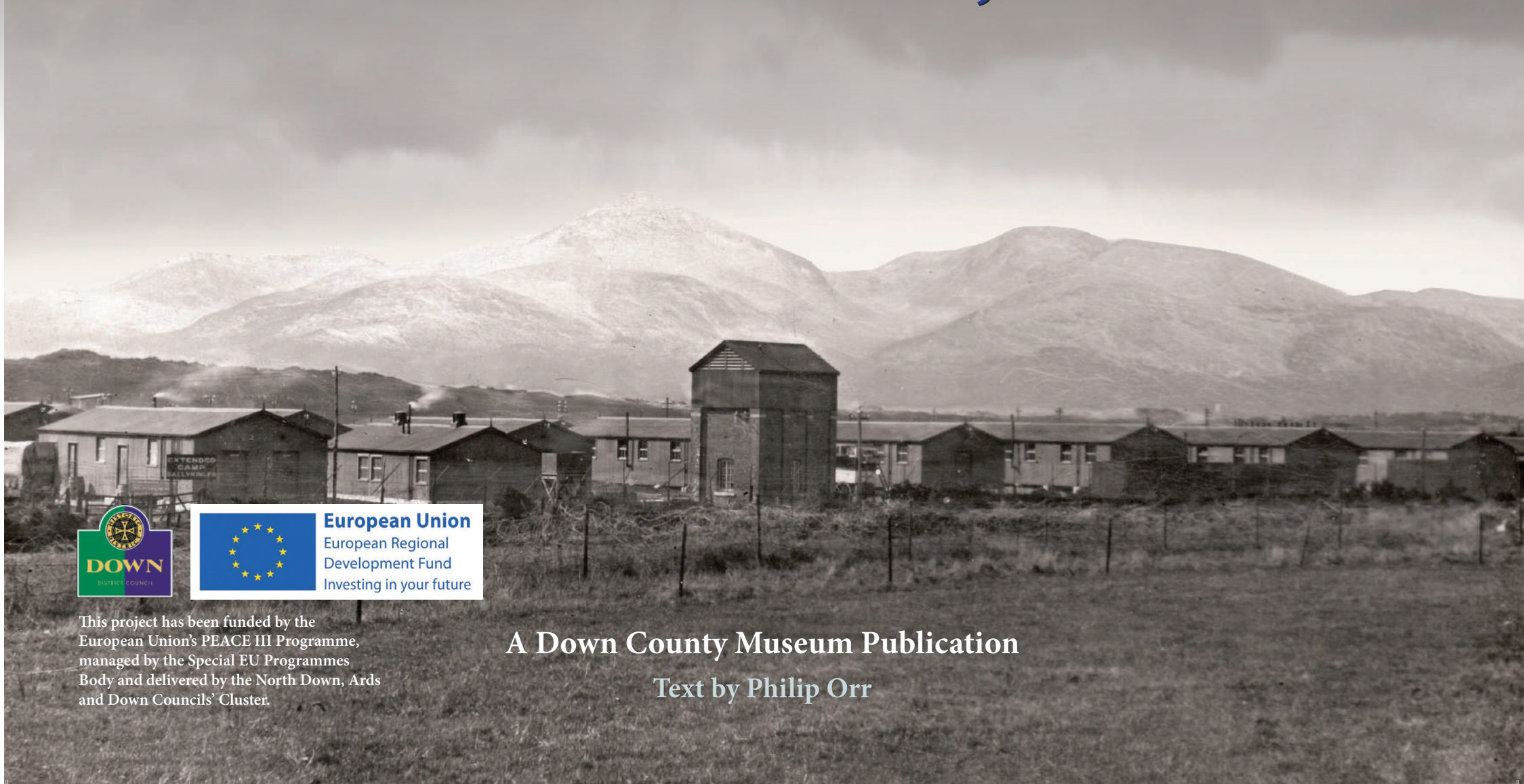


# Ballykinler Camp

## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969



This project has been funded by the European Union's PEACE III Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body and delivered by the North Down, Ards and Down Councils' Cluster.

**A Down County Museum Publication**

**Text by Philip Orr**

## Acknowledgements

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Down County Museum's PEACE III funded community history project aims to contribute to a reduction in sectarianism and racism across the North Down, Ards and Down Councils' cluster by increasing understanding and awareness of a range of issues relating to cultural and community identity. The project seeks to provide opportunities to learn about local history and culture and produce resources which examine issues of cultural identity and diversity.

The author wishes to acknowledge help given by current and former members of the armed forces who have served at Ballykinler, as well as staff who were employed there as range wardens. Help was also given by employees of the Sandes Homes and by local residents in the Ballykinler area. Staff of Down Museum are to be thanked for assistance throughout the project as are a wide range of friends and enthusiasts who volunteered relevant information. Particular thanks to Nigel Henderson for historical expertise and regular support, including a photographic record of the camp and its hinterland as seen today.

***The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission or the Special EU Programmes Body.***

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Cover photo: Nigel Henderson

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## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

Dundrum Bay, seen from the Anglo-Norman Castle which overlooks its waters. To the right is Murlough and to the left are the Ballykinler Sandhills which gird Northern Ireland's most beautifully situated military base.

# 1

In July 2007, Operation Banner came to an end. The British Army's longest continuous deployment in a single field of operations was over. The engagement had begun on the streets of Northern Ireland in the violent summer of 1969 but by the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a sustained peace process had produced political power-sharing in Belfast and the evolution of a more stable society, even though some dissident paramilitaries were still active and seasonal outbreaks of civic unrest still posed a threat.

Some commentators speculated about the shut-down of Northern Ireland's military infrastructure. Many watchtowers and high-security barracks that were built to monitor paramilitary activity had already been dismantled. Less clear was the fate of a number of the more substantial British Army bases. Girdwood Barracks in inner city North Belfast had just been decommissioned and was now the subject of debate regarding an appropriate allocation of former military land for housing. Another base, of older vintage and larger proportions was Ballykinler on the County Down coast. This base had certainly played a key role during the 'Troubles.' Even when dealing exclusively with a single decade such as the 1970s, historians can compile a list of fateful days for Ballykinler. In 1971, when the Northern Ireland government implemented the controversial measure known as internment, some Republican 'suspects' who had been 'lifted' were



## Ballykinler Camp

brought to the Ballykinler barracks. In the previous year, a local battalion of the Ulster Defence Regiment - created to support the regular army - had been formed at the camp. Then in 1974, the Provisional IRA bombed the institution known as Sandes Home, which catered for the welfare of the British armed forces and stood in a vulnerable place on the outskirts of the base. The explosion killed two soldiers, Alan Coughlan and Michael Swanick, and caused a number of other serious injuries. Then in 1979, men from the Parachute Regiment, who had left their Ballykinler depot to patrol the roads of South Down, died in an IRA blast at Narrow Water near Warrenpoint on the far side of the Mourne Mountains.

The Ballykinler site continued to be important, even though its tranquil coastal location gave it a lower public profile than many other military barracks. Throughout the final years of the 'Troubles', soldiers who arrived as reinforcements for the regular battalions undertook a short course at the camp, to introduce them to the military realities of operating in the region and to explain a little of the political history of a part of the United Kingdom that many British servicemen did not readily understand.

Now, in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Ballykinler is still a site for training and hosts the Police Service of Northern Ireland, local units of the Territorial Army and

Army Cadet Force. The site still houses and trains British soldiers but they are being prepared for service abroad rather than in Northern Ireland. At the time of this book's publication, a battalion of the English infantry regiment, The Rifles, was stationed there. The Rifles have operated recently in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are obvious reasons why the Ministry of Defence would want to maintain a serviceable, successful military base at a historic location and it is to be expected that local people who gain employment at Ballykinler will wish to see the military facilities retained. There are clear reasons why the Unionist population of Northern Ireland would be dismayed by the military's departure from Ballykinler. They would see it as an indication of Britain's gradual retreat. However, there are also obvious reasons why anyone who longs for the re-unification of the island under Irish sovereignty would want to see the eventual closure of the base.

It is not the purpose of this publication to describe the future for Ballykinler or indeed to describe the years from 1969 onwards when civil strife convulsed Northern Ireland and the base was intimately and at times tragically involved. Rather, this is an account of the years before 'The Troubles' broke out in 1969. It could be seen as the 'pre-history' of a location that swiftly became an important



The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

military venue for one of the world's most well-known, small-scale regional conflicts.

This account constitutes a small attempt to reveal some of the deeper, older layers that can be found beneath the surface of a British military base in Northern Ireland. In understanding the way that places such as Ballykinler have been 'camped on before' perhaps we will be in a better place to understand the role they played in the more recent past. We may also become better equipped to consider their role in the present day and ruminate on their long-term future.



Army token found in recent excavations of huts at Ballykinler camp

.....

Then in 1974, the Provisional IRA bombed the institution known as Sandes Home, which catered for the welfare of the British armed forces and stood in a vulnerable place on the outskirts of the base.

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## Ballykinler Camp

### 2

Situated on the eastern seaboard of Ireland, County Down, and especially the areas of Strangford and Lecale, has long been affected by a complex sequence of influences and invasions from Britain and Europe. Not far from Ballykinler itself there is evidence of this. The first people to arrive in the Middle Stone Age, some 9000 years ago, moved from the coast following river valleys and exploiting the resources of land and sea. They left traces of their lives around Strangford Lough. Much nearer to Ballykinler, along the Dundrum sandhills, flint tools and sherds of pottery have been found, which belonged to people in the New Stone Age, between 6000-4000 years ago. It was during this period that people began to make the first real changes to our landscape, through farming and by building stone monuments. A stone circle at nearby Ballynoe dates from this time but continued to be used in the Bronze Age, after 2000BC. Evidence from the Iron Age in County Down is relatively scarce although it was during this period that the Irish language first developed.

The beginnings of written history in Ireland, in Early Christian times, means we have more information about people's lives, to add to the archaeological evidence. Of course, sometimes fact needs to be sifted from fiction.



The Lecale peninsula where Ballykinler sits in an ancient landscape that has seen many battles and experienced many cultures. The Ballynoe stone circle is situated only a few miles from the camp and is at least 4,000 years old.

Down County Museum collection.



## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

St Patrick has close associations with Lecale and there is even a story about him disembarking at Ballykinler. The small stone church at St John's Point dates to the 10th-11th century and although the old church at Maghera is 13th century the ruins of a round tower mark the site of an earlier monastery.



Down County  
Museum collection.

For all their impact on Ireland, noted in written sources, the Vikings left few archaeological traces in Down. However, it is a different story with the Normans. The imposing castle at Dundrum was begun by John de Courcy in the late 12th century. This may be the biggest castle in the area but there are many other smaller castles, such as that at Clough, built to defend strategically important routes.

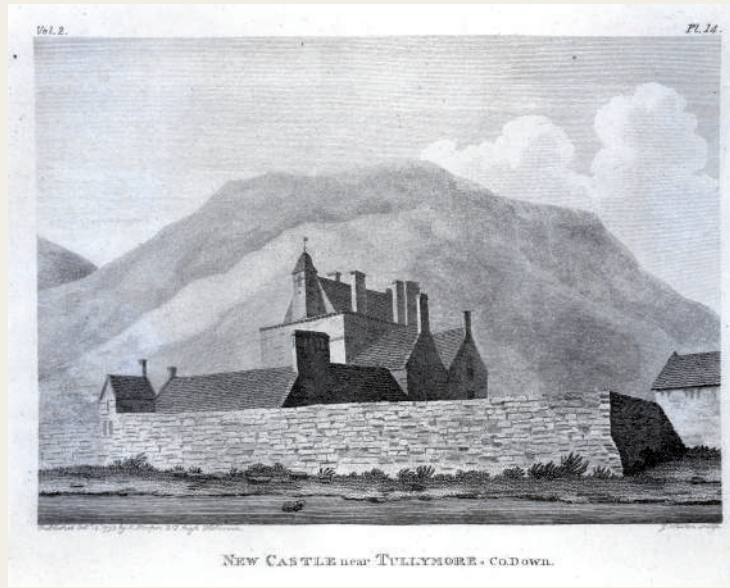
Down County Museum collection.



By the later Middle Ages, Norman power was on the wane and the Magennis family held much of the land in this area, including Dundrum castle. Although County Down was not part of an official Plantation, it was nevertheless still affected by changes in land ownership in the 16th and 17th centuries. Whether by purchase, marriage or forfeit, English and Scottish landowners took over estates of varying sizes. The town of Newcastle takes its name from a castle, possibly one pre-dating a tower house built by Felix Magennis in the 16th century.

By the later 18th century many acres of land in Down, including Ballykinler, were owned by the Downshire family. They were responsible for developing both Dundrum and Newcastle. In the 20th century, nearby Tyrella House

## Ballykinler Camp



belonged to the Craig family – James Craig became the first prime minister of Northern Ireland.

It was onto this complex historical background that the military camp at Ballykinler was established. As elsewhere,



major historical events often leave unexpected traces. It was the Normans who introduced rabbits to Ireland – these animals thrived in the sand dunes in the Ballykinler area, providing food and furs to be exploited in later centuries.

The Tyrella boatman, James Burns, with some of the Craig family children.

Down County Museum collection.

### 3

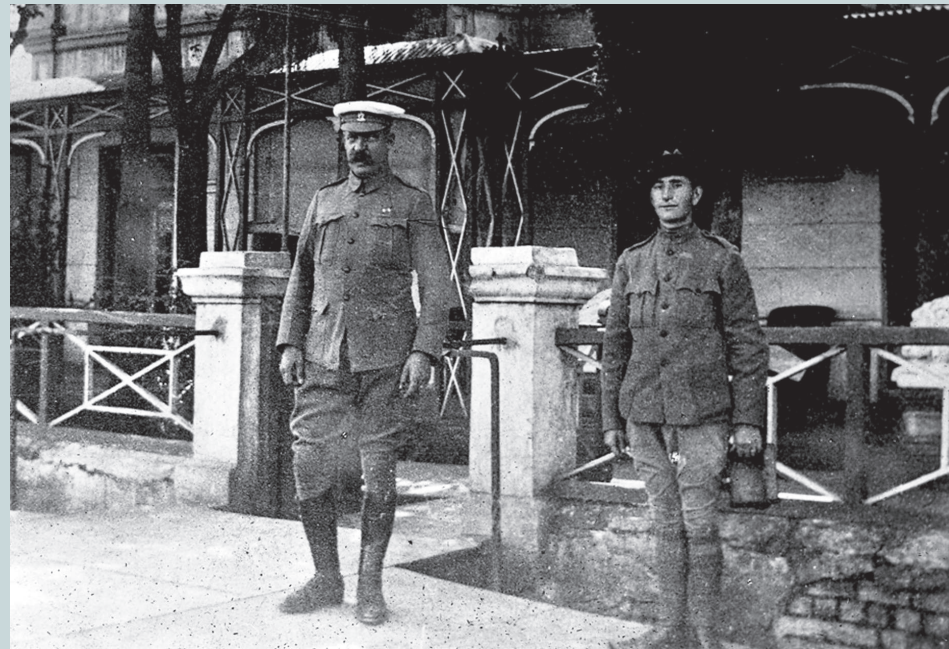
The modern British army base at this place dates from the very earliest months of the 20th century when a rifle range was constructed on a stretch of sandy coastline where the inner reaches of Dundrum Bay meet the open waters of the Irish Sea. Coastal venues are popular for rifle ranges as they often offer a wide open space and well-drained, sandy terrain that has little potential for alternative uses such as agriculture. Ballykinler is one such venue.

The range was constructed in a time of war. Britain was fighting the Boers in South Africa. In response to the enormous difficulties that this conflict presented, fresh troops had to be trained and sent abroad. The regiment known as the Royal Irish Rifles, which recruited in the north-east of Ireland, was destined to play its part. The regiment's 5th battalion had a catchment area which centred on the southern part of County Down. Its headquarters was an imposing 18th century barracks, situated on The Mall in the county town of Downpatrick. That barracks is now the County Museum.

Throughout 1900, batches of 'reservists' from this battalion were sent abroad, then in 1901 a larger unit sailed for South Africa, led by Colonel Wallace of nearby Myra Castle. In the previous year, the new rifle range at Ballykinler had been completed, so soldiers from the Royal Irish Rifles

and a number of other regiments who were about to make their way to this far-distant war, travelled on the Belfast and County Down railway to Tullymurry station, where they marched to the camp for musketry practice. They slept in tents which had been erected for the duration of their stay. One other body of soldiers who quite possibly used the range were local members of the Imperial Yeomanry. These were mounted infantrymen from across Ireland and Britain whose marksmanship would need to be of excellent quality when fighting on the South African *veldt*.

Colonel 'Bob' Wallace, of Myra Castle, local Orangeman and Unionist, photographed in South Africa while commanding a unit of the Royal Irish Rifles during the Boer War.



Down County Museum collection.

## Ballykinler Camp

The 5th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles was also known by its 'old' name - the South Down Militia. Units such as this had been formed primarily for home service during the 1890s. They claimed descent from older militias which had participated in the suppression of a rising undertaken by the United Irishmen in 1798. Although the South Down men would have served outside their own 'catchment area' in the 1790s, a well-known song still celebrates their achievements, describing 'the South Down Militia' as 'the terror of the land.' However it is worth stressing that Irish militiamen in bygone years had often been from a Catholic, Gaelic background, despite the enmity between many Irish Catholics and the Protestant Ascendancy which prevailed in the country during the 18th century.

By the latter years of the 19th century, Colonel Wallace was a dominant figure in soldiering in south-eastern County Down and he was a regular visitor to the Ballykinler camp. When Wallace led the 'South Downs' to South Africa in 1901 - including both local Catholics and local Protestants in the ranks - very few other Irish militiamen were serving in this far-off imperial conflict. This was a matter of special pride to local Protestants, whose predominantly 'Unionist' politics had become closely wedded to the cause of the British Empire.

As the British War Office lifted the tempo of the Boer War in an attempt to defeat a resolute foe, a decision was made to improve the facilities at Ballykinler. The local newspaper, *The Down Recorder*, reported that -

'Notices have been served on twelve tenants and the landlord, Lord Downshire, by ...the Chief Crown solicitor... under the Military Land Act, 1892, to take 593 acres of additional land in Ballykinler Upper...for an extension of the rifle range recently constructed there... the entire range will cover over 1,200 acres....If any objections to the acquisition are made, a local enquiry will require to be held.'

The newspaper went on to speculate -

'It is presumably the intention of the military authorities to construct a bridge connecting Ballykinler with Dundrum...'

Over a century later, that bridge remains un-built but the military base that it would have served remains very much in place. As for an enquiry into forcible acquisition of local ground by the Army, a legal case was indeed mounted by local residents, focusing on the compensation they were being offered for removal. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Information on the early life of the camp is to be found in *The Down Recorder*, 20 January, 10 February and 13 June, 1900.

## 4

Ballykinler soon became a hive of activity, especially in the summer months. Not only did the Royal Irish Rifles train there but also soldiers from Scottish regiments, including the Kings' Own Scottish Borderers and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Cavalrymen such as the 21st Lancers travelled to the base and joined 1,600 troops who were quartered at the camp by the summer of 1901. The arrival of so many men made the presence of the Army Service Corps a necessity. Kitchens were built. A great array of ridge-pole tents was constructed, each one holding twenty men. And then there was the problem of water-supply. A condenser for transforming sea-water into drinking-water was used as a short term measure. Local history suggests that a well was located by a civil engineer called Jardine, who was brought to the camp because he had developed expertise in such matters in his professional career. However, no such well has been re-discovered in recent years, using modern technology.

The opportunity to improve the men's musketry on the '100 yards' range was the main advantage of Ballykinler. The latest 'sash' targets had recently been installed and various parts of the range were connected by telephone. By May 1901, the versatile Mr. Jardine was constructing what

*The Down Recorder* referred to as 'a running man target... propelled along a switchback railway.'

Some of the challenges posed by Ballykinler's remote location were also noted in the local paper, when a journalist explained that –

'At present, telegraphic messages have to be carried to Clough post office for transmission...'

The writer had a solution to this difficulty –

'..a few poles, half a mile or so of wire and a junction with the telephone wire leading to Tyrella Coastguard Station would remedy that ...and save a great deal of time and labour.'

Ballykinler's remote and unprotected coastal location also left soldiers exposed to spells of unpleasant weather

.....  
'when Slieve Donard is crowded with  
mist, and a cold wind blows across the  
sandhills from the sea' the reading room  
fire would blaze and the coffee bar would  
become busy.  
.....



when Slieve Donard is crowded with mist, and a cold wind blows across the sandhills from the sea' the reading room fire would blaze and the coffee bar would become busy

Ballykinler swiftly earned the title 'World's End' due to its lonely isolation, even though its beautiful beaches were overlooked by the natural grandeur of the Mourne Mountains.

that swept in from the sea or down from the Mourne Mountains, which stood on the far side of Dundrum Bay.<sup>2</sup>

Comfort for the soldiers came in the shape of a 'Miss Sandes Soldiers' Home', which had recently opened. Miss Elise Sandes was a lady of strong Christian convictions, born in County Kerry in 1851 and the instigator of a

mission to British servicemen stationed in Ireland. It was a mission that soon spread far beyond Irish shores, offering home comforts and an evangelical ethos everywhere that it was established. By the early years of the 20th century there were twenty two Sandes Homes at military barracks throughout Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the early work on the Ballykinler facilities may be found in *The Down Recorder*, 18 May 1901.

## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

The Sandes' magazine for the year 1902 exulted in the newly erected building at Ballykinler. The magazine described how - 'when Slieve Donard is crowded with mist, and a cold wind blows across the sandhills from the sea' the reading room fire would blaze and the coffee bar would become busy. The writer described how some men gathered around the piano and sang hymns while one of the ladies who ran the establishment provided the musical accompaniment. Every evening at 8 o'clock, a hymn-singing session was concluded with a ten-minute homily. The writer also delighted in the fact that the coffee-bar was busy on pay-day, as the men's money was not spent on alcohol or other dubious pleasures, though those attractions were undoubtedly available in the holiday resort of Newcastle, further along the coast.

The opening ceremony did not take place until 10th September 1902, when the Duke of Connaught inspected the timber bungalow with its smart verandah that was perhaps more suited for tropical parts of Britain's worldwide empire. The Duke noted with approval the facilities for men to write their letters home. He saw the suite of upstairs bedrooms for the Sandes ladies, who worked tirelessly with the soldiers. He admired the flowers and hanging plants which had been put on display for his arrival. Before

leaving, he presented medals to eighteen men of the Royal Scots Regiment, for bravery shown during the South African War.

The Duke was no ordinary member of the gentry or the military. In 1903, he had been the royal representative at a huge imperial durbar in India, held to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII.

The Sandes' Home continued to exercise an important role for the men who came there every summer to train. Even with the end of the Boer War, the number still present at Ballykinler was considerable. In fact, up to 3,000 soldiers attended summer sessions of instruction at the camp in 1903. Given that there was no newspaper for sale within seven miles of the base, it was important for these troops to have other reading material to hand so as to ease boredom in such a remote location. Amongst the many business leaders who donated literature was the Belfast man Thomas Sinclair, later to gain fame during the Home Rule Crisis which preceded the Great War, when he was the architect of the Ulster Covenant, a public pledge by Ulster Protestants to keep Ireland tied securely to the British Empire.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Information on the early days at the Sandes Home is to be found in compilations of the organisation's *Forward* magazine for the years 1902 (p.125, 155-7) and 1903 (p.74)



When they travelled to Downpatrick and then further afield, their presence could provoke cat-calls and occasional stone-throwing, especially when passing through areas where anti-military sentiment flourished.

#### BALLYKINLER CAMP

### 5

**F**or those who had lost their land due to the camp's creation and subsequent enlargement, there was a court case to fight, although there is no indication that political capital was made out of it by County Down's Nationalist politicians, for whom the memory of 'land-loss' was part of the political psyche. Not until late in 1902 were compensation claims finally settled. Some tenants were compensated for the loss of rabbit-trapping business, which had brought in good earnings for the owners, who sold the

rabbit-meat to local buyers. Some tenants had lost small but valuable potato-fields. One tenant had lost the use of a small water-powered mill, while others had lost the use of a pier, look-out tower and boathouse, by means of which locals had been ferried across the bay to the village of Dundrum. For several local people, fishing facilities had been reduced and the opportunity to gather seaweed for fertiliser had also been diminished. The advent of the camp meant reduction of access to a considerable stretch of the coastline.

- Today, wild flowers mark the site of a farm once owned by the Redmond family, prior to the purchase of their land for the creation of an extended army base and rifle range in 1900.



## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

Of greater political significance for County Down's Nationalists than the loss of local land was the fact that troops stationed at Ballykinler during the Boer War period were going to fight in a conflict that many Irish Catholics perceived as an arrogant imperial adventure. The assumption that Britain could 'lord it' over the 'disloyal' Boers was seen by Nationalists as a mirror of Britain's ongoing belief that it had a right to dominate Ireland. Pro-Boer sentiments were widespread throughout the island and they existed in Down, even though local Catholics had often found much-needed work by joining the British Forces.

In February 1900, 'pro-Boer rowdyism' had broken out in Downpatrick. A black flag was thrust through the window of one 'notorious' house in the county town. The presence of a large number of soldiers at the barracks in The Mall continued to be a cause of anger among the more militant Nationalist youths of Downpatrick all through the Boer War years.

When the relief of South African towns besieged by the Boers was celebrated in Downpatrick, it could generate a furious exchange of letters in the local paper. One writer would argue that these celebrations possessed a Protestant, sectarian flavour, and another writer would lament the way in which different parts of Downpatrick were now traduced as 'disloyal' simply because of their inhabitants' dislike of

these celebrations. On one occasion, a letter-writer lamented the damage that had been done to a 'Protestant school' by a group of 'rowdy' Nationalists. Another correspondent observed dryly that 'although the John Street heroes may shout for the Boer today, it is out of their ranks the army is created.'

When stationed at Ballykinler Camp, with its quiet, marine location, soldiers saw few political disturbances. When they travelled to Downpatrick and then further afield, their presence could provoke cat-calls and occasional stone-throwing, especially when passing through areas where anti-military sentiment flourished.

There can be no doubt that during the camp's years of origin, south-eastern County Down, like many other parts of Ulster, manifested opposed political loyalties. In September 1900, a local Protestant clergyman, Reverend L.A. Pooler, had made a speech in the Downpatrick YMCA which lauded the British Empire as an antidote to 'insularity and parochialism.' He thrilled to the 'pulsation of a world whose heart was Britain.' This proud imperial sentiment was echoed to the rafters when a reception was held for Colonel Wallace's Royal Irish Rifles on their return from South Africa two years later. Union flags were waved and South African veterans, dressed in their khaki uniforms, marched proudly through the Downpatrick streets, past cheering



## Ballykinler Camp

crowds. Members of the Royal Irish Constabulary kept a close eye on the behaviour of potential trouble-makers.

There was little civil disturbance on this imperial occasion but there had been a number of disturbances in 1902 during the '12th July' annual Orange parades in Newcastle. In due course, claims were made by some of the Protestants who had attended the parades that they were stoned by Nationalists on their way back to Ballynahinch.

Speakers on local Nationalist platforms handed out no plaudits to the British Army. During the summer of 1902, the South Down MP, Jeremiah McVeagh, repeated the

commonly heard demand for 'self-government' or 'home rule' in Ireland. He proclaimed that this country would 'continue in disaffection and discontent' until that claim was met. In the town of Castlewellan, a few weeks later, there was a rally by the United Irish League, an organisation that argued strongly for a Dublin parliament and the restitution of 'old wrongs' done by Britain to the Irish people, including the 'seizure' of their land.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For information on local views on the Empire and the Boer war, see *The Down Recorder*, 17 November 1900, 19 July 1902, 9 August 1902 and 30 August 1902.



## 6

During the following decade, Ballykinler continued to be a training camp. Among the troops being stationed there was the new local cavalry unit known as the North Irish Horse. Parties of young students from the Officer Training Corps at Queens' University Belfast also visited.

By now, a massive naval arms race with the German Empire caused grave concern in British governmental circles but it was the growing political tension in Ulster that pressed most keenly on the minds of many politicians. By 1912, the Liberal Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, had placed a 'Home Rule' bill before Westminster, which was certain to become law by 1914. Irish Nationalists rejoiced at the prospect of the return of a Dublin parliament which had been closed down in the aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion. But for Unionists, who were now in a narrow majority within the northern province of Ulster, a Dublin legislature would be the realisation of their worst nightmares.

They believed they had a three hundred year old right to full British citizenship in their part of Ireland and that the 'mother country' had long since established its right to own and administer the island of Ireland. Should the link with Britain be modified by Home Rule, they believed that Ulster

would be placed under the sway of a devolved government in which militant Catholicism would soon hold sway. Some Unionists felt that Nationalists would begin to undertake a slow process of revenge against them, motivated by age-old grievances.

By 1914, Unionists and Nationalists alike had hastened to form their own improvised paramilitary armies and these men were being armed with thousands of guns procured in the European arms-market. Ulster was on the verge of a civil war that could replicate the bloodshed and mayhem that had too often characterised the relationship between Ireland and Britain.

However, in the summer of 1914, the economic and territorial rivalry between Europe's great empires exploded into a global conflict. As Britain faced the prospect of

.....  
Recruits from the Ulster Volunteer Force were invited to enlist in this unit, where they would become part of Lord Kitchener's 'New Army' of volunteer citizens  
.....

## Ballykinler Camp

Captain James Craig, the Unionist MP for East Down and Boer War veteran paid several visits to Ballykinler camp during the Great War. The Craig family owned a mansion and demesne adjacent to the base.

Photo: Nigel Henderson



joining its French ally in a war to the death against a powerful German foe, the War Office recognised the need to recruit a new civilian army of infantrymen if the German Empire was to be defeated. As part of that recruitment strategy, a decision was made to draw on the long history of Irish service in the British army, a tradition that had thrived despite Irish Nationalist resentment of British rule in Ireland.

One likely source of recruits was the Ulster Volunteer Force. This was the uniformed body of almost 100,000 Unionists, formed in 1913 to oppose Irish Home Rule. Under the eye of Unionist leaders such as Sir Edward Carson, it had already undergone considerable military training, led by ex-British Army officers who feared that Home Rule would begin the process of dismantling the Empire which they had so faithfully served. Among the Boer War veterans who had become heavily involved in the Ulster Volunteer Force - even though they risked the charge of illegality and sedition - were Colonel Robert Wallace of the South Down Militia and his colleague, Captain James Craig MP, whose family possessed a home adjacent to the Ballykinler camp.

In September 1914, recruitment got under way for a new British Army unit, the 36th (Ulster) Division. Recruits from the Ulster Volunteer Force were invited to enlist in this unit, where they would become part of Lord Kitchener's 'New Army' of volunteer citizens, tens of thousands of whom were already beginning to train at army camps all around the British Isles before departure for the European battlefield.

The 36th Division was structured in a way that reflected the territorial organisation of the Ulster Volunteer Force. So one of its three brigades was mostly composed of men who had been in the Belfast regiments of the Ulster Volunteers. Numbered as the 107th Infantry Brigade within the British Army, it contained four battalions, each with a strength of up to 1,000 men. Belfast fell within the recruiting area belonging to the Royal Irish Rifles. The four groups were numbered as the 8th, 9th, 10th and 15th battalions. The decision was made to send these Belfast men to Ballykinler. Once again the camp on the edge of Dundrum Bay would bustle with life, just as it had done over a decade ago, in the time of the Boer War.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>For information on the local impact of the first few weeks of the Great War and the subsequent role of Ballykinler, see Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme* (Belfast, 2008) p 42-83.

# 7

On the morning of 7th September, the first volunteers to sign up for the 107th Brigade of ‘Carson’s Army’ had made their way to recruiting stations and thence to the Belfast and County Down railway terminus in East Belfast. They had been cheered as they made their way through the city streets. Ligoniel Brass and Reed Band had played ‘Lead Kindly Light’ and ‘God be with you till we meet again’ amidst emotional scenes on the railway platform.

*The Belfast News Letter* had waxed lyrical about the beauties of Ballykinler, explaining how –

‘the camp is situated in the centre of picturesque countryside, with the Mountains of Mourne forming an imposing background...(while) on the edge of the camping ground and within easy reach of the tents is an arm of Dundrum Bay and here the men will have swimming and bathing drills. Within sight of the camp is the beautifully situated demesne of Tyrella.’<sup>6</sup>

However for many new working-class recruits who arrived at Ballykinler, this was a first challenging experience of the rigours of army life and also of life outside the big city. One early problem which faced the officers was the tendency of some new soldiers to absent themselves on weekend leave. Severe punishments had to be imposed,

in order to make it clear that Ballykinler was not in fact a holiday camp, despite the newspapers’ glowing depiction of its salubrious qualities.

4,000 new soldiers needed proper accommodation. This was going to be a winter stay, rather than the summer visit that tended to feature in most musketry training during recent years. Some men were housed for a while under canvas in the grounds of Donard Lodge, in Newcastle and tents were also erected for short-term use at Ballykinler, at least until the worst of the winter storms set in. Meanwhile building work swiftly began on a series of corrugated iron huts, similar in style to the ones erected in military camps all over the British Isles.

They were sturdy, they were dry and they were heated by smoky coal or log stoves. Most of these huts were destined to endure for a century or more and to serve many different functions.

There were two recognisable parts to the camp now at Ballykinler - the ‘World’s End Camp’ which was situated nearer to Tyrella and the ‘Central Camp,’ with its stunning

.....  
‘You must lose your  
gentle selves...steel your  
hearts and minds and be  
callous of life and death...  
[for] that is war...’  
.....

<sup>6</sup>Information on the Ballykinler halt is located in *The Belfast Newsletter*, 25 February 1915.

## Ballykinler Camp

view over the bay to Dundrum's medieval castle and on towards Ulster's highest mountains, glimpsed in the far distance – at least when the weather was fair. It was the name 'World's End' which 'stuck' for the men of the 36th Division. This was a name which seemed to epitomise their isolation from the bustle and bright lights of the city. The wind-swept coast of Ballykinler was the edge of the known world.

The training which the men received was considered tough by those who endured it. There were route marches along the roads of the Lecale Peninsula and there were grisly bouts of bayonet practice, using sacks filled with straw to represent the enemy soldier's torso. Meticulous care had to be taken of the precious new uniform, once it had arrived. There were endless sessions of drill, with the aim of creating the kind of co-ordination and physical discipline that the army had always prized. The senior officers who were assigned to the brigade were often men with overseas experience and a hardened temperament, especially keen to toughen up the idealistic young men who were junior officers in the four battalions.

Frank Percy Crozier was one such man. The commanding officer of the 9th Battalion, which recruited soldiers from the working-class citadel of the Shankill Road, was known as a ruthless egotist who believed in what he called 'intellectual

discipline' as well as the very necessary physical prowess of a soldier. For five nights every week, he lectured the fresh-faced officers in his battalion, who were mostly the product of Officer Training Corps at Queens University or Trinity College Dublin, on the urgent need for 'hardening'.

He told them –

'You must lose your gentle selves...steel your hearts and minds and be callous of life and death ... [for] that is war...'

The New Year saw a further 'toughening' of the training and the diffusion of anti-German sentiments, fuelled by stories of atrocities which had been committed by the German army in France and Belgium. In his memoirs, Crozier would reflect on the role of bands, fifes, pipes and



The volunteer troops of the Ulster Division troops practised their new-found bayonet skills at Ballykinler, sometimes with very little success.

Somme Heritage Centre collection

The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

drums, all of which played martial music designed to stir the men and generate pride. By now, a regimental band preceded each battalion on its route marches, playing an Irish traditional tune that distinguished that unit from any other.

The Sandes Home was a great source of comfort for many men, as they would later indicate in their reminiscences -

‘There was one haven for us in the dark and cold nights, the Miss Sandes Soldiers’ Home...it stood outside the camp as you walked down the road that led to Dundrum Bay... [and] the women who worked there would play endless games of chess and checkers with you...’

To the women who worked at Sandes, the arrival of so many novice soldiers at Ballykinler was an inspiring challenge. Although some men in the 36th Division were ‘rough diamonds’, there were hundreds of others who were deeply steeped in the evangelical Christianity of Ulster’s Protestant heartlands, and who made the 36th seem like a truly Christian army. As one of the women exclaimed -

‘I verily believe they would all die in defence of the Bible.’

It was with very mixed feelings that the women watched these devout and determined young men prepare for departure in the spring of 1915, travelling towards a battle-front where they would face extreme danger.

At a watchnight service on the last day of 1914, a young officer stood up and addressed a crowded room in the

Sandes Home. He said -

‘men, before this time next year, we may all be killed but to a Christian, death is beginning to live...’

However some soldiers had their eyes fixed on comforts to be found beyond the gates of Ballykinler, as they explained in postcards sent home to Belfast -

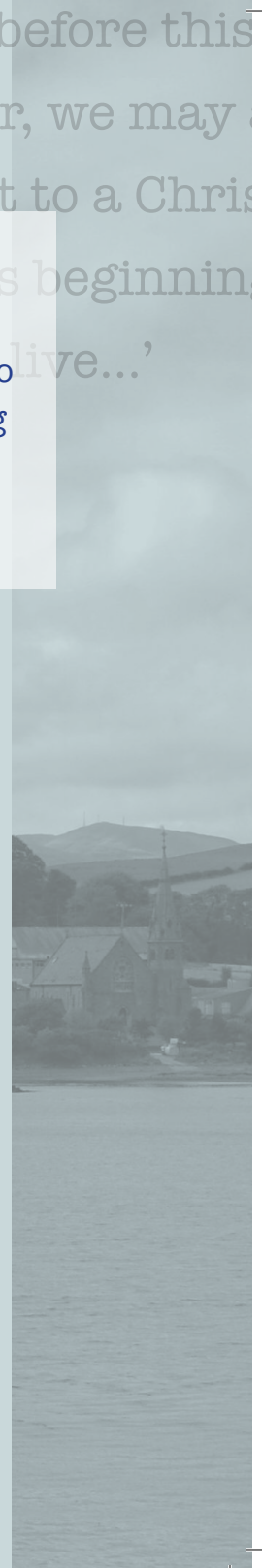
‘Third time in Newcastle since coming to camp. Got a great tea in Aunt Maggie’s café...wouldn’t take any money. First good food since Christmas. Weather cold. Frost at night. Snow on the mountains. Yours, Harry.’

By February 1915 there was new halt on the railway line, much nearer to the camp than the distinctive, redbrick Tullymurry station. This meant that the men had less distance to walk in order to catch a train which could take them to the busy seaside resort of Newcastle. Soon, a special Sunday service from Belfast had been organised, which took family and friends of the Ballykinler soldiers to this remote halt, where they could meet their relatives for a few short hours of conversation and the loving donation of gifts.

One young man who was beginning to enjoy his stay at Ballykinler was Tommy Ervine, soldiering with the 8th

.....  
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.....

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Rifles' battalion, who were drawn from the streets of East Belfast and known as 'Ballymacarrett's Own' in reference to a district of the city that supplied men to Belfast's huge shipyards.

'I mind Ballykinler' said Tommy, when interviewed in later life - 'It was all sandhills full of rabbits. We built trenches and we actually thought the Germans would come up from Dundrum! There was a big dog belonged to one of the officers and one night he came into our tent and we thought

it was the enemy! I remember that tent with candles. Eight to a tent and our heads leant out the canvas. Boys-oh, you might get a kick! The uniforms too didn't arrive too soon - I lent my uniform to a friend who had got none as he wanted it to

go home in for the weekend. ...then we made drains to get the rainwater away, then we built huts. My friend Billy Mills and I had a great way of harmonisin' together as we worked up on the roof of the huts... we put together a song called 'The Gentleman's son and the Outcast.' We made a stage at Ballykinler and there were some concerts there. We saw the cinema too at Ballykinler and they also came and took a film of us working there and then I saw myself in the film

when they showed it in our makeshift cinema, a bit later...'

Tommy also remembered the men's excursions into Newcastle when misbehaviour and fighting were the norm, rather than the Christian behaviour noted with approval by the ladies at the Sandes Home. Although Tommy was one of the smallest men in the battalion, he had been a boxer in the pre-war days and so he was chosen to be a military policeman at the camp. He had some rough customers to deal with -

'there was this tough guy called Chuck Patton, and there was no prison at Ballykinler so we fastened him to a pole in the marquee. Some NCOs showed him to some visiting friends one Sunday but he reared up and nearly pulled the tent down. He escaped once and - in handcuffs and all - he managed to get a horse and cart and steer as far as Clough before they caught him!'

Tommy made several visits back to Belfast from Ballykinler camp. He was now part of the battalion band and so he was asked to parade through East Belfast on recruiting marches in the spring of 1915. He also performed a more sobering task as a bandsman on one particular occasion -

'We gave a fellow drowned in Ballykinler Bay a military funeral. Fell down steps into the water ...his mate was too drunk to save him ...I played the Dead March from Saul and I saw all the women crying...'

.....  
"there was this tough guy called Chuck Patton, and there was no prison at Ballykinler so we fastened him to a pole in the marquee."  
.....



## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

John Stewart –Moore was a young gentleman from a landed family in North Antrim. He gave up his plans for a career in the church in order to serve as a junior officer with the Ulster Division at Ballykinler.

Somme Heritage Centre collection



Also at Ballykinler in the spring of 1915 was a man with a different social background from that of Tommy Ervine. John Stewart-Moore was an officer with the 15th Royal Irish Rifles battalion, whose rank-and-file soldiers were from North Belfast but whose officers came from much further afield. Stewart-Moore was from near Dervock in northern County Antrim. He had been about to train as a clergyman when the war broke out but now he was a young, inexperienced officer, in charge of a squad of men from

the back-streets of the city. He had a room to himself in one of the 'tin huts' and so he bought himself a deck-chair for greater comfort and also installed his gramophone, a modern machine which rejoiced in the brand-name 'His Master's Voice' and possessed a large horn, through which Stewart-Moore could hear the sweet strains of the classical music which he so enjoyed.

For their evening meal together, the officers in the 15th battalion sometimes wore stiff white collars instead of khaki and endeavoured to create a 'pleasant and cultivated' atmosphere, despite the spartan surroundings. Officers were able to enjoy legitimate, regular 'outings'. Stewart-Moore, during his stay at Ballykinler, managed to attend the theatre in Belfast and on one occasion spent a weekend in Dublin, when he attended a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta at the Gaiety Theatre.

On another occasion, Stewart-Moore visited Jordan's Castle in Ardglass, not many miles away from Ballykinler, during an overnight route march which his men were undertaking around the Lecale peninsula. The famous antiquarian and Nationalist Francis Joseph Bigger often resided in the castle. On this occasion he showed Stewart-Moore his collection of artifacts, then called at the harbour to pick up 'some scrumptious fresh herrings' for breakfast on the following morning. Among the other exercises

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which the men from North Belfast had to carry out was a march across Dundrum Bay on a ford visible at low tide to the grounds of Murlough House where the men performed nocturnal manouvres which would prepare them for night-time warfare on the Western Front in war-torn France.

It was at the mouth of Dundrum Bay that some men said they had seen a periscope, indicative of a German submarine. Some 'enthusiasts' now spent their free time on top of the Ballykinler sandhills, trying to obtain their first sight of the dreaded enemy.

One of Stewart-Moore's duties was to take turns as 'orderly officer' and this meant inspecting the quality of the men's facilities, receiving complaints and also doing a round of the sentries in the evening to see if they were alert and knew their duties. The orderly officer wore a sword as a badge of office. Stewart-Moore also noted with keen interest the regular bayonet-practice at Ballykinler –

'a row of dummy figures made of sacking stuffed with straw was hung up from a sort of gallows and instruction was given by NCOs... as an alternative I had some target practice with an automatic pistol in the sandhills which bordered the sea...'

Occasionally the officers' mess would have important visitors and one such distinguished guest was Captain Wilfred Spender, a former Quarter Master General of

the UVE, who proceeded to talk loudly but lucidly about philosophy, in particular about the writings of the great German thinker, Immanuel Kant. However such high-flown musings would soon become less frequent. The War Office had plans to ship the entire Ulster Division across the Irish Sea to Sussex for the final part of their training, before they were sent to the front-line in France. This would include the use of rifle-ranges in southern England to improve the men's 'musketry' rather than the smaller Ballykinler facilities.

As a key part of the 'farewell' process, the division was ordered to parade in full military splendour through the streets of central Belfast on the 8th of May, 1915. So Stewart-Moore and his men set out from the camp by road and reached Ballynahinch by late afternoon, having halted on the way for sandwiches and water from their water-bottles. At Ballynahinch, Stewart-Moore slept on his camp-bed in a room above a shop. On the next morning, the men made an early start and reached Belfast before midday. On 8th March, the great parade took place amidst cheering crowds of relatives and friends. A few weeks later the Ulster Division left for England. Shortly after that, they crossed the English Channel and their war began in earnest.

In July 1916, on the banks of the River Ancre, on the opening day of the Somme campaign, Ballykinler-trained



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men in the Belfast brigade of the 36th Division perished under a withering hail of German machine-gun fire or were stranded under shell-fire in No Mans' Land. They were caught in a bloody, confused battle-zone that was utterly different from the empty, windswept coast of Lecale. Fortunately, both Tommy Ervine and John Leslie Stewart-Moore would survive the battle. However, Tommy received an injury that meant he would never fight in the trenches again, whilst Stewart-Moore would receive a wound in a later Great War campaign, which necessitated the amputation of an arm.

The line of the 'dummy-trenches' which Tommy and his friends were sent to dig was once quite visible in the scrubland behind the sand-dunes. Now the scrubland of

the Irish coastline has overgrown such tracks. For the most part it is up to the imagination of the visitor to Ballykinler, Tyrella and Dundrum Bay to recreate the winter of 1914/1915, when so many volunteer soldiers gathered there to train, within constant earshot of the Irish Sea. It is as well that the volunteers at 'World's End' camp were unaware of the terrible fate that awaited them at the infamous Battle of the Somme.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>For information on the 36th Division's stay at Ballykinler, see the article in the 2005 edition of the *Down Survey*, Philip Orr, 'Volunteers at the World's End – the Ulster Division at Ballykinler Army Camp 1914-15'.



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### 8

**F**ar from returning to its quieter pre-war rhythms on the departure of the 'Belfast Volunteers', Ballykinler became an important training ground for reserve battalions of the British Army. Young men who enlisted in Irish regiments would spend their first few months at the camp before active service abroad. However, once the full horror of life and death at the front-line became apparent, recruitment in Ireland began to slacken.

As the war went on, Ballykinler then began to fill with men who had already experienced battle and been sent home to recover from injuries or illness. Recuperating soldiers were needed urgently at the front-line, so troops from a variety of regiments were housed at Ballykinler by 1917, having been released from hospital and prior to rejoining reserve battalions where they would be re-trained for the battlefields. In November of that year, nearly 4,000 men were being looked after at the camp.


During November, in a letter to the *Belfast News Letter*, an army chaplain at Ballykinler and an 'entertainments officer' responsible for boosting the morale of his men, noted the difficulties faced by these convalescing soldiers. Some men had 'two, three and four gold stripes' on the sleeve of their uniform, which indicated that they had been wounded on

several occasions. Some men were veterans of Gallipoli and others had served as far away as Mesopotamia. The letter-writers described in detail the plight of these men who were 'cooped up' in this coastal location and could not make a visit to Newcastle or Downpatrick, much less travel by train to Belfast for a day's outing in the 'big city'. The two writers noted that 'all the villages and neighbouring towns' were 'out of bounds' and that the soldiers were 'confined to camp' as the winter weather closed in.

The close confinement of these soldiers is indicative of the changed environment in Ireland after the Easter Rising of 1916. A small group of Nationalists had taken up arms on the streets of central Dublin in an attempt to inaugurate an independent Republic. By 1917, support for the cause of these 'rebels' was growing fast and in nearby towns such as Castlewellan, Sinn Fein - the political party that stood on an separatist platform - was gaining ground. The green, white and orange flag of the Easter Rising started to appear in some Nationalist strongholds in south-eastern County Down and although Unionism and the more moderate forms of Nationalism were still predominant in the county, British troops needed to be on guard at all times.

The letter-writers issued a request for financial help to





The World's End Camp they called it  
But described it to a T.  
Had it been a few yards further  
T'would have been right in the sea.

And the men who first discovered  
This interesting spot  
Should rank as an explorer  
With Shackleton and Scott.

.....  
'The World's End Camp they called it  
But described it to a T.  
Had it been a few yards further  
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And the men who first discovered  
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.....

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the tune of £300, in order to construct a sizeable hall at the camp. This was needed for the church services which were impossible to hold in the open air during winter months. The hall would also be useful for lectures and concerts. Some of the men at the camp were well able to entertain their colleagues with comedy reviews and Pierrot shows, if they had an indoor venue with a suitable stage. The letter stressed the 'loneliness' of the wounded soldiers and the depressing prospect of 'long evenings' in the 'coming winter'.

Such concern was merited. Many men who were installed at Ballykinler probably suffered not just from recent physical damage but from the Great War's notorious emotional legacy. Terrible nightmares, in which veteran infantrymen recalled the scenes of horror that they had known, would have been a common occurrence. The prospect of returning to their old regiment may well have gladdened the hearts of men who wished to see old comrades again. However, others would have dreaded the prospect of finding out that former colleagues had made the ultimate sacrifice during their absence. Other men may simply have dreaded the thought of a life marked once more by daily danger and degradation, or cut short in an instant by a sniper's bullet.<sup>9</sup>

Many would have sympathised with the sentiments

expressed by one amateur poet who did not enjoy his wartime stay at Ballykinler –

'The World's End Camp they called it  
But described it to a T.  
Had it been a few yards further  
T'would have been right in the sea.

And the men who first discovered  
This interesting spot  
Should rank as an explorer  
With Shackleton and Scott.'

Thankfully there was a widespread tradition in Ireland of providing entertainment to convalescing soldiers and so a number of willing artistes made their way to Ballykinler, in order to do their duty at 'World's End'.

But if this corner of County Down was not congenial to men who were awaiting a return to the fiery hell of France and Flanders, the Lecale coastline offered a peaceful resting place for some unfortunate men who perished while serving there. At the nearby Tyrella Church, a number of soldiers who had died at Ballykinler since the camp's formation in 1900, had already received a military funeral. Among the Great War volunteers who never got a chance to travel to



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France or see the battlefields, and who had been buried at Tyrella or else been taken home for their interment, were at least six young Ballykinler riflemen. It should be remembered that in an era before the advent of antibiotics, grave illness and a swift death were not that uncommon in a group of soldiers who had been in apparent good health until the sudden outbreak of an infectious illness.

In October 1918, just a few weeks before the end of the Great War, Bishop Charles d'Arcy consecrated a new burying ground in this peaceful Church of Ireland

graveyard. The plot is still there today, girded by trees and hedgerows and accessed by a small gate. Its upkeep is the responsibility of every regular battalion which stays at the Ballykinler camp.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For information on the final period of the Great War and the poem quoted here, see *Ballykinler - a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, pp. 34, 37. Information on the details of the dead soldiers of Ballykinler may be found through the Commonwealth War Graves Commission or through consulting the following newspapers - *The Belfast Evening Telegraph*, April 1915, October 1915 and *The Belfast News Letter*, February 1915.



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### 9

When the Great War ended, political conflict in Ireland resumed with added intensity. In an election held during the last few days of 1918, Sinn Fein became the major Nationalist voice in Ireland although the Irish Parliamentary Party continued to draw considerable support in the north of the island. Catholics were in a minority in Ulster as a whole, nonetheless they constituted a majority in certain parts of the province, including much of the rural hinterland of Downpatrick.

During the post-war months, a number of the new 'Republicans' in towns such as Castlewellan and Portaferry began to hold public meetings to voice their refusal to support the British state. This refusal was expressed all the more vigorously when the British government passed a Government of Ireland Act in 1920. This law divided the island into two very different entities, leaving Ulster Catholics inside a northern state whose Unionist ethos they generally deplored.

Throughout the post-war years, a unit of the British Army's regular garrison force in Ireland continued to be based in the camp. During 1919, soldiers were periodically called out to support the police, especially when trying to disperse illegal Sinn Fein gatherings. In the early months of 1919, officers clad in khaki from the Ballykinler camp

had been seen on the golf links at Newcastle. However, a year later such a scene would have been much less likely. An organisation known as the Irish Republican Army was launching a formidable guerilla war against the British presence in Ireland and it employed guns and explosives to assault police barracks in nearby towns and villages such as Crossgar, Clough, Ardglass, Castlewellan and Ballynahinch.

By 1922, violence in Ulster had greatly intensified, in response to the controversial Anglo-Irish Treaty, which had been signed in the closing weeks of the previous year and seemed to copper-fasten partition of the island. Local IRA units continued to operate. In the south of County Down there had already been a number of armed hold-ups in which local mail vans had their contents stolen and searched. Now there were regular incidents in which telegraph poles and trees were chopped down to cause civil disruption and in one case, a senior officer with the Royal Sussex Regiment crashed his car into a fallen tree while driving on the Ballykinler-Downpatrick Road, resulting in the death of his wife.

A mansion belonging to the prestigious de Ros family, who lived near Strangford, was burned down. Shots were fired on several occasions at the 'big houses' in the district,





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including Killyleagh Castle and Finnebrogue House. By 1922, railway bridges in the area were being mined with explosives. Cars and vans were impounded for use by the IRA. A curfew was brought into effect each night from 11pm until 5am and it was enforced with severity by the Ulster Special Constabulary, a locally raised unit created by the British Government to support the hard-pressed police. Most of them served on a part-time basis in their own locality.

By 1922, it was the 'Specials' rather than the British Army which did most patrolling in the area, driving around the country roads in their armed 'Crossley Tender' vehicles, arresting Republicans, searching for arms, guarding key installations and protecting the mansions of the gentry and the homes of the Unionist political leadership.

Large numbers of local IRA members and suspects were arrested and many faced trial. When trees were chopped down or bridges were demolished, the Specials often ordered local people to clear up the 'mess'. In Castletwellan, on the day of the funeral of Sir Henry Wilson, who had been shot by an IRA volunteer in London, the Special Constabulary insisted that every shop should close and every window must have its blinds drawn down. Obviously, this constabulary had no previous experience of policing the divided society of which it was now a

controversial part. Many constables had little experience of guns. So there were local fatalities. One incident involved a constable accidentally shooting a colleague and another tragedy occurred when a young 'special' killed himself while cleaning his own weapon.

By 1922, the *Down Recorder* would report that 'citizens abed hear almost every night the crackle of rifle fire'. The Petty Sessions court in the county town heard sorry lists of cases in which local people sought compensation for stolen motor vehicles, for the wounding of livestock in local ambushes and even for damage done to boats on the River Quoile, which had been rendered unusable because they were riddled with bullets.

By this stage, Ballykinler Camp was situated in a part of Northern Ireland where the majority of the local political representatives had voted to secede from the state. Like several other councils with a strong Nationalist presence, Downpatrick Rural Council had decided by a majority vote in December 1921 to affiliate to the new Free State parliament known as the Dail, which met in Dublin. The council, whose writ ran in Lecale, thereby rejected the Northern Ireland legislature in Belfast, much to the displeasure of several local Unionist councillors.

But what must be acknowledged is that the violence in Belfast and in the southern-most counties of Ireland was



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much worse during these difficult years and that the troops at Ballykinler, the constabulary who supported them and the local civilians, all had a much easier time than those who lived or served in Cork or Kerry.

Nonetheless, soldiers based at Ballykinler may well have been pleased by the news that they were required overseas. A number of men from the garrison regiment were summoned to Belfast in order to make the sea-crossing to England. Before long they would be on their way to the Near East, where an international crisis had developed due to the desire of the newly resurgent Turkish Army to re-occupy the straits known as the Dardanelles, which

had been in British and French hands since the end of the Great War. The men who travelled abroad in the latter part of 1922 were leaving behind a new Northern Ireland state that would settle down to a subdued and uneasy peace. Bitter enmities were in danger of resurfacing in the decades that lay ahead.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> There is an abundance of information on the local unrest from 1918 to 1922 in *The Down Recorder* but the following editions have been used to build the narrative which is presented here – 16, 30 November, 14 December 1918; 5 January, 1, 15 March, 2, 16, 23 August, 13, 20 September, 4, 11 October, 22 November 1919; 21 February, 20 March, 16, 30 October, 4 December 1920; 8 January, 5, 12, 19 February, 19 March, 4 June, 6 August, 17 December 1921; 4, 11, 25 March, 1 April, 27 May, 3, 10, 24 June, 1, 15, 29 July, 23, 30 September 1922.

.....  
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## 10

**B**allykinler's most crucial role in the political events of the period had come in 1920, with the internment of Irish Republicans. This was a measure that had already been practised in the wake of the Easter Rising but now it became a key part of the latest British attempt to quell insurgency. Ballykinler was the perfect location for a new internment camp. It already possessed a supply of huts and it was partly bounded by the sea.

Men of the British Army's Royal Engineers had been dispatched to dismantle the huts from a police training ground at The Curragh in County Kildare. These were brought to Ballykinler and reassembled to supplement the huts that had been erected to house the Ulster Volunteers. Fortifications were introduced all around the camp and a 'cage' was erected, into which internees would be ushered and processed before dispersal to their huts. In due course, the camps would hold those prisoners already held in prison camps such as Kilworth in County Cork, who were transferred northwards. They would also hold an array of newly arrested Republicans. This group would include IRA volunteers and also political activists - men who had become key figures at a regional level in Sinn Fein.<sup>10</sup>

Among the Sinn Fein members who arrived at Ballykinler in 1921 was Louis Walsh. He was a solicitor

based in the seaside town of Ballycastle in County Antrim. He had been arrested in the December of the previous year. This was the second arrest in the Walsh family. His brother was also an internee.

Louis was an able man, who had been at University College Dublin when the writer James Joyce was a student - he had actually beaten Joyce in a student election in 1899. Politically, Louis moved from the Irish Parliamentary Party into Sinn Fein in the months after the Rising and by 1920 he had stood successfully as an election candidate in elections for Antrim County Council, hence his arrest when the British government decided to round up suspected gunmen of the Irish Republican Army and their political fellow-travellers. Louis Walsh was a man of many parts. He was a playwright, poet and short story writer in his spare time.

Louis had been transported to a gaol in Derry, then he and a number of fellow-prisoners were taken from their cells on 5th January 1921 and began a rail journey with an armed escort to the new internment camp. The men were not handcuffed on the journey and Louis had freedom to use the toilets and the 'refreshment room' at a station in East Belfast, while waiting for the train that would take them on the next leg of their journey. Some Republican

<sup>10</sup> For details on the origins of the internment camp, see *Ballykinler - a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, p. 38-45.



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prisoners had had to endure a volley of nuts and bolts when passing through this station on recent occasions. Once again a hostile crowd gathered in this Loyalist neighbourhood, on hearing that Republican internees were in transit. However the bayonets of the Rifle Brigade, who escorted Louis' party, kept assailants at bay.

A group of internees from Kilworth joined the party from Derry at the Belfast station. Then they boarded a train which headed south through the County Down countryside, calling at stations where scowling faces at the

window indicated that they had come to a halt in a Unionist village. Only at one station was there a friendly response. It came from a Catholic priest. When the prisoners were decanted under armed guard onto the platform for a short break, he walked past the men and replied to their greetings with a quiet Gaelic blessing

- 'Dia is Muire duit'

Eventually, after another change of trains in Downpatrick, Louis and his colleagues arrived at the Tullymurry halt. Then they were marched to Ballykinler.



Photo: Nigel Henderson

Hundreds of internees from all over Ireland arrived at Ballykinler in 1920, as the British Government strove to defeat the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein. The remote prison camp soon became a crucible of resurgent Irish identity.

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On arriving, Louis was handcuffed and sent into the 'cage' where his manacles were subsequently removed. He was searched, his money was taken away and a record was made of his personal details. In due course he was given chits with monetary amounts printed on them, to the value of the cash he had possessed on his arrival.

Louis noted the stark nature of the camp where he must now reside for an indefinite period. The thought of confinement depressed him deeply. In his memoirs he would write that it was only his deep Christian faith and the sincere, supportive patriotism of his colleagues that saved him from despair. There were four lines of huts, a cookhouse and another building that seemed to function as a hospital. He discovered that the huts could accommodate 25 men at a time and that they were very sparsely furnished. In each building there was a stove, some shelving, a table and a few chairs. There were several buckets which acted as makeshift latrines. Louis' 'home' was Hut 19. It was becoming clear to him that the camp was in two sections. In his section, approximately 1,000 men were incarcerated, including internees from all over Ireland. Some men had been in British gaols for several months and some had even been on hunger-strike.

At the heart of his part of the prison was the makeshift chapel. Father McLister was the chaplain. He officiated at

Mass every morning and many of the men attended on a daily basis. Every evening, the Rosary was recited. Huts at Ballykinler were consecrated by Father McLister to the Sacred Heart – in a camp that just a few years previously was packed with volunteer soldiers of the 36th Ulster Division. For some of these militant Protestants, such Catholic rituals would have been regarded as the reviled tokens of an alien religion. In 1921, Republican prisoners noted graffiti on the walls of their huts that had been there since the days of the 36th Division. According to Louis, the internees found the sentiments expressed on the walls to be 'disgusting'.

Louis had not been long at Ballykinler when violence unfolded. The wire fence that divided the older and newer parts of the compound – Camp No 1 and Camp No 2 - was meant to effect a complete separation between the prisoners in the two sections, for purposes of control. No-one was meant to converse with men on the other side of that fence and severe warnings were issued by the authorities about the dire consequences of approaching within three feet of the wire.

Just a few days after Louis' arrival, two internees called Patrick Sloan and Joseph Tormey, were shot by a camp guard, allegedly for breaking the rules about staying well away from the wire. Louis became aware of the fatal nature of the shootings when news spread like wildfire across the



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camp and men dropped to their knees to pray. Soon, small groups of internees gathered in solemn huddles to say the Rosary. Meanwhile the bodies of their two colleagues were brought to a building that acted as the camp mortuary. One prisoner had already dipped his handkerchief in the blood of the dead men and would keep that piece of blood-stained cloth as a sacred memento of Ballykinler and a visible proof for future generations of the price some men were ready to pay for an independent Ireland.

Later, the remains of Patrick Sloan and Joseph Tormey were returned to their families for burial. Any attempt by the British Army to hide the highly controversial circumstances of the killing were to prove in vain. News filtered from the prison into the outside world despite rigid censorship of letters. Reports that two internees had been executed, merely for talking to other prisoners, soon circulated. There was an outpouring of condemnation in Nationalist newspapers.

In the camp, there was a strong reaction by the prisoners to the fact that a key witness called Dr. Higgins, who had been summoned at once to the site of shootings, was removed from No. 1 camp, while another doctor from the No.2 camp was ushered in to replace him. There was also deep hostility at this time regarding one other issue. A man in No. 12 hut was about to be transported to a court in

Dublin on capital charges. The IRA 'commandant' simply refused to 'hand over' the man in question. The response of the authorities to this refusal was to arrest the commandant and to indicate that all the men in No.12 would have to be sent to Dublin. As a response, the prisoners in No.12 scattered and 'went on the run' by hiding in the other huts, thereby creating deep frustration for the camp authorities.

With the entire camp now refusing to answer names at roll-call or identify themselves, the situation was deteriorating. A proclamation by the prison authorities was read out, establishing that all 'privileges' were to be withdrawn unless the prisoners accepted that their commandant must be stood down as a punishment. This was something that the men refused to accept.

Night raids on the huts soon began. In later life, Louis would recall the threatening presence of the soldiers, who stood there brandishing bayonets. He would remember how some soldiers started to do damage to the interior of the huts.

A crisis was reached when a new group of soldiers was seen being admitted to the camp, many of them singing and shouting. They were clearly worse for the wear with alcohol. If they were admitted to the cage, fully armed and intoxicated, the prisoners would be in mortal danger.

.....  
As for the killing  
of Sloan and Tormey,  
their disobedience  
with regard to the  
wire fence should have  
merited a mere 14 days'  
confinement in a cell,  
not a swift execution.  
.....

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A conference was swiftly held with the camp authorities. A compromise was reached in which the commandant in camp No.1 was removed to camp No.2 but allowed to retain a leadership role in the new environment. In due course, the prisoner who faced capital charges was identified and sent to Dublin.

It is not unlikely that the volatile and aggressive troops described by Louis were members of the notorious 'Black and Tans' who had been sent to Ireland to reinforce the police and regular army and whose indisciplined behaviour would soon become legendary.

As for the killing of Sloan and Tormey, their disobedience with regard to the wire fence should have merited a mere 14 days confinement in a cell, not a swift execution. This was according to prison rules that the authorities themselves had established. An attempt was made by the widow of one of the two dead men to press for a legal enquiry. However, the move was 'quashed' and Sir Hamar Greenwood, the commanding officer of the British Army in Ireland, issued a statement that there was 'no blame attached to the soldier who fired in execution of his duty' as it appeared to the sentries that an escape was in the advanced stage of being planned. The deaths therefore constituted a case of 'justifiable homicide'.

Despite the outrage generated by the killing of Sloan

and Tormey and the stand-off over the internee who was wanted in Dublin, British officers who were tasked with guarding the internees at Ballykinler were often regarded with satirical amusement by their captives, rather than bitter anger. Louis actually admired one of the senior British officers, Colonel Ennis, whom he would later describe as a 'fine old type of soldier'. Then there was Colonel Hely-Hutchinson, who was known to the prisoners as 'Play the Game' because of his constant proclamations - in a posh voice - that if the inmates of Ballykinler would just 'play the game', then he would comply with a fair implementation of the camp rules. He would often say -

'I understand that you are soldiers and I intend to deal with you as such...'

There was also a British adjutant whose nickname was 'Got me?' due to his frequent use of the phrase during a lecture to the prisoners.

For Louis, the junior British officers at Ballykinler were the ones who possessed a 'bad' attitude. He regarded these young men as 'cads'. Possibly one of them had been ultimately responsible for the recent killings. However, Louis felt that relations between the internees and many of the older 'enemy officers' were remarkably good, given the grim circumstances.

However, there was always a sense of being under tight







Amongst the most hated aspects of life at the Ballykinler internment camp was the food, as even food parcels from home, supervised by the Red Cross, often contained food that had 'gone off'.

Ballykinler autograph book.  
Down County Museum  
collection

surveillance at the camp. Everyone knew there was a spyhole in the quartermaster's store, through which the authorities were watching the behaviour and listening to the conversation of the men, when they entered the building. There was also a sense amongst the prisoners that any successful escape beyond the barbed wire would lead to man-hunt of the surrounding countryside, triggered by deafening blasts on the 'big horn' at the sentry box.

Few successful escapes from Ballykinler were recorded - one incident which was noted in *The Down Recorder* involved the disappearance of two men who were captured a few days later in Dundalk. However quite a number of tunnels were built, often with their sides shored up by bed-boards. One tunneling success involved the creation of an underground link between an IRA prison-hut and a building which was used by the military for the censorship

of mail and the manufacture of the chits that the camp authorities had given to the men as 'money'.

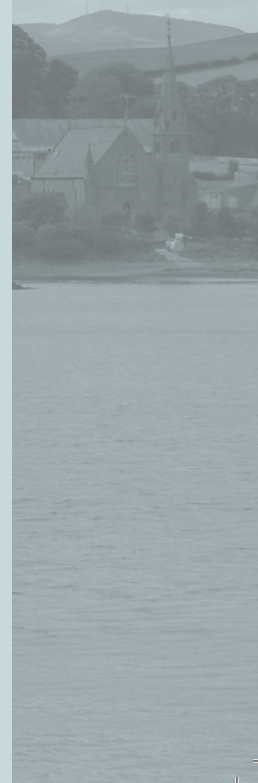
Louis felt amused pity at the plight of some men who had ended up at Ballykinler due to a misguided arrest. One man, who was a member of the Plymouth Brethren sect, had ended up in custody, the injustice of which he regularly proclaimed to his captors and his fellow-inmates, calling out -

'I only serve one master and the only army to which I belong is the Army of God.'

This passionate statement was followed on one occasion by a jovial rejoinder from a Republican prisoner -

'Well, you're a devilish long way off your barracks...'

A man called John Graham, who had been mistaken for a well-known activist called James Graham, ended up in the Ballykinler camp, despite the fact that he was



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neither a 'Shinner' nor a gunman. His incarceration was all the more galling given that John Graham was a Great War veteran who had been in the army from the very first weeks of the war. He was the proud possessor of a much-revered army medal known as the Mons Star. However, he had been arrested in Belfast while wearing the uniform of a tramway worker by a drunk, aggressive and confused British officer. Thus he had begun his unmerited spell in prison within Holywood Barracks. He completed it in the camp at Ballykinler.

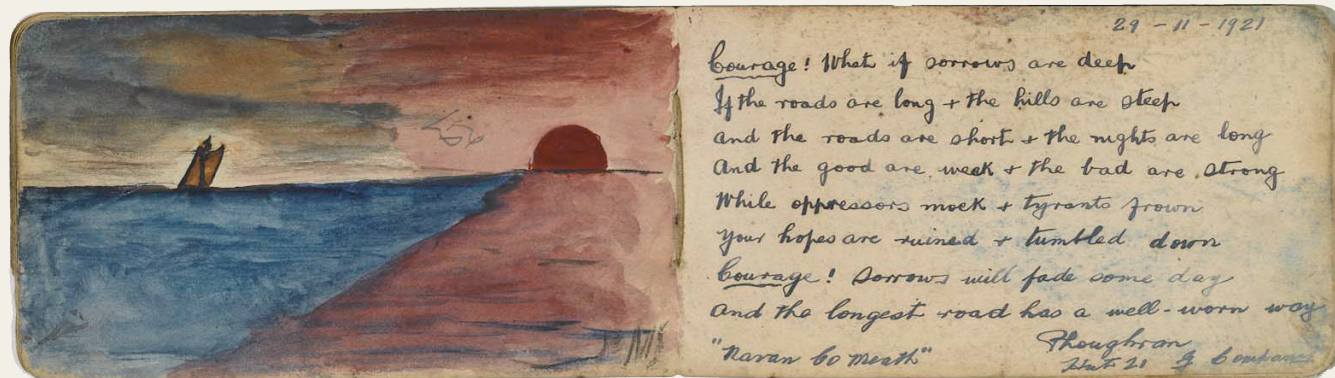
He used to rail against his fate, saying –

'Think of me lying here and the other bloody ruffian drinking pints outside!'

Of course, what should be remembered is that the British soldiers tasked with arresting and looking after

Republican internees may well have been victims of the physical and mental strain of the Great War. They may well have had friends who died in that conflict. This military and psychological legacy would have made them a far from suitable group of combatants in any Irish conflict. They were not equipped to understand the motivation and morality of Irish Republicans, for whom a much older and more enduring conflict was the one which truly mattered.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Information presented here about the Ballykinler internment camp has been drawn from several different sections of Louis Walsh's autobiographical book about incarceration. See *Louis J. Walsh, In My Keeping And In Theirs – a record of experiences on the run, in Derry Gaol and in Ballykinler Internment Camp* (New York, 1922) See too, Peadar Kearney, *My Dear Eva – letters from Ballykinler Internment Camp* (Dublin, 1976)



Ballykinler autograph book. Down County Museum collection

## 11

Before long, Louis was struggling with life as an internee. The challenges often came not so much from the British officers, although they did insist on an eleven o'clock inspection of the huts, when the internees were obliged to stand by their beds each morning. Louis felt that the severest discipline was implemented by the Republicans themselves. The prisoners had established their own camp government, their own camp police force, their own 'Ballykinler courts', their post offices and their currency. They had been given the chance, as Louis wryly phrased it, to establish 'Home Rule within the Empire!'

Many men took Irish classes taught by the more experienced Irish speakers, though Louis observed that tuition in the native language was 'not as well attended as one would have desired.' Meanwhile, the long wait continued, in which some prisoners held out a naïve hope that the Ulster hills nearby were 'full of Shinnors' who would come down in droves some night to Ballykinler and 'clear the camp.'

Louis sensed differences of temperament and ideology amongst the prisoners during this 'long wait'. He felt that there was 'more fun in the wee finger of our fellow-prisoner, Danny McDevitt, of the Falls Road, Belfast, than in four score of Munster men.' He noted how the men who

came from a farming background got on well together and formed a farmer's union, which held meetings to discuss such specialised matters as onion-growing.

Then there was Dick Davis who was in charge of the camp church and the camp bath-house. Dick loved 'cold baths, co-operation [and] the south Dublin Union' as well as vigorous political debates. Louis would later recall the sight of Dick holding forth in argument, while clutching the chapel bell in his hand, locked in a contest with Danny McDevitt, who was an 'able and aggressive Belfast Socialist.' Then there were those respected individuals who had taken part in the Easter Rising, such as 'Dr. Hayes'. He had become a Sinn Fein representative to the first Irish Dail that Republicans set up in 1918. Since his arrest he had been one of the doctors in charge of the Ballykinler hospital.

The civilian prisoners, amongst whom Louis was one, deeply disliked the military discipline that prevailed. Amongst these men, the Republican commanding officer who 'ruled the roost' from his HQ in Hut 11, was often referred to as 'The Prussian'. Ten huts, containing twenty five men, constituted a 'company' of two hundred and fifty, who were commanded by a 'line captain'. The line captains were answerable to the commandant.



## Ballykinler Camp

Amongst the various activities in which internees engaged, to enhance their sense of personal and cultural morale were camp newspapers, Irish classes, concerts and drama productions.

Because military drill was forbidden by the British authorities, military discipline was achieved in other ways such as the rigorous implementation of duties or 'fatigues' involving mundane jobs like picking up litter and binning it.



Down County Museum collection

Louis often reflected on the fact that 'a lot of us in custody were not worth the expense involved in our capture and maintenance and guarding'. By that he meant that a large number of prisoners who had been interned for their political activism did not pose any military threat to the British state, by reason of age, infirmity or temperament. They were never going to become gunmen. Indeed, if anything, Ballykinler was a political school for a number of prisoners who had never been heavily involved in Sinn Fein or the IRA. They were immersed in a deeply Republican atmosphere. They took part in conversations about politics and heard the stories

of IRA 'active service', which were regaled after 'lights out'.

Some men went through swift political evolution that would have taken much longer outside the camp. However, the lectures in socialism, delivered by a prisoner called Cooney, proved far from popular with the men who came from a conservative, rural background. Louis often contemplated how all of this education was being offered at 'the expense of the British treasury'.

There were also cultural classes that intensified the men's Gaelic identity, including sessions where men learnt to sing in Irish and sessions where men learned how to play traditional tunes on the fiddle. Other practical skills were taught in the camp. Henry Dixon, a Dublin man, not only taught Irish but also short-hand and book-keeping. There was a piano in one of the huts and some men learned to play. There were classes offering all kinds of linguistic achievement, including conversational French and the basics of the ancient classical languages, Latin and Greek. Gaelic sports offered a popular, patriotic form of recreation. Indoors, chess and draughts were played. For some men, the camp library in Hut 18 was a popular location.

Mental worry rather than any physical privation was the true torment of Ballykinler. The Down Recorder noted that one internee had been admitted into hospital care in Downpatrick, because he was manifesting suicidal

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tendencies. Louis, meanwhile, ‘tramped’ his ‘weary rounds of the compound’ in order to get some exercise or else busied himself with scrubbing clothes on washing day, while dwelling anxiously on the welfare of his family or mulling over the prospects for his solicitor’s business. He received a letter in which he learned that his young son had awakened one morning and had called out –

‘Oh auntie, I dreamt my father was home...’

For Louis this was a prelude to further melancholy meditation –

‘What an arithmetician he would be who could tot up the sum of all the sufferings that the people of Ireland have had to endure at the hands of the British government...’

On the other hand, there were moments when he felt elated to be at Ballykinler. He experienced this on special occasions such as the anniversary of the execution of the Irish patriot, Robert Emmet and also on St. Patrick’s Day. On the night of 17th March, there was a party to celebrate the legacy of Ireland’s patron saint, after the men had marched around the compound and saluted the Irish flag. Once the news started to circulate that release of some of the ‘political’ prisoners lay ahead, he even felt sad that he might soon be leading the mundane life of a ‘country attorney’ and start to ‘slip quietly down the years into the shadows.’

One of the thrills for Louis Walsh was the experience of Easter, not just because of his faith or the prisoners’ stirring commemorations of the Easter Rising. The dramatists in the camp decided to stage two plays for Easter and one of them was his own humorous drama called *The Pope in Killybuck*, written in the pre-war years and first performed in Ballycastle. Remarkably, this wasn’t the first time in its short life that the play had been performed at Ballykinler. Louis knew that *The Pope in Killybuck* had had a staging when men of ‘Carson’s Army’ performed it as an entertainment for their fellow soldiers, during their sojourn at ‘World’s End’ during the early months of 1915.

One of the play’s themes was the way in which, throughout rural Ulster, ‘the best and kindest of neighbours’ are often ‘people of the opposing party.’ Many of the Republican prisoners who watched the play hailed from far-off Munster and found this complicated issue of friendship and enmity between rival Ulstermen a very hard thing to understand.

However, the endurance of common decency, despite Ireland’s deep divisions, was something that Louis had good reason to note once more on his return to Ballycastle where the majority of his Protestant clients had waited

.....  
‘What an arithmetician  
he would be who could  
tot up the sum of all  
the sufferings that the  
people of Ireland have  
had to endure at the  
hands of the British  
government...’  
.....

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Ballykinler autograph book. Down County Museum collection

patiently for his return, rather than removing their business to another solicitor.

On 9th May 1921, all the Sinn Fein electoral candidates who had been interned a few months before were released. As he prepared for departure from Ballykinler, Louis felt a strong sense of political affirmation and personal well-being, despite the several miseries that he had known during his stay –

‘I allowed my eyes to feast themselves on stately Slieve Donard and the fair mountains of Mourne and the wavelets breaking on the shores of Dundrum Bay and from my full heart came the joyous cry – ‘Lord, it is good to be here...’

As he made his way out of the internment camp for the last time, Louis Walsh uttered a prayer of gratitude, giving thanks to ‘Our Lady of Perpetual Succour’ – a term often used to describe Mary, the mother of Christ. He believed

that she had protected and cared for him throughout his entire time as a Republican prisoner.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The further information presented here about the internment camp has also been drawn from different sections of Louis Walsh’s autobiographical book about incarceration. See Louis J. Walsh, *In My Keeping And In Theirs – a record of experiences on the run, in Derry Gaol and in Ballykinler Internment Camp* (New York, 1922)

.....  
 ‘I allowed my eyes to feast themselves on stately Slieve Donard and the fair mountains of Mourne and the wavelets breaking on the shores of Dundrum Bay and from my full heart came the joyous cry – ‘Lord, it is good to be here...’

.....  
 and the fair mountains of Mourne and the wavelets breaking on the shores of Dundrum Bay and from my full heart

## 12

The list of Republican internees included some men who would later rise to political distinction. One such prisoner was Sean Lemass, a future premier of the Irish Republic, who would strive to lead Ireland towards modernisation in the 1960s. Another distinguished 'resident' was Peadar Kearney, who had already penned *The Soldier's Song*, which was sung regularly at Ballykinler and would become the national anthem of the Republic. His letters to his wife Eva reveal a man who was sorely tested by the ordeals of incarceration.

The British authorities ensured that the men at the camp were being treated according to internationally accepted rules of conduct and so the Red Cross was permitted to organise food parcels from prisoners' families. So it was the Red Cross which was responsible for the acquisition of a 'job lot' of fiddles for the famous camp 'orchestra'.

In theory, internees had a reasonable if monotonous diet, including an ounce of butter per day. There was also electric light in the huts at Ballykinler, running from a specially installed plant. The camp hospital was an adequate building, having been there since the days of the 36th Ulster Division, when it had had to cater for 4,000 men. However, none of these 'benefits' compensated for the sense of deep political injustice. In fact, a joint British/Irish inspection party heard

many complaints from internees about long periods of nocturnal confinement, poor sanitary conditions, inferior rations and abusive verbiage from the camp guards.

Many years later, striking testimonials still exist in various museum archives to the stressful but formative months spent 'behind the wire'. Ballykinler Autograph albums have survived and can be seen at Kilmainham Gaol and Down County Museum. They include drawings, paintings and mementoes such as the camp's own Irish currency and the signatures of many of the prisoners, a number of which are written in Irish.

Some men used this opportunity to reflect on their lives and on Ireland's destiny. One man reflected not only on his life as an internee but on his past as a British soldier prior to joining the IRA -

'I have fought on many battlefields. But none I love so well as the one I have been denied.'

Another man wrote about the differences between England and Ireland which he felt were immutable and worth fighting for -

'The Irish race, distinct, apart  
And so till time itself shall end.'



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The Irish and the English heart  
No human power can fuse or blend.<sup>13</sup>

One other prisoner indicated in resounding terms his  
belief in sacred political martyrdom –

‘No prince or king hath tomb so proud  
As he whose flag becomes his shroud.’

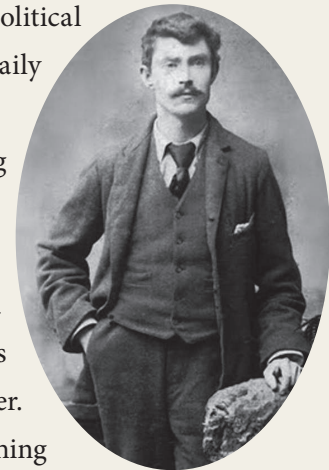
Copies of the ‘camp newspaper’ have been preserved as  
are several photographs which were developed on-site with  
chemicals smuggled out of the chemist’s stores connected  
to the hospital. The photos were taken with a camera which  
had been smuggled in to the prison in a cake.

Not only is it clear that Ballykinler was a significant  
laboratory for the creation of the identity for a modern  
European state – namely the Irish Free State and subsequent  
Republic – but it is also evident that the resourcefulness  
with which the prisoners of a much later IRA campaign  
approached their own incarceration owes a great deal to the  
folk-memory of Ballykinler, with its band of prisoners who  
had been awarded political status and subsequently turned

their prison camp into a place where political  
consciousness could be raised on a daily  
basis.<sup>13</sup>

However, the deaths of the two young  
men who had been shot in January 1921  
were not the only killings at the camp. The  
Sinn Fein representative Tadhg Barry had  
been a councillor in Cork when he was  
arrested and sent northwards to Ballykinler.  
On 15th November 1921, whilst watching  
some of his colleagues being released, he was shot  
dead by a sentry as he stood at the wire that guarded the  
compound. He was one of the handful of prisoners who  
maintained an unashamed belief in the radical, socialist  
beliefs that had animated some earlier Republican leaders  
such as James Connolly. Barry had flown a red flag over his  
prison hut, much to the annoyance of the camp authorities.

His coffin was driven back to Cork for his funeral and as  
it made its way through Newry, the cortege met with jeers  
from Loyalists who gathered to watch it pass. However, in  
Dublin, tens of thousands of Nationalists stood respectfully



The internee Tadhg Barry was a Sinn Fein alderman with strong socialist convictions who was shot dead at Ballykinler. His funeral brought huge crowds onto the streets in his native Cork.

Photo: Nigel Henderson

<sup>13</sup> For this further information on the internment camp see *Ballykinler – a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, p. 43-44, also a small file of information about the camp in the Ballykinler section of a set of newspaper clippings on the townlands and villages of County Down in Downpatrick Library, including material from the Patrick Hayes autograph book. There is also some interesting material on the camp to be found on the ‘Your Place and Mine’ section of the BBC Northern Ireland website, focused on a program presented on this subject in 2007. ([www.bbc.co.uk/.../yourplaceandmine/...](http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../yourplaceandmine/...)) The Kilmainham Gaol archive in Dublin has an extensive collection of artefacts and documents relating Ballykinler camp. Down County Museum also has a collection of documents including, an autograph book, camp newspapers, camp money and other items.



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to watch their hero go by. Shortly afterwards, in Cork, Tadhg Barry's funeral finally took place. It was thought to be the largest that the city had ever seen.

Internment continued in the southern counties after partition, this time implemented by the new Irish government in order to crush Republican resistance to the treaty of 1921. It was also implemented by the new northern government to suppress the IRA during these years. The major focus during this phase was not Ballykinler but rather a prison-ship moored off the Ulster coastline. The prison-camp was eventually closed but it remained a powerful memory for all those who had been interned there, as indeed it was for those who had given the internees succour, such as John McLister, the Catholic chaplain. He had been given a golden chalice by the

prisoners, when the final release date came around.

Those who had not survived their time in the camp were remembered through poetry and in the lyrics of patriotic songs –

'Hark to the Banshee's keen  
O'er Ballykinler's windswept shore.  
For Tadhg the peerless, noble Gael  
Is now no more...' <sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For information on Barry's death, see *Ballykinler – a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, p. 43-44 and also an article on Barry which can be found at [www.ballincolligsinnfein.com](http://www.ballincolligsinnfein.com). See also material about Barry in the Ballykinler camp in the 'Your Place and Mine' series on the BBC Northern Ireland website, dated to 2007. ([www.bbc.co.uk/.../yourplaceandmine/...](http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../yourplaceandmine/))



## 13

**B**ecause it was located in Northern Ireland, Ballykinler was a long-term 'survivor' from the days of Britain's rule throughout Ireland. Several military camps and barracks in the south of the island had to close after partition of the island whilst others were occupied by the new Irish Army. The fate of the Sandes Homes reflected this situation. South of the Irish border, thirteen homes closed down and only the Curragh, Parkgate and Dundalk homes remained, where the workers soon tended to the needs of

The new Sandes Home at the camp was erected in 1923 and would provide home comforts to many people, soldiers and civilian alike, until its destruction by a bomb planted by the Provisional I.R.A. in 1974.



Photo: Nigel Henderson

men with very different loyalties to the British soldiers who had traditionally frequented Sandes' properties.

In contrast, a more spacious building for the mission at Ballykinler was opened in 1923, leaving the old home, which had been there for nearly a quarter of a century, to become an officers' mess. This new building possessed a café, a kitchen, a games room, a cinema, a garden and a number of upstairs bedrooms for the staff.

Among the regiments billeted at the base in this new dispensation was the Highland Light Infantry, who occupied the camp in 1924. Battalions belonging to many other famous regiments resided there, including the Gordon Highlanders, the Sherwood Foresters and the Durham Light Infantry. The rifle-ranges were very much in use, training the new Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Special Constabulary. These men needed tuition in the use of their weapons. Whether full-time or part-time, all these policemen were armed in order to meet the ongoing danger of insurrection.

As the years went by and that threat seemed to recede, soldiers stationed at Ballykinler felt confident enough to take part in civic life in Downpatrick, even though this

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county town was still a place where Nationalists were in a clear majority. In 1932, the Royal Hampshire Regiment even participated in a pageant at Castleward to mark the 1,500th anniversary of St. Patrick's arrival in Ireland.

By now, a small village had grown up on the edge of the Ballykinler camp, in a townland which thirty years before had been entirely rural. Shops such as Blackwood's tobacco and sweet business offered services and supplies to both locals and soldiers. A bus service from Ballykinler to Downpatrick was started during the 1920s, lessening the sense of isolation.

However, the inter-war period was one of persistent poverty. Employment in the army camp provided much-needed income in a time when hunger and unemployment stalked the land. However, it would seem that the citizens of this part of Lecale were able to supplement their diet with an interesting mix of fried rabbit, locally caught fish and goat's milk, as well as adding to their income by harvesting cockles, winkles and mussels from the Ballykinler seashore for sale in local markets. Wood that was washed up on the beach was a regular source of firewood, in an area which had few sources of winter fuel.

When interviewed by a journalist during the 1960s, one local man could still recall the back-breaking hours he had spent as a youngster, gathering potatoes in a small field that existed where the barracks now stood. He also remembered how during the 1920s young lads from the district went to a nearby hiring fair in order to seek employment as yard men or agricultural labourers for local farmers. They would have considered themselves fortunate to get regular work, albeit with a meagre wage and basic accommodation.

The presence of so many soldiers at Ballykinler also led to liaisons with girls from the immediate district - and indeed with some women who travelled to the camp from further afield, looking for 'business'. The 'Ballykinler sandhills' had always been a favoured spot for the furtherance of many such relationships.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For much of this information on life at Ballykinler during the period between the World Wars, see *Ballykinler - a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, p.46-48. See also an interview with J. Killen, carried in *The Mourne Observer*, 3 March 1967.



## 14

**D**uring the 1920s, Elise Sandes came north to live, residing at Ballykinler where the new home looked over the bay and the God-given beauty of the mountains. It was said that the Mourne reminded her of the rugged landscape of her native County Kerry. She had become an invalid, confined to a wheel chair, but she lived on until 1934 when she was given a military funeral at the Tyrella graveyard. Letters poured in from all over the world, to mark the departure of a famous and inspiring woman. Newspapers carried details of her burial, noting that her favourite hymn had been sung during the ceremony –

‘While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When mine eyes shall close in death,  
When I soar to world’s unknown,  
See thee on thy judgement throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee.’

Her successor was Miss Eva Maguire, who would live on until the 1960s, embodying the traditions of the Victorian founder. In 1938 and 1939, Miss Maguire opened new homes at Aldergrove and Armagh.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For information on the death of Elise Sandes, see the history section of the Sandes website ([www.sandes.org.uk](http://www.sandes.org.uk))

The expansion of military facilities in the late 1930s offered ominous proof that Europe was becoming a tense and unsafe place once more, as the Nazi regime began to threaten war. The home at Aldergrove was situated at an air base. This would soon be one of many airfields in Ulster, including a landing strip at Murlough, adjacent to Ballykinler, and another one at Bishopscourt. Meanwhile on the site of the old internment camp a new barracks was constructed during the 1930s, providing a modernized alternative to the camp’s basic hut accommodation, much of which had been in place since the Great War and some of which remained in use until the early decades of the 21st century.

By the time that the Second World War broke out in 1939, there was a vehicle workshop and there were comfortable residential facilities, a NAAFI building, a set of married quarters and a primary school for the children of soldiers. By 1938, as a new world conflict began to loom, there was local evidence that it would be fought in a more mobile, sophisticated way than during the war on the Western Front. New anti-tank weapons were being tried out at Ballykinler. Permission was sought for an increase in the camp’s ‘Sea Danger Area’, because ordnance was

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landing far out into the ocean during practice sessions.

Britain's fears about German intentions were justified. On 3rd September 1939, after Hitler's invasion of Poland, war was declared. On 17th October, garrison troops of the 2nd battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment, left the camp for service with the British Expeditionary Force in France. After a final, emotional review, they marched away, watched by wives and children who would depart later for England.

Watching them go was Eva Maguire. In between busy spells serving tea and sandwiches, she must have thought of the grim fate that once awaited the Ulster Division, who had marched out of Ballykinler to go to war in 1915. She would have hoped that no similar catastrophe loomed for these soldiers and their families. In a last, sad episode of the story of the Northamptonshire Regiment at the camp, the pets that their children had kept while stationed in Ireland were 'put down', because transport across the Irish Sea for the beloved animals proved impossible to arrange.

Ballykinler became a busy training ground for Irish regiments who had started to prepare their men for a long and costly war. After the defeat of the British Army in France and their evacuation from Dunkirk, some Irish troops who had escaped from the fighting were posted to Ballykinler for recuperation and re-assimilation to their

regiments. No doubt they brought with them the painful memories of that dark time, when Hitler's armies carried all before them.

Sandes Home was busier than it had ever been since the Great War. The building which housed the original Sandes had become an officers' mess during the 1920s. Now it was re-adapted so as to become the 'Little Sandes', whose staff worked alongside those who ran the 'Big Sandes'. The entire team had to meet the needs of the thousands of soldiers who would pass through Ballykinler during the war years.

However, Britain's preoccupation with a global conflict was seen by some Irish Republicans as providing another opportunity for insurrection, centred not only in Northern Ireland but in Britain. In January 1940, the Irish Republican Army raided the camp armory, encountering surprisingly little resistance and getting away with 100 rifles. However, given that the raiders did not procure bullets for the guns, the incident had little more than propaganda value. The IRA campaign which this raid was meant to initiate proved to be of little ultimate effect.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For information on the Second World War at Ballykinler see *Ballykinler – a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, p. 49-53, 60-62. See also the history section of the Sandes website

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## Ballykinler Camp

It was in the light of such activities, and due to the ongoing fear of Nationalist 'disloyalty', that Home Guard duties in the province were undertaken mainly by members of the Ulster Special Constabulary and by new recruits drafted into a defence force closely attached to the USC. These men practised regularly at Ballykinler throughout the war years. Not only did these new defenders of the realm engage in target practice with rifles, machine guns, revolvers and other military hardware but they even learned the art of constructing home-made weapons of last resort, such as the petrol bomb - known as the Molotov Cocktail.<sup>18</sup>

The destruction of the American fleet by the Japanese air force at Pearl Harbour in December 1941, led to the entry of the United States into the war. In May of the following year, the 1st Armored Division left New York, sailing for Britain as part of the vast consignment of troops that the Americans threw into the fight against Hitler. This division, over 17,000 strong, was stationed in Northern Ireland at venues throughout County Down, including Ballykinler. The 'Old Ironsides', as they were commonly known, would soon take part in Operation Torch. This was a campaign to defeat the German and Italian troops in North Africa,

<sup>18</sup> For information about the Home Guard in Ballykinler see David R.Orr, *Duty without Glory - the story of Ulster's Home Guard in the Second World War and the Cold War* (Newtownards, 2008)

prior to launching an attack on the Italian mainland, en route to Germany.

The 1st Armored Division did not stay long at Ballykinler. They embarked for North Africa and invaded enemy territory in November 1942. However, their impact on local people had been considerable. The roads and fields of Lecale were dominated by tanks which were driven and maintained by young men such as Laurel Anderson. Laurel was not a veteran soldier - he had been an agriculture student at the University of Minnesota but joined the army to train as a tank driver although his skills with tank engine maintenance meant that he was soon working as a mechanic.

Encamped in County Down and servicing the tanks which were parked at the Ballykinler base, Laurel shared a billet with poor men from Illinois who could not read or write. He wrote letters home for them on a regular basis. Later he would know all about the pain that wartime correspondence could deliver. When he opened a letter from America, while fighting at the front-line in Italy, he discovered that his fiancée had left him for another man. The social challenges and emotional discomforts which these American troops experienced echo all too clearly the experience of other soldiers who had been located at Ballykinler not so long before.

The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

Among other young men who served with the 'Old Ironsides' were Robert Dowell and Niel Wreidt. Robert spent long days spent training in the scrubland and on the long, flat beach at Ballykinler. He and his friends were amused to be told that their duty, until they were sent to the front-line, was to 'guard the Mourne Mountains'. He wondered why those bare and beautiful peaks would need guarding from a distant Nazi foe.

Niel Wreidt was an officer. He would remember the view

across the bay to the mountains with an enduring fondness.

- 'I'll never forget the beauty of seeing Slieve Donard across Dundrum Bay...watching its mystical changes of hue as the sun went down...'

Other members of the Armored Division took their love for their training camp to the battlefields in a very tangible way. One tank commander named his vehicle 'Ballykinler'. In the allied campaign against Rommel's Afrika Corps, that tank made its way across a sandy terrain that was very



Dundrum village across the bay tempted many soldiers based at Ballykinler throughout the decades to seek out a ferryman who would take them across the water to a welcoming pub or café.

Photo: Nigel Henderson

.....  
the Red Devils, trained at  
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## Ballykinler Camp

different from the one it had negotiated on the shores of Dundrum Bay.

During the war years, Ballykinler saw the arrival of another American unit with an even greater mission. Members of the 5th Infantry Division of the United States Army, known as the Red Devils, trained at the camp while preparing for 'D' day. An ordnance battalion spent several months there, simulating battlefield conditions. One highlight of the 1940s was the arrival in south-east Down of the Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, to inspect his troops. Stopping off at Clough and Dundrum, he met a group of men from Ballykinler who were sent to brief him on training procedures at the camp.

It is little wonder that many American soldiers would look back with favour on a time spent in the verdant quiet of the Irish countryside, given the horrors of war that lay ahead. It is also understandable that local people would recall with clarity the years when the global conflict came to their shores. Stories remained in the area for many years of 'Yanks' who would pay handsomely to be ferried across the bay to Dundrum for a drink in a local pub or spend time teaching children the rules of baseball.

However, baseball was not the only exotic feature of life in this part of County Down in wartime. Several families of Gibraltarian refugees lived at a camp near Clough, having been evacuated from their Mediterranean home for the duration of the conflict. Italian and German Prisoners of War were also imprisoned at Ballykinler and put their time to good use. They constructed a football ground, using empty ammunition boxes full of soil to provide a firm if rather unorthodox foundation for a pitch that would soon gain a reputation as one of the best in these islands.

Then in 1945, war came to a close. Victory in Europe and triumph in the Far East were both greeted by a salvo of artillery fire, echoing across the dunes and out to sea. Within a few months, the presence of American tank drivers, enemy prisoners and Mediterranean refugees would only be a memory.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup>The story of the American soldiers who have been mentioned here may be found in the 'Your place and mine' section of the BBC Northern Ireland website ([www.bbc.co.uk/.../yourplaceandmine/...](http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../yourplaceandmine/...)) The subject began its coverage in 2008.





# 15

By the close of 1949, the main military accommodation at Ballykinler had been named the Abercorn Barracks, in honour of the first Governor of Northern Ireland, whose family had played a key role in the growth of Ulster Unionism. For many years, Abercorn Barracks was host to men from all over Britain who were undertaking compulsory National Service, which lasted from 1947 until 1960. In the relaxed post-war atmosphere, local children played again in the Ballykinler sand-dunes. Children from the army camp attended the local schools. Families of men who were stationed in the camp used local businesses on a regular basis, such as Boal's taxi services and Mick McCartan's drapery store. Relationships between British soldiers and local women continued to thrive during the 1950s and 1960s. Dances were held in the camp and the result of such entertainment could well be romance and an ensuing marriage.

However, one local man would later recite a verse that evoked the temporary nature of so many Ballykinler liaisons –

'Days that were happy, nights that were gay,  
Sweethearts that came and vanished away,  
Whence did they come, where did they go?  
Ballykinler will never let you know.'

Vigilance was renewed with the emergence of another campaign by the Irish Republican Army in 1956. Although this low-key offensive was primarily confined to the border area, the military authorities kept a wary eye on all possible intrusions into Ministry of Defence territory, until this rather desultory campaign concluded in 1962.

One other reason for wariness at Ballykinler was the presence of ordnance in a closed target area used for mortar practice during the Second World War. During the 1950s, a Royal Engineers Bomb Disposal team cleared and disposed of a substantial amount of dangerous material.

The Cold War with the Soviet Union, although it was less tangible and costly for the people of Ireland and Britain than the two preceding global conflicts, soon made its presence felt. At Bishopscourt there was an RAF base, with technology linked to an early warning system designed to give swift notice of Russian bombers or missiles heading for these shores. In 1957, Hungarian refugees arrived at the camp, having left their native country after the Soviet crack-down on a local uprising. They were looked after by the Northern Ireland Hungarian Relief Committee, the Red Cross and the Army. All the families hoped to travel further, sailing across the Atlantic to resettle in Canada.

Historians in Bangor, where the refugees also stayed, have

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## Ballykinler Camp

Photo: Nigel Henderson



The gate to the small cemetery annex at the Tyrella church, where several soldiers and a number of former workers at Ballykinler's Sandes Home are buried or memorialized.

recorded local memories of the poor, dishevelled people who arrived in Northern Ireland without belongings and possessing no ability to converse in English with the people who wanted to help them. Many of these Hungarians had had terrible experiences. Some had lost family and friends in the fighting or had witnessed protestors being crushed by Russian tanks. There can be no doubt that at Ballykinler, refugees had similar psychological problems to those manifested at Bangor, where men, women and children would waken in the night hours, sobbing and screaming.

A number of Catholic refugees were taken from Ballykinler and Bangor to St. Mary's Chapel in Belfast, where a memorial was dedicated to those who had died. A blood-soaked, bullet-torn Hungarian flag was carried through the streets.<sup>20</sup>

Although the work of the Sandes Home continued, there were many changes. In October 1967, the body of Eva Maguire was interred in Tyrella Churchyard, where her predecessor, Elise Sandes, had been laid to rest over thirty years before. Once again, the stirring 18th century words of 'Rock of Ages' were heard in the quiet cemetery. There

<sup>20</sup> Information on Ballykinler in the post-war era may be found in *Ballykinler – a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, p.54-55. Brief mention of the arrival of Hungarian refugees is found in *The Mourne Observer*, 22 February 1957 and further detail may be found in an article by James O'Fee, dated 26 September 2007, which is found in the 'blogger' section of the website [www.impalapublications.com](http://www.impalapublications.com). The poem about Ballykinler romance is to be found in *The Mourne Observer*, 29 July, 1960.

was a 12 gun salute and army buglers played the Last Post and Reveille. With Miss Maguire's death came a powerful sense of a vanished era. She had been a young girl living in Victorian Ireland when she had first heard of the work at the Sandes Homes. Later, as one of that generation of able young Irishwomen who were first to gain a university education, she had decided to play a role in the provision of spiritual and material well-being to thousands of British soldiers.

She was but one of many individuals who had dedicated themselves to the Sandes' project. Local people who used the facilities would later recall the names of a several single Christian ladies who had worked there, alongside busy men like 'Billy the baker' and 'Wee Billy, the general hand'.

Another person with abundant memories of the camp during the post-war era was James Killen, who in 1967, at seventy years of age, retired from his role as groundsman at Ballykinler. He was an old soldier himself, having joined the Leinster Regiment in 1916 and fought throughout the final two years of the Great War. In the 1940s, he had helped supervise the prisoners who built the football pitch which eventually merited the praise of no less a player than Stanley Matthews, who had practised on it with England's international squad. James had formed a good relationship with one of the Germans who worked on the pitch's construction. After the Second World War was over, the

## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

two men still corresponded, especially at Christmas time.

In truth, the 1960s was a time of innocence at Ballykinler before the renewal of civil strife. At the start of 1964 there was every prospect of a visit from that major pop sensation of the 1960s, the Beatles. Soldiers in a battalion of the King's Regiment, many of whom had grown up on Merseyside, wrote to their fellow-Liverpudlians in the 'Fab Four' when they were stationed in Berlin. They asked for a Beatles concert in the German city. Their manager, Brian Epstein, replied that Berlin was not a feasible venue but given that the battalion would be stationed in Ballykinler by the summer of 1964, the band would very much like to play a concert there. Of course, no such concert ever took place. By the summer of 1964, the Beatles, who had already 'conquered' America, were engaged in a packed-out, month-long global tour. The Lecale peninsula was not on their itinerary.

However, the English football team, fresh from winning the World Cup in 1966, was to be found practising on Ballykinler's famous pitch in the autumn of that year, brought there by Sir Alf Ramsay, their manager. He followed a post-war tradition whereby the English and Scottish players trained at the camp, prior to playing Northern Ireland in the annual Home Championships.

The abatement of serious civil unrest in the north of Ireland over the previous forty years also meant that many local people felt happy to apply for a job at the base.

If they were from a Nationalist background, they showed little equivocation or distrust. One man from Newcastle who worked as a barber in the Ballykinler camp gave an interview to a local newspaper during the mid-1960s. He had no qualms about revealing his occupation but also the fact that he had played hurling for a Gaelic Athletic club named after The O'Rahilly, a republican hero who had died during the Easter Rising when the Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizens' Army had fought the British Army on the streets of Dublin!<sup>21</sup>

After the summer of 1969, that kind of cultural and political latitude would be hard to maintain. Only with the ceasefires of the 1990s and the building of a Northern Ireland peace process, did it become possible once more to consider a sporting contest between men who played Irish traditional sports and the British Army from Ballykinler, as evidenced in ground-breaking contests between military personnel and members of the Gaelic Athletic Association.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Information about the football history of Ballykinler may be found in an interview with J. Killen, in *The Mourne Observer*, 3 May 1967. Details connected to the Sandes home may be found on the Sandes website ( [www.sandes.org.uk](http://www.sandes.org.uk)) and also in *The Mourne Observer*, 1 April, 1955; The connection with The Beatles is to be found in the paper on 13 March 1964; the connection with local hurling is to be found in the same paper on 4 October 1968.

<sup>22</sup> Personnel interviewed at the camp have offered information about recent Gaelic games.

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Like many military sites of its kind, Ballykinler has become a haven for wildlife and rare flora, despite the obvious danger from gunfire. On the great sand-dunes that front the waters of the bay and on the adjacent shoreline, sandwort, marram grass, saltwort, sea couch, sea rocket and the 'devil's bit' scabious flower have been left to grow in abundance. Insects prosper in a pesticide-free environment that has all too rarely survived the march of 'progress' in other parts of the County Down countryside.

In summer, some of the flowers which flourish at Ballykinler are host to the larvae of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly, whose bright, speckled wings will catch the eye of anyone who walks the paths and roads between the ranges, when firing has ceased for the day. There are shell ducks, moorhens, mallards, kingfishers, shore curlews, skylarks, cormorants, swifts and owls at Ballykinler. Terns can be seen on the shining mud-flats, searching for sand eels. Some birds have developed the ability to bring shellfish to a road that runs along the edge of the sea, and crack the shells open on the hard, metaled surface.

Meanwhile, out on the tide, gulls swoop over the water and gannets come from breeding grounds in Scotland and Wales to dive into the ocean in search of fish. On the sand spit at Ballykinler Point is a remarkable colony of grey seals

and common seals, now the largest in Ireland's coastal waters. A local marine biologist has often been summoned to hand-feed seal pups which have been orphaned at an early age, before releasing them back into the ocean.

Sometimes foxes can be seen, digging sand-eels from the mud at low tide. At night the haunting bark of dog-foxes can be heard in the scrubland beyond the barracks complex. Badgers may be encountered in the light of a torch-beam, and also a less popular animal, the common rat. Rabbits continue to thrive, as they did in the age when Anglo-Norman armies crossed the Irish Sea to County Down and established a mighty castle at Dundrum. However, in recent decades strange colourings have appeared amongst the animals that live in the warrens which underlie the sand-dunes. Rumour has it that the wild rabbits have interbred with other 'domestic' rabbits, kept as pets by several generations of military families who lived for a time at the camp once known as World's End. However, the reality which subverts this enticing narrative is that dark-skinned or mottled rabbits are really not that uncommon in the wild.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>For most of the details about the natural history of Ballykinler, I have relied on *Ballykinler – a history to commemorate a hundred years of military training*, p.72-73.



## The First Seven Decades, 1900-1969

Of course, not everyone who stayed, either willingly or unwillingly, at the Ballykinler base during the period which is the subject of this account was entirely enamoured of its wild and lonely hinterland, especially in winter. Too often, cold wind, mist or driving rain compounded the sense of isolation felt by the 'Belfast boys' in 'Carson's Army' or sharpened the sense of deep historic injustice that filled the hearts of Irish internees. Inevitably the memories of Ballykinler over many decades were threaded with the kind of pain, loss, and tragedy that are forever interwoven with military activity. Nonetheless, the fact that Ballykinler is beautiful and – perhaps ironically - a very peaceful place, has remained in the minds of the many men and women who have had to spend some time there.

Those who live permanently in the vicinity and who raise families nearby have an important stake in the future of the place. Among such local people the future is sometimes contemplated with a degree of anxiety. What will happen to the ground that the camp now occupies, should the military decide some day to depart? If experience is anything to go by, a location such as this, with its stunning views of the Mourne, could be bought in a hurry by a rich property developer, keen to build a massive and exclusive leisure resort or to populate the shoreline with a swarm of holiday homes or gigantic bungalows. If so, the Ballykinler

landscape would never return to a tranquil condition, where rabbit-trappers and fishermen once roamed freely over the dunes and a seal-colony now basks on the sand.

The prospect of turning Ballykinler into a historical theme park has been mooted in certain quarters and this is also disconcerting, given the way that the conflicted narratives of Unionism and Nationalism overlap at this site, as indicated throughout this account. Would 'World's End' become the site of an unresolved cultural contest?

In absence of answers to such questions, Lecale continues to host a British Army base for the foreseeable future. And someday a sequel to this short book must be written, in which the story of the camp and those who were so deeply connected to it during the recent Troubles, can finally be told. Possibly the insights gained from this account of the first seven decades at Ballykinler will help the writer of that sequel to undertake a demanding but necessary task.



THE PRESENCE

[By kind permission of the author]

**The Rising Breviary**  
 by J. Bernard Mc Carthy,  
 a new comedy in three acts,  
 on  
 November 12th. & 13th. 1921,  
 at  
 2 pm. each evening.

**Cast.**

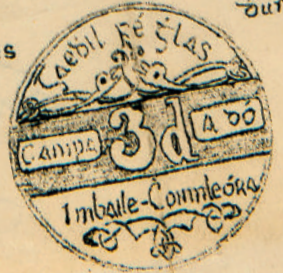
James Breen - A Money Spinner -	S. Mulherns.
Alie - His wife	R. Saunders.
Iea - His daughter	S. Hogan.
Kevin Kennedy - Iea's lover	P. O'Byrne.
Captain Roche - A retired mariner	M. Baynor.
Cassidy - Chairman Electric Lighting Co.	B. O'Kennedy.
Sam - A ne'er-do-well	S. Rowley.

Scene: The private parlour of Breen's Hotel  
 in the town of Knocklehane.  
 Act I - Morning. Act II - Afternoon of  
 following day. Act III - One day later.

Sean O'Suilleabhain

Orchestral Selections during evening.

Produced by  
 Seamus Mulherns  
 &  
 Brian O'Kennedy.



Stage Manager -  
 P. O'Byrne.

THE TERRORS OF THE LAND.



Down County Museum has a collection of documents and photographs relating to Ballykinler camp. This is a small selection of these items. We would welcome more donations of objects, photographs and documents relating to the camp and the surrounding area.



Ballykinler is home to Ireland's largest seal colony and the ranges play host to myriad wild flowers and animals. If the camp were to close, would 'redevelopment' of the coastline change some things forever?

Photo: Nigel Henderson



**European Union**  
European Regional  
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