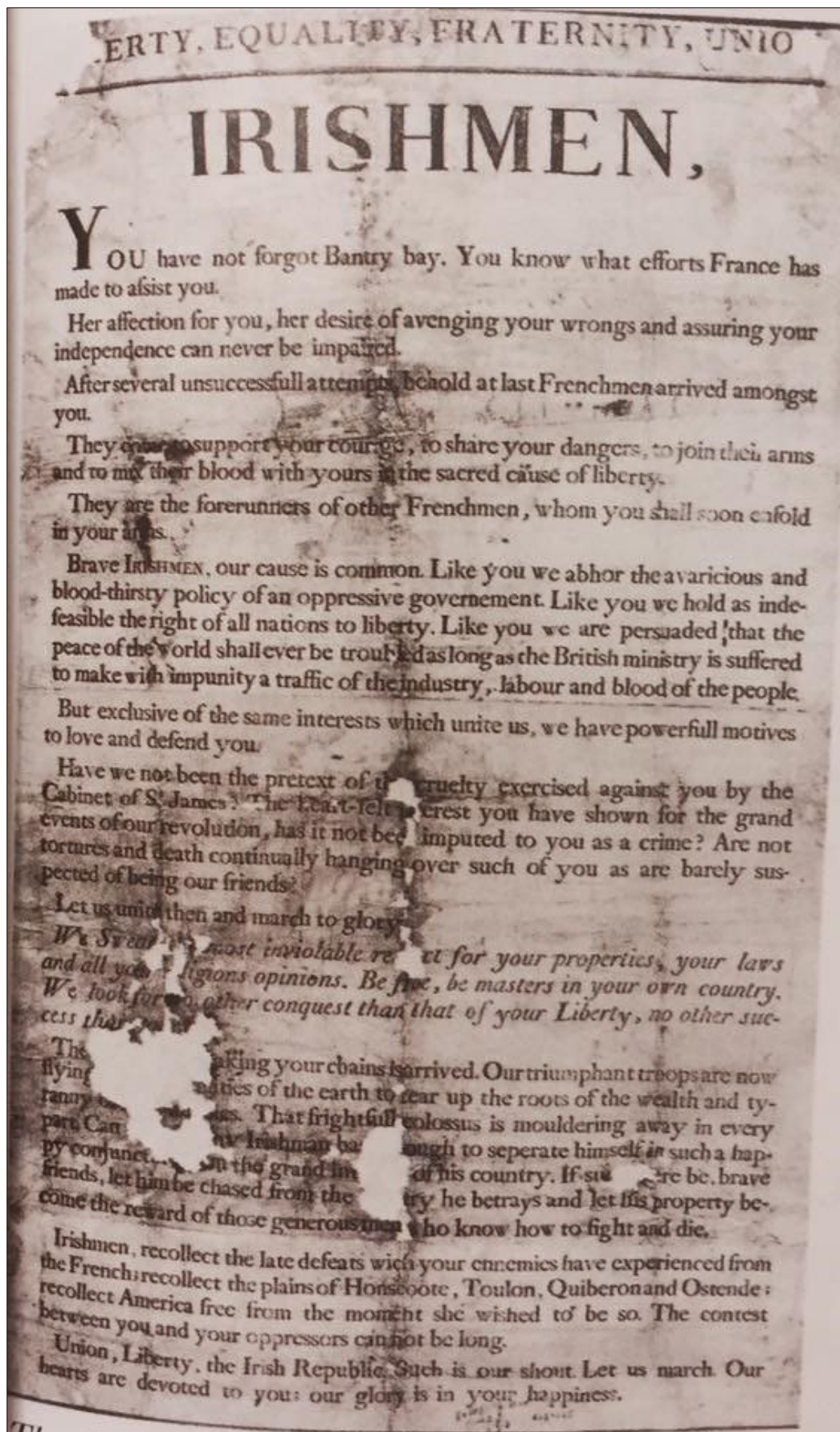
Humbert and his men moved southward by the western shores of Lough Allen and crossed the River Shannon at Ballintra Bridge. By this time, an estimated 5,000 Irish men had joined with the French. Close behind them, the infamous General Lake led an English force numbering nearly 15,000 while Cornwallis waited with an army of over 15,000. While General Humbert and his revolutionary men had successfully defeated British troops several times, they were tired and battle-weary, with a much more significant encounter looming as they made their way to Ballinamuck on 8 September 1798.





General Humbert on horseback at the Battle of Castlebar.<sup>48</sup>





General Humbert's Proclamation of the Republic of Connacht, at Castlebar, August 1798.<sup>49</sup>

By this stage, all was not well with the Irish and French partnership. The Irish rebel leader George Blake had challenged Humbert to a duel stemming from an argument about where to place the pikemen at Ballinamuck. Blake insisted they should be on the hillside of Shanmullagh, but Humbert ordered them around the Black Fort. Humbert told Blake, *Don't think that I am going to lose my men for a lot of savages.*<sup>50</sup> At Ballinamuck, some pikemen marched with Humbert, while most stayed on the road with Blake. It appears that Blake's reasoning was spot on. During the battle, the pikemen climbed to the Shanmullagh summit, an ascent almost impossible for the British on horseback. Blake's men then inflicted significant losses on the British as they tried three times, without success, to claim the hill.<sup>51</sup> It is impossible to know whether the Geevagh, Kilonan, and Inishmagrath men at Ballinamuck stayed with Humbert or joined Blake.

**The French were treated as prisoners of war while the Irish revolutionaries continued their desperate fight. In a hail of crossfire, the Irish men, many armed with only a pike, were shot, sabred, or bayoneted in a merciless massacre.**

The Battle of Ballinamuck lasted just over an hour before Humbert surrendered his remaining force of 844 soldiers. The French were treated as prisoners of war while the Irish revolutionaries continued their desperate fight. In a storm of violent

warfare, the Irish men, many armed with only a pike, were shot, sabred, or bayoneted in a merciless massacre. Those that escaped were hunted and most captured. Matthew Tone, the younger brother of Wolfe Tone, escaped Ballinamuck only to be caught in County Cavan the following day. He was taken to Dublin to face a court-martial, where he was quickly found guilty and hung. Bartholomew Teeling, Humbert's aid-de-camp, was singled out from the other French officers, and suffered the same fate as Matthew Tone. Hundreds of those captured were taken to Ballinalee, County Longford, or Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim. The prisoners taken to Carrick-on-Shannon received no court-martial or opportunity to plead a case. Their fate is captured in the following report from a field officers journal:<sup>52</sup>

*After the action [at Ballinamuck], the regiment [Armagh Militia] were marched to Carrick-on-Shannon – where in the courthouse, there were collected a couple of hundred rebel prisoners, taken in arms. An order arrived from Lord Cornwallis, directing a certain number of them to be hanged without further ceremony – and a number of bits of paper were rolled up with the word 'death' being written on the number ordered; and with those in his hat, Captain Kay (on whom devolved the management of this wretched lottery), entered the courthouse, and the drawing began. As fast as a wretch drew the fatal ticket he was handed out and hanged at the door. I am not sure of the exact number thus and dealt with, but seventeen were actually hanged. It was dreadful duty to devolve on any regiment...*

Several accounts from English soldiers about the fateful encounter included:<sup>53</sup>

*We pursued the rebels through the bog - the country was covered for miles around with their slain...we brought one hundred and thirteen prisoners to Carrick-on-Shannon, nineteen of whom we executed in one day, and left the remainder for others to follow our example!*



*They are hanging rebels here by twenties together, it is a melancholy sight, but necessary.*

*There lay dead about five hundred; I went next day with many others to see them; how awful! to see that heathy mountain covered with dead bodies, resembling at a distance flocks of sheep - for numbers were naked and swelled with the weather. We found fifteen of the Longford militia among the slain.*



*How awful! to see that heathy mountain covered with dead bodies, resembling at a distance flocks of sheep.* <sup>54 55</sup>

**Following the rout at Ballinamuck, the British retraced their steps to seek vengeance against those who had helped the French. The cottages of many Catholics across townlands, including Drumshanbo, Drumkeeran, and Ballintogher, were burned to the ground, with many women and men murdered and their families the subject of the most brutal assaults.**

Following the rout at Ballinamuck, the British retraced their steps to find rebels and seek vengeance against those who had helped the French. The cottages of many Catholics across townlands, including Drumshanbo, Drumkeeran, and Ballintogher, were burned to the ground, with many women and men murdered and their families the subject of the most brutal

assaults. The rampage of reprisals, punishments, and executions continued for weeks.

First-hand accounts of 1798 are scarce. Patrick O'Reilly from Dromard in County Longford recalled the experiences of his great-grandmother, who witnessed the slaughter at Ballinamuck and said *the corpses were lyin' like sh'aves of oats in a harvest field*. She told her

great-grandson how she saved her husband from the British by pleading for his life, giving them all the family money, and even cooking their only two hens to feed them.<sup>56</sup>

It was not until several weeks after Ballinamuck that Wolfe Tone was recognised amongst the French Officers. At his court-martial trial Wolfe Tone defended his actions and read the following speech:<sup>57</sup>

*I entered into the service of the French Republic with the sole view of being useful to my country. To contend against British Tyranny, I have braved the fatigues and terrors of the field of battle; I have sacrificed my comfort, have courted poverty, have left my wife unprotected, and my children without a father. After all I have done for a sacred cause, death is no sacrifice. In such enterprises, everything depends on success: Washington succeeded – Kosciusko<sup>58</sup> failed. I know my fate, but I neither ask for pardon nor do I complain. I admit openly all I have said, written, and done, and am prepared to meet the consequences. As, however, I occupy a high grade in the French army, I would request that the court, if they can, grant me the favour that I may die the death of a soldier.*

Wolfe Tone was sentenced to be hanged on 12 November 1798. A neck wound, which he likely self inflicted, prevented his public hanging, but caused his death seven days later.

Given the story of *Miley of the Spear* and the Cullen man that died fighting the British in 1793, it is highly probable other Cullen men were active as Defenders and joined with the French. Many from the parishes felt the agony of losing their men in battle and the repercussions of their involvement in the rebellion. The destruction of property, loss of life, and crop losses brought starvation and death for many of these poor people in the long winter of 1798 and 1799.

Roughly 500 Irishmen joined the French as they travelled through Leitrim and Roscommon. This number might have been tenfold if the French had arrived during the Defender peak of 1793 through 1795. In a twist of cruel fate, just two months after General Humbert, a second French force of comparable size arrived on the shores of Ireland only to realise it was too late and turn back, leaving many to lament if the French troops had arrived just six months earlier a different chapter may have been written in the history of Ireland.

The failure of the revolution was devastating for Irish Catholics, including the families of the Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes. Many maintained an enduring affection for the French, forever hopeful of an independent Ireland.

**The failure of the revolution was devastating for Irish Catholics, including the families of Geevagh, Kilronan, and Inishmagrath parishes. Many maintained an enduring affection for the French, forever hopeful of an independent Ireland.**

At the centenary of *Bliain na bhFrancach*, John O'Dowd, then Member of Parliament for Bunnanadden in south County Sligo, wrote the following ballad for unveiling the Charles Teeling monument at Carricknagat outside Collooney.<sup>59</sup>

## *The Battle of Carricknagat*

*They camped along the Abbey Wall  
Amid the clustering trees,  
As loudly rang the bugle call  
Upon the morning breeze.  
Now down each slope our soldiers swarm  
With wild and ringing cheers,  
While fast in line of battle form  
Bold Humbert's Grenadiers!*

*The flags of France and Ireland wave  
Above that serried host,  
While here and there each sentry brave  
Stands sternly at his post.  
Amid the trees of Union Wood  
Pikes glitter near and far,  
Blades that had drunk of Saxon blood  
At far-famed Castlebar.*

*Old Leyney sends her bravest sons  
To strike for the old land,  
While Corran's swords and scythes and guns  
Gleam 'mid the mustering band.  
From Sligo town and Sooley's height  
They're mustering near and far,  
Brave hearts that never shirked a fight  
Or feared a foeman's scar.*

*Soon shall their prowess tested be  
Hark! yonder opening gun,  
Proclaims to friend and enemy  
The Battle has begun!  
The foeman's scarlet lines advance  
Across the open dell,  
Now sons of Ireland - men of France  
Strike vengefully and well!*

*Charge as your fathers charged and fought  
When dauntless brave Red Hugh,  
At Curlew's Pass and Ballymote  
The Saxon hosts overthrew.  
Charge as they charged when Clifford bled  
On Ballinacorney's green plain,  
When Ireland's green above the red  
Hung high o'er heaps of slain!*

*Forward! the slender line of blue  
Advances to the fight,*



*By files of pikemen firm and true  
Supported left and right.  
The foemen meet their stern attack  
With swinging sword and spear,  
And though they're driven a moment back  
They rally with a cheer!*

*A battery posted 'neath the rock  
A battery served right well,  
Sends forth with many a flash and shock  
Its showers of shot and shell.  
It rains destruction on our flanks  
And lays our pikemen low,  
Yet undeterred the patriot ranks  
Dash boldly on the foe!*

*"That battery must be silenced be  
At whatso'er the cost,  
Capture that cursed gun" cried he  
"Or else the day is lost"  
Thus rang our leader's stern command  
And scarcely had he spoke,  
Wheen Teeling on his gallant mare  
Rode forward through the smoke.*

*Alone he dashed with desperate speed  
Across the ball-swept plain,  
Whilst 'round him and his gallant steed  
Fell bullets thick as rain!  
A cheer ascends from Ireland's host  
As spurring madly on,  
He shot the gunner at his post  
And spiked the smoking gun!*

*A cheer for Ireland and for France  
And one for Liberty!  
No more the scarlet lines advance  
They turn and break and flee.  
They leave their wounded and their slain  
The battle plain upon,  
The Green in triumph waves again  
And Carricknagat is won.*

*And here upon the hallowed ground  
Where Teeling turned the day,  
A monument of stone is found  
To honour deeds of clay!  
It will stimulate our Irish youth  
Heroic deeds to do,  
When next for Freedom and for Truth*

*The combat they renew.  
And teach the tyrants of our land  
Enslaved though we be,  
No threat nor terror can withstand  
Our longing to be free.*

<sup>1</sup> [https://republican-news.org/current/news/2018/06/the\\_1798\\_rebellion.html](https://republican-news.org/current/news/2018/06/the_1798_rebellion.html)

<sup>2</sup> A National 1798 Rebellion Centre<sup>2</sup> in County Wexford hosts an educational service, while most counties traversed by General Humbert and the combined forces, including Sligo, Leitrim, and Roscommon, conduct annual commemorations.

<sup>3</sup> Beiner, G. (2007). *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory*, University of Wisconsin Press.

<sup>4</sup> France was at war with the German states, primarily the Kingdom of Prussia, during the year 1870. This conflict is commonly known as the Franco-Prussian War. The war began on July 19, 1870, and lasted until May 10, 1871. The primary cause of the war was the growing rivalry between France and Prussia over the question of German unification, which eventually led to a diplomatic crisis and military confrontation. The war ended with the defeat of France and the establishment of the German Empire.

<sup>5</sup> *The Sligo Champion* 12 November 1870.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., Beiner (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Dating from 1937-39, this remarkable collection is the outcome of an innovative project supervised by the Irish Folklore Commission. In conjunction with the Department of Education and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, senior Primary School children recorded more than 750,000 pages of local history and oral tradition from across the 26 counties of the Irish Free State. This collection is digitized and available at [www.duchas.ie](http://www.duchas.ie)

<sup>8</sup> The Bastille was a fortress-prison located in Paris, France. It was originally constructed in the 14th century as a defensive structure to protect the eastern entrance of the city. Over time, it was used primarily as a state prison by the French monarchy to detain individuals who were considered enemies of the state or threats to the king's rule. On July 14, 1789, during the French Revolution, a crowd of revolutionaries stormed the Bastille in a pivotal event known as the Storming of the Bastille. The attack was driven by a desire to obtain weapons and ammunition stored in the prison, as well as to challenge the authority of the monarchy. The storming of the Bastille marked a turning point in the French Revolution, and it has since been celebrated as a symbol of the people's victory over tyranny.

<sup>9</sup> Myles Cullen's memorial song or poem is also acknowledged in other places such as Op. cit., Beiner (2007). An interesting aside to the song is the line: *The memories of the Slasher Grand, the Myles of famed Finea*. This refers to the much lauded, Myles *The Slasher* O'Reilly who defended the Bridge of Finea against British forces in the mid-1600s at Finea, a small village in County Westmeath on the border with County Cavan. This is the same person who is the inspiration for the famous Irish ballad *Come Back Paddy Reilly*.

<sup>10</sup> A gibbet is a form of gallows where multiple people could be left hanging.

<sup>11</sup> Ninety-Eight Memorial, Ballinamuck, County Longford. The pikeman monument in Ballinamuck was unveiled at a ceremony to mark the 130th anniversary of the battle. It depicts an archetypal wounded Irish pikeman.

<sup>12</sup> Kelly, L. (1998). *A Flame Now Quenched. Rebels and Frenchmen in Leitrim 1793-1798*. The Lilliput Press Ltd., Dublin.

<sup>13</sup> Duffy, P. (2007). *The Killing of Major Dennis McMahon – A Mystery of Old Ireland*. HarperCollins, New York. p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Lecky, W.E.H. (1892). *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, Volume 3. Longmans, Green and Company, London, p. 481.

<sup>15</sup> Bartlett, T. (1983). 'An End to Moral Economy: The Irish Militia Disturbances of 1793', *Past and Present*, No. 99, pp. 41-64.

<sup>16</sup> The ballot system failed and was ultimately withdrawn. In the period between 1793 and 1798 the percentage of Catholics in Irish regiments reduced from 68% to 5%.

<sup>17</sup> Nelson, I. F. (2003). "The First Chapter of 1798"? Restoring a military perspective to the Irish Militia riots of 1793. *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 132.

<sup>18</sup> A farmer emphatically announced this at a Defender meeting in County Roscommon following Sunday Mass. In Op. cit., Kelly (1998)

<sup>19</sup> Connolly, S. J. (2008). *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800*, Oxford Scholarship Online.

<sup>20</sup> Op. Cit., Nelson (2003).

<sup>21</sup> Schools' Folklore Commission (1937). *Johnny Cullen's grandfather from Geeva was kelled at the battle of Lavagh, Drumkeerin*. This was provided by James Cullen who is Gerry Cullen's grandfather's brother who was born about 1878. In 1938 he was living at Drumkerran and provided the story. The Johnny to which he was referring was most likely John Cullen (1873-1952) the son of Terry and Bessie Cullen (Nangle). This would make his grandfather a sibling of Miley of the Spear. [www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4605938/4604102/4650001](http://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4605938/4604102/4650001)

<sup>22</sup> A.A. Slack to Miss Thompson, 20 June 1793. Quoted in Op. cit., Kelly (1998).

<sup>23</sup> Musgrave, R. (1802). *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland From the Arrival of the English Also, a Particular Detail of that which Broke Out the XXIIIrd of May, MDCCXCVIII; with the History of the Conspiracy which Preceded it* · Volume 2 [https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/Memoirs\\_of\\_the\\_Different\\_Rebellions\\_in\\_Ireland\\_cvAAAAAMAAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/Memoirs_of_the_Different_Rebellions_in_Ireland_cvAAAAAMAAJ?hl=en)

<sup>24</sup> Op. cit., Kelly (1998).

<sup>25</sup> A complete set of weapons for one person.

<sup>26</sup> Donovan, J. B. (2017). *Henry Foxall: Methodist, Industrialist, American*. United Methodist Board of Higher Education & Ministry.

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., Musgrave (1802).

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., Lecky (1892)..

<sup>29</sup> Op. cit., Kelly (1998).

<sup>30</sup> Smyth, J. (1992). *The Men of No Property, Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century*, Palgrave Macmillan.



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- <sup>31</sup> Op. cit., Donovan (2017).
- <sup>32</sup> alcohol made usually from potatoes.
- <sup>33</sup> Op. cit., Kelly (1998).
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Hegarty, S. (2020). The Arigna iron and coal works during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. DCU School of history and geography. <http://doras.dcu.ie/25218/1/TheArignaironandcoalworksBreifnefinal.pdf>
- <sup>36</sup> Op. cit., Musgrave (1802).
- <sup>37</sup> Op. cit., Kelly (1998).
- <sup>38</sup> Bartlett, T. (1985). Select Documents XXXVIII: Defenders and Defenderism in 1795. *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 24, No. 95, pp. 373-394.
- <sup>39</sup> Kelly, L. (nd). *Defenderism in Leitrim during the 1790s*. <http://mctiernan.com/defend1.htm>
- <sup>40</sup> The Sean-Bhean bhocht (Irish for *Poor old woman*) is a traditional Irish song from the period of the Irish Rebellion of 1798, and dating in particular to the lead up to a French expedition to Bantry Bay, that ultimately failed to get ashore in 1796.
- <sup>41</sup> Wikimedia Commons.
- <sup>42</sup> A class intermediate between the gentry and the labourers, usually applied to the British.
- <sup>43</sup> Gribayedoff, V. (1890). *The French Invasion of Ireland in '98. Leaves of Unwritten History That Will Tell of an Heroic Endeavour or a Lost Opportunity to Throw Off England's Yoke*, Charles P. Somersby, New York. <https://www.libraryireland.com/frenchinvasion1798/general-humbert-killala.php>
- <sup>44</sup> Picture taken from Op. cit., Gribayedoff (1890). British Library Commons.
- <sup>45</sup> Devotional scapulars typically consist of two rectangular pieces of brown cloth, sometimes with passages of scripture, connected by bands and worn around the neck.
- <sup>46</sup> Op. cit., Beiner (2007).
- <sup>47</sup> Op. cit., Kelly (1998).
- <sup>48</sup> *The Irish Times*, November 2022.
- <sup>49</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/1798casualtylist/photos/humberts-proclamation-castlebar-the-republic-of-connacht-august-1798/3161296513935902/?paipv=0&eav=AfbvmnT8IO5dkrSNI7lqssPg2QaceXvvXasR\\_R6RzX7Qpm024EpDIyfKBxGJNxGtnVs&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/1798casualtylist/photos/humberts-proclamation-castlebar-the-republic-of-connacht-august-1798/3161296513935902/?paipv=0&eav=AfbvmnT8IO5dkrSNI7lqssPg2QaceXvvXasR_R6RzX7Qpm024EpDIyfKBxGJNxGtnVs&_rdr)
- <sup>50</sup> Beiner, G. (2004). Who Were "The Men of the West"? *Folk Historiographies and the Reconstruction of Democratic Histories*, Vol. 115, No. 2, pp. 201-221
- <sup>51</sup> Hayes, R. (1979). *The Last Invasion of Ireland. When Connacht Rose*. Dublin.
- <sup>52</sup> Quoted in Op. cit., Kelly (1998).
- <sup>53</sup> Op. cit., Gribayedoff (1890).
- <sup>54</sup> Op. cit., Gribayedoff (1890).
- <sup>55</sup> Picture taken from Op. cit., Gribayedoff (1890). British Library Commons.
- <sup>56</sup> Who were "the Men of the West"? Folk historiographies and the reconstruction of democratic histories. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249013005\\_Who\\_were\\_the\\_Men\\_of\\_the\\_West\\_Folk\\_historiographies\\_and\\_the\\_reconstruction\\_of\\_democratic\\_histories](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249013005_Who_were_the_Men_of_the_West_Folk_historiographies_and_the_reconstruction_of_democratic_histories)
- <sup>57</sup> Speech by Theobald Wolfe Tone in cited in Sampson, W. (1817). *Memoirs of William Sampson*. Samuel B. T. Caldwell Publisher. [https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/Memoirs\\_of\\_William\\_Sampson/OtoEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/Memoirs_of_William_Sampson/OtoEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en)
- <sup>58</sup> Kościuszko refers to Tadeusz Kościuszko, a prominent Polish-Lithuanian military leader, statesman, and national hero. Born in 1746, he played a significant role in the American Revolutionary War, fighting alongside the colonists against British forces. Known for his strategic brilliance and unwavering commitment to liberty, Kościuszko designed and oversaw the construction of fortifications, including the pivotal defenses at West Point. After the war, he returned to Europe and became actively involved in the fight for Polish independence, leading an unsuccessful uprising against foreign powers in 1794. Kościuszko's name became synonymous with bravery, resilience, and the pursuit of freedom, making him an enduring symbol of national pride and heroism in Poland and beyond.
- <sup>59</sup> Carricknagat was the site of the battle of the same name on 5 September 1798. The ballad was recorded by Elizabeth Benson, a teacher at Carrowreagh, County Sligo, during an interview with John O'Dowd, MP, as part of the Schools' Folklore Commission in 1938. <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4701754/4699513/4708707?ChapterID=4701754&NameKey=mr-j-o-dowd>