### TIMELINE OF

# The War of Independence in Wexford

#### 1916

**April 24th** - On Easter Monday, Pádraig Pearse read aloud the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in front of the G.P.O. in Dublin. The Rising had begun. In Wexford town there was very little support for the rebels in Dublin.

May 17th - At a meeting of Wexford County Council, the members passed a motion that they deplored the" lamentable rising" that had taken place in Dublin in Easter week. They pledged their support, to John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary party, and for Home Rule.

Enniscorthy on the other hand, had been the only place outside Dublin where a rebellion had happened. The leaders there, refused to surrender until they knew that Pearse and the other leaders in Dublin had given up the fight.



Courtesy of Wexford County Archive.

March 6th - John Redmond died in London and his remains were brought home and interred in John Street graveyard, Wexford.

**April 16th** - The British Government introduced conscription in Ireland to send men to the Great War, that was still ongoing. This was opposed by all parties in Ireland. John Dillon, the new leader of Redmond's Irish Party led its members out of Westminster and home to Ireland in protest.

November 11th - The Great War ended. Irish soldiers came home to a changing country. Soldiers returned after the horrors of war to discover they were not treated as heroes but were looked on by many as those who had betrayed the Irish cause by joining the British army. Many maimed and disabled soldiers were seen on the streets of towns and villages in County Wexford.

**January 21st** - The Sinn Féin party, who won a landslide victory in the British elections held on December 14th 1918 refused to take their seats in Westminster and set up Dáil Éireann as the parliament of Ireland. County Wexford returned two members to Dáil Éireann; Dr. James Ryan and Roger Sweetman. On the same day the Dáil first met, a party of RIC men were ambushed by the IRA at Soloheadbeg in County Tipperary. One was killed and gelignite taken. The War of Independence had begun.



Courtesy of Helen Corish Wylde.

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from Margate in Kent.

January 30th - Wexford Corporation elected a 33-yearold republican mayor called Richard Corish, a member of the

June 7th - Troops from the South Devonshire Regiment took up residence in the Wexford Military Barracks. Their job was to assist the RIC in finding Sinn Féin rebels. The Sinn Féin government declared they were to be treated as an invading army. The railway men refused to transport them to Wexford. Notices appeared in the local papers warning young Wexford women not to talk to them or socialise with them.

**June 12th** - A police cycle patrol was ambushed at Bloomfield near Enniscorthy. Three policemen cycling to Clonroche were ordered to "Halt". They continued cycling but were fired on from a ditch. They returned fire. No one was hurt, the attackers escaped across the fields.

June 15th - District Inspector Lea Wilson of the RIC was shot dead by members of the IRA outside his home in Gorey. It was alleged that he had ill-treated the 1916 leaders when they were prisoners and particularly that he had humiliated Thomas Clarke.

**January 4th** - Martial law, already imposed on counties Cork,

February 8th - Aileen Keogh, matron of Mount Saint Benedict's

school, Gorey is sentenced to two years by a Waterford court-

May 7th - An Auxiliary was killed and a sergeant injured in an IRA

ambush at Inch. The dead man was Constable Frederick Dupree

May 18th - District Inspector Peter McGovern receives wounds

to his thigh and arm in a shooting near his home at Distillery House,

Wexford. In reprisal, in the early hours of the following morning, a

fire destroyed Ned Foley's shop on North Main Street and damaged

Rochford's pub, Kehoe's drapery and McGoldrick's butcher shop.

Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary, was extended to Wexford.

martial for possession of ammunition.

**June 16th** - Wexford County Council passed a resolution recognising Dáil Éireann as the government of Ireland.

**June 18th** - At a meeting of Wexford County Council, members agreed to rescind the motion passed by the council on May 17th 1916 that condemned the rising of Easter week.

July 5th - James Dunne was shot dead by Constable Henry Lenihan at Dunbar's pub, Ferns, when he refused to drink with him and another RIC constable.

**August 9th** - The Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill was passed in Westminster. This meant that suspected Sinn Féin rebels could be tried by court martial and imprisoned on suspicion. Police and military alike began searching houses, arresting and imprisoning people on very little or no evidence. Many local families can still tell stories of their grandparents and great-grandparents, woken up at night, the whole family held at gunpoint, while the crown forces ransacked their homes.

**September 10th** - Some of the soldiers in Wexford barracks ran amok in the town breaking windows, damaging property and injuring local people. The RIC had difficulty controlling behaviour.

May 25th - Enniscorthy postman and former soldier, 23 year old

James Morrissey was found dead at Coolnahorna. He had a bullet

wound in his forehead and a sign around his neck read "Spy and

**June 18th** - In the early hours of the morning Francis Carty

and Gerry O' Brien for the IRA, climbed in through the window of

Wexford Courthouse on the quay and poured petrol all round it.

They then came out and their comrades who were waiting outside

threw flaming torches through the windows. The building was

July 8th - A truce was agreed between the forces under the

control of Dáil Éireann and the British government. It came into

effect on July 11th. This led to a break in hostilities.

traitor: others beware - I.R.A."

destroyed.

October 4th - Dáil Éireann, refusing to recognise English law, set up their own courts. Richard Corish, Mayor of Wexford was arrested for presiding at one of these courts in the Town Hall and was imprisoned for one night in Wexford military barracks. Also arrested with him that night was Francis Carty who later burnt the Wexford Courthouse and Ned Foley a prominent shopkeeper and member of Sinn Féin.

October 12th - Five men were killed in an explosion at Saltmills where the IRA were manufacturing bombs from old pipes packed with gelignite.

**December 21st** - The home of Dr James Ryan TD for Wexford was raided by crown forces. Ryan himself was later imprisoned in the military barracks. In the same month, an attack on the RIC Barracks in Bannow was foiled but the owner of the building, publican James Walsh was shot and killed.

December 22nd - Constable William Jones, from Castleconnell, County Limerick, stationed in Newtownbarry (Bunclody) R.I.C. barracks, was shot dead in Kelly's public house by members of the IRA North Wexford Flying Column.

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Design by Bailey Design.

The officers block at Wexford Military Barracks.





Courtesy of Wexford County Archive.

Permit for William Sadler to use his push-bike

has permission to use the fink busylob described

police who ransacked the house for evidence.

to destroy community support for the RIC.

supported in their actions by the military and by

to search for evidence of IRA activity. They were

people on the streets or went to their places of work

the military, raided people's houses, arrested

members of the IRA. They, with the help of

suspected of being Sinn Féin rebels or of being

was their job to arrest and imprison any people

local schools. During the War of Independence, it

they worked, and their children often went to the

families lived in the towns and villages where

an Irish and Catholic force. These men and their

many villages had RIC barracks. It was mainly

George Street. The other towns in the county and

Wexford, one in South Main Street and one in

There were two RIC barracks in the town of

1922 when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom.

The RIC was the Irish police force from 1836 until

Displayed by kind permission of Des Fitzpatrick. Cumann na mBan brooch (Marie Moran's Brooch).

intelligence on the enemy's movements.

fed and sheltered IRA volunteers and provided

messages, smuggled weapons and ammunition,

the War of Independence, its members carried

republican women allied to the IRA. During

Cumann na mBan was an organisation for

Cumann na mBan

hid them in their houses and warned them of danger. Often the men escaped leaving the family to face the

Many local people who were sympathetic to the IRA sheltered men on the run from police or army. They

known as the Auxiliaries or "The Auxies". These two groups, the "Black and The "Auxies" helped

house was ransacked in search of evidence. They were later joined by a group of former military officers

or IRA members often in the middle of the night with terrified families being held at gunpoint while the

military tactics. They earned a reputation for police brutality. They raided houses in search of Sinn Fein

like black and tan and so they got their nickname. They were experienced in the use of weapons and

as reinforcements for the RIC. Their first temporary uniform was dark green and military khaki. It looked

The "Black and Tans" were mainly British veterans of the Great War, (World War 1), who were recruited

The Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC)

Furlong photographic collection at Wexford County Archive).

Courtesy of the Sinnott collection (as featured in the Nicholas

mBan. Courtesy of Wexford County Archive.

Spotograph showing the apprehension of a prisoner by the Black

and Tans circa June 1920.

Who were the "Black and Tans"?

Safe Houses"?

also set up roadblocks to impede the movement of the British forces and destroyed bridges to make Even postmen cycling around the county were stopped and made to hand over the postbags. They

continued "sniping."

those in the barracks were feeling the pressure of their described conditions in the RIC barracks. They knew that letters to the families of the Black and Tans in England that stamped "Censored by the IRA". Sometimes they found of transport at the time. The mail was slit open and rubber and to disrupt the train service, a very important means to Dublin so that goods and mail could not be delivered Another tactic was to make raids on the train from Wexford

Harbour and Taghmon.

Enniscorthy, Ferns, Foulksmills, New Ross, Rosslare Ballycanew, Bannow, Bridgetown, Clonroche, Duncannon, work policing the area. Among the barracks attacked were: making it extremely difficult for the RIC to carry out their be successful, but they kept them up, often at night, by stealth. They knew that their attacks would not always Constabulary (RIC), and to make attacks on their barracks of the local area to ambush members of the Royal Irish The IRA were not well-armed, so they used their knowledge

attacking police barracks, holding up trains, wrecking bridges and disrupting the postal service. of the IRA was to make it impossible for the British Government to govern Ireland. This they did by Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army. Their aim was to make Ireland an independent republic. The purpose The original IRA, sometimes referred to as the Old IRA, was formed in 1917 from members of the Irish

#### The Irish Republican Army (IRA)

in wextord during this time.

we will look at the motives of the groups involved and some of the more important events that happened Like all other conflicts its beginnings date back many centuries. To understand this troubled time in Ireland

# The War of Independence

short period of relative peace before the Civil War erupted. The Civil War occurred between June 28th, The War of Independence started on January 21st, 1919 and continued until June 25th, 1921. There was a

events that took place in the latter part of this time, from 1919 to 1923 in County Wexford. People in County Wexford were actively involved in all campaigns. This leaflet records the significant Events include the 1913 Lockout, the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence, the Treaty and the Civil War. The time of unrest and conflict in Ireland from 1912 to 1923 is called The Irish Revolutionary Period.

**County Wexford** 

and Civil War

War of Independence

An educational resource

1912 -1925 Ireland 1912

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Text by Monica Crofton, Michael Dempsey and Hazel Percival.





Enniscorthy Flying Column, Carnew, 1922, a photograph taken after the Truce declaration and before the Civil War.



# The Civil War

1922 0 1923

## The Treaty

**1921, December 6th** - A treaty between the British government and Ireland was signed in London. It was signed for the Irish by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith. It gave Ireland the status of a Free State within the British Commonwealth. Those running for office would have to take the Oath of Allegiance: "I will be faithful to King George V, his heirs and successors by law."

#### What the IRA did now

The members who opposed the treaty aimed to make it impossible for Dáil Éireann and those who had accepted the treaty to govern the country. Now however, they were opposing, not the British government but the Dublin government. They again turned to guerrilla warfare and used what were known as "flying columns" to carry out ambushes and surprise attacks on the National Army. A flying column was a small group of armed personnel who could move quickly. They knew the countryside well and often under cover of darkness they moved in stealthily, made an attack and got away quickly, as they had done during the War of Independence on RIC Barracks.

## Destroying bridges

One of the most effective ways to block communications, to disrupt business and stop the National Army from getting around the county was to blow up bridges. Bridges were damaged on at least 65 occasions in County Wexford.



The destruction of Taylorstown railway bridge/viaduct at Loughnageer, Foulksmills on 28th Aug 1922. Courtesy of Wexford County Archive.



Coolbawn House.

Courtesy of Wexford Public Libraries Photographic collection.

## Attacks on the Railways

The IRA tried to disrupt the railway services by every possible means. Signal boxes were burnt, signals were damaged and railway lines were pulled up to derail the trains.



The reconstruction of temporary signals and a cabin at Enniscorthy Railway Station following their demolition by the IRA on 16 Sept 1922. Courtesy of Wexford County Archive.

#### Roadblocks

Because the bridge at Wexford was damaged, there was only one bridge at Ferrycarrig to connect Wexford with Dublin. Roadblocks were placed across every road that led to this bridge. When the army stopped at a roadblock they were attacked.

# Destroying Great Houses

During the War of Independence many great houses belonging to landlords were burnt down. This continued during the Civil War. Owners of large houses were considered supporters of the Free State. In 1923 the following large houses were among those destroyed: Ballynastragh, Bellevue, Castleboro, Coolbawn, Upton and Wilton. Some houses and farms belonging to those who were pro-treaty suffered in the same way.

# The National Army

The National Army was the official army of the government of Ireland. It had many advantages. It soon outnumbered the IRA. The soldiers were well armed and had transport. They were paid and were organised as an army, though most of them had very little experience. Many referred to them as the "Free State Army". They took over the military barracks in Wexford when the anti-treaty IRA moved out on 9th July 1922. They also took over the courthouse in New Ross, the RIC Barracks in Abbey Square, Enniscorthy and Enniscorthy Castle.

Many of the men stationed in Wexford Barracks were from Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Meath, Offaly and Westmeath. The transport section was almost all from Wexford. Their job was to capture, arrest and imprison anyone suspected of carrying out acts of violence against the Free State.



Free State Army.

Courtesy of the Browne family collection

### TIMELINE OF

# The Civil War in Wexford

#### 1921

**December 10th** - Wexford newspaper "The Free Press" had the headline "We have won our Liberty". This was a direct quote from Arthur Griffith.



Michael Collins pictured with Phil<mark>ip Pierce's bike.</mark>
Courtesy of the Pierce & Co. collec<mark>tion at the Irish Agricultural Museum, Johnstown.</mark>

## 1922

January 7th - Dáil Éireann voted for acceptance of the treaty. 64 were in favour 57 against. The Ceann Comhairle and three others did not vote. Those who voted for the treaty, led by Michael Collins, believed the treaty was the first step on the road to independence. For those who voted against it, it was a complete betrayal of the ideals of the rebels of 1916. The Irish people were completely divided in their opinions. Members of the same family even took opposite sides.

**February 9th** - Thirty-five soldiers of the IRA took over the military barracks of Wexford which had been evacuated by the British army. The tricolour was hoisted and flown over the barracks for the first time in its history. On the following day, the tricolour was flown over the Court House in New Ross, directly across the road from the RIC barracks where the Black and Tans still were. They and the RIC left the barracks one week later.

**February 22nd** - The RIC were replaced with the Civic Guards. They were renamed the Garda Síochána na hÉireann on August 8th, 1923. Those in the Black and Tans, who were not born in Ireland left in the weeks after the Treaty was signed.

**April 9th** - Michael Collins spoke to a huge crowd at St. Peter's square in Wexford town. All pubs in Wexford were closed on that day. He visited Pierce's Foundry and was given a Pierce bicycle by Philip Pierce.

July 2nd - A battle began in Enniscorthy between the National Army and the Anti-treaty IRA. It lasted for four days and terrified people escaped from the town during a break in the fighting. The National Army were in the old RIC barracks and the IRA were in the courthouse. Many other buildings were taken, including the Castle. The National Army in the castle surrendered because the IRA had cut off food and water supplies. The IRA allowed them to go free. Two anti- treaty IRA volunteers died, Maurice Spillane and Patrick O'Brien. There was great damage done to buildings in the town.

**July 6th** - When word reached Gorey that the National Army was on the way the IRA blew up the courthouse and the RIC barracks. The army occupied St. Patrick's Club on Main St and later the old workhouse buildings at Ramstown.

July 9th - The National Army took over the military barracks

**July 24th** - A train was attacked at Killurin Station. IRA prisoners were being taken to gaol in Dublin. The IRA led by Bob Lambert fired on the train. Two members of the National Army died on the day. A third died a few days later. A special train was sent to take the prisoners to Dublin.

August 9th - The IRA surrounded Mc Donald's Pub in Ferrycarrig where a small group of the National Army who had been guarding the bridge had taken shelter. After hours of fierce fighting the National Army surrendered. One of their soldiers was killed. The IRA took their prisoners boots, arms and uniforms and let them go.

August 15th - A goods train was derailed at Killurin.

**September 6th** - From early morning the IRA fired on Wexford Military barracks. A stray bullet hit the window of the Convent of Perpetual Adoration but injured no one.

October 22nd - In an ambush at Ferrycarrig bridge four National Army soldiers were killed.

**November 20th** - A train engine was unhooked and run into a marsh at Sparrowsland, near Bree Hill.

**December 3rd** - A young Free State soldier, Private John Dooley from Drogheda was killed in an ambush at Ferrycarrig.

# 1923

January 3rd - General Mulcahy, Commander in Chief of the National Army, visited Wexford and took over the County Hall and Wexford jail for IRA prisoners. He ordered that anyone found bearing arms should be executed in accordance with a law enacted by Dáil Éireann in September 1922.

**January 7th** - Máire Comerford, Cumann na mBan, from County Wexford was arrested by Free State soldiers in Loughlinstown, Dublin. She was carrying a loaded revolver at the time of her arrest.

**January 10th** - Twenty-six wagons of pigs were unhooked by raiders before two goods trains were made to collide at Ballyanne.

**January 16th** - The 5 o'clock train from Macmine carrying cattle was attacked at Rathgarogue. The carriages were unhooked and the engine sent off the rails where it steamed along the road for about a mile until they got it back on the rails.

January 27th - Another mail train was derailed at Killurin.

**March 13th** - Three young IRA prisoners were executed at Wexford gaol, they had been found to be carrying arms. Their names were John Creane, Patrick Hogan and James Parle.



Patrick Hogan, James Parle an<mark>d Joh</mark>n Creane who were executed in Wexford Jail on 13 March 1923. Courtesy of Wexford County Archive.

March 23rd - Four anti-treaty IRA men, John Lacy, John O'Connor, Martin Nolan and Denis Lacey were killed in a fire fight with Free State troops after they ambushed an army car at Kyle crossroads. Privates Cooke, Murphy and Bergin were wounded.

March 24th - The bodies of three soldiers of the National Army were found in a barn at Adamstown. They had been shot by the IRA. They were Thomas Jones, Edward O'Gorman and Patrick Horan from Dublin and Kilkenny.

**April 24th** - Wexford Cumann na mBan members, Nell Ryan and Annie O'Neill are released from Kilmainham gaol after 34 days on hunger strike.



Ryans of Tomcoole. Standing: Kit (Mary Kate) and Jim (James). Seated: Phyllis and Min (Mary Josephine).

Courtesy of Wexford Public Libraries Photographic collection.

April 30th - The IRA called a ceasefire. They had neither the men nor the arms to continue the struggle.

May 2nd - Twenty-seven prisoners escaped over the wall at Wexford gaol.

By **May 30th** the Civil War in Ireland was over, but the bitterness and hurt it generated is still now remembered by families one hundred years later. The number of deaths in Wexford and of people from Wexford who died elsewhere is estimated as 32 Free State or National Army, 27 Anti-Treaty IRA and 10 civilians. Not all of these were shootings or executions. Some were caused by accidental discharge of weapons or trying to use handmade missiles. The IRA also cited "hardship" as a cause of death because of untreated wounds, beatings under interrogation and being in the open air constantly on the run.



Wexford gaol.

Courtesy of Lee Robinson