

KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL LIBRARY SERVICE

Decade of Centenaries publications

DECADE OF CENTENARIES

1921

was one of the most memorable years in Kilkenny during the War of Independence period.

Kilkenny County Council Library Service, as part of its ongoing Programme of Events over the last few years to commemorate the Decade of Centenaries has commissioned two short publications. Supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023 initiative.

One of the main aims of the Programme is to raise awareness of the Decade period locally and to put the spotlight on often forgotten events locally from this period.

Both of these have been researched and edited by local researchers and historians.

Kilkenny Men interned in Ballykinlar, County Down, 1920-21, researched and written by Orla

Murphy, edited by Carmel Cummins

This short excerpts gives a flavour of the content in the publication.

'Ballykinlar Camp Co. Down was the first and the largest of the internment camps opened by the British authorities at the height of the War of Independence in December 1920. Several of the Kilkenny men who were interned in Ballykinlar already had experience of internment earlier in 1920 and some like Tom Treacy, Jim Lalor and Ned Comerford had experienced it in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. Both Tom and Jim had ended up in Frongoch via Richmond Barracks, Dublin, and Wakefield

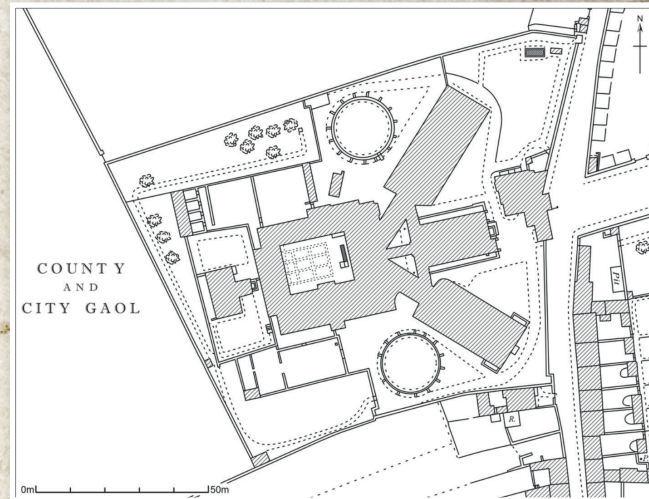
Prison in Yorkshire. It was in Frongoch, "the University of Revolution", which had thrown almost 1800 prisoners together after the Rising, that the seeds of the resurgent Irish Volunteers were sown.

On the 4 December, the Kilkenny People reported that Ballykinlar, a British army training base during WW1, was being readied for an influx of internees from across the country. During the war British soldiers had christened it World's End and that One eyed Godforsaken Ballykinlar, Co. Down because it was so isolated on the shores of Dundrum Bay.



The day after Bloody Sunday, 21 November, 1920, the authorities moved swiftly to implement a country-wide round up of any prominent Sinn Féiners, public representatives and anyone suspected of being an I.R.A. officer. They were enabled to do this by the Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations which had multiplied the number of raids and arrests carried out in all areas that autumn.

By the time this news broke in the local newspaper arrests had already been made on 23 November and the first batch of Kilkenny men who were destined for Ballykinlar had been transferred from Kilkenny Military Barracks to Kilworth camp and then to Cork Military Prison from where they were transferred on board a ship called The Heather to Belfast along with 250 other prisoners.'

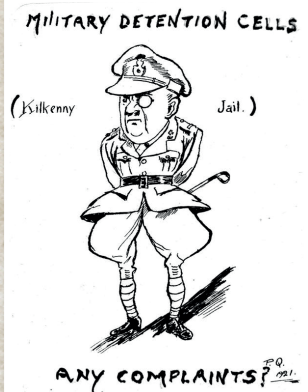


Kilkenny Jail, November 21st 1921, researched and written by Fergal Donohue

The short excerpts below will give a flavour of the publications.

Kilkenny Jail, November 21st 1921

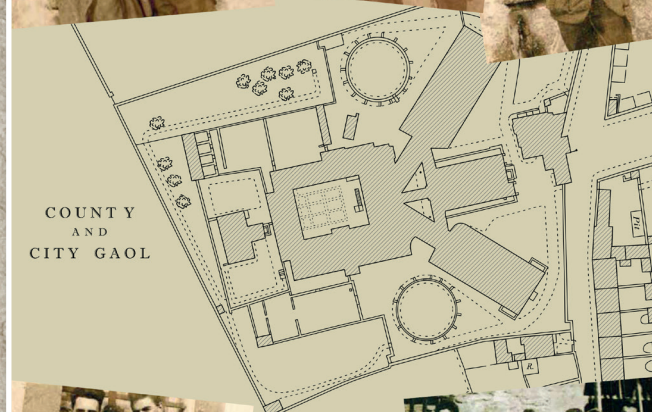
'On the night of 22 November 1921, forty-three prisoners escaped from Kilkenny jail. This was not the first time that prisoners had escaped from the city or county jail, but it was certainly the most audacious of jail breaks and the largest. It is also one that lives on to this day in folklore, family history, and the written record. The escapees were all political prisoners during the War of Independence and due to a slew of recent arrivals from Spike Island, came from all over Ireland.



A limited number of brochures will be available to the public in our Library network from early December and they can be downloaded from the library website www.kilkennylibrary.ie

In addition, we the have developed a series of 14 podcasts, researched and compiled by author and historian Eoin Swithin Walsh. These are available through our website kilkennylibrary.ie under Our Services - Decade of Centenaries

Kilkenny Jail 22 November 1921



On the night of 22 November 1921, forty-three prisoners escaped from Kilkenny jail.



HUT 19 - 'C' COMPANY

CONDITIONS IN BALLYKILNAR CAMP

Startling Reports from Prisoners' Commandant and Doctor
CASTLE OVERRIDES R.A.M.C.
Five Hundred Men in Camp II. Sleeping On the Floor

The declaration of the Irish Hierarchy has a very potent factor in the attainment of peace will lose none of its great force when, read side by side with the reports published to-day charges relative to the treatment of his men. The doctor gives a detailed report on the food supplied the internees, and criticises severely many of the camp arrangements from a health point of

LET THEM OUT!

The demand for the release of the political prisoners has been endorsed in date by the following public bodies—
City Councils (8)—Limerick, Clonmel, Kilkenny, County Councils (3)—Galway, Waterford, Sligo, Monaghan
Militarised Guards (1)—Cork
District Councils (2)—Listharrow, Kilkenny.
Boards of Guardians (5)—Tipperary, Carrick-on-Shannon, Kilkenny, Wick, and Westmeath.
Urban Councils (4)—Drogheda, Kilkenny, Thurles, New Ross
Town Commissioners (1)—Newcastle-Weir.
Other bodies that have demanded the prisoners' release are the Irish Dominion League, Cork County and City Land and Labour Health Administration Society, Etna Trades Council.



At the time of the escape, the county jail was at the top of Gaol Road, on Stephen Street, close to the modern fire station. While nothing remains of jail today, its history can be traced, and the surviving plans show what the jail looked like. The oral evidence from the bureau of military history, in combination with the surviving maps and plans, also reveals a lot about the escape and the approximate location of the exit point of the tunnel can be established.

The full series will be all available in December 2021.

A short film detailing what sources are available free online on the Decade period with a Kilkenny emphasis will also be available to watch over the coming days, so follow our social media platforms @kilkennylibrary and website!