

Micheál Ó Droighneán

‘the most dangerous man at large’

Donncha Ó hÉallaithe

Céad bliain ó shin bhí Micheál Ó Droighneán, ón Tuar Beag, ar cheann de na ceannairí ba thábhachtaí a bhí ag Sinn Féin in Iarthar na hÉireann. Ball den IRB a bhí ann, curtha faoi mhóid an Bhráithreachais roimh Éirí Amach na Cásca ag Éamonn Ceannt, a bhíodh ag tarraingt ar an Spidéal ag an am. Tá Micheál luaite go minic sna tuairiscí rialta a cuireadh RIC an Spidéil agus na Gaillimhe go Caisleán Bhleá Cliath, an ceanncheathrú a bhí ag an fórsaí an choróin in Éirinn. I dtuairisc amháin a cuireadh go Bleá Cliath i Meán Fómhair 1918, dúradh faoin Droighneánach gurb é *‘the most dangerous man at large in the Riding and that he is responsible for the Sinn Féinism that prevails in the Spiddal district’*. Tá an cód a bhí á choinneál ag an RIC ar an Droighneánach scrúdaithe agam agus is ar na tuairiscí sin atá an t-alt seo bunaithe.

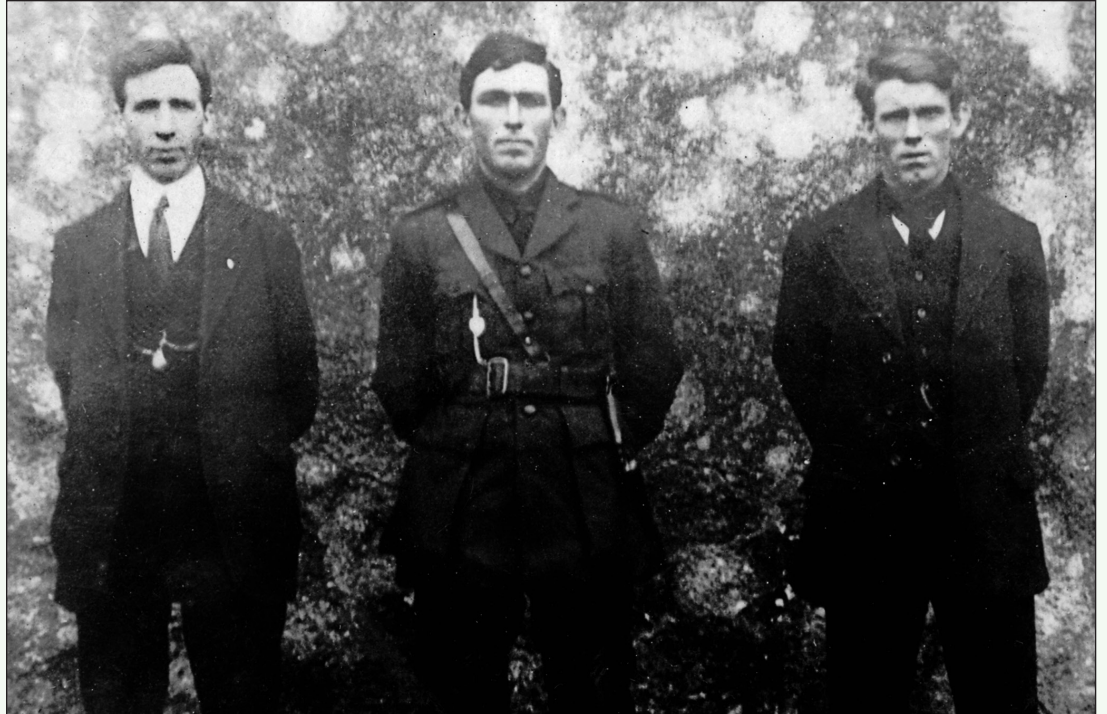
Roimh Éirí Amach na Cásca

Thosaigh an RIC ag cur spéise i Michael Thornton in 1914, mar go mbíodh sé as casadh le Tom Kenny ón gCreachmhaoil¹ i nGaillimh. Deireadh Fómhair 1914, seoladh an tuairisc seo go Caisleán Bhleá Cliath, sínithe ag G.M. Head faoin teideal ‘Sinn Féin at Spiddal’.

‘Spiddal which was one of the most peaceful law abiding portions of this county will now I fear be brought under the influence of Thomas Kenny. Coroner George Nicholls and M. Thornton, National School Teacher, are supporters of Kenny.’

I súile Chaisleán Bhleá Cliath, b’ionann a bheith bainteach le Sinn Féin agus a bheith ar thaobh an Ghearmáine sa Chogadh Mór. Bhí an RIC neirbhíseach faoin Droighneánach, a raibh cónaí air taobh le Cuan na Gaillimhe, ar eagla go mbeadh sé ag tabhairt comharthaí do chriúanna

fomhuireán de chuid na Gearmáine, dá dtiocfaidís isteach sa chuan faoi choim na hoíche. Cuireadh tuairiscí rialta faoin Droighneánach go Caisleán Bhleá Cliath. Seo leanas mír as tuairisc fhada den dáta 25 Eanáir 1915:



Micheál Ó Droighneán atá ar chlé. Ba bhreá linn a fháil amach cé biad na daoine eile. Seo an cur síos faoi a bhí i gcód an RIC, a cuireadh go Caisleán Bhleá Cliath, Meitheamh 1915: ‘Thornton’s description is as follows: 26 years of age; 5ft 7 or 8 ins; rather broad face with some freckles; large nose; fresh complexion; clean shaven; rather long brown hair; dressed in brown tweed suit; brown trilby hat; new boots and carried a tweed overcoat.’
(Le caoinchead ó Mhaidhcín Dan Ó Droighneáin).

1 Bhí Tom Kenny ina eagraí ar an IRB in Oirthir na Gaillimhe. Níor réitigh sé féin agus Liam Mellows le chéile, nuair a cuireadh Mellows go Gaillimh in 1915. B’eisean an bainisteoir ar fhoireann iomána na Gaillimhe ar éirigh leo Craobh Iomána na hÉireann 1923 a bhuachaint. Is ina onóir a ainmníodh Páirc Uí Chionnaith, de chuid an Chumann Lúthchleas Gael i mBleá’n Rí.



Taimín agus Maidhcín Dan Ó Droighneáin, as an Tuar Beag. Ba é Micheál Ó Droighneáin a n-uncail.

'I beg to report that I have been reliably informed the above named [M. Thornton, National Teacher, Spiddal] is doing what he can to spread the Sinn Féin and pro-German movement.....

He resides at Spiddal and is the Teacher of Furbough National School. Most of the people of the locality are very ignorant and semi-literate, and are easily brought round to the way of thinking of a man like this....

He first introduced the G.A.A. movement to Spiddal.... On yesterday he acted as gate keeper at a hurling match in Athenry....

I would respectfully suggest that this man's conduct be brought under the notice of the Commissioners of National Education.....'

Bhíodh an RIC ag fáil eolais ó dhaoine faoin Droighneánach, mar a léiríonn an tuairisc seo faoi thuras a rinne sé go Dún Dealgan le haghaidh Oireachtas na Gaeilge i 1915.

'I beg to state that I have ascertained today that the above named [Micheál Ó Droighneáin], accompanied by Miss Burke N.T., went to Dundalk from Dublin to attend the Oireachtas, which opened there on the 25th inst. My informant had a letter from Miss Burke today, in which

she stated that herself and Thornton were stopping at the Royal Hotel, Clanbrassil St., Dundalk; that they are coming to Dublin for the O' Donavan Rossa funeral on Sunday, 1st prox; and will return to Galway by the excursion train on Sunday night.'

Bhí Miss Burke, as Baile na Cúirte, ina cúntóir ag an am i Scoil na bhForbacha. Phós Máire Burke an Droighneánach i dtús na bliana 1918. Is léir go raibh dlúthchara léi ag sceitheadh eolais leis an RIC.

Sampla é seo den chineál tuairisce a bhíodh á seoladh go Bleá Cliath faoin Droighneánach.

'I beg to report that the above named suspect [Michael Thornton] arrived here cycling at 2p.m. today. Immediately on his arrival he went into O' Donnell's hall, where a meeting of the West Galway District Board of the GAA was being held. This meeting was held for the purpose of arranging hurling fixtures, and was attended by 9 persons, amongst whom was suspects George Nichols, Galway and Tom Kenny, Craughwell. Thornton left the hall on the conclusion of the meeting at 3.15 in the company of Tom Ruane, Carnmore. After talking outside the hall for a few minutes they separated. Thornton then went into O' Gorman's shop where he purchased some stationery. At 4.30pm he met George Nichols in Shop Street, and both remained in conversation for about 15 minutes. Shortly after parting with Nichols he met Miss Burke, who teaches with him in Furbough school and remained in her company moving about the town until 5.50pm, when both left cycling in the direction of Spiddal.' [4 Meán Fómhair 1915]

Tar Éis 1916

Le linn Éirí Amach na Cásca, ghabh an RIC Micheál Ó Droighneán agus cuireadh go Frongoch sa Bhreatain Bheag é. Scaoileadh amach é Lá Nollag 1916. Chuaigh sé ar ais i mbun múinteoireachta i Scoil na bhForbacha. Thug an *National Board of Education* fógra scoir dhó i mí Aibreáin 1917, de bharr an bhaint a bhí aige le hÉirí Amach na Cásca. Ach ní raibh bainisteoir na scoile, an tAth Lally, sásta é a bhriseadh as a phost. Cuireadh i bpríosún arís é ar feadh tréimhse le linn 1917 agus scaoileadh amach é ar an 23 Meitheamh 1917, do réir na tuairisce a chuir an Sáirsint Reidy ar aghaidh ón Spidéal.

'I beg to report the deportee Michl. Thornton, Bohona [sic], Spiddal, returned home last night at 10pm.... Outside it there was a faint cheer by a few youngsters playing pitch and toss at a Crossroads....He attended 1st mass at Spiddal today and wore a Sinn Féin badge, only few of the Sinn Féiners paid any heed to him....'

Choinnigh sé air ag teagasc sna Forbacha, mar a mhínítear sa tuairisc seo ón Sgt Clarke den dáta 9 Nollaig 1917:

'Since Thornton's release from internment he does not associate with extremists in Galway while police are about, evidently fearing that such would prejudice his chance of reinstatement as National Teacher....He is still teaching in Furbough National School, although neither himself nor his assistant (Miss Burke) receive any salary from the Educational Commissioners. It is stated that both are being paid up to the present by the National Teacher's Association'

Ní i ngan fhios don RIC a phós Micheál Ó Droighneán an

cuntóir i Scoil na bhForbacha, Máire de Búrca, i dtús na bliana 1918, mar a léiríonn an tuairisc seo, a sheol Sáirsint Reidy den dáta 9 Eanáir 1918:

I beg to report that the above named suspect [Michael Thornton] got married in Galway yesterday morning and I am told he left for Dublin to spend his honeymoon there.... He intends returning to Spiddal on Saturday next'

Litreacha Gearán

Ní mó ná sásta a bhí roinnt daoine leis a Droighneánach a bheith ar ais i mbun na scoile sna Forbacha agus bhí litreacha gearánacha gan ainm á sheoladh ag na húdaráis faoi. I mí Iúil 1918, cuireadh litir gan ainm, chuig an *Under Secretary* i gCaisleán Bhleá Cliath, ó duine a thug 'A Furbough Parent' air féin, ag gearán faoin Droighneánach.

'Thornton won't allow our children to speak a word of English. He curses the English and the English language and slaps the children if they speak English. He makes them wear Sinn Féin badges and makes them salute the Sinn Féin flag and is always teaching them disloyal and dangerous things.... Our children are taught nothing but ideas of revolution. This is not well known and for the present I won't give my name as his gang might shoot me.'

'It is monstrous,' a dúradh i litir eile a cuireadh chuig an RIC i nGaillimh i mí Lúnasa 1918, *'to see how Thornton is allowed to hold the Furbough School and keeping preaching sedition to the pupils going there and putting in their young minds everything poisonous and disloyal...'*

Bhí RIC An Spidéil den tuairim go raibh an litir áirithe sin curtha isteach ag Mr. Joyce², a bhí ag múineadh i mBearna *'who it seems is anxious to get the Furbough School.'*

Ó tuairiscí an RIC, tá an cuma ar an scéal go raibh an Droighneánach ag fanacht ciúin i dtús na bliana 1918, ach faoi dheireadh na bliana bhí sé lárnach arís in imeachtaí Shinn Féin. Ar an 26 Nollaig, 1918, chuir Sgt M. Reidy tuairisc chuimsitheach isteach faoin méid a bhí ar bun ag Micheál Ó Droighneáin.

'I beg to report that the abovenamed [Michael Thornton of Furbough, Spiddal, Co Galway] with his wife are living with his father at Bohona E. Spiddal for past couple of months. The school has been closed for a considerable time owing to the outbreak of influenza.....for the past six weeks he has become an active Sinn Féiner and came to the front.'

Toghchán 1918

I mí na Samhna 1918, bhásaigh duine de cheannairí Shinn Féin ón Spidéil, Jimmy Ó Flatharta, agus cuireadh é i Reilig an Chnoic le socraid mhíleata³. Bhí an Droighneánach i measc an tslua a ghlac páirt sa tsochraid mhíleata. Seo thíos an tuairisc a

2 Bhí Pádraig Joyce ag múineadh scoile i mBearna ag an am. In 1920 tógadh óna theach é agus maraíodh é, de bharr gur friththeadh amach go raibh sé ag sceitheadh eolais faoin IRA i gceantar Chois Fharraige. Aimsíodh a uaigh in 1998. San fhianaise scríofa a thug Micheál Ó Droighneáin don *Bureau of Military History* (W.S. 1718), insítear an bealach ar friththeadh amach go raibh P.W. Joyce ag sceitheadh eolais ar lucht an IRA. Bhí baint lárnach ag an Droighneánach leis an bpróiseas faoinar fuadaíodh, ar ceistíodh is ar cuireadh Joyce chun báis.

3 Seo mar a scríobhann an Droighneánach faoin sochraid sa bhfianaise a thug sé don *Bureau of Military History*: *'The flu was raging towards the end of 1918, and we lost one of the most determined of the Spiddal Volunteers, Jimmy O' Flaherty, at that time. He was buried in Knock Cemetery. Half a dozen RIC men followed behind the funeral but did not come any nearer to the cemetery than the public road, a quarter of a mile away. We fired 3 volleys over the grave with revolvers. The RIC remained at the head of the boren leading to the graveyard until we had passed through on our way home, but they did not molest nor search us.'*



Micheál Ó Droighneáin in éide airm 1922, lena bheirt mhac, Seán agus Pierce. Tá muid buíoch le Tom Kenny, ó Shiopa Leabhar Uí Chionnaith as an bpictiúr.

chuir an Sgt. Reidy ar aghaidh ar an 26 Nollaig, 1918:

On 19th Nov. '18, we marched in fours with a party of 39 other Sinn Féiners from Spiddal to Knock graveyard, after a hearse conveying the remains of Jas Flaherty for interment there. Flaherty held the rank of Captain of the Sinn Féin volunteers. Before burial one revolver shot was fired and after burial three more were fired. Thornton was amongst the crowd. The police could not identify the persons who fired the shots.....'

I mí na Nollag 1918, tionóladh olltoghchán agus rinne Sinn Féin scrios ar pháirtí John Redmond, ag tógáil 73 suíochán in Éirinn i gcomparáid le 6 suíochán do na Home Rulers. I



Ó chl : Dan   Droighne in, a bhean Sail  Mhicil Liam agus a mac M irt n (sa l r), Tuar Beag.
(Le caoinchead   Taim n Dan   Droighne in)

gConamara, sheas P draig   M ille   Shinn F in in aghaidh an Redmondite, William O' Malley M.P. Bh  Miche l   Droighne in p irteach sa bhfeachtas toghch ana ochta. Tuairisc odh ar an 11 Samhain go raibh an Droighne nach ag bail u airgid sa gceantar le haghaidh costais  an toghch in.

'I beg to report that a levy of 2s. 6p. is being made in Furbough for Election Expenses by Thornton's directions.'

Labhair s  ag cruinnithe taobh amuigh de na s ip il ar son P draig   M ille, iarrth oir Sinn F in.

'On Sunday 1st December 1918 he [Miche l   Droighne in] addressed a Sinn F in meeting in Spiddal for the purpose of furthering the interests of the Sinn F in candidate, Patk O' Malley and told the people all to vote for him.'

'On Sunday 8th December he addressed a meeting at Knock, Spiddal....'

Toghadh P draig   M ille ina fheisire do Shinn F in agus bh  ceili radh ag Sinn F in sa Spid al de r ir tuairisce a chuir Sgt. Reidy isteach ar an 30 Nollaig 1918.

'I beg to report that on last night, Sunday 29th isnt. about 8pm at a bonfire lighted in celebration of the return of Patk O' Malley, Sinn F iner as M.P., for Connemara. Michael Thornton was addressing a crowd of about 150 Sinn F iners in Irish...

Soon after a party of 100 Sinn F in volunteers in fours formation marched on the road through the village, on the Galway road, back again by the fire, on the Inveran road.... The volunteers marched in companies with a commander a couple of paces in front of each company. Thornton marched on the left of centre company..... The night was dark and identification was difficult.'

A Phost Faighte ar Ais

N or  irigh leis an bhfeachtas a bh  ar bun go bhfaighf  r idh leis an Droighne nach   Scoil na bhForbacha. Dhi ultaigh bainisteoir na scoile, an tAth Lally,   a shac il agus sa deireadh

gh ill an Bord Oideachais agus ceapadh sa phost ar s   ag t s na bliana 1920, in ainneoin go raibh s  i gceannas ar  glaigh an IRA in Oirthear Chonamara. Cuireadh litir gan ainm go Caisle n Bhle  Cliath ag tabhairt le fios go raibh Miche l   Droighne in le bheith athcheapaithe mar mh inteoir i Scoil na bhForbacha:

'It has come to our hearing that Thornton, the ex-Schoolmaster of Furbagh is to be appointed to his school by the National Board..... There is not in the West of Ireland a more devilish ruffian and if now appointed by the Board, all loyal people and all loyal teachers must be Sinn F in or be shot. There is no second course....'

An tuairisc deireannach a scr daigh m  th inig s   n Sgt P. Hanly  n Spid al ar an 29 Bealtaine 1920:

'I beg to report that I have been reliably informed that the above named [Michael Thornton] has been permanently appointed school master at Furbough by the National Education Board. He is presently teaching there and resides in a gate lodge owned by Major Smith, Furbough.'

Ba dheacair Miche l   Droighne in a chlo . Tar  is Chogadh na Saoirse, lean s  an Coile nach agus ghlac s  taobh an tSaorst it. Le linn an Chogaidh Chathartha, is cos il go raibh s  ina gobharn oir ar Phr os n na Gaillimhe, agus comr adaithe d  chuid   Chogadh na Saoirse, faoi ghlas aige.

Fuair s  b s i 1964 agus t  s  curtha i Reilig Rath in.

N ta Bu ochais: Gan c namh   Mhaidhc n Dan agus agus a dhearth ir Taim n Dan   Droighne in, An Tuar Beag, An Spid al, n  fh adfa  an t-alt seo a chur le ch ile. Bu ochas chomh maith le Tom Kenny,   Siopa Leabhar Kennys i nGaillimhe, agus le Leabharlann Hardiman in O EG, a chuir c d an RIC ar f il ar mhicrif s. ■



Comhghairdeas do Chumann Forbartha Chois Fharraige   Catherine Connolly TD

Sonra  teagmh la:
Oifig Toghlaih
4, Teach na Tr cht la
Sr id Thobar an Iarla
Gaillimh