

James Stephens Barracks

A variety of earlier military barracks existing in Kilkenny City, before the present Barracks. In St. John's Parish, a military barracks was situated on the site of what is now Evan's Home; this was later demolished to make room for the Home. The lane connecting Evan's Home to John Street is still called Barrack's Lane in memory of this building.

A variety of factors combined that lead to the construction of the current barracks. The 1798 Rebellion increased security concerns overall in Ireland. The Act of Union in 1801 also brought security issues in Ireland to the attention of the Parliament in London. There as also a trend to relocate military installations outside of the old cramped centres of medieval towns like Kilkenny.

The site chosen in Ballybough Street was on the edge of the built up areas of St. John's Parish. The land was provided by Walter Butler, the 18th Earl of Ormond. The contractor was James Switzer, a Quaker philanthropist. He was an ancestor of the Switzer family, former owners of the Department Store in Grafton Street in Dublin. There was surplus stone after the building work was completed. This was used to build an 'Asylum' on the Bennettsbridge Road. This is now known as Switzer's Asylum.

The Barracks was built to a standard plan issued by the British Board of Works. Similar buildings still exist in Templemore and Mullingar. The original building was to house 200 troops, a company of infantry and a troop of cavalry. By the 1830s this figure had exceeded 500. The living accommodation was gradually added to. In 1852, a Garrison Church was added; this was used by members of the Established Church, i.e Church of Ireland. As was common military practice at the time, no single unit was stationed in the Barracks for more than a few years. Most of the units were infantry with a smattering of cavalry and artillery.

On the eve of the Great War, the barracks housed the 4th Battalion of the Royal Irish - a training and reserve unit and the 87th Royal Field Artillery. The 4th Battalion in an earlier incarnation had been known as the Kilkenny Militia/Kilkenny Fusiliers. These men were soon to be redeployed out of Kilkenny.



Military Barracks Lawrence c.1900

Courtesy National Library of Ireland

Private Patrick Hayes - a Kilkenny Story

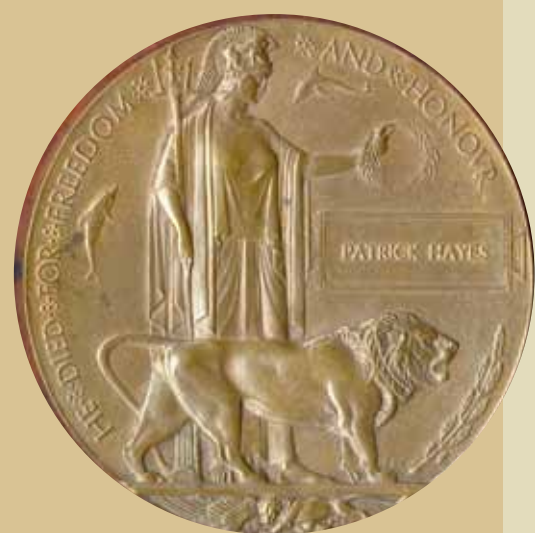
The story of Private Patrick Hayes war is a tale similar to many other soldiers, except his is a story of Kilkenny's part in the war. Patrick a native of St Canice's Parish had resided in Green's Hill for the majority of this life with his mother Bridget, his brother John and sister Bridget. He worked for George McAdams a draper of High Street, as a messenger prior to joining the army. Patrick Hayes had joined the Militia (army reserve) of the Royal Irish Regiment on 23rd of February 1904, age 17yrs and 2 months. He quickly joined the 2nd Battalion South Lancashire Regiment as a professional Soldier on the 23rd of July 1904 and began his training.

His war service began with the second Battalion began as part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France on the 22nd August 1914. He joined the Battalion in the field from Kilkenny. The day after his arrival the first major action of the BEF began with the Battle of Mons. The defending of the French border from superior German forces would eventually lead to a retreat, with the estimated casualties on both sides of between 5,000 - 7,000 men. The Battalion would be involved in further battles at Marne, and Aisne throughout September 1914.

By 16th October the Battalion was in entrenched in the vicinity of Neuve-Chapelle, in northern France. On the October 20th the occupied trenches were under heavy attack, this attack continued the next day with considerable casualties, and a large number of men reported missing. The remainder of the battalion withdrew from the trenches as the attack continued throughout the night and into October 23rd. Patrick Hayes was one of the missing, he was officially listed missing presumed dead on October 24th 1914

While Patrick was away his wife Mary and their three children Mary, Bridget, and John waited for news of him. Upon receiving news that he was missing/presumed dead, he was mourned but was not discussed in great length over the following decades within the family. This pattern was repeated in many families after the Great War, in post-independence Ireland where the cause they had died for was an uncomfortable memory. He was remembered by his nephew John Power, late in his own life with the words, "my uncle died in the First World War, I don't know much about him"

A neighbour stated after the war that he had seen Patrick Hayes with his Battalion climbing a hill in France, and he reportedly shouted to him "see you back on the hill (Green's Hill)" His war was brief and he never saw Green's Hill again. He is commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Richebourg-L'Avoue in France



Royal Irish Regiment



Royal Irish Regiment 1914

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Kilkenny on the Eve OF WAR

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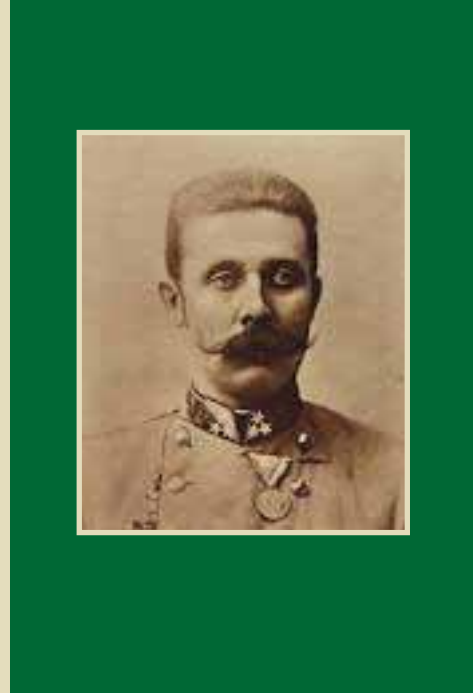
The Councils of the City and County of Kilkenny

Kilkenny on the Eve OF WAR

The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

On 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, were shot dead in On 28 June 1914, in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, one of a group of six assassins (five Serbs and one Bosnian Muslim) coordinated by Danilo Ilić. He was a member of the 'Black Hand' an ultra-nationalist Serb group with links to the Serbian Government. The political objective of the assassination was to break off Austria-Hungary's Slav-dominated provinces so they could be combined into a pan-Slavic state dominated by the Kingdom of Serbia - Yugoslavia. Due to the system of alliances between the various powers in Europe, the assassination led directly to the First World War when Austria-Hungary subsequently issued an ultimatum against Serbia, which was partially rejected. Austria-Hungary then declared war.

Franz Ferdinand had become heir following the mysterious suicide of his cousin, Crown Prince Rudolf, son of the Emperor Franz Joseph. His marriage to Countess Sophie Chotek did not meet imperial approval and their subsequent children were excluded from the succession. Relations between the Archduke and the Emperor were poor. The Archduke had advanced ideas as regards the reforming the ramshackle Habsburg domains. These included a greater role for the Empire's Slav subjects. These ideas encountered considerable resistance from the old conservative Emperor and his court and also brought the Archduke to the attention of Slav nationalists both in Bosnia-Herzegovina inside the Empire and also in Serbia. This lead directly to the tragic events of the 28th June. In Ireland, the assassination was widely condemned in the national press. There was widespread sympathy for the Archduke and his wife. There was little reaction to these events locally initially with the issue of Home Rule dominating local and national politics. The tensions inside the ruling Habsburg House in Austria-Hungary were not lessened by the death of the Archduke and his wife. Every attempt was made by the Emperor's court to lessen and cheapen the funeral. Thus the chance for any initiatives to ease tensions with a post-funeral conference between



Europe's royals was lost. Gavrilo Princip the assassin of the Archduke denied any exterior help at his trial. At 19 he was too young to receive the death penalty. He was to die of tuberculosis in prison in 1918.

The Royal Visit 1904

Kilkenny City ten years earlier than the ill-fated royal visit to Sarajevo had also experienced a royal visit. In this case it was the visit of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. This visit thankfully did not end in bloodshed or cause a World War but did cause a lot of recriminations, tensions and bad-feeling locally. In this respect Kilkenny in microcosm reflected many of the tensions that were to lead to War in 1914. In this case an emergent strident Irish nationalist identity at odds with an Imperialist British one.

debated public addresses occurred. The King and Queen were also addressed by representatives of the Kilkenny Agricultural Society and Girls' Friendly Society. The Royal Party then processed to Kilkenny Castle through the decorated streets. Many turned out to see them; the reception to quote the Kilkenny People was 'generous' rather than enthusiastic. After refreshments the Royals attended the Kilkenny Agricultural Show in St. James Park. Again large crowds turned out to watch. Later, the Marquis of Ormond hosted a grand dinner for his guests on Saturday night in the Castle. The citizens of the City were entertained by light displays and fireworks. On Sunday morning the Royal Party attended services in St. Canice's Cathedral. Inclement weather meant that planned visits around the County had to be abandoned, the same afternoon. The King departed Kilkenny on Monday around noon.

The Kilkenny People in its editorial prior to the



High Street Royal Visit

Courtesy National Library of Ireland

Graigueenamanagh and Borris Contingents of Irish Volunteer Force, 1914



Home Rule

The main political topic both in Ireland and Kilkenny in the summer of 1914 was not events in the Balkans but the issue of Home Rule. It had its origins in the Act of Union in January 1801 which had seen the old Irish parliament in Dublin vote itself out of existence. The old separate Kingdom of Ireland amalgamated into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Ireland's elected MPs now took their seats in a united parliament in London. Outside Ulster it was widely seen that the Union had being disastrous for Ireland. The calamity of the Famine was popularly attributed to it. In Ulster on the other hand the Union was seen as a guarantee of a shared Irish and British identity and continued economic prosperity.

Throughout the 19th Century various attempts had being made in the south to alter the Union. These included the Repeal movement of Daniel O'Connell. By the 1880's these ideas had coalesced under Charles Stuart Parnell into the idea of Home Rule. Ireland would have its parliament restored with limited legislative powers over domestic affairs. This would be similar to the current arrangement in Scotland but with fewer powers. Many saw this has a first step to greater freedoms but still inside the Union. Other of a more violent persuasion including the Fenians was demanding a complete break and a Republic. In the south, Home Rule ideas as espoused by the Irish Parliamentary Party had come to dominate political representation both locally and in Westminster by 1914.

In the General Election of December 1910, the last before the War, Kilkenny elected three MPs, Kilkenny City – Pat O'Brien; County Kilkenny North – Michael Meagher; County Kilkenny South – Matthew Keating. All were members of the Irish Parliamentary Party. After the Election the Party in alliance with Liberals had a working majority in the Westminster Parliament.

The coming of War

As earlier alluded the initial spark – the Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand leading to the declaration of the First World War made little impact locally. The dominant theme in the local media in 1914 was seen as the imminent arrival of Home Rule. Home Rule had become an extremely polarising issue in Ireland, with Unionist dominated Ulster opposed and Nationalists in the rest of the country in favour. By 1914 Ireland was divided in two camps each with its own para-military forces, the anti-Home Rule – Ulster Volunteers and the pro-Home Rule – Irish Volunteers. In this respect Ireland reflected many other European countries as societies became increasing militarised in the early twentieth century.

In Kilkenny as in many places the outbreak of War was greeted with a mixture of trepidation and excitement. The Kilkenny People of August 8th 1914 noted many men around the City were attired in quasi-military attire. Large crowds turned as members of the army reserve, the former Kilkenny Militia embarked by train to Dublin. The Army were also busy rounding up horses for the war effort. 26 horses were taken from the City's breweries. The Kilkenny People again recorded that owners were generally happy with the compensation offered. Top horses made between £25-£35. There is little evidence in the local press of any great numbers of men enlisting, unlike other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Kilkenny People in its editorial of the 8th August noted that the War transcended religion with Catholic and Protestant States arrayed on both sides. Again the conflict was seen through the prism of Home Rule. The suggestion that the British army evacuate Ireland and leave the security of the island to the two volunteer forces was not however taken up on.

In the weeks following the declaration of War concerns were raised locally about individuals hoarding both food and materials to drive up prices. Local Shop 'the Monster House' however noted that despite the War it was not increasing prices and indeed reducing some. The local press was also affected. The Kilkenny People noted its editions were four pages smaller due to a shortage of paper.

Kilkenny on the Eve of War

Kilkenny City in the early days of August 1914 observed many of the rhythms familiar to us today. The summer sales were winding down in many of the shops in High Street with advertisements promising bargains in stores like the Monster House, J. Bourke and Sons, J. Bibby, Bowdens and Kenny's. A gentleman could buy a pair of trousers from 2 shillings and 11 pence to 7 shillings and 6 pence, a tweed overcoat would set one back anything from 19 shillings and 6 pence to 30 shillings. All these reduced bargains were available from the Monster House.

Cycling was as popular in the City then as it is now. A Raleigh Bike would cost from 5 shillings and 6 pence from a variety of stockists. In Deloughrey's in Parliament Street, a Royal Enfield Bicycle could cost anything from 5 shillings and 6 pence to 13 shillings.

Kilkenny Corporation approved the provision of a water supply and toilets to Corporation tenants in Parnell Street, John's Quay and John's Green. A proposal to install concrete paving in the area of Walkin Street was also approved. Meetings and drilling of various local divisions of the Irish Volunteers took up a lot of space in the local papers.

As regards sports Kilkenny had unfortunately just being knocked out of the Hurling Championship losing the Leinster Final to Laois or Queen's County as its was referred to then by a score of Kilkenny 2-4, Laois 3-2. – a narrow one point victory for Laois. The match was played in James Park. Disunity in the team was a major factor in this defeat. A disallowed goal for Kilkenny added to the controversy. This defeat prevented Kilkenny from achieving a fourth All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship in a row.

There was better news in other sporting arenas. Castlecomer beat Offaly or King's County in Cricket by 149 runs to 93.

