**Jack Reidy** [1] b. 30-12-1895 – d. 15-04-1921

John (Jack) Reidy was a native of Rathanny in the parish of Ballymacelligott. He was born on 30 December 1895 and worked as a tailor, having been apprenticed to his uncle who was a master tailor in the neighbouring townland of Kilbane in Ballymacelligott. Jack Reidy was a member of the Ballymacelligott Company of the Irish Volunteers, though he was not in the active service unit. His brother, Paddy, was a lieutenant in the company.

In January 1920 Jack Reidy was one of eleven Ballymacelligott men arrested following an attack the previous week on Serjeant at Law Alexander M. Sullivan, KC, at Clounalour, Tralee. This senior crown lawyer had been involved in a controversial legal case between Ballydwyer Creamery and a large business firm in Tralee which controlled a rival creamery in the parish. Although he had been on Roger Casement's legal defence team in his Old Bailey trial in 1916, Sullivan was opposed to the Republican movement and had actively recruited for the British Army during the Great War. However, the evidence against Jack Reidy and his co-defendants was slight and they were acquitted of the charge of the attempted murder of Sullivan.

Reidy was now considered by the RIC to be a Republican activist and this led to his death the following year. On 15 April 1921 Major John McKinnon was shot dead on Tralee Golf Course by Tralee marksman Con Healy. McKinnon was the commander of 'H' company of the Auxiliaries, which was based in the town. On Christmas Eve 1920 he had killed John Leen and Mossy Reidy at Ballydwyer, Ballymacelligott. Fearless by nature, 'The Major' was not deterred by several attempts to kill him. His Auxiliary comrades remembered him remarking that if he were to be killed, it would be John Cronin, the captain of the Ballymacelligott Company, who would probably be responsible. Thus, on the night of his assassination, several lorry loads of Auxiliaries travelled to Ballymacelligott to exact revenge on the parish for their commander's death [2].

The Auxiliaries swooped on Ballydwyer on the evening of 15 April 1921, hours after McKinnon's death. Jack Reidy and a fellow tailor named Jim Clifford were busy at work completing an order for a suit in the house of Phil Reidy, Jack's uncle, who lived in nearby Kilbane. Phil was not in the house that evening. The cottage stood on relatively high ground, which was given the name Phil's Height, and there was only a single door. Distracted as they were, Reidy and Clifford were unaware of the presence of the enemy until they heard the vehicles approaching the cottage. Hearing the noise of the engines, the two men rushed from the house and ran into the fields. As the Auxiliaries approached in the moonlit night they saw the two men fleeing. They opened fire and Reidy was shot and died at the scene of gunshot wounds to the head and body. Clifford hid in a drain that ran along a ditch. Despite searching within feet of him and prodding the briary ditch with their bayonets, the Auxiliaries were unable to find Clifford and after an hour returned to their vehicles. They placed the body of Jack Reidy on a lorry and brought it to his mother's house. Opening the door, they threw the remains on the floor and left. The Auxiliaries then proceeded to burn several houses in the locality, including the parochial house at nearby Clogher [3].

Volunteer Jack Reidy was buried in the Republican Plot in O'Brennan Cemetery near his home in Ballymacelligott.

References

[1] Tim Horgan, *Dying for the Cause - Kerry's Republican Dead* pp. 265 – 266,

published by Mercier Press, Cork in 2015

[2] Ernie O'Malley, *The Men will talk to Me – Kerry Interviews* (2012), interview with Denis Quille.

[3] *Information* from Dan Brosnan, nephew of Jack Reidy.

**Death Certificate**

John Reidy b. 30-12-1895 - d. 15-04-1921

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Superintendent Registrar's District Tralee

Registrar's District Castleisland

DEATHS Registered in the District of Castleisland

in the Union of Tralee

in the County of Kerry

No. (1). 420

Date and Place of Death (2). 1921 Fifteenth April

…..ly of Rathanny Co. Kerry

Name and Surname (3) John Reidy

Sex (4). M

Condition (5). bachelor

Age last birthday (6). 23 years

Rank, Profession or Occupation (7). Tailor

Certified Cause of Death shock and haemorrhage

and Duration of Illness (8). due to gunshot wounds

in the head and body

Homicidal

Signature, Qualifications and Certificate received from

Residence of informant (9). Military Court of Inquiry

Inquiry held 19th April 1921

When Registered (10). Thirteenth May 1921

Signature of Registrar (11). John Rice Registrar.

John (Jack) Reidy RIP – report in: **The Freeman’s Journal, Monday, 18 April 1921**

**Trail of Fire in Kerry**

**Many Houses Burned in Reprisal for Shooting of Auxiliary**

**A Presbytery in Flames**

**Man Shot Dead While Running Towards His Home**

Reprisals of a widespread and devastating character followed the shooting of Major MacKinnon, commandant of “H” Coy, RIC Auxiliary Division, at Tralee Golf Links, on Friday.

The district surrounding Ballymacelligott was reduced to a waste of shattered homesteads. Columns of smoke ascended from the ruins of what were once comfortable homes.

Farmers, with their wives and children, fled in terror from their burning houses, many of them in night attire. Even animals suffered, and in one of the destroyed out-buildings, some calves were roasted to death.

Among the premises set a blaze was the Presbytery at Clogher, from which the Parish Priest and curate had to depart hurriedly. The building was completely destroyed, as was also the Ballydwyer Co-operative Creamery.

One man, who was running towards his house when the lorries were approaching, was shot dead.

## Destruction of Ballydwyer Creamery

The shooting of Major MacKinnon, of the Military Division, at Tralee Golf Links on Friday, was followed by extensive burnings in the locality.

Several farmhouses, out-offices and hay-sheds in the district around Ballymacelligott were assigned to the flames, and when Saturday dawned, a big area was veritably a smoking mass of smoldering ruiins. The people fled from their homes when the burnings commenced.

John Reidy, a tailor, who was in his uncle’s house when he heard the lorries approaching, ran towards his home, and was shot dead on the way.

**Flight of Two Priests**

The Presbytery near Clogher’s Catholic Church, was one of the buildings which suffered. Rev. P. Trant, P.P. and his curate, Rev. Father McDonnell, had to flee, leaving valuable furniture, plate and clothing to the mercy of the flames. The Presbytery and all its contents were completely consumed. The extent of the damage loss is estimated at several thousand, but the suffering endured by the people cannot be measured by monetary standards.

Their homes ablaze, they fled in terror without an opportunity of saving any of their property. Weeping children were snatched from their beds by distracted parents, and carried away in night attire. Furniture and all belongings, except the clothes people were wearing at the time were lost in the flames.

**A Creamery Destroyed**

Ballydwyer Co-operative Creamery which had partially been wrecked the previous November, and was since reconstructed and fitted with new machinery, was also destroyed on Friday night. The entire building, with valuable plant, machinery and stock, was reduced to ruins.

Among the farm-houses burned down were those of John Hayes, Jerry McEllistrim, Ballydwyer; Widow McEllistrim, Ahane; Mrs. Reidy, school teacher; Mrs. Sullivan, widow of a labourer and Frank Hill. Farm out-offices with hay and corn were destroyed on the premises of Richard McEllistrim, whose calves were roasted to death.

The houses of Thomas Groves, George Groves and Widow Carmody were also fired, but they were saved from destruction.

**Panic on the Links**

**Shot Rang Out as dead Major was Hitting the Ball**

A later account of the shooting of Major MacKinnon on Tralee Golf Links, states that he was in the act of hitting a ball, when a shot rang out from behind a fence, twenty or thirty yards away.

The Major fell, wounded through the forehead, and everybody on the Links fled in disarray; some throwing themselves on the ground.

After the Major fell, two men jumped over the fence and fired further shots into the prostrate body. He was taken in a motorcar to the military barracks. Passing through the town his moans were heard, and this was the first intimation the townspeople had of the shooting.

Shops which were closed on Friday evening have reopened, and the town of Tralee had not on Saturday been involved in the destruction which took place over the surrounding countryside.