

Canon Arthur Ryan, the National Volunteers and Army Recruitment in Tipperary

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This is the third in a series of articles about aspects of life in an Irish provincial town during the first half of the twentieth century. The first article used the 1901 census returns to analyse the geography of deprivation in Tipperary town and discussed how local government responded.¹ The second article looked at the impact of cultural nationalism on the town, especially the Gaelic League and how during the early years of the century, 'Irishness' was redefined.² This third article looks at the formation and history of the Volunteers in Tipperary but following the 'Split' stays with the majority National Volunteers. Winners not only get to write the history; more often than not they become that history. This was certainly the case with respect to the Irish Volunteers whose story both locally and nationally occupy yards of shelf space.³ In contrast, those who saw things differently and fought and died in the Great War, occupy forgotten graves. The story of the National Volunteers in the Tipperary district has its own interest and connects with the earlier articles in this series. For example, what can the 'geography of deprivation' tell us about the background of those killed in the trenches, who had Tipperary addresses? Not all of these casualties were National Volunteers but with respect to 'issues of identity' the Tipperary parish priest Canon Arthur Ryan had a crucial role to play, not just locally but nationally. How did his intense and frequently expressed nationalism allow him to become one of the major clerical promoters of recruitment to the British army?⁴

Canon Arthur Ryan

Arthur Ryan's background was unusual among his brother clergy in Cashel & Emlý. He was not just a Ryan but a Ryan of Scarteen, Knocklong Co. Limerick, famous for its Black and Tan hunting hounds. While the family had absolute ownership of but fifty acres, they were substantial middle landlords, holding mainly from the Normanton estate.⁵ Arthur Ryan was born in 1852, the eight son in a family of eleven, of whom nine were boys. An older brother joined the Jesuits and one of his sisters became a nun. Following education at St Mary's College Oscott near Birmingham, Arthur Ryan was ordained in Thurles in 1876 and spent the rest of the century in St Patrick's College, serving as president 1887-1903. In July 1903 he was appointed parish priest of Tipperary. He died in 1922. As his notice in the diocesan records rightly observed: 'Notwithstanding the circumstances of his birth and education, he became a prominent figure in the nationalist movements and a trusted friend of Irish leaders.'⁶



Canon Arthur Ryan (1852-1922) PP Tipperary 1903-1922.

Arthur Ryan had pride in his family and from early in his career saw himself occupying a broader stage than offered by Thurles or Tipperary.⁷ In 1890 a collection of thirty of his sermons was published and he also wrote some material for the Catholic Truth Society.⁸ In September 1908, the Nineteenth Eucharistic Congress was held in London and Canon Ryan delivered a paper on 'the practice of frequent communion in Ireland'. He painted a glowing picture of Irish piety, describing the strength of confraternities and sodalities and was especially lyrical about the practice of 'stations' in private houses. His rapture was supported by statistics such as 'Nenagh's record of 2,800 monthly communions, made in its glorious church'.⁹ He was very proud of his role in the Congress and in a sermon in Tipperary following the death of Pope Pius X in 1914, explained how 'your parish priest gave evidence by statistics regarding Ireland's response to the Pope's wish for frequent communion' and described how shortly afterwards, when meeting the Pope as part of an Irish pilgrimage to Rome, 'His Holiness met them with these statistics in his hand'. Ryan added: 'It is a consolation to us today to think that we brought joy to that sad heart and that it came to him from Tipperary'.¹⁰

While Ryan was a senior and influential figure in the Cashel diocese, the big prize was beyond reach. While his name was mentioned when Archbishop Fennelly resigned in May 1913, Ryan's political profile, apart from any other consideration, made him a weak candidate.

Canon Ryan's commitment to the Gaelic League was absolute and he was resolute in advancing the status of the Irish language. In 1908 he won the enthusiastic support of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the Gaelic League journal, for his demand that Irish be essential for entry to the new National University. He used his control of the Tipperary branch to pass uncompromising resolutions to this effect.¹¹ Perhaps the clearest statement of his ideals was in a speech delivered in June 1917 when those ideals were under threat. What he wanted was an 'Irish Ireland' in which Irish industry, sport and language would flourish. Above all he wanted 'the development of the Irish Soul'. He went on to declare: 'If I thought that this would be impossible within the future Empire of Nations, I would without hesitation declare for the nation against the empire'. However, his faith in this commonwealth ideal was unshaken and

in its creation 'the ideals that have lighted my path all through my life would be realised'.¹² Canon Ryan was equally committed to the Irish Parliamentary Party, led by John Redmond, with whom he had a personal relationship and through which all this would be achieved. His relationship with Redmond may have dated from c.1905 when he sought Redmond's help with regard to a piece of unfinished business from the New Tipperary episode (with which Ryan had nothing to do but as PP of Tipperary was a trustee of the houses built as 'New Tipperary').¹³

In April 1912 in the context of the third Home Rule Bill being debated in the Commons, an 'Irish National Convention' was held in the Mansion House Dublin. The purpose of this was not to allow debate but to demonstrate support for John Redmond. The meeting heard Redmond promote the bill like Moses after years in the wilderness looking down on the Promised Land. The meeting was packed with priests but it was Ryan who proposed the second and key resolution that questions of detail be left to the Parliamentary Party. Using a homely image, Ryan told the delegates that just as they would not dream of interfering with the drivers of the trains that brought them to Dublin that day, it would be equal folly to interfere with the drivers of the Home Rule train. *The Times* correspondent described Ryan as 'a stalwart clergyman with a voice which has made him famous as the Stentor of Nationalist politics'.¹⁴

Canon Ryan had great affection for the Redmond brothers and their deaths affected him deeply. Major William Redmond MP was killed on the Western Front in June 1917. The previous Christmas Ryan had visited him at the Front (see below). The following year Ryan edited a memorial volume and wrote about his friendship with Redmond, who in the language of the period was declared to have had a 'glorious death'. Ryan particularly remembered when Redmond had dined with him after addressing a political meeting in Tipperary a decade before. Also present was General Sir William Butler, a neighbour, who did not see his military career as incompatible with being Irish. Ryan's retrospective has an intense feeling of loss, not just for these dead friends but for a view of politics, what might now be termed the 'Scottish Option': the expression of political and cultural identity but within a United Kingdom context.¹⁵ When John Redmond died in March 1918, Ryan officiated at a memorial mass in Tipperary and spoke elegiacally: 'Many a time in years gone by he worshiped with us before this altar.... In days of anxiety and crisis, he turned to Tipperary for support and we gave it to him whole-heartedly'. More than a man was being memorialised; a political culture was being consigned to history.

Along with his religious vocation and his role as a public figure, a major influence on Canon Ryan was the close connection between his family and the British military. His oldest brother, who died in 1905, had a military career but it was the service of so many of his nephews in the Great War that together with his support for Redmond, made him one of the most important clerical supporters of recruitment to the British army. Three sons of his oldest brother served, one of whom died on the Somme and another of whom was famously mistakenly reported killed in action. Three sons of another brother also served, one of whom was killed in action in the closing weeks of the war. The family suffered two further losses. A son of his youngest brother was killed at Loos in 1915 and in July 1916, a professional soldier married to his niece also died in action. This loss was particularly keenly felt because it concerned the family of his brother Charles who was a medical doctor and who lived across the road from Canon Ryan in Tipperary.¹⁶ (This is the British officer commemorated in the stained glass window mentioned above.)

The Irish Volunteers

St. Patrick's Day 1914 in Tipperary town was celebrated with a parade and speeches. Chairing the platform was the PP, Canon Arthur Ryan and the guest speaker was The O'Rahilly, invited as an important figure in the Gaelic League. The purpose of the exercise and the focus of their speeches was the promotion of the Irish language. Canon Ryan asked the children present to raise their hands to heaven and promise to attend Irish classes. Two days earlier Ryan had also presided at the AGM of the United Irish League branch, the political machine of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Ryan was president of the branch since his appointment to Tipperary a decade earlier and the main business of the meeting was to confirm their confidence in the leadership of John Redmond. It was clear from Ryan's keynote speech that he had an emotional investment in Redmond's leadership of the Irish people.¹⁷ A few weeks later, with the enthusiastic support of Ryan, the branch, in the context of the Home Bill bill about to become law, passed a resolution of confidence in the British PM Asquith.¹⁸

Canon Ryan saw himself speaking for a wider constituency than the parish of Tipperary or indeed the diocese of Cashel & Emyly. During this period when Redmond was coming under pressure with respect to the political division of Ireland, Ryan wrote to *The Tablet* a leading catholic journal, defending nationalism as the only legitimate expression of political catholicism.¹⁹ In early May, Ryan again addressed the local UIL branch proclaiming the need to support Redmond at a time when 'every effort is being made to shake our trust in him'. The vice-president of the branch Dr JF O'Ryan (a contemporary and friend of John O'Leary) emphasised that there was no question of complete separation from England, that the day was gone when 'small powers' could cope and all that was sought was a domestic parliament for a united Ireland.²⁰

Eoin Mac Néill once declared that the complicated circumstances leading to the founding of the Irish Volunteers could be explained in one word 'Carson'.²¹ The Irish Volunteers were founded at a meeting in Dublin presided over by Mac Néill on 25 November 1913. With respect to South Tipperary, the police noted that the first meetings were being held in March 1914 and that within the following couple of months: 'It was reported that the movement had taken a great hold of the people and that branches were springing up in all directions, the recruits being mostly of the labouring classes'.²² At a very well attended meeting the Irish Volunteers were inaugurated in Tipperary town on Sunday 10 May 1914. The keynote speaker was Seán Mac Diarmada who was off-message with his reference to Volunteers being willing to sacrifice their lives. Mac Diarmada's primary loyalty was to the IRB and he undoubtedly conducted IRB business while in Tipperary. (Perhaps he was amused by the fact that the location of this inaugural meeting was literally around the corner from the IRB centre in Tipperary.)

The inaugural meeting was chaired by Dr O'Ryan but Canon Ryan apologised for his unavoidable absence in a public letter dated that same day. This declared his full support for the new movement. 'The right to bear arms belongs to every free man and to every free nation....I do not think that any of those 1500 men who received holy communion this morning in our parish church are likely to prove unworthy of this privilege.' Ryan subscribed to the nationalist core belief that Ulster Unionists were posturing. He saw the Volunteers as a necessary response to the Ulster Volunteers and that by organising and hopefully arming, the Irish Volunteers would win Unionist respect. He looked forward to the

not too distant day when both Volunteer organisations would constitute 'our' national army. The Irish Volunteers he declared should arm for peace not war and 'that is why I as a Minister of the Gospel of Peace, beg God's blessing on the Volunteers.'

The first parade of Volunteers in the town took place the following Tuesday. Several hundred young men turned up and submitted to drill from James Quane, a former NCO in the Royal Irish Regiment and a key figure over the following few years.²³ The use of British army drill taught by ex-army men was official policy.²⁴ Within weeks drill exercises were being held on three evenings a week, a second company was organised and a larger field was being sought.²⁵ By mid-July a press report mentioned that there continued to be 'scoffers' and that 'lots' of young men had still not joined. Concern was expressed about the lack of arms, without which the Volunteers would not be taken seriously.²⁶ The Howth gunrunning took place on 26 July and the reaction to this and its fatalities was that there should be no more young men 'on the ditch'.²⁷ On Sunday 19 July there was a meeting in Tipperary of delegates from Volunteers from surrounding parishes in the hope of linking these companies into a regiment. This meeting was disappointing, with delegates from Tipperary, Oola, Cullen, Cappawhite, Doon, Dundrum, Donaskeigh, Grantstown & Kilfeacle and Bansha; apologies from Emly and Donohill but nothing from many other parishes including Hollyford, Kilmoyler, Aherlow, Kilross and Glenbane. Local rivalry appears to have been the problem.²⁸

Nationally, that summer had seen a very important change in the Volunteers. In June, John Redmond as the elected leader of the Irish people had moved to exercise influence over the Volunteers. The existing leadership was unhappy but unable to resist Redmond's demand to nominate twenty-five new members to the provisional committee. Heading Redmond's list was Canon Arthur Ryan PP of Tipperary, one of four clerical nominees.²⁹

Another of Redmond's appointees was T.J. Condon, the Clonmel based MP for Tipperary East. The Provisional Committee wondered about what these people could bring to the organisation. Bulmer Hobson noted that many of Redmond's nominees (for example Ryan) had little or no association with the Volunteers.³⁰ What mattered was the loyalty of these nominees to Redmond, described by Hobson as Redmond's 'henchmen'.³¹ Canon Ryan was not a member of the smaller standing committee. There was little common ground between the two sides. According to Hobson, the 'old' Provisional Committee was treated with 'insolence and contempt', whereas the other side declared that Redmond's nominees were made feel 'unwelcome intruders'.³²

War

The outbreak of war in Europe at the beginning of August changed everything.³³ 'The movement on which all our dreams had centred seemed merely to have canalized the martial spirit of the Irish people for the defence of England' was Desmond Fitzgerald's opinion, though he did admit that Redmond's offer to use the Volunteers for the defence of Ireland had popular support. Fitzgerald was angered by the automatic assumption that Germany because it was England's enemy, should be Ireland's enemy.³⁴ Canon Ryan's view was very different. 'To speak of Englishmen as if they were still our foes would be the depth of folly', was his opinion as expressed at a meeting in Tipperary in September.³⁵ Following Redmond's lead, his faith now centred on the Volunteers and a belief that helping Britain would serve Ireland's interest. However, helping Britain, as he made clear at an UIL meeting in Tipperary

on 2 August, meant using the Volunteers to 'guard' Ireland, while reminding his audience of the Irish contribution to the British army. The Howth related shootings were of course regrettable, he emphasised, but were not evidence of British malevolence.³⁶

As a garrison town, Tipperary was the scene of great excitement on 4 August, the day Britain declared war on Germany. A battalion of the Shropshire Light Infantry occupied the military barracks and was preparing to leave for France and join the British Expeditionary Force. That night the PO remained open all night to allow reservists draw funds and was a focus of cheering and jubilation at what was clearly seen as a great adventure. There were business opportunities. On the following day, walls were postered declaring the government's intention of buying thousands of horses which of course had the effect of increasing prices. One odd story in the local newspaper was that a well-known jeweller in the town and member of the Volunteers, who was a German national (A. Duffner) was given a 'send-off' on 4 August as he left by train, having been recalled to join his regiment in Germany. (Not surprisingly, he was not allowed leave the country and was interned in Templemore and later in Oldcastle County Meath. Another German who ran an hotel and was older, continued his business without public opposition, until his internment in December.)³⁷

When the Volunteers were founded, they needed professional military training and to this end Maurice Moore was appointed Inspector-General. A brother of the novelist George Moore, he belonged to a nationally-minded West of Ireland catholic gentry family. Maurice Moore had been in the British army, seeing service in the Boer War and retired in his early fifties. He was an enthusiastic member of the Gaelic League. Moore was a contemporary of Canon Ryan and both were educated at Oscot. While relations between them were cordial (Moore was offered the Canon's hospitality when in the area), their attitudes to the Volunteers differed. Moore wanted the movement kept clear of overt politics.³⁸ Writing to Ryan in early September about coming to review Volunteers in Tipperary, Moore complained about the plan to have several MPs make speeches and suggested that no such speeches should be made until the Volunteers were dismissed.³⁹ In conflicts between Moore and Redmond, Ryan who frequently chaired national meetings, saw matters Redmond's way.⁴⁰

That August and September, before the Volunteers split, they became better organised within the county. A county board was set up and in the Tipperary town region, a 'district committee' was established, with Thomas Dawson Tipperary town clerk as a central figure. Canon Ryan was invited to attend its meetings as a link with the national Committee. A few individuals from a protestant gentry background became involved. RM Minchin was appointed County Inspector. Captain The Hon. Fitzroy Hemphill offered his services as did Colonel HS Massy of Grantstown Hall, Kilfeacle who wrote to Moore about the importance of the Volunteers becoming armed as quickly as possible. Earlier he had written to Redmond, citing his military record and adding 'I might perhaps be useful to you'.⁴¹ In mid-September, Volunteers from Tipperary town and district, called the 'Clanwilliam Corps', some 600 in number and with thirty 'cavalry' were inspected by Colonel Moore who denied that the Volunteers would fight abroad but were for home defence.⁴²

On Sunday 20 September, this line officially changed when Redmond, addressing Volunteers at Woodenbridge in Wicklow, presented the war in Europe as a crusade against evil and talked about the Volunteers having a 'twofold duty', which no longer included defending Ireland against 'an unlikely invasion' but involved continuing to prepare

themselves as a military force and then exercising those skills 'not only in Ireland itself but wherever the firing line extends'.⁴³ The following Thursday, the original Volunteer leadership ended the alliance forced on them three months earlier and ditched Redmond.

That same Sunday, Canon Ryan was in Tipperary addressing a meeting of the AOH in the Town Hall. His topic was the passage of the Home Rule bill into law the previous Friday. The speech was a hymn of praise for Redmond and the Parliamentary Party. Ireland was 'A Nation Once Again', a victory won by all, the followers of O'Connell and of Mitchel. Ryan was intent on getting his message to the widest audience and this speech was more for the local press than a small crowd in a local hall. The rhetoric seemed designed to hide the uncomfortable fact that while the act was passed (the culmination of a campaign that had begun back in the 1870s), it was also suspended for the duration of the war.⁴⁴ From the beginning, people like Redmond and Ryan made the argument that Irishmen serving in the British army were not actually fighting for Britain but for Ireland. This was justified on two fronts: the black propaganda that German soldiers had committed atrocities in Belgium, a small catholic country and the odd belief (totally contradicted by history) that a great empire would show gratitude.

A sense of the confusion and dismay engendered locally and around the country by the events of that week is understood from the report placed in the local press by the Volunteer's PRO. Rumours and resolutions put about by 'busybodies' were condemned.

What was dismissed as 'politics' was blamed for distracting from the business of discipline and drilling. Elsewhere, units of the Volunteers had 'split' but in Tipperary, the Volunteers were holding together and within a few days a meeting of the District Committee would confirm this. Wishful thinking. Reality was in the same newspaper's report of a meeting in Dublin on 30 September of the Irish National Volunteers, over which Canon Ryan presided. The meeting itself was private but a new organisation with Redmond as president was formed with Canon Arthur Ryan as one of two national trustees.

The extent of popular support in Tipperary was clear from the subscription list for the 'Defence of Ireland Fund'. With £25 Count Moore of Mooresfort headed the list, followed by many well known names such as Mansergh of Grenane, McCarthy of Carron, Mulcahy of Ballyglass, Cleeve of Tipperary Creamery, Frewen of Baronstown, local MDs and solicitors, some members of the UDC and of course the local MP John Cullinan and Canon Ryan (£5 each). There were lots of smaller subscriptions, down to two shillings.⁴⁵ Dublin Castle keeping their eyes on events, concluded there were 6,747 Volunteers in Tipperary SR before the split, organised in sixty-four branches. By the end of the year, they estimated a drop of around 800 in overall Volunteer membership. However the anti-Redmond Irish Volunteers were given at just less than two hundred members.⁴⁶

The National Volunteers (1914)

This new or renewed (take your pick) organisation powered through its first months. The 2nd Tipperary Regiment with its battalions gave considerable scope for meetings, drills and marches, though as discussed below, Dublin found local situations confusing. Tom Dawson (town clerk) was chair of the District Committee, which had representatives from Tipperary and neighbouring parishes. Among those involved were Daniel Kelly chair of the UDC and activist during the New Tipperary campaign; Louis Dalton, Dr JF O'Ryan, Eamonn Mansfield and Timoney of Cappawhite. Division was played down. 'We who have common ideals are not going to fall on one another because there may be a difference of opinion as

to methods.' The reality of war in Europe was felt with the huge increase of the British military presence in the town resulting in the commandeering of buildings such as the Workhouse and grounds in Scalaheen on the outskirts of town. The war was used to remind slackers of their duty. All over Europe men were fighting and dying for their countries, the least these young men in Tipperary could do was 'attend at drill' and not be 'a disgrace to the manhood of Ireland'.⁴⁷

In early October Moore visited a number of mid-west Tipperary parishes. Among local leaders mentioned were E. Mansfield, J. Stapleton and H. Nash in Oola and Cullen; Toby English and Con Hanly in Solohead; Paddy O'Dwyer in Donohill; Gus Cleary in Drumline and J. Timoney in Cappawhite.⁴⁸ However, Moore clearly found how units were organised very confusing. Tipperary town had five companies and a band and called itself the 1st battalion, 2nd Tipperary Regiment. In Cashel there was a unit calling itself the 1st battalion with companies called A/C/D/F/M/N from Cahir, Dualla, Roesgreen, Golden, New Inn and Boherlahan. He found how matters were organised in Borrisokane and Borrisoleigh similarly confusing. Writing from Dublin on behalf of Moore, Diarmuid Coffey begged G.F. Barry (Golden) the Hon Sec. of Tipperary County Board to 'send me a report of the organisation in County Tipperary and clear up the muddle that I have got into here'.⁴⁹

Apart from administrative inefficiency, confusion resulted from divided loyalties. For example, an important member of the County Board (P.C. O'Mahoney of Cashel) did not pass on letters because he was a 'Sinn Féiner and is not willing to give us any assistance or information'. As a result the county Hon. Sec. lamented: 'I have practically to organize the entire county over again'.⁵⁰ Among Colonel Moore's papers is his best estimate of National Volunteer numbers in the county from around November 1914.

Membership of National Volunteer Units in Tipperary, c.Nov 1914.⁵¹

Boherlahan	100	Ballyporeen	110
Dualla	50	Clonmel	206
Golden	100	Thurles	300
Roesgreen	50	Rossmore	80
Cashel	150	Moyaliffe	108
Tipperary	380	Eliogarty	166
Kilfeacle	75	Nenagh	180
Bansha	80	Cahir	70
Donaskeigh	50	Mullinahone	170
Cullen	100	Twomileborris	50
Clonoulty	40	Cloughjordan	88
		Fethard	200

These figures are notional and the aggregate is about half the police estimate for the end of 1914. Elsewhere the five companies in Tipperary town and district are given as notionally eighty each but realistically Company A (59), B (55), C (55), D (45), E (50) and the Band (27), a total of 291. The enthusiasm for the Volunteers in Tipperary relative to other places in the county was presumably due to Canon Ryan's influence and the pro-war hysteria engendered by the military presence in the town.

Information for Cashel, Golden and Boherlahan from late November and mid December is more precise because based on circulars filled in and returned. Cashel had two companies with 160 on the books and around 100 turning out for parades. Equipment included just six uniforms but a hundred bandoliers, belts and haversacks. More to the point, they had seventy-two Italian rifles.⁵² The drill instructor was Thomas Cahill who had been a private in the Royal Irish Regiment and was paid twelve shillings a week. It was remarked that there would be a bigger turnout for drill if they could get ammunition for their rifles. In Golden there were 100 enrolled but around sixty were active. They had no equipment, except eighty caps and no rifles. The drill instructor was John Hennessy, an ex-army sergeant, paid six shillings a week. Boherlahan had around seventy active members with bandoliers and caps for all but with just five Italian rifles. The drill instructor was Thomas Reilly. The president was the PP and the Capt was DC Maher, 1st Lt Thomas Leahy and 2nd Lt Denis Walsh.⁵³ Leaving politics aside, young men have always been attracted to guns and the appeal of being in a military organisation with few guns was going to become both boring and embarrassing. In the '2nd Tipperary Regiment' of the National Volunteers for example, there was criticism of the governing body in Dublin; too much politics, too few guns.⁵⁴

At a convention in Thurles on 7 November, new officers were elected for the National Volunteers in the county. Tom Dawson of Tipperary was elected president, with Robert Gill of Nenagh as vice-president. JF Barry of Golden continued as secretary and RM O'Hanrahan of Fethard was treasurer. The four MPs for the county were put on the committee.⁵⁵ (Dawson, a 'disciple' of Canon Ryan was the third member of his family to hold the position of town clerk in Tipperary. He had a national reputation as an expert on local government housing. He died in 1923.) A month later, Dawson was elected chairman of the Volunteers in Tipperary town, with TF Rogers as secretary and JJ O'Brien as treasurer. Twenty others, comfortably middle class, were elected to the committee, headed by Daniel Kelly JP and chairman of the UDC.⁵⁶

As each week passed after war began in Europe, rhetoric increasingly could not disguise the question demanding an answer regarding the National Volunteers; 'What were they for?' Canon Ryan's answer was delivered on the occasion of the annual Manchester Martyrs commemoration in late November. Addressing some thirteen hundred Volunteers from Tipperary and surrounding parishes, he drew attention to the fact that they were in uniform and armed (an exaggeration but not such as to invalidate his point) and that 'our National Army' was ready to defend the same sacred cause for which Allen, Larkin and O'Brien died. 'Every man who carried a rifle proclaimed himself ready to shed his blood for Ireland'. The issue of course was where that blood might be shed.⁵⁷

At a display of massed enthusiasm in Pallas a few weeks earlier, Volunteers from Tipperary and Limerick heard speeches from a platform on which sat several PPs (Kilteely, Hospital, Emly and of course Tipperary). John Dillon's answer was clear. In a war that would be over in a few months, the Unionists could not gain advantage with the government if the National Volunteers did their bit. He emphasised there could be no question of compulsion but he had faith in Ireland's martial spirit. Canon Arthur Ryan was more emphatic and tackled head-on criticisms that he was a 'recruiting sergeant'. Making a joke, he explained that as he had been recruiting for such a long time, he deserved a higher rank. The Land League, National League, UIL, Gaelic League, AOH were among the organisations for which he had recruited. Now he was recruiting for the 'Irish Brigade' (cheers).⁵⁸ Speaking in

Limerick at the close of the year to a review of '14,000' Volunteers from Munster, Ryan was explicit. Priests and people were together and 'should the splendid ranks here proceed to the battlefield, the priests would be with them'. The archbishop was with them and Redmond who had delivered Home Rule would 'deliver the Volunteers safe and sound as the Irish army'.⁵⁹

The Decline of the Volunteers (1915)

In his evidence before the royal commission investigating the Easter Rebellion, Augustine Birrell (Chief Secretary 1907-16) gave six factors to explain anti-English sentiments in Ireland: Home Rule a long time coming but never arriving; lack of respect for the parliamentary tradition; the behaviour of Unionists; Carson's membership of the government; lack of enthusiasm for a war that had no end in sight and of relevance in the context of Canon Ryan's politics, that Redmond should have 'struck a bargain with the Crown ere he consented to become a recruiting officer for it'.⁶⁰ Redmond's hope that the National Volunteers would be allowed a distinctive identity with the British army was undone by a Kerryman. Redmond's vision was that 'Irish Brigades' would demonstrate national identity and that troops marching through garrison towns such as Fermoy, Tipperary or Buttevant would rally popular enthusiasm.⁶¹ Lord Kitchener (born and brought up in Kerry) a professional soldier was put in charge of the War Office and resolutely opposed the concept of Irish Brigades.

Three Divisions were raised in Ireland: the 10th, 16th and 36th or Ulster which absorbed men from the UVF and allowed them retain a distinctive identity. The effort through 1914 and into 1915 to maintain the National Volunteers as a meaningful force in Ireland was hugely hindered by thousands of its most committed members joining the Irish Divisions. The 16th Division commanded by General Sir Lawrence Parsons was centred on Munster, with Tipperary town as the base of one of its three infantry brigades. This 49 Brigade was formed on 1 October 1914 and with the military barracks full to capacity, the nearby Poor Law Union building was requisitioned (the inmates dispatched to Cashel) and additional accommodation or 'hutments' were erected in Scalaheen a nearby townland.⁶² During the war, Tipperary was the focus of constant troop movements and later was a depot for wounded. Perhaps four thousand troops were in Tipperary at any given time over the period. While the fighting may have seemed a long way away, in Tipperary the war was a very visible reality. Army recruitment, led enthusiastically by Canon Ryan and indeed opposition to recruitment, had therefore an extra edge.

Thanks to the song 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary', the place and the war are forever linked. Written in 1912 by Jack Judge an English music hall entertainer who had no connection with Tipperary, the song caught-on to such an extent that Judge's royalties for 1915 came to an astonishing £1,680 (in today's values perhaps £100,000).⁶³ Described accurately by one Tipperary newspaper as 'a poor bit of doggerel but catchy for marching', the enormous popularity of the song directed attention to the town with various British publications running features during Christmas 1914.⁶⁴ Even *The Times* editorialised about the extraordinary popularity of the song, without being able to explain it.⁶⁵ The name 'Tipperary' became attached to an odd variety of products and enterprises. Examples include a toy soldier 'Tipperary Tommy'⁶⁶; in British clubs for soldier's wives were called 'The Tipperary Rooms'⁶⁷; popular novels such as 'Tipperary Tommy' by Joseph Keating⁶⁸; paintings such 'Tipperary' by J.C. Dodman exhibited at the Royal Academy⁶⁹ and a destroyer called 'Tipperary' built in 1914 and sunk during the battle of Jutland.⁷⁰

Clerical division in the diocese over army recruitment was illustrated at its starkest with respect to one just one death during the early weeks of the war. Archbishop Harty supported the war and was one of only nine bishops who continued to do so into 1916.⁷¹ A man known and admired by Canon Ryan was Charles Dalton, a native of Ballygriffin (Golden), born in 1867 to a prosperous farming family. Educated at Clongowes, he became a doctor and in 1891 joined the army medical corps, serving in India and Africa.

In mid-August, with the rank of Lt-Col. he joined the expeditionary force to France and was killed a few weeks later.⁷² Speaking at mass on 4 Oct., Fr Matt Ryan the very well known PP of Knockavilla, asked for prayers for Dalton but then launched into a diatribe about the war and MPs 'going through the country as recruiting sergeants' wanting their sons 'to become maggot's meat in France and Belgium'. He added if the MPs went themselves, Ireland would be well rid of them. A few weeks later, in the context of a recruiting rally in the parish, he was reported as being even more bitter. To possible recruits from the parish, his message was: 'I don't want to stop ye (sic) if ye want to go to France and eat turnips. Ye can stop a bullet as well as any other and let John Bull stop at home.' These outbursts were reported to the police who complained to Harty who promised to order Fr Ryan not to offend again.⁷³

Through 1915, the question: 'What are they for?' with respect to the National Volunteers was increasingly difficult to answer. In January the County Board admitted that in some districts Volunteer companies had 'practically' disbanded and that there was need to shake things up in preparation for a major 'National Review' being planned for Easter. A huge problem was the shortage of instructors, the best men having joined up.⁷⁴ Confusion as to the role of the Volunteers was clear from a statement from E. Mansfield of the Cullen company. He declared that the Volunteers had nothing to do with recruitment to the army, their purpose was defence but if Volunteers wished to join the army, their training would be useful. Then referring to the plight of Belgium, his sympathy was obvious.⁷⁵ Presumably he was not surprised when in May, twenty men, fifteen of whom were Volunteers from his region, joined the army.⁷⁶

Mansfield and many others were very influenced by anti-German propaganda, in the spreading of which the local press played an enthusiastic role. For example, a letter from a Tipperary nun (Newtown Anner) many years in a convent in Nancy, France retailing hearsay atrocities. '(The Germans) cut the hands off little boys....'⁷⁷ The local press, especially the *Clonmel Chronicle*, publicised mass recruitment from specific neighbourhoods, a version of 'Pal's Units'. For example, an impressive (if true) fifty one men out of thirty five houses in Peter Street, Clonmel.⁷⁸ However as the war dragged on and politics at home changed, the local press as often as not, ignored war casualties.⁷⁹ The deaths in action of three men from Tipperary town on 27-28 April 1915, did merit reporting, especially when one of them Private William Murphy from the New Road, was one of three brothers who joined up at the outbreak of war. The other casualties were Corporal Michael Murphy from the Bansa Road (See Photograph) who had seen service in South Africa and Quarter-Master James Heffernan, a native of Galway who lived in St Michael Street. The two Murphys died on the Western Front, while Heffernan was killed at Gallipoli. (See Appendix.)

This Appendix contains fifty-five names and while compiled from various sources does not claim to be definitive. The addresses are for the men's widows or parents and provide substantial evidence regarding class. Detailed information about these addresses is provided

in an earlier article published in this journal.⁸⁰ At most, fifteen percent of this group could be considered middle class. Most notably absent are sons of shopkeepers. In the sample only one individual unambiguously fits into this category. Private Theobald English joined the Irish Guards in October 1914 when he was about 19 and was killed in November 1917.⁸¹ Michael Murphy, the sole name in this list for whom there is a face, was a son of Michael and Mary Murphy of 5 Bansha Road and was born in February 1883. He made a career in the army and served in South Africa. At the outbreak of war in 1914, he was training to be a teacher in the army. According to family tradition he was shot by a sniper. He died on 27 April 1915 and is buried in Ferme Buterne military cemetery in France. His brother William, three years younger, was a member of the 4th battalion, 3rd Tipperary brigade IRA – a not uncommon family history.⁸²

Speaking on St Patrick's Day, 1915, Canon Arthur Ryan talked about ways of 'showing love for Ireland' and left people in no doubt that while being in the Volunteers was useful, those 'shedding blood in thousands' were making the superior sacrifice.⁸³ John Cullinan the local MP, speaking to the same Volunteers some months later, was more explicit, being 'glad to see that such a large number of Volunteers had joined the colours'. Cullinan seemed clear that the Volunteers existed to provide recruits for the British army but was doubtful about their current readiness.⁸⁴ That March, around 100 men (out of 250 on the rolls) had turned out for drill and twelve men competed for company officerships.⁸⁵ This '1st Battalion, 2nd Tipperary Regiment' had but twelve uniforms but more to the point, had 100 rifles.⁸⁶

Easter 1915 saw the high point of support and enthusiasm for the National Volunteers. A large-scale Review, with thousands of Volunteers attending, was held in Dublin, with Redmond presiding and Canon Ryan having the honour of proposing the vote of thanks to Redmond for his leadership of the Irish people. Some one hundred Volunteers attended from Tipperary town (plus the band) and there was pride that the county turned out the second largest number of companies, fifty-seven.⁸⁷ One of those attending the Review was Jeremiah Darmody who worked as an agricultural labourer near Bansha. After the Review, along with others he joined the Irish Guards. In September 1916 he was killed at the Somme while trying to recover the body of his officer. His death received local press notice because the mother of the officer sent £100 to Darmody's father in gratitude for his son's bravery.⁸⁸

Failure on the part of local units to pay affiliation fees to the national organisation is always an indication of weakness and by the summer Dublin was complaining that of seventy-five registered companies in the county, only five had paid up. Also ominous was talk from HQ of the need to get a 'proper County Board'.⁸⁹ However, a county convention of the UIL held in St Patrick's College Thurles and attended by Redmond and Dillon and with the Volunteers in attendance, ('The right arm of the Irish Party in defending Home Rule') gave the impression that church and state could go forward together into a new Ireland. When the war was over, thousands of returning soldiers would form the army of the new state. Canon Arthur Ryan, president of the college for many years, was very much in evidence. Essentially the meeting was a rally in support of John Redmond's leadership, with a review of the Party's past legislative gains for Ireland. A letter of support from Archbishop Harty was read as was a similar declaration signed by thirty-two chairmen of elected public bodies in the county.⁹⁰

This impression that the National Volunteers were flourishing was misleading. As Maurice Davin, Captain of the Carrick-on-Suir Volunteers, wrote in early September, four

months had passed since it was agreed that two County Boards (NR and SR) would be set up but nothing happened and 'consequently this splendid movement is growing very flat purely for want of proper organisation'.⁹¹ In South Tipperary, a large-scale Review or parade of Volunteers in Cashel was an effort to stimulate interest. At the end of August Volunteer companies attended from surrounding districts, as did a contingent from Dublin, perhaps 1000-1500 men. Canon Ryan presided but while the Volunteer's print organ pumped up the gathering, local press coverage was much more muted.⁹² Privately, the Volunteer leadership was less than happy, though the turnout from Tipperary town and Cashel was praised.⁹³

In October, Maurice Davin noted privately 'the lack of enthusiasm' in the county and that there were not eight companies at full strength.⁹⁴ Around the same time, there was a meeting representative of Volunteers from the region, held in Tipperary town, addressed by J. Cullinan and J. Hackett, both county MPs, at which some painful truths were confronted. Cullinan admitted that people sneered at the Volunteers 'even in Tipperary town' and that the novelty value had worn off. Especially interesting is the way he highlighted a difference of perspective between generations, younger people not understanding the point of the organisation except as a recruiting agency for the British army. Speakers were defensive and had no answer to repeated demands for access to weapons. The 'elephant' in the meeting room was that this was a peculiar thing indeed: an army without guns.⁹⁵ A few weeks later, urgent missives were launched from Tipperary, 'we are in a fix', imploring Dublin for ammunition so that 'our lads' could at least practice for a forthcoming marksman competition.⁹⁶

One of the most enthusiastic members was Eamonn Mansfield, a leader of the Cullen Volunteers.⁹⁷ Just prior to this meeting he had written to the Dublin office, painting a bleak picture. His complaints included the fact that Cullen which wanted to be part of the 1st battalion, 2nd Tipperary Regiment based in Tipperary town, was instead tied to Emlý 'which never enjoyed three months active existence'; their military exercises had declined, a 'slackness' mainly due to around thirty members, including six instructors, joining the army;⁹⁸ it was unclear what the Volunteers were for and that the Irish Party appeared at best confused and at worst indifferent and that with the government and War Office hostile, people increasingly were of a mind not to join an organisation seen as supporting the war. Pointing out that the local committee had supported Redmond in 'the teeth of strong opposition', there was real regret in Mansfield's conclusion that 'interest, earnestness and enthusiasm' had gone from the local organisation.⁹⁹

The reply to Mansfield a few days later, indicated that in a reform of the Volunteers in the county, there would be twelve battalions and that Cullen would be in the 2nd Battalion which would include Emlý.¹⁰⁰ A few days later, there was a meeting of the County Board in Thurles, chaired by Tom Dawson. This produced a plan to reform and revitalise the Volunteers. There were to be thirteen battalions and Cullen was included with Tipperary town (not evidence of coherence between the centre and the regions.) These battalions would be centred on the following locations: Tipperary, Anacarty, Cashel, Ballingarry, Clonmel, Carrick, Clogheen, Fethard, Thurles, Drombane, Templemore, Nenagh and Borrisokane. Each battalion comprised several companies. For example, Tipperary, the 1st or Clanwilliam Battalion had companies from Tipperary, Kilfeacle, Grantstown, Dunaskeagh, Bansha, Solohead, Oola, Cullen and Emlý. Each battalion was to appoint a representative to the County Board.¹⁰¹

Much of this effort at reform and revitalisation did not extend beyond paper but at least in Tipperary town, the most important annual political demonstration, the anniversary of the Manchester Martyrs in late November, saw a good turn-out of Volunteers, many in uniform and some with rifles.

While the trinity being commemorated would undoubtedly have approved of armed Irishmen in military uniform that was not British; they would not have understood their passivity.¹⁰² Canon Arthur Ryan was present, for once, more intent on saying the rosary than making a political speech.¹⁰³ The police looking at South Tipperary for 1915 saw the story of the National Volunteers as one of decline: 5,680 members at the start of the year; 3,694 at its close and many of these were merely nominal.¹⁰⁴



Michael Murphy (1883-1915)

Army Recruitment

The nature of the war on the Western Front ate men and swallowed whole companies. At the start, the war in Europe was a great adventure. Young men rushed to join up. In Ireland at least three factors influenced this: the universal appeal of guns; the impact of anti-German atrocity propaganda and Redmond's argument that fighting Germans served Ireland's political interests. An official report gave a figure of 20,780 Irish in the British army on the eve of war.¹⁰⁵ 'A total of 140,460 men enlisted in Ireland in the British armed services during the war.'¹⁰⁶ Some fifty thousand joined during the first six months but only half of this number during the second six months, after which recruits were considerably fewer. The three new Divisions, 10th, 16th and 36th had insatiable appetites for recruits and suffered severe losses respectively at Gallipoli (1915), the Western Front (1916-18) and the never to be forgotten Somme (1916).¹⁰⁷ Conscription, introduced in Britain in February 1916, while threatened for Ireland in 1918, was never actually enforced.

By the summer of 1915, demands for more army recruits from Ireland became more strident. As an officer from Tipperary barracks declared to a meeting in Dundrum; 'If men won't come forward, they will have to be fetched'. This public meeting largely addressed the converted, with the substantial protestant community in the area needing no threats for their men to join up. The names read out included Howard, Devenish, Godsill, Going and several Frydays.¹⁰⁸ A similar meeting in Cappawhite had an apology from the local PP and a letter of support from the PP of Anacarty. The format of these meetings was the same: an army band, speeches from local worthies, recruitment appeal by an army officer emphasising local men who had responded to the call. Some thirty men were named, including two, J. Ryan of Glengar and M. O'Brien of Cappawhite who were POWs in Germany. Speakers at this meeting included a local rector, St John D. Seymour, well known scholar and historian, who

ignored the rules of evidence and made much of how the Germans had murdered Belgian priests and also an officer son of a local doctor.¹⁰⁹

The war years were profitable for farmers, an incentive for their sons to stay at home.¹¹⁰ One writer looking back from 1918, noted that the value of agriculture produce doubled from 1913. Store cattle were now £3 per cwt. as against a little over half of that; while pigs were £7 per cwt. compared to £3. Of consequence to a region like mid-west Tipperary, butter prices doubled. Agricultural labourers did not benefit. One estimate put the cost of feeding a husband and wife at eight shillings and two pence per week in 1914 but in 1918, this had risen to sixteen shillings and ten pence. Agricultural wages certainly improved, from an average of around twelve to fifteen shillings per week to twenty-two shillings and sixpence, hardly enough to compensate for the increased cost of living.¹¹¹ Compared to these wage rates, the allowances paid to soldier's dependants were quite generous. In 1914, a wife with no children received twelve shillings and sixpence per week. If she had four children, the payment was twenty-two shillings. These rates improved in 1915 so that a wife with four children now received twenty-five shillings per week.¹¹² 'There is a consensus that pay and allowances were a major inducement for some men to enlist.'¹¹³ Confirming the working class origins of most recruits, a magistrate commented that the people living in the Bansha Road in Tipperary town, seemed to survive on these 'separation allowances'.¹¹⁴

In Tipperary town a major recruiting rally was held on Saturday 9 October 1915. The venue was the Market Yard. The previous evening handwritten notices opposing recruitment and attacking Canon Arthur Ryan were posted on walls around the town. That morning's post brought an anonymous letter warning him not to take part in the meeting. Ignoring this squib, Ryan appeared on a platform with, among others, the Church of Ireland rector, an assortment of solicitors, JPs and a number of officers. The band of the Royal Irish Regiment from Clonmel stirred the crowd. Ryan presided over the rally and in a passionate speech attacked his detractors before making a weak case emotionally delivered. He spoke about the 'honour of Tipperary'; how if not a priest and younger he would join up, like nine of his nephews; shameful that gaps in the Irish Divisions were being filled by Welshmen and about the possibility of conscription would only be an option if the young men failed to do their duty. When an officer from the Central Recruiting Office in Dublin spoke in similar terms, depicting the Germans as enemies of religion and castigating Sinn Féin as selfish, he was heckled: 'There's enough men gone from Tipperary'.¹¹⁵ According to one press report, twenty-two young men joined up.¹¹⁶

A week or so later, Arthur Griffith's newspaper *Nationality* cleverly attacked Canon Ryan in a piece headed 'Two Ryans'. The second Ryan was Fr Matt Ryan, who, readers were reminded, was imprisoned during the Land War, a period when Canon Ryan was silent. 'He is not silent today. His fine rolling voice is working for England.'¹¹⁷ Canon Arthur Ryan was sensible enough to know that as a parish priest he had a duty to be inclusive and a few months later, again in the Tipperary Market Yard, his tone was much more accommodating. The occasion was the delivery of speeches following the St Patrick's Day parade, in which both the National and Irish Volunteers had taken part, separately. Referring to the Irish Volunteers, he thought them 'misguided'. However, he accepted that they loved Ireland: 'Heads unwise but hearts true'. Explaining his attitude, he told his audience: 'I have a horror of secret plotting and underhand work'.¹¹⁸ (The Easter Rising was just over five weeks away.) Ryan appears to have refrained on this occasion from overtly recruiting. In any case, his

message was increasingly falling on deaf ears. Figures for 16 March to 15 April, indicate that thirty-six men joined up from Tipperary SR, of whom only four were known to be National Volunteers. Twelve of these joined from the Tipperary district, none of whom were known to be Volunteers. From the North Riding, forty-four men answered the call, none of whom were Volunteers. Nationally recruits numbered 1,314, of whom just seventeen percent were Volunteers.¹¹⁹

Rousing speeches, martial music, patriotic fervour, economic factors, even political calculation – all may have served to push a few young men into the British army but in Tipperary town, by 1916 a particular factor operated that must have served to keep them out. ‘The first casualty of war is truth’ – very relevant to this war in which, apart from government controls, there was massive self-censorship. Family at home did not learn about the horrors of the trenches from front-line troops because language could not deliver and imaginations could not receive experiences so totally outside normal life. It was possible for ordinary people to avoid confronting the human cost, the shattered limbs and broken spirits.¹²⁰ But not in Tipperary.

Early in 1916, Tipperary military barracks was selected for the ‘Great Depot in Ireland for our Irish wounded soldiers’; a place for recuperation and rehabilitation.¹²¹ By late February, around 1,500 had arrived and many more were expected. The local newspaper commented on the impact of seeing these men around the town and with rhetorical overdrive declared:

Ireland has never been ungrateful. She will not be unmindful now of the men who have come back to her stricken in their heroic efforts to keep her sacred shores inviolate and to save her women and children, her churches and her convents from the horrors that have desolated Belgium and Poland.

The executive committee to gather local support for this project was headed by Canon Arthur Ryan. As well as military personnel, members included the Church of Ireland rector, the chairman of the UDC, the secretary of the Technical Instruction Committee,¹²² a bank manager and the agent of the Smith-Barry estate. Instruction was available in a range of occupations from boot repair to french polishing. Some forty masseuses were on hand to relieve damaged limbs. Much of this was to be supported by voluntary effort and subscriptions.¹²³ In late May for example, Queen Alexandra attended a fund-raising concert in London for the Tipperary Depot.¹²⁴ In Tipperary the huge sum of £1,000 was raised by an auction of livestock as well as other goods.¹²⁵

While this indicates a high level of local support among the better off in the region (though one may suspect that for some the contribution of a bullock to the war effort was preferred to contributing a son), there were tensions. By April there were around 2,000 soldiers being looked after, one of whom was accosted in the street by a prominent Donohill farmer and district councillor who fingered him in the chest and charged: ‘You (expletive deleted) who are you fighting for? Why don’t you fight for Ireland instead of fighting the Germans?’¹²⁶ A month or so after this encounter, the Irish Volunteers did ‘fight for Ireland’, in Dublin. In Tipperary on Easter Monday, Michael O’Callaghan, trade unionist and IRB member was abused on the street by some wives of men fighting in France. He fired a gun and fled. When, two days later, the police located him at a cousin’s house outside the town (Kilross), two policemen were killed in the gun-battle and O’Callaghan got away to the

United States.¹²⁷ Set against such full-blooded responses, the National Volunteers seemed distinctly anaemic.

Indicative of how sidelined the National Volunteers had become was their complaint in late June that they had not been invited to join the Tipperary branch of the National Aid Association, an initially moderate response to the Rising and the government reaction. Just as revealing was the National Volunteers expectation of an invitation. The Association received widespread support, a church-gate collection raising around £200.¹²⁸ Another indication of the National Volunteers being pushed to the margins was increasingly scant coverage in the local press. In the country generally, the National Volunteers were a declining source of recruits. One writer has suggested that in the fifteen months from mid December 1914 to mid March 1916, nearly 12,000 National Volunteers joined the British army but in the following twenty-one months, the figure was a little less than 1,700.¹²⁹

On 1 July 1916 the Somme offensive began, on that first day resulting in 60,000 British casualties, including 20,000 killed. By the time the offensive ended, in failure, on 13 November 1916, the British had advanced about eight miles and suffered in excess of 400,000 casualties. The following day Irish newspapers printed official figures that indicated the pool of manpower from whom replacements might be found.¹³⁰ The figures below refer to county Tipperary.

Total number of men of military age (19-40 years)	21,351
Total number whose labour is considered indispensable (All farmers and half 'farmers sons' and labourers)	9,566
Estimated number who are physically unfit (40%)	4,159
Total number who have enlisted since the outbreak of war to 15 Oct 1916	4,956
Estimated number available for military service	6,239

In some respects the nearly five thousand who had enlisted from the county were a tribute to the work of Canon Arthur Ryan. The comparable figures for the rest of Munster are of interest: Clare (1,288), Cork (8,360), Kerry (1,209), Limerick (3,177) and Waterford (2,089).

Canon Ryan's reaction to the Easter Rising is not on record but presumably he agreed with his archbishop who, speaking at mass in Tipperary on 7 May, declared: 'We all know that the people of Ireland at large do not want any revolutionary measures and that all such measures are doomed to failure'.¹³¹ Canon Ryan spent Christmas 1916 at the Front. It says a lot that he wanted to do this and that he was allowed to do it.

The powers that be were of course conscious of the potential propaganda value. In command of the 16th (Irish) Division was a Tipperaryman Major General William Hickie. With his help and that of Major Willie Redmond, Ryan was able to make what was an unusual journey for an Irish parish priest. He left Tipperary on 20 December and on Christmas Eve arrived with Redmond at the HQ of the 16th Division where he met Hickie. He celebrated midnight mass in a convent chapel for some 500 soldiers and on Christmas Day officiated at several more masses and preached a predicable message, that they were fighting for Ireland. On St. Stephen's Day, he was brought to the trenches. 'Only afterwards I realised the serious risk I took'. It may be assumed that risk was minimal but Ryan saw and heard shelling and got some idea of life in hell, the noise and pervasiveness of the mud being the worst elements.

During the week Canon Ryan spent in Flanders, his days were a mixture of religious ceremonies, battlefield tourism and meeting individuals he knew from home. Among these were a major in the Royal Irish Fusiliers, a brother of Bryan O'Donnell, a prominent figure in Tipperary town. He also met Fr Edmond Kelly, a curate from Mullinahone who served as army chaplain for the duration of the war and won the MC.¹³² Ryan's report of his visit, which undoubtedly was closely read back home, was both upbeat and elevated. Patrick Pearse was not alone in using language and imagery to change waste and loss into something transcendent. Death became sacrifice and religious belief was used to transmute the merely political into a Divine agenda. When six months after Ryan's visit, Willie Redmond was killed, Fr Kelly sent Ryan a personal account. Especially moving must have been the description of Redmond's body laid out in the same convent chapel where Ryan had said mass the previous Christmas. '(Redmond) was absolutely convinced he was dying for Ireland'.¹³³

Tipperary in 1917 was not a congenial place for Canon Ryan. While farmers were doing well, labourers were leaving 'in dozens' for England, helping the war effort, not by joining the army but by working in munitions factories. The UDC wanted land for allotments so that the working class could grow food but grazing land was in such demand that farmers were unwilling to respond. This 'food crisis' was a national issue, though slogans such as 'The People's Need – The Farmer's Duty' had little impact in Tipperary. Some land was obtained in Carronreddy on the outskirts of the town and ploughed and set with potatoes.¹³⁴ In May, Canon Ryan had to defend the people of the town against charges in a British newspaper that a 'wounded British Tommy' was abused.¹³⁵ In June came news of the death of Willie Redmond. Also that month, there was every sign that Sinn Féin was catching the popular imagination, with well-attended meetings.¹³⁶

De Valera's victory in the East Clare by-election in July produced an enthusiastic victory celebration in the town, with bonfires on the Hills (town park). A counter-demonstration by soldier's wives was insubstantial enough to be considered amusing.¹³⁷ The visit of De Valera to the town in mid-August polarised opinion, with various statutory bodies divided on the question of giving the visitor formal addresses of welcome. The ostensible purpose of his visit was to attend a huge Irish-Ireland gathering organised by the Gaelic League, exactly the kind of event Canon Ryan would have dominated except this time he was absent because the League had been taken over by Republicans like Sean Treacy and renamed in honour of Patrick Pearse. Or as John Cullinan put the matter: this coup was effected by 'a couple of gentlemen who had recently arrived in the town'.¹³⁸ Fr Matthew Ryan ('The General') was present.¹³⁹ It was while De Valera was attending this event (19 August) that news arrived of the death of Bishop Thomas O'Dwyer of Limerick, thereby allowing De Valera praise a churchman whose politics were congenial.¹⁴⁰ In late November, the annual Manchester Martyrs commemoration was clearly a Sinn Féin event, with the emphasis on the recent death of Thomas Ashe.¹⁴¹

With the National Volunteers in Tipperary slipping quietly into the night, Canon Arthur Ryan's appearances in the local press became fewer. In mid-December he presided at a meeting of the support committee for the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers.¹⁴² On 6 March 1918, John Redmond leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party died. In Canon Ryan's ideal world, Redmond would have become prime minister of an Ireland contentedly within the empire. As Ryan came to terms with this loss, he surely reflected on the way matters had changed. On the night before Redmond's death, several thousand Sinn Féin supporters

gathered and paraded in the town. The picture houses were almost empty because their best customers, the military, were confined to barracks. Volunteers, many in uniform, were very conspicuous. However, they were not National Volunteers.¹⁴³

A requiem mass was celebrated for Redmond in Tipperary on 20 March and was followed by a meeting of the UIL (the grassroots organisation of the Irish Parliamentary Party). Canon Ryan acknowledged that there had not been a meeting for some time. Memories of John Redmond dominated the speeches. John Cullinan was explicit about the increasing bitterness between republican and nationalist and Ryan talked about the 'corruption of the rising generation', casting what he stood for as 'old principles' and the 'old faith'. The strength of the current flowing against Ryan and Cullinan was evident by the opposition's control of St Patrick's Day festivities.¹⁴⁴ It was increasingly obvious that the gentlemanly amateurishness of the old guard was no match for the ruthlessness of Sinn Féin. For Ryan the Gaelic League represented an end in itself and he and his friends were scandalised by its politicisation, the best example of which was De Valera's visit.¹⁴⁵

For Canon Ryan, the downward trajectory of his hopes was inexorable. In April, the government's intention to introduce and presumably enforce conscription was a severe blow. A church-gate collection, to fight this, in Tipperary on 5 May raised around £900, a huge sum. At a public meeting after last mass on that day, Canon Ryan presided and a local committee was put in place. Behind-the-scenes negotiations, dominated by Sinn Féin, agreed six Sinn Féin, six Labour, six Parliamentary Party (including Cullinan and Tom Dawson) and the five local priests. Canon Ryan and a Sinn Féiner (Patrick Mortell) were co-trustees. Thanks to the government and its desperate need for more bodies for the war machine, Sinn Féin leaped to the mainstream.¹⁴⁶ There remained one final political struggle for Canon Arthur Ryan, the general election in late 1918 when the terrible war was finally over. This will be discussed in the fourth article in this series.

Appendix

'His Name Be Not Forgotten'

Listed below are individuals from Tipperary town killed during the war, all (unless indicated) on the Western Front. A few may not have been natives of the town but were probably married to local women. The list is compiled from the local press, the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and *Ireland's Memorial Records 1914-1918* (8 vols., Dublin, 1923).

1914

Casey, Private Christopher, 2nd Bn. Royal Irish Reg., age 20, Hannon's Cottages	19 October
Condon, Private John, 2nd Bn. Royal Irish Reg., Bohercrowe	23 August
Daly, Private Jeremiah, 2nd Bn. Leinster Reg., age 32, II Mountain View	20 October
Dwyer, Private Charles, 2nd Bn. Leinster Reg., age 33, Old Road	20 October
Murphy, Private David, 2nd Bn., Manchester Reg., 36, Old Road	28 October
Nagle, Private John, 2nd Bn. Leinster Reg., age 19, Church St.	18 October
O'Loughlin, Sergeant James, 1st Bn., Irish Guards, age 25, Cordangan	Died of wounds 6 September
O'Loughlin, Private Patrick, 1st Bn. Irish Guards, age 20, Cordangan,	29 December
Wilkins, Rifleman Charles F., 3rd Bn. Rifle Brigade, age 28, Brookville	21 October

1915

Falvey, Ord Seaman Daniel, HMS Tipperary, age 20, Murgasty	27 December
Fanning, Corporal Anthony, 1st Bn. Worcester Reg., age 32, 2 Brodeen Cottages	13 March
Heffernan, Company Quarter Master Sergeant James, 1st Bn., Lancashire Fus., age 30	St Michael St., 27 April

Hirons, Rifleman F.J., 3rd Bn. Rifle Brigade, 10 Cashel Road,	16 August
Leahy, Private Patrick, 5th Bn., Royal Irish Fus., 2 Dawson Villas	Died of wounds 31 August
Marsland, Lt James F. MC, 2nd Bn. Leinster Reg., age 39, 25 Main Street	15 August
Murphy, Corporal Michael, 2nd Bn., Leinster Reg., age 32, 5 Bansha Road,	27 April (See Photograph)
Murphy, Private William, 1st Bn., Leinster Reg., age 25, New Road	28 April
O'Donnell, Private John, 2nd Bn., Royal Irish Reg., age 31, Monastery Road,	24 May
Ryan, Private Timothy, 2nd Bn., Leinster Reg., age 28, Bansha Road,	4 May

1916

Darmody, Lance Sergeant Jeremiah, 2nd Bn., Irish Guards, age 24, Tipperary	13 September
Loftus, Private Patrick, 8th Bn. Royal Irish Fus., age 27, 17 Spittal St	27 April
McCarthy, Private Michael, 2nd Batt Leinster Reg., age 19, Bansha Road,	Died of wounds 25 June
McDonagh, Lance Corp Stephen, 1st Bn. Irish Guards, age 28, 29 Main St.	11 September
Markes, Major John C., Leinster Reg., age 36, St Michael Street	19 July
Murphy, Private Thomas, 7th Royal Irish Fus., age 32, Spittal	1 May
Noonan, Lance Corp. James, Irish Guards, age 19, Ardavullane	13 May (Died in London)
Quane, Sergeant James, 3rd Bn., Royal Irish Reg., age 43, 5 Davitt Street	Died of wounds 17 August (Died in Tipperary)
Rahilly, Rifleman Patrick, 8th Bn., London Reg., age 32, Murgasty	15 September
Slaten, Private Patrick, 2nd Bn. Leinster Reg., age 25, 4 Bansha Road,	30 April
Walsh, Private James, 7th Bn. Royal Irish Fus., age 37, Carronreddy,	21 May

1917

Butler, Private Michael, 5th Bn., Leinster Reg., age 20, Eaton's Cottages	Died of wounds 26 December (Died in Tipperary)
Carroll, Gunner Jeremiah, Royal Garrison Art., Tipperary	17 June
Coleman, Driver Michael, Royal Field Art., age 37, Greenrath	13 August
English, Private Theobald, 1st Bn., Irish Guards, age 22, Bridge Street,	30 November
Heffernan, Private Stephen, 2nd Bn., Leinster Reg., age 34, Spittal	12 April
Morrissey, Private Patrick, 6th Bn. Royal Irish Reg., age 30, Kilshane	5 April
O'Dwyer, Private Patrick, 6th Bn., Royal Irish Reg., New Road,	Died of wounds 16 June (Died in Tipperary)
Poulten, Private Ernest, 16th Bn., Royal Warwickshire Reg., age 30, New Road	9 October
Ryan, Private John J., 106th Machine Gun Corps, age 28, 37 O'Connell Road	20 October
Ryan, Sergeant Myles J., 36th Bn., Australian Infantry, age 24, 13 Emmet Street	22 July
Sampson, Private J. 6th Batt Royal Irish Reg., age 17, 51 O'Connell Road,	27 October

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Allen, Private John, Canadian Machine Gun Corps, age 32, Bank of Ireland House	Died of wounds 29 August
Burns, Private Garret, 5th Bn. Royal Irish Reg., age 22, Bansha Road	4 November
Dolan, Reg. Sergeant Major Robert, 7th Bn. Royal Inniskilling Fus., age 36, Dillon Street	27 March
Flynn, Private Patrick, 2nd Bn., Royal Irish Reg., age 18, Dillon Street,	21 March
Hourigan, Reg. Sergeant Major William, 18th Queen's Own Hussars, age 40, O'Connell Road, Died of wounds 1 October (Died in England, buried Shronell)	
Marnane, Private Patrick, 6th Bn. Connacht Rangers, age 20, 31 O'Connell Road	7 August
McGrath, Private James, 4th (Queen's Own) Hussars, age 33, 35 O'Connell Road	23 March
O'Connell, Private Daniel, 2nd Bn., Royal Munster Fus., age 29, Kyle	4 October
Ryan, Corporal Cornelius, 1st Bn., Royal Irish Reg., age 32, Cashel Road	4 January
Ryan, Private E., Royal Irish Reg., Knockanrawly	7 November
Ryan, Lt. Henry J., 25th Bn., Australian Infantry, age 39, St Michael Street	17 July
Ryan, Driver Timothy, Royal Field Art., age 39, Bansha Road	11 October (Died in Italy)
Tobin, Private Patrick, 4th Bn., Royal Irish Reg., age 18, New Road,	Died of wounds 7 September (Died in Tipperary)
Westman, Private Michael, 4th Bn. Royal Munster Fus., age 26, Knockfoble	Died of wounds 15 October

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