

# Limerick's Forgotten Son: Sir Thomas Myles (1857-1937) — Sportsman, Surgeon, Sailor and Gun-Runner

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## 1 Introduction

In 1912, the House of Commons in London passed a Home Rule Bill for Ireland, which prompted the formation in turn of the anti-Home Rule Ulster Volunteers (in January 1913) and the pro-Home Rule Irish Volunteers (in the following November). Worried Dublin Castle authorities in early December 1913 invoked a prohibition on the import of arms and ammunition into Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Despite this prohibition, in April 1914, the Ulster Volunteers landed 24,000 German rifles and three million rounds of ammunition, mostly at Larne, without any interference from the civil or military authorities.<sup>2</sup> Thus it came about that around the same time, Michael, The O'Rahilly, Director of Arms of the Irish Volunteers, in conjunc-

tion with Erskine Childers, Sir Roger Casement and other prominent nationalists, began planning the importation of arms for the nationalist organisation. While the resulting landing of 900 rifles at Howth in July 1914 and its tragic aftermath will be familiar to most readers,<sup>3</sup> the subsequent associated landing of a further 600 rifles which took place at Kilcoole, county Wicklow on August 1, 1914 remains one of the lesser known gun-running operations in Irish history.

Of the three prominent Irish yachtsmen involved in importing these arms in 1914, two remain household names in Ireland today, not least because they came from families which played a leading role in Irish history over several generations. The third, however, has largely been forgotten. The three were Erskine Childers, skipper of the *Asgard*, whose son and namesake succeeded Éamon de Valera as 4th President of Ireland in 1973; Conor O'Brien (1880–1952), skipper of the *Kelpie*,<sup>4</sup> a Limerickman whose grandfather William Smith O'Brien was sentenced to death for his rôle in the Young Ireland rebellion of 1848; and Sir Thomas Myles, skipper of the *Chotah*. That this incident is remembered in the Ireland of today is due more than anything to the prominent role of the Childers family in subsequent Irish history and to the use of the name *Asgard II* for a sail-training

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\*I would like to thank a number of people for assistance in compiling this article. My distant cousin, Wendy Parker of Juneau, Alaska, who is also related to the subject of this article, provided me with a copy of a Myles family history written in the 1870s by her ancestor, Alderman Zachary Myles. Tomás Ó Broin supplied me with extracts from his extensive collection of newspaper articles. Robert Mills, Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, provided access to relevant material from the Kirkpatrick Archive, especially the vital clue which enabled me to track down Wendy Parker. Dr. Steven Cocks permitted me to quote from his grandfather's family history. Erin Gibbons of the Save The Asgard campaign provided leads when I was investigating the fate of the *Chotah*. Tom Donovan, Tony Browne and Larry Walsh displayed commendable patience in the face of numerous missed deadlines. Helen O'Hara and Jean O'Hara of Trinity College supplied details of Sir Thomas's education there.

<sup>1</sup>Scannell (1995).

<sup>2</sup>Lydon (1998, p.328).

<sup>3</sup>There was a brief account in a recent issue of this *Journal* (Ryan 2003, p.5).

<sup>4</sup>My cousin and namesake has ensured in his book (de Bhaldraithe 1996) that Edward Conor Marshal O'Brien, to give him his full name, and his yachts, *Kelpie*, *Saoirse* and *Ilen*, will not be forgotten.

vessel.

Myles, a member of a family which had been prominent in Limerick City for many generations, died childless and had no ancestor of national or international fame, so appears to have been forgotten by history. In this article, I hope to rectify this omission. As shall be seen, even without his political involvement, Myles's medical and sporting achievements alone would merit greater acknowledgement than history has heretofore accorded him.

## 2 Family Background

The Myles family has been in Ireland since the time of Cromwell and in Limerick, where it is commemorated today in a street name, since a generation or so later. The principal branches of the family descended from two brothers born around the year 1740, John of Boherboy (d. 1810) and Zachary of Thomondgate. John's daughter Eliza (c.1785–1862) married her first cousin, Zachary's son George (1782–1832). Their son, Alderman Zachary Myles (1812–1897), wrote an invaluable, if undated, family history some time around the late 1870s.

According to Joyce (1995), Myles' Street and James' Street, which today connect Pery Street to Upper Mallow Street, are named after James Myles, 'a property owner in the area'. This is undoubtedly James Myles (c.1785–1847), son of Zachary of Thomondgate and uncle of Alderman Zachary, of whom the latter wrote:

He had a mania for building, neglected his business for it, and sunk his capital in houses. He got financially embarrassed and unable to meet his engagements. His brothers Tom and George arranged his affairs, on condition that he ceased from building. They had a horror of a fondness for brick and mortar. James became largely indebted to Tom, whose son Thomas eventually became possessed of his property.

The latter Thomas (c.1822–1898) resided at 4 The Crescent, which remained the residence of his family

until at least 1953, when his daughter Barbara Alys died.

Sir Thomas Myles came from the other branch of the family, being a greatgrandson of John of Boherboy. Alderman Zachary wrote:

John Myles of Boherboy . . . took a lease of the house called *Claret Hall* in Boherboy, with the ground attached, on part of which he built four houses, one for each of his [three] sons and [another] for his daughter Eliza. Hannah [another daughter] married Thomas Parker<sup>5</sup> of Clarina, Co. Limerick [and] lived in the old house called *Claret Hall*.

[The sons of John of Boherboy,] James, Thomas and John had on part of [the *Claret Hall* grounds] a woollen factory, making blankets and stuffs which they sold wholesale. They subsequently had another in Roche's St., worked by Steam Power.

They did not agree, and dissolved the partnership. The quarrel became so bitter that they would not agree on the division of the Property, of which they made 3 equal parts, so that the Machinery, which as a whole was valuable, was eventually sold as old metal.

The factory was divided into 3 parts. Thomas bought James's share. John built a dividing wall. When erected, Tom said it encroached on his part, which when measured was found to be so. Tom offered to pay the value, which John would not agree to. The wall had to be taken down, and erected on the exact place. . . .

The Boherboy branch cared for no one but themselves, caused perhaps by their not knowing what want was. They were close, hard working people, who made their money by industrious habits, and always had sufficient to meet their requirements.

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<sup>5</sup>The present author is descended from Thomas Parker's brother Craven. The two Parker brothers both died in Christmas week 1840.

The sons of the eldest of these three brothers, James, eventually emigrated to Australia and those of the youngest brother John to Canada and England. The middle brother, Thomas (c.1770–1833) married Ellen (or Elenor) Peacocke (d. 1818) and had a family of two sons and four daughters. The sons, John Myles (c.1808–1871) and his younger brother, known as Little Tom (1813–1874), remained in Limerick. Cocks (1948) gives an account of their generation which is more flattering than the Alderman's, but may be somewhat exaggerated:<sup>6</sup>

The Myleses were wool merchants and ship owners. The brothers sent their sister Rebecca O'Loughlin over [to Canada] on one of their ships with two servants and a complete household outfit. As long as they lived they sent her money boxes of clothes, linens, silks and woollens annually. The ship docked at Québec and on the return trip took a cargo of lumber. The Myles daughters were educated by governesses and some went to private school. After the boys were finished they were sent on "the Grand Tour" of a year on the Continent. Then they went into business with their father and, after his death [in 1833] continued as partners. The Myles brothers married in Ireland and had large families. When one brother died his will was probated for £150,000.<sup>7</sup>

Compiling a more factual account of the history of the Myles family business is complicated by the several changes to street names and house numbers over the centuries. No other reference to *Claret Hall* appears to have survived,<sup>8</sup> but it may have been located close to the present-day Parnell Street (previously Nelson Street), opposite the top of Roches Street. Fitzgerald & M'Gregor (1827) contains a map showing that, at that time, "Boher Boy" continued

through what are now Parnell Street and Wickham Street to the southern end of High Street. Lenihan (1967, p.370) notes that Nelson Street was given its name in 1804, the year prior to Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson's death at the Battle of Trafalgar. Pigot's 1824 Directory confirms that the name Nelson-street was in common usage by that year, while the last reference to a Myles business in Boherboy in any city directory appears to be that in Deane's 1838 directory.<sup>9</sup> Despite this, the family historian, Alderman Zachary, writing in the late 1870s, still describes this branch of the family as the 'Boherboy branch'. Numerous descendants of John Myles of Boherboy occupied houses in this part of Parnell Street, some as recently as the mid-twentieth century, suggesting that these were the houses which he originally built for his sons and daughter. For example, Ashe (1891-'2) lists 'Parker M., pawnbroker' (widow of a grandson) at no. 6; 'Myles Z., wool merchant' (the family historian) at no. 11; and 'Trousdel A.' (a granddaughter) at no. 13.<sup>10</sup> The obvious explanation is that the earlier generations of the Myles family had lived in the same location even before Nelson achieved fame. In other words, the family probably never moved, but the street name changed.

Over the years, the family business which had been inherited<sup>11</sup> by John Myles and his brother Little Tom in 1833 occupied several premises in Upper Roches Street and the adjoining Nelson Street, Anne Street and Catherine Street, as well as elsewhere in the city.<sup>12</sup> J. Myles of Roches Street is listed among

<sup>9</sup>The Limerick City Trades Register at <http://www.limerickcorp.ie/webapps/TradesReg/TradesReg.aspx> was an invaluable aid in following the movements of the Myleses around the city. **It is a great pity that the compilers of early city directories did not include street directories, but the records in the Valuation Office provide an excellent substitute. Consult them again and copy a map!**

<sup>10</sup>Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Trousdel had in fact died many years before this directory appeared; their families presumably continued to reside at the same addresses.

<sup>11</sup>**Index to Wills: Thomas Myles, City of Limerick, clothier, 1834. There is a transcript of this will in the National Archives (IWR/1834/F/108). Get a copy of it! The executor was John Myles of Limerick, presumably Thomas's son.**

<sup>12</sup>Tom Donovan is procuring a copy of Advert Myles Bros Roches St., Coal Merchants from the *Limerick*

<sup>6</sup>I e-mailed Steven Cocks on November 26, 2004 asking if I can double-check this quote anywhere.

<sup>7</sup>The *Calendars of Wills and Administrations* in the National Archives record a more modest 'Effects under £16,000' for each of the brothers!

<sup>8</sup>Note to Larry Walsh: Can you find it on any old city map in the Museum?

the city's wool combers and clothiers in Deane's 1838 directory, which also lists T. & J. Myles of Upper Denmark Street and Roches Street as iron and coal merchants and T. & J. Myles of Boherbuoy as pawnbrokers. The brothers again appear in partnership as Myles Brothers, Iron Merchants, Roches Street, in the 1840 *Triennial Directory*, in which John Myles of Nelson Street is listed separately as a wool comber and clothier, while Thomas & John Myles of Anne Street are listed as merchants. That directory also lists Thomas & James (*sic*) Myles of Nelson Street as pawnbrokers, which must be either an error or a very out-of-date reference to Thomas senior and his brother James who had dissolved their partnership long before their deaths in 1833 and 1825 respectively.<sup>13</sup> In *Slater's Munster Directory* of 1846, Myles Brothers of Roches Street make numerous appearances: as Coal Merchants, Corn Merchants, Herring Merchants and Ship Owners. John & Thomas Myles, Wool Combers and Clothiers, are listed at 9 Nelson Street in that Directory, while J. Myles of Roches Street appears on his own as an agent for Mariner's General Life Insurance.

The first of the brothers to marry was John, whose marriage to Mary Myles (1820–1853), who was also his second cousin, took place on February 19, 1852, while he was still living in Nelson Street. Mary, in the words of Alderman Zachary, 'died without issue', within a year of the marriage. Civil registration of deaths was still over a decade in the future, so the cause of Mary's death was not recorded, but it is worth noting that, even among the merchant classes, complications from childbirth were probably the leading cause of death for young married women at that time.

In the interim, on July 29, 1852, the younger brother, Thomas, by then in his 40th year, had married 16-year-old Sarah Goggin, second daughter of Edward Hodges Goggin<sup>14</sup> of Burtonhill, county

Clare, by his wife Prudence Bradshaw.

John soon remarried,<sup>15</sup> to a younger Prudence Bradshaw (*c.*1833–1904), daughter of William Bradshaw, later described as 'of Kylebeg, county Tipperary'. While confirmation has not yet been forthcoming, it would not be surprising to find that the two Prudence Bradshaws were aunt and niece, making the two Mrs. Myleses first cousins. There are five townlands called Kylebeg in Tipperary, but Griffith's Valuation, compiled around the time of the marriage of John Myles and Prudence Bradshaw, records no Bradshaw in any of the five. Perhaps John's second wife was the Prudence Bradshaw, daughter of William Bradshaw and Anne (Worrell), who had been christened at St. John's on February 7, 1833. If so, it would appear that, like his probable brother-in-law, Edward Hodges Goggin, William Bradshaw left the city in middle age for the life of a country gentleman.<sup>16</sup>

Little Tom Myles had already set up home in Catherine Street when he married and John followed suit soon afterwards. Valuation Office records and other sources show that the two brothers and their growing families lived for several years a few doors away from each other, Thomas residing at the then no. 19 Catherine Street until 1858, when he moved next door to no. 18, while John continued to live at no. 15. The earlier city directories do not list the residences of those in business in the city, but we know that John was residing in Catherine Street by the time that his first child was baptised in 1855. The number of the house is not given in the baptismal register until the baptism of Henry, the seventh child recorded, in 1863, but records in the Valuation Office confirm that John Myles lived at what was then no. 15 from at least 1856 until the mid-1860s.

The future Sir Thomas Myles was the third of ten children<sup>17</sup> born to John and his second wife, Pru-

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**Reporter of September 28, 1841 for reproduction here.**

<sup>13</sup>**Double-check the original directory!**

<sup>14</sup>Edward was a son of William Goggin, of Mary St., Limerick, printer, bookseller and landowner, by his second wife Susanna Morgan. See Dore (1979, p.83) for Susanna's ancestry. Having originally followed his father's occupation, Edward later gave up the life of a city merchant for that of a country

squire at Burtonhill.

<sup>15</sup>**Still need second marriage certificate from Joyce House!**

<sup>16</sup>**Phone John Bradshaw of Tipperary again in January 2005 to see if he has found any information on these Bradshaws.**

<sup>17</sup>The baptisms of ten children from this family are recorded in the registers of St. Michael's Church (of Ireland). An apparent eleventh child, Eleanor, is named as a beneficiary in the

dence. He was born on April 20, 1857, probably at the family home in Catherine Street,<sup>18</sup> and baptised at St. Michael's Church on the following May 27.

Baptismal and birth records show that both brothers moved their family residences to Mallow Street around 1863 or 1864, John to 13 Upper Mallow Street and Tom to 15 Lower Mallow Street.<sup>19</sup> Tom later moved again, to Victoria Terrace. His will does not give a house number in Victoria Terrace, and his widow had moved again, to The Crescent, by the time she proved the will.

Through the 1850s and 1860s, the two families continued to grow and the business to prosper. In Slater's 1856 directory, John & Thomas Myles of Roches Street were listed as corn merchants. In Henry & Coghlan's 1867 directory, John & Thomas Myles of Roches Street and Catherine Street were corn merchants and also wool merchants and brokers. In Slater's 1870 directory, John & Thomas Myles of Roches Street made multiple appearances, as agents for patent manures, corn merchants, manure manufacturers and agents, wool merchants and brokers. In that directory, Mr. John Myles of 13 Upper Mallow Street made his only appearance among the nobility, gentry and clergy. His elevation to this category was perhaps justified by the fact that he left an estate of close to £16,000 when he died at his home in Upper Mallow Street on May 4, 1871.

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1869 will of her aunt Anne Myles (National Archives of Ireland, 4/208/51, Limerick Will Book 1867-75, p.204). I have been unable to trace any other record of Eleanor's existence. Could she have been a child of the first marriage? Did John's first wife really die in childbirth? Is this the Eleanor Myles who d. 21 May 1880 and is buried in Kilmurry? **Need that Eleanor's death certificate from Joyce House!**

<sup>18</sup>The numbering of the premises on Catherine Street has changed in the intervening century and a half. Valuation Office records at the time of Sir Thomas's birth used two numbering schemes: the Myles family home, on the corner of Catherine Street and Upper Cecil Street, was no. 13 on the accompanying map, but local no. 15. **Is it today's Flannery's pub, no. 20 in the phone book but possibly encompassing no. 21 also, or no. 21, W. F. Humphries, telegraph superintendent in Ashe (1891-'2)? Get a publishable copy of the contemporary Valuation Office map, confirm this, and mark all the Myles properties!**

<sup>19</sup>Slater's 1870 directory lists Mr. Thomas Myles of 13 Lower Mallow Street among the nobility, gentry and clergy. **Check this!**

John and Little Tom, as already mentioned, had four sisters. Anne (1806-1870), the eldest sister, never married. On her mother's early death (during the 1818 epidemic of typhus fever in Limerick) she assumed management of the family home and eventually became a partner in the business; her cousin Zachary described her as a keen business woman, although her rôle in the business appears to have been ignored in its official title, in the city directories, and in probate matters: she left 'Effects under £800' a matter of months before her brother's estate was estimated at twenty times this sum. Eliza (1811-1850), the second sister, married her first cousin James Parker (1811-1854), also a wool merchant, clothier and pawnbroker, whose descendants from a second marriage kept up the last-mentioned business in Parnell Street in living memory.<sup>20</sup> Ellen (c.1814-1879) married William Phayer (1810-1879), who had a coach factory at 58 O'Connell Street (now the County Library) and lived at Indiaville, Corbally.<sup>21</sup> The youngest sister, Rebecca (1818-1884), married Anthony O'Loughlin (1817-1896), a minister of the Episcopal Church, and emigrated with him to Canada.<sup>22</sup>

The three partners in the Myles family business died in quick succession at relatively early ages, Anne on August 18, 1870, aged 63; John on May 4, 1871, also aged 63; and Little Tom on March 20, 1874, aged 60. None of the next generation had reached their majority by this time, which perhaps explains the failure of the fathers to make explicit provision in their wills for the continuation of the family business into another generation. In his will, John left all his property, both that owned as partner in J. and T. Myles Corn and Wool Merchants and other personal assets, to his wife Prudence in trust for whichever two of his sons would first survive to the age of 21 years (Jack and Thomas). Little Tom's will makes

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<sup>20</sup>Eliza's own children did not remain in Limerick with their stepmother, but moved to Ballinasloe, county Galway, and eventually to Australia, where their descendants remain to the present day.

<sup>21</sup>See Phayre (2001) for an excellent history of the Phayer/Phayre family.

<sup>22</sup>Rev. Orrin Giddings Cocks, who wrote the equally impressive history of the O'Loughlin family cited above (Cocks 1948) was married to a granddaughter of Anthony and Rebecca.

no reference to any continuing partnership with his sister-in-law Prudence, but leaves all his property to his wife Sarah, in trust for their three surviving children. By this time, however, the trend away from business into the professions and the Church had already begun. The eldest of the next generation, Little Tom's son John, who became a barrister, must have begun his legal studies before his father's death.<sup>23</sup> His cousins Jack<sup>24</sup> and Thomas were both to commence the study of medicine shortly afterwards.

The widows Prudence and Sarah may have continued to run the business briefly after 1874. The corn stores in Roches Street are listed under Thomas Myles Corn Merchants in Bassett's 1875 directory. While this listing may refer to the surviving brother, who died in 1874, the 1877 listing of Thomas Myles, corn merchant, Roches Street, with a residence at 13 Upper Mallow Street, appears to refer to the subject of this article, by then probably a medical student in Dublin. Having been left to raise her six surviving children, who ranged in age from four up to sixteen when their father died, on her own, Prudence may not have had the time or the inclination to devote herself to continuing the business. Mrs. Myles continued to be listed at 13 Upper Mallow Street in city directories, appearing, for reasons unknown, as 'Mrs. Proteus Myles' in Bassett's 1879 directory.<sup>25</sup>

It is easy to speculate as to why two scions of a successful merchant family chose medicine over Mammom. A century before Donogh O'Malley's reforms brought free secondary education for all, there was no need for a points system to ration an inadequate supply of places in medical schools. No misguided individual would have told Jack and Thomas Myles

that they were wasting their points by not studying medicine, but belonging to the small minority who had a secondary education would naturally have directed them towards the professions.

Jack and Thomas were exposed to death and illness from an early age. By the time they lost their father in 1871, when they were sixteen and fourteen years old respectively, they had already seen the deaths of their aunt Anne and four of their siblings. Anne Bradshaw Myles, a year younger than Jack and a year older than Thomas, must have died before her sister and near namesake Anna Charlotte was born in June 1864.<sup>26</sup> Anna Charlotte in turn lived for just over a year. The two brothers next after Thomas in age, George and James, both succumbed to an outbreak of scarlet fever within a week of each other in the December preceding their father's death.

It was, however, more likely that the influence of several doctors in the extended Myles family helped to spark the young brothers' interest in medicine. A near neighbour at 10 Upper Mallow Street was the prominent Limerick doctor and Town Councillor, Joseph Parker (c.1816–1881), who had been married to Elizabeth Myles (1815–1858), a first cousin of John and Little Tom.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Parker's son and namesake, a couple of years older than the Myles brothers, was already studying medicine. All seven sons of the family historian, Alderman Zachary, studied medicine. Henry George (1857–1896), the youngest of this septet, was baptised at St. Michael's exactly one week after Thomas, his second cousin. Another second cousin, Parker Arthur Smith<sup>28</sup> (1843–1891), who had graduated in 1864, was in the Medical Department of the Army, serving in such exotic loca-

<sup>23</sup>**Get his King's Inns records!**

<sup>24</sup>A Canadian cousin Beulah Craig (granddaughter of Rebecca Myles and Anthony O'Loughlin) recalled that Thomas's elder brother, John or Jack, had also chosen medicine as a career; this is confirmed by his mother's obituary in the *Limerick Chronicle* of September 29, 1904. **Track him down! His age suggests he was the John Myles B.A. T.C.D. Aest. 1877. Thom's Directory suggests he was the John Myles M.B. B.Ch. Dub. FRCSI practising in Limerick in 1890. But that man had only been awarded his Dublin degrees in 1888 and 1889 and doesn't appear in Limerick City directories. Is there anything in the Kirkpatrick archive to help?**

<sup>25</sup>**Check original directory!**

<sup>26</sup>In 1950, the novelist Alice Louise Dwyer-Joyce (née Myles), in updating the Myles family history originally written by her great-grandfather Alderman Zachary Myles in the 1870s, added a list of the surviving children of John and Prudence Myles, numbering only six: 'John, Thomas, Prudence, Henry, Edward, Louisa'. This is further evidence both that Anne Bradshaw Myles died in infancy.

<sup>27</sup>Despite the business dispute between their fathers, the cousins were apparently on good terms: Dr. Parker was a beneficiary under the 1879 will of his wife's first cousin Mrs. Ellen Phayer. (Phayre 2001, p.82)

<sup>28</sup>Son of John Smith (c.1814–1884) and Grace Parker (1806–1862), daughter of Thomas Parker (c.1750–1840) and Hannah Myles (c.1773–1852).

tions as Madras and west Africa. Only two of the many Dr. Myleses returned to practice medicine in Limerick after qualification, namely the Alderman's son George (1842–1901) and the latter's son and namesake. The elder George also succeeded his father as a city Alderman.

A few years later, another Thomas Myles, son of Little Tom and thus first cousin to the subject of this article, also studied medicine at Trinity College, Dublin, graduating nine years after his older cousin.<sup>29</sup>

The six surviving children of John and Prudence Myles all lived to adulthood and were named in their mother's 1904 will. Thomas was not the only member of the family to achieve a prominent role in Irish life. The youngest son, Edward Albert (1865–1951), became a leading cleric in the Church of Ireland, ending his career as Dean of Dromore. Census returns reveal, however, that the two surviving daughters were not obliged to enter professions. In the census return for 13 Upper Mallow Street on March 31, 1901, the household comprised the widowed Prudence Myles (68), and her unmarried daughters Prudence E. Myles (39) and Louisa V. Myles (34), together with a cook and housemaid. The word 'None' is marked across the 'Rank, profession or occupation' column opposite the first three names.<sup>30</sup>

By the time she made her will on April 12, 1904, Prudence Myles had moved to 25 Barrington Street, where she died on September 27 of that year.

After her mother's death, Louisa Victoria, known as Lucy, lived with her brother Edward in county Down, but her remains were brought back to Kilmurry for burial after she died in 1937, just a few months before her brother Thomas. The burial register gives her address as Tullylish Rectory, although Edward had become Dean Of Dromore four years earlier after 37 years as Rector/Vicar in Tullylish.<sup>31</sup> Prudence junior, still a spinster at the age of 42 when her mother died, apparently married late in life, for an obituary<sup>32</sup> of Sir Thomas notes that he was sur-

vived by one sister Mrs. Mervyn, Donegal Park avenue, Antrim road, Belfast, while another obituary<sup>33</sup> mentions a wreath sent by 'John and Prue'. The mother's will had made provision for the possible marriage of either of her daughters, although neither was then in the first flush of youth!<sup>34</sup>

The records of Trinity College Dublin reveal that Thomas received his early education at ...<sup>35</sup> and was admitted to Trinity on ... aged ...

I have been unable to date to trace any descendant of either John Myles or his brother Little Tom still living at the time of writing.

### 3 Sportsman

Thomas Myles first came to public attention as a sportsman while still in his teens.

Bruce Murray, president of Limerick Boat Club and described as 'the doyen of oarsmen', was the guest of honour at a club dinner in the Glentworth Hotel in 1938.<sup>36</sup> At the dinner, Murray, then 83 years old, recalled that his first entry into sport was in 1873, when he played in the first rugby match that was ever played in Limerick. Another member of the team was Sir Thomas Myles, Murray's junior by two years.<sup>37</sup> The following year, Murray's rowing career began, when he was on the winning crew at Castleconnell as

<sup>33</sup>*Irish Press*, July 16, 1937.

<sup>34</sup>**What became of Henry, the fourth surviving son? While he is mentioned in his mother's will, he was not as well provided for as her other children, and was not mentioned in her obituary in the *Limerick Chronicle* of September 29, 1904.**

<sup>35</sup>**Waiting for Jean O'Hara to check this!**

<sup>36</sup>See <http://www.limerick-leader.ie/issues/19981212/memories.html> and the *Limerick Leader* of December 12, 1998.

<sup>37</sup>'J. Myles (Limerick)' was a member of the Munster rugby team which faced Leinster on 26 Mar 1877, the first match between the sides (Mulqueen 1983, p.18). This may well have been Sir Thomas's elder brother, also a noted athlete, who would have been 22 years of age at the time. The first rugby match played in Limerick itself which is mentioned by Mulqueen was the Munster–Leinster interprovincial of 1887, played at the Markets Field. Mulqueen's researches did not unearth any concrete evidence as to when the Munster Branch of the IRFU was formed, but it is now generally accepted that it was constituted round about 1879, so it appears unlikely that any contemporary information concerning Thomas Myles's early rugby career has survived.

<sup>29</sup>These two namesakes have been confused in the alumni records at Trinity College.

<sup>30</sup>13 Upper Mallow Street was listed as 'Vacant' in Ashe's 1891–2 Directory. **Why?**

<sup>31</sup>**Check details at RCBL!**

<sup>32</sup>*Irish Times*, July 15, 1937.

a junior under 19, and his comrades in the boat were G. Browne, W. B. Browning, and the same Thomas Myles. Thomas's interest in rowing continued while he was a student at Trinity, where he was a prominent member of the old Dublin University Rowing Club, which was the predecessor of the present Boat Club.

The Myles family were regular visitors to Kilkee. In 1892, the *Clare Journal* carried a series of articles by an unnamed author under the title 'Our Irish Watering Places'. The article dealing with Kilkee<sup>38</sup> contained the following:

The spot to which I refer is now known as "Myles' Creek" — and a lovely spot it is, to boot. To show how very modern the names of some Kilkee places are, I shall give this name as proof. I believe it owes it to Dr. Tom Myles of Dublin, or his brother Jack. The former is the well-known [already, at the age of 35!] surgeon of Dublin City, but to politicians (I am not one) he is also well-known as a Protestant Home Ruler. Both are natives of Limerick, whose people, more than any other, have made Kilkee what it is.

Local legend has it that Myles was also among the first to swim Kilkee bay. By the time a locally owned horse named 'Myles' Creek' embarked on a successful career at the Kilkee Strand Races,<sup>39</sup> the origin of the name was but a distant memory. In more recent times, Sir Thomas has also indirectly given his name to one of Kilkee's most popular night clubs, also called Myles' Creek. It is doubtful that any of the revellers there know for whom the place is named!

Another so-called sport in which Thomas Myles took a keen interest and at which he excelled was boxing.

In his autobiography, Dr. E. F. St. John Lyburn describes an encounter with Sir Thomas Myles.<sup>40</sup> St. John Lyburn describes Myles the surgeon, when he was about sixty-eight years of age, as still 'a man of

great stature, with massive shoulders and determined features [...] working with the ease and dexterity of a needle-woman'. Boylan (1998, p.291) says he was 'a man of gigantic stature and strength'.

Sir Thomas was at the London Stadium Club to watch St. John Lyburn win his second British boxing title.

## 4 Surgeon

On being admitted to Trinity College as a Pensioner,<sup>41</sup> Thomas moved to Dublin, where he was to make his home for the rest of his life. He was conferred with the degree of Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) on December 15, 1880, and the degrees of Bachelor in Medicine (M.B.) and Bachelor in Surgery (B.Ch.) on June 30, 1881.<sup>42</sup> He was resident surgeon in Dr. Steevens's Hospital from 1881 to 1884. While there, he attended to the newly-appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and Thomas Henry Burke, his Undersecretary, after their assassination in the Phoenix Park on May 6, 1882.

He received the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (F.R.C.S.I.) in 1885.<sup>43</sup> From then until 1890, he was resident surgeon at Jervis Street Hospital.<sup>44</sup>

Thomas Myles makes his first appearance in Thom's Directories in 1887, as 'Myles, Thomas, M.B., F.R.C.S.I., Surgeon,' living at 32 Harcourt Street, a house with a valuation of £50. On December 19, 1888, he returned to Trinity College to be conferred with the degree of Doctor in Medicine (M.D.). The College *Calendars* reveal that at that time 'A Doctor in Medicine . . . must . . . read two theses publicly before the Regius Professor of Physic [at the time, John Thomas Banks, appointed in 1880], or must undergo an Examination before the Regius Professor of Physic . . . The Regius Professor as a rule appoints the day before Commencements for hearing Theses.'<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Check definition in *Calendars*.

<sup>42</sup>University of Dublin *Calendars*, various issues.

<sup>43</sup>Masterson (n.d., p.137).

<sup>44</sup>See *Irish Times* obituary.

<sup>45</sup>See if Marina Pearson who has succeeded Joyce Timms as administrative secretary in the Medical

<sup>38</sup>This article was published on June 30, 1892. I am grateful to Tomás Ó Broin for the reference.

<sup>39</sup>check old racecards from the 1950s?

<sup>40</sup>The description from Lyburn (1947) is reprinted in Kemmy (1996, pp.201–203).

In 1889 the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland became the first Irish medical school to formally acknowledge Pathology as a distinct medical speciality, by creating a Chair and establishing a Department of Pathology. Dr. Thomas Myles, a surgeon in the Richmond hospital, was appointed Professor at the relatively young age of 32. He was succeeded in 1897 by Arthur Hamilton White, a full-time professional pathologist who, by the terms of his appointment, was not allowed to practise clinical medicine or surgery. The University of Dublin did not create its Chair of Pathology until 1895.

Thomas continued to live at 32 Harcourt Street (between Camden-place and Harcourt-road) until some time before the publication of the 1898 *Thom's Directory*, in which William Taylor, another F.R.C.S.I., had replaced him.

Thomas Myles soon became vice-president of the Royal College of Surgeons, and perhaps it was this promotion which allowed him to move to an even grander Georgian residence, no. 33 Merrion Square, a house on the corner of Holles Street with a valuation of no less than £104, now part of the site of the National Maternity Hospital. He first appears at the new address in the 1899 *Thom's Directory*. He must have been in Merrion Square for both the 1901 and 1911 censuses.

Thomas Myles was president of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland from 1900 to 1902. Thomas Myles, described at the time as 'M.D., F.R.C.S.I., and recently appointed President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland,' was made an Honorary Freeman of the City of Limerick in 1900 while John Daly was Mayor. Around that time, Daly was a near neighbour of Myles's mother in Barrington Street.

One source says that Sir Thomas Myles was president of the Royal College of Physicians [sic] and Surgeons.

Thomas Myles was highly respected both as a surgeon and as a teacher of medicine.

He served on the surgical staff of the Richmond Hospital for many years.

Along with Vincent Nash, the High Sheriff of Lim-

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Alumni Association c/o Dept of Physiology can trace the subject of his theses. Her e-mail is medalumni@tcd.ie

erick, Thomas Myles was one of two Limerick men awarded knighthoods (Kt. Bach (1902)) in Edward VII's 1902 coronation honours list.<sup>46</sup> This was also during his term of office as President. Funny story of his invitation to coronation.

Honorary surgeon in Ireland to King George V of England.

Lyburn (1947) said of Sir Thomas that those 'who attended at the Richmond Hospital, where he was senior surgeon, [had] every reason to bless his skillful teaching.' 'Very many must be the doctors and students and patients, of every class and condition, who have sorrowed for his passing, and will agree [...] that we shall not easily see his like again.'

Among the medical students who came under the influence of Thomas Myles was a Limerick-born cousin, Henry Lee (Harry) Parker (1894–1959). Having one line of Myles ancestry on his father's side and two on his mother's, Harry was trebly related to Sir Thomas. Having emigrated to South Africa with his parents as a young boy, Harry returned alone to Dublin to study at Trinity College around 1913. According to his family, it was on the advice of Sir Thomas Myles that Harry decided to take up medicine. After a spell at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, Harry returned to Dublin in 1934, and established a Department of Neurology at the Richmond Hospital in Dublin, from which his mentor had recently retired. The University of Dublin revived the Honorary Professorship of Neurology (which was formerly held by Dr. Francis Carmichael Purser but lapsed on his death) in favour of Dr. Parker in June 1936.<sup>47</sup> Harry named his only son, born in 1928, Thomas Myles Parker. The latter, still living in Minnesota, has informed the author that he was named after Sir Thomas 'on account of my father's great respect for same' and was designated the childless 71-year-old's Godson.

Sir Thomas adopted the newest practices in surgery, particularly Listerian antiseptic methods.

An *Irish Times* obituary noted that Sir Thomas continued to pursue his professional duties and met

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<sup>46</sup> *Limerick Chronicle*, June 30, 1902 and (Boylan 1998, p.291). **When did he return to Limerick to give a public lecture? [check LC again, circa July 31, 1902.]**

<sup>47</sup> See *The Irish Times* of June 23, 1936.

the demands made upon his services until he was in his mid-seventies.

## 5 Sailor

Lyburn (1947) describes Sir Thomas as ‘a great yachtsman, with several beautiful craft under his command’. ‘He had sailed, perhaps more than any other Irishman in the waters of the United Kingdom. His last ship, the *Harbinger*, was the finest of her class afloat.’ The schedule of assets filed after Sir Thomas’s death confirms this:

He earlier had a seventy-ton ketch, the *Sheila*.<sup>48</sup>

Asgard in Kilmainham jail. Cite *Archaeology Ireland*. Return in 1964 or so. Asgard II.

Kelpie scrapped. de Bhaldrathe (1996, ??). Saoirse took its place, Ilen sister ship of Saoirse.

Chotah is an Indian word. Chotah Bagh means Little Garden. Waiting for information on fate of the yacht. It was a steam yacht according to Scannell (1995).

## 6 Gun-Runner

As the article quoted above on Kilkee place names reveals, by his mid-30s Thomas Myles was as well-known to politicians as for his medical achievements. Boylan (1998) describes him as a supporter of Home Rule with strong nationalist sympathies. Exactly which of the myriad of home rule organisations he belonged to is not clear. Myles’s obituaries (probably the one by Quidnunc) may have confused the various organisations which had come and gone half a century earlier.

Myles appears to have come under the influence of Home Rulers while a student at Trinity.<sup>49</sup> The Home Government Association had been launched by the

<sup>48</sup>Where are Sir Thomas’s yachts and the gunrunning yachts today? Where did they get their names? Insert a paragraph on each. Waiting for more information from Erin Gibbons of the Save The Asgard campaign.

<sup>49</sup>Consult Webb & McDowell (1982) who will surely have details of the connection between Trinity and the early Home Rule movement.

lawyer Isaac Butt (1813–1879), a former Professor of Political Economy at Trinity, on September 1, 1870. According to Connolly (1998, p.245), the term *home rule* itself was believed to have been coined by Joseph Allen Galbraith, an Anglican clergyman and a Senior Fellow of Trinity College, where he was Erasmus Smith’s Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy from 1854 to 1870.<sup>50</sup> By 1873, the Home Government Association had evolved into the Home Rule League. This was long before Myles arrived at Trinity.

One obituary<sup>51</sup> notes that while a student at Trinity, Thomas Myles was one of the earliest members of the Protestant Home Rule Party, which it says had been started in the early 1870s by Galbraith and some other influential members of the newly disestablished Church of Ireland. I can find no record of this particular organisation.

The Irish Protestant Home Rule Association was founded long after Myles’s student days, on May 21, 1886, in the Castle Restaurant in Belfast’s Donegall Place.<sup>52</sup> Its founder, depending on the source consulted, was either Charles Hubert Oldham<sup>53</sup> (1860–1926) or Thomas Shillington<sup>54</sup>. Alexander Bowman was secretary of the Irish Protestant Home Rule Association for a number of years.<sup>55</sup> For the accurate version, it will be necessary to consult Loughlin (1985).

Sir Thomas’s obituary in the *Irish Times* noted that he had been a consistent supporter of the policy of Charles Stewart Parnell, of whose bodyguard he was a member during the famous Louth election.<sup>56</sup> Sir Thomas himself spoke occasionally on political platforms.

St. John Lyburn says that ‘if asked his nationality,

<sup>50</sup>See <http://www.maths.tcd.ie/pub/official/400Hist/8.html>.

<sup>51</sup>Which one?

<sup>52</sup><http://www.palgrave.com/pdfs/0333968727.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup>Oldham eventually (from 1916 until his death) became Professor of Economics at the National University of Ireland. During that period, he chaired the first meeting of the Irish Volunteers [var. Citizen Army], which was held in the Trinity College rooms of R. M. Gwynn, FTCD, in 1913. (See [http://www.pgil-eirdata.org/html/pgil\\_datasets/authors/o/Oldham,CH/](http://www.pgil-eirdata.org/html/pgil_datasets/authors/o/Oldham,CH/) and <http://www.deakin.edu.au/wcah/papers/Clarke.pdf>.)

<sup>54</sup>[http://www.pgil-eirdata.org/html/pgil\\_archive/research\\_sources/h](http://www.pgil-eirdata.org/html/pgil_archive/research_sources/h)

<sup>55</sup><http://srsm.port5.com/scotradhist/davitt.html>.

<sup>56</sup>What year was that?

he would say he was a poor man used to hardships to which Irishmen are born. He was a devout son of the Church of England [sic], but, if asked his religion, he would say that he was a poor sinner.'

Thomas's next political intervention is remembered more by grammarians than historians. Lists of the most spectacular mixed metaphors often include the following Myles quotation regarding the Boer War: 'Why should Irishmen stand with their arms folded and their hands in their pockets when England called for aid?' One might easily jump to the conclusion that Myles here referred to Myles na gCoppaleen rather than Sir Thomas!<sup>57</sup>

Sir Thomas Myles himself was not directly involved in the establishment of the Irish Volunteers in 1913.<sup>58</sup> The formation of the Volunteers was first proposed by Eoin MacNeill in an article published in the Gaelic League organ *An Claidheamh Soluis* in October 1913.<sup>59</sup> The Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood immediately chose The O'Rahilly to interview MacNeill with a view to putting his proposal into practice and a Provisional Committee with twelve members under MacNeill's chairmanship was formed. An inaugural meeting of the Volunteers was fixed for the Rotunda in Dublin on November 25. Four thousand men enrolled in the Volunteers at that meeting.

On December 4, nine days after the inauguration of the Irish Volunteers, a Proclamation was issued prohibiting the importation of military arms and ammunition into Ireland. The O'Rahilly was already head of a sub-committee authorised to draw upon the Volunteers' funds secretly for the purchase of arms. He wrote:

We assured our men that, Proclamation or no Proclamation, we would procure arms for them; and the men accepted our assurance.

Arming the Volunteers was an ambition of the entire spectrum of nationalist opinion. As McDowell (1967, p.96) put it, 'Constitutional nationalists seem to have

craved for arms largely to buttress their political self-respect.' Thus, the importation of arms for the Irish Volunteers the following year came about as a result of the actions of a London-based committee of Anglo-Irish people which had been established on an informal basis.<sup>60</sup> This committee first met in the historian Alice Stopford Green's home at 36 Grosvenor Road in London on May 8, 1914. Mrs. Green, who, according to McDowell, 'wished she was drilling volunteers', was made chairperson and treasurer. de Bhaldraithe (1996, p.4) lists the other members of the committee as Roger Casement, Molly Childers, and the first cousins Conor O'Brien and Mary Spring-Rice.<sup>61</sup> The connection between the O'Rahilly sub-committee and the London committee is not clear. A fund of about £1,500, a considerable portion of which was advanced by Mrs. Green herself, was raised.

The gun-running itself was masterminded by Molly Childers' husband, Erskine, who initially decided to use his own 28-ton yacht *Asgard*, which was laid up in Wales, to smuggle some of the arms and ammunition into Ireland. Childers, Spring-Rice and O'Brien travelled to the Shannon to inspect another boat called the *Santa Cruz* for possible use in the operation. It was deemed unsuitable, and Childers and Spring-Rice were persuaded that Conor O'Brien's own yacht, the *Kelpie*, would be more suitable, and that it would be used to land part of the consignment of arms in county Limerick. O'Brien, active in the Gaelic League and the Volunteers, was an enigmatic character. Today, he is as famous for his subsequent round-the-world voyage as for his gun-running exploits. He later wrote:<sup>62</sup>

I, to be in the fashion, had put my yacht at the disposal of the other side. If I were asked which other side, I should have to admit that I knew as little as my employers did, so obscure were Irish politics in 1914; by the other side I mean not Ulster.

<sup>57</sup>See [http://www.insultmonger.com/quotations\\_6.htm](http://www.insultmonger.com/quotations_6.htm) and many other web pages.

<sup>58</sup>Cite F X Martin etc.

<sup>59</sup>What follows draws heavily on MacArdle (1937, Chapter 8).

<sup>60</sup>Scannell (1995); McDowell (1967, p.97).

<sup>61</sup>Mary Spring-Rice was a granddaughter of Thomas Spring Rice, the 1st Lord Monteagle, who was M.P. for Limerick from 1820 until 1832 and whose statue stands in Limerick's People Park.

<sup>62</sup>Quoted by de Bhaldraithe (1996, p.3).

O'Brien made no arrangements for the proposed landing in Limerick, and it was subsequently decided that his cargo would instead be landed at Kilcoole in county Wicklow.

For reasons of security the entire plan was known only by Bulmer Hobson, MacNeill, Casement, Erskine Childers and possibly The O'Rahilly. Not surprisingly, Childers and Hobson did not trust O'Brien to keep quiet about his landing plans, and so it came about that at a later stage<sup>63</sup> Sir Thomas Myles, was brought in. Boylan (1998, p.291) says that it was James Creed Meredith, a future judge of the Supreme Court, who approached Myles to use his yacht, *Chotah*, to land the guns. Meredith himself helped out aboard the *Chotah* during the operation.

Darrell Figgis was chosen to accompany Childers to France and Belgium and finally to Hamburg, where they purchased 1,500 second-hand rifles<sup>64</sup> and ammunition,<sup>65</sup> which were surplus to the requirements of the German Army which had re-equipped with more modern weapons. Sellers Montz Magnus did not have the weapons in Germany — they were stored in Antwerp — and Figgis had to travel there to select the best of them and then recruit local people to clean and prepare them for shipment to Germany. The purchase price was £1,500.

Childers in the meantime had returned to Ireland, from where at the end of June both the *Kelpie* and *Asgard* sailed independently of each other. The *Kelpie* left Foynes on Monday, June 29, O'Brien's crew comprising his sister Kate, his friend Diarmaid Coffey and two sailors from Foynes, George Cahill and Tom Fitzsimons.<sup>66</sup> They arrived on Friday, July 3 at Cowes where they were to meet up with the *Asgard*.

The *Asgard* was navigated by Childers, with his wife and Mary Spring-Rice and Gordon Shepherd among the crew. It was behind schedule and did not reach Cowes until late on Wednesday, July 8.

<sup>63</sup>**Find more details of all this!!**

<sup>64</sup>Scannell (1995) describes them as Model 1871/84 single shot 11mm Jaeger rifles; MacArdle (1937, p.116) and de Bhaldraithe (1996, p.4) say that they were Mauser rifles.

<sup>65</sup>Scannell (1995) says there were 45 boxes of ammunition, each box containing 1000 rounds; MacArdle (1937, p.116) says that there were 49,000 rounds.

<sup>66</sup>de Bhaldraithe (1996, p.5).

Childers was not pleased to learn that Conor O'Brien had compromised the secrecy of the operation by sending telegrams and making phone calls to Alice Stopford Green concerning the *Asgard's* late arrival at Cowes. The following Friday, July 10, both vessels sailed for the meeting place near the Ruytigen lightship in the North Sea off the Dutch coast where the cargo was to be collected on Sunday, July 12. In the meantime Figgis had repacked the rifles and shipped them by rail to Germany without the Customs authorities being aware of what the consignment was. In Hamburg, Figgis chartered the tug *Gladiator* and had to endure several hours of anxiety waiting for the arrival of the ammunition, which came just as they were about to cast off. Another hitch was the fact that the cargo had to be cleared by a customs official before departure. It was discovered that a pilot could exercise this function, so a sympathetic individual was obtained who did this and accepted a bribe from Figgis, who pretended to be a Mexican. The cleared cargo, which all on board including the pilot knew to be arms and not as stated on the manifest, was now officially on the way from Germany to Ireland.

In the early hours of July 12, the *Gladiator* sailed for the rendezvous point in the North Sea where Figgis had to wait the arrival of the two vessels. First to arrive was the *Kelpie* and very quickly its consignment of 600 rifles and 20 boxes of ammunition were loaded. The *Kelpie* departed around 8 p.m. for Bere Island off the Welsh coast, where its cargo was to be transferred to the *Chotah*. Just as the *Kelpie* sailed off with its cargo, the *Asgard* arrived, to be loaded with the balance of the consignment. On the way to Ireland, 3,000 rounds of ammunition had to be dumped overboard due to a heavy seas which threatened to swamp the *Asgard*, which lay very low in the water due to the weight of her consignment.

Back in Ireland, the Volunteers had been busy preparing for the landing day and spread so many rumours that the authorities were totally confused. The confusion was aided by the late change of plan with respect to the *Kelpie* and *Chotah*: it was hoped that the authorities would expect O'Brien's yacht to be loaded with weapons with it docked, and would be dismayed to find it empty! With the exception of a

few officers, however, the Volunteers who set out for Howth on the morning of Sunday, July 26 had no suspicion that anything out of the ordinary was to take place. Thomas MacDonagh and Bulmer Hobson were in charge of the arrangements at Howth.

The plan prepared by Childers allowed for twelve days sailing time to reach the rendezvous point twenty miles west of Bardsey Island in Cardigan harbour where they were to meet with the *Chotah* into which the arms on the *Kelpie* were to be loaded. The *Chotah* was scheduled to bring these arms into Kilcoole on the night of Saturday/Sunday, July 25/26 as a prelude to the Howth operation on the Sunday. The two yachts meantime were sailing to Ireland independently of each other. On Thursday, July 23, the *Kelpie* arrived in the St. Tudwell's Road and waited for the arrival of the *Chotah*. They eventually spotted it on the Saturday: the *Chotah* had encountered a gale which split its mainsail and delayed it for several days. The operation planned for that weekend was postponed for one week to allow time for repairs. When its cargo had been transferred to the *Chotah*, the *Kelpie* sailed for Ireland.

Orders postponing the Kilcoole operation were issued but some Volunteers did not receive them in time and that Saturday night, July 25, the Kilcoole area was subjected to an unusual amount of motor traffic as Volunteers drove around for hour after hour waiting in vain for the arrival of the arms. This activity was noted and commented on by the correspondents of the local newspapers, and some assumed that the landing had taken place when in actual fact it had not. After several hours the Volunteers realised that the landing was not going to happen and departed from the area.

The following morning, Sunday, July 26, the *Asgard* landed its own consignment in Howth unopposed. Soon every waiting Volunteer had a gun, and they set off to march back to the city. Although the Volunteers had cut the telegraph wires, news still reached Dublin Castle. The Dublin Metropolitan Police, supported by a detachment of soldiers from the King's Own Scottish Borderers, confronted the Volunteers on the way back to the city centre at Fairview. While the Volunteer officers parleyed with the police, most of the weapons and ammunition were spirited

away by those at the rear of the column. Only nineteen guns were seized.

While returning to Barracks via Bachelor's Walk, the soldiers opened fire on a crowd who were jeering them and this resulted in the deaths of two men and one woman. Another thirty-two civilians were wounded.

The empty *Kelpie* arrived off Bray head that same Sunday morning. There it was boarded by a journalist, to whom O'Brien fed appropriate misinformation. Rumours that the Volunteers had landed arms along the coast were rife and a large force descended on Dalkey Harbour waiting for the *Kelpie* to sail in. But when no Volunteers arrived and several hours had elapsed, it dawned on the watchers that they had been duped and they left immediately, leaving a token force to guard the Harbour. A watch was put on Bray Harbour and Greystones, and all vessels at anchor in Dún Laoghaire were boarded and searched but nothing was found. As news about the shootings in Dublin spread down the coast the initial reaction was that the story was a fabrication and yet another rumour put out by the Volunteers, but when special editions of the Dublin newspapers appeared this disbelief changed to one of outrage and horror.

The following day, Austria declared war on Serbia.

The immediate effect of the successful Howth operation was that coastal surveillance was stepped up and daily the warships *Liverpool* and *Forward* which were based in Dún Laoghaire (or Kingstown as it was then still known) sailed up and down the coast stopping and searching vessels at random by day and night. At night time, the vessels swept the seas with their searchlights looking for the vessel which they expected would try and sneak through the blockade under cover of darkness. They did not know that the *Chotah* was still lying at anchor in Wales waiting to carry out the Kilcoole operation. The strength of the blockade coupled with the guard on the Bray, Greystones and Wicklow harbours gave many supporters of the Irish Volunteers and those who were to take part in the Kilcoole operation great cause for alarm as they believed that the *Chotah* would be unable to slip through the blockade.

Meanwhile, preparations for the imminent outbreak of World War 1 continued. On Thursday,

July 30 all available coastguards were taken from their respective stations and sailed for Portsmouth from Kingstown, leaving only a skeleton force behind to try and cover the coastline as well as carrying out their normal duties. No replacements were drafted to carry on the coastal surveillance operation so this part of the operation to prevent a further landing of arms by the Irish Volunteers now fell by the wayside. This was the breakthrough that the Irish Volunteers were waiting for and Seán Fitzgibbon, the officer in charge of the Kilcoole landing, issued orders for the mobilisation of those concerned with this operation for Saturday, August 1 with great security being maintained. That day's issues of the *Wicklow People* and *Wicklow Newsletter* contained accounts from various correspondents about the previous Saturday's activities in the Kilcoole area, speculating as to whether or not arms had been landed, but no-one in authority seems to have realised the importance of these news items which clearly indicated that Kilcoole was to be a landing site and that the previous week's events had been in effect a dress rehearsal for the real thing.

On Saturday, the Volunteers selected for this operation assembled with their respective motorised transport in Dublin and headed off to various spots in County Wicklow on an individual basis spending the afternoon sight-seeing or taking it easy pending the arrival of nightfall. Road maps which had been prepared by Seán Kenny in Bray gave the routes from Dublin to Kilcoole and in the village itself Mr. Foley had made arrangements with the Holy Faith Convent that vehicles not directly in use during the operation could be parked there. Some boatmen, some from as far away as Bray, had sailed down the coast and had their vessels hidden in readiness for the arrival of the *Chotah* which had sailed earlier that day. As darkness fell, the Volunteers began to converge on Kilcoole and carefully it was isolated from the outside world lest details of the operation about to unfold leaked to the authorities. Telegraphic communications were disconnected and pickets were placed on all the approach roads to warn those down at the beach of the arrival of the authorities. As Volunteers arrived in motorised vehicles, they parked in the convent grounds and made their way on foot to the

beach. The only vehicles which were brought down to the beach were those forming the convoy to bring the arms to Dublin. The size of this convoy has been quoted by some sources as three motor lorries, six motor cars and twelve motor cycles with sidecars.

Down at the beach, the Volunteers, under the command of Seán Fitzgibbon and Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh (the future President), lay hidden pending the arrival of the *Chotah*. After a while, the vessel was seen coming into Ballygannon Point and flashing a series of pre-arranged signals which confirmed its identity. Replies were given from on-shore and the *Chotah* came in as near as possible to the beach to facilitate unloading. Once it was in position, a number of small boats which had sailed down the coast for this operation, went out to the *Chotah*, where those on board began to hand down the rifles and ammunition which were then ferried ashore. As these boats came in, Volunteers waded through the surf to unload them and to place the arms and ammunition in the waiting motor convoy. Backwards and forwards these boats went until the *Chotah's* entire cargo was unloaded.

All the activity at Kilcoole had not, however, gone unnoticed. To the south, a fireworks display in Wicklow provided a welcome backdrop but the exchange of light signals had been seen by two policemen, Constables Dalton and Webb from the Greystones R.I.C. Station, who had the task of patrolling the railway line from Greystones to Kilcoole and back. During their patrol they spotted the *Chotah* lying at anchor off Ballygannon Point, which they knew was not an anchorage point normally used. They decided to investigate further. As they got nearer, they saw the exchange of light signals and this immediately aroused their suspicions. They decided to head for Kilcoole Railway Station from where they could contact their superiors in Greystones. As they neared the station they were surrounded by local men, armed with batons, who indicated to them that they should proceed with them to Kilcoole Village. The two policemen protested but when revolvers were produced, they realised that resistance was futile and went under protest with the Volunteers to Kilcoole Village where they were kept under guard. In the village, they noticed that the place was full of Irish Volunteers and that some type of operation was in progress,

at the same time noting the absence of the local inhabitants. By 3 a.m. on Sunday morning, the landing operation was over and the *Chotah* sailed off. On the beach, the Irish Volunteers lined up four deep and arming themselves with any weapons left over, marched up to the Village proper singing ‘A Nation Once Again’, ‘Clare’s Dragoons’ and ‘God Save Ireland’. There they joined their transport vehicles and then returned to their respective destinations. The last act of the rearguard party as they left the village was to release the two policemen and to collect the pickets which had been placed on the approaches to warn of the arrival of the authorities should the operation have been detected while in progress.

Thus ended the Kilcoole operation. Today on the beach at Kilcoole, a stone marker reminds the visitor of the events that took place there in 1914. Sir Thomas Myles’s involvement in the Kilcoole landing is commemorated in the inscription on this simple monument, which is adjacent to the platform at Kilcoole railway station (see photograph).

While the convoy was on its way back to Dublin from Kilcoole, the two released policemen found that communications with the outside world had been cut off and it was left to Constable Webb to board the 3.30 a.m. train to Bray where he raced up from the railway station along the Quinsboro Road to the police barracks which at that time lay beside what is now part of the Royal Hotel. He sounded the alarm and immediately the police in the district went on the alert, but by the time the check points had been put in place the convoy with the arms and ammunition was back in Dublin. On arrival at St. Enda’s in Rathfarnham, it was discovered that a vehicle was missing and immediately another lorry was sent out to locate the missing one, which was located on the outskirts of Bray where it had broken down. Those in this vehicle had the presence of mind to hide the cargo in neighbouring houses and with the arrival of the rescue vehicle the cargo was retrieved and transported to Dublin for redistribution.

Interestingly enough no action was taken by the authorities against Childers, O’Brien, Myles or anyone else who took part in either the Howth or Kilcoole landings.

From St. Enda’s, the arms and ammunition were

distributed to the various Volunteer units. Preference was given to those individuals who were I.R.B. members or supporters, as Pearse did not trust followers of John Redmond who wanted the arms to be sent to Belfast to protect the Catholics there from sectarian attacks. It would be interesting to know how many of the 1,500 rifles landed in 1914 survive today. We do know what became of the first gun landed in Howth, a story with an interesting Limerick connection, recounted by Éamon de hÓir in an unpublished account of his early life (cited by Lee & Gonzalez (2000, pp.48–49)).

In September 1914, de hÓir was invited to meet John Daly (1845–1916) at his Limerick home, 15 Barrington Street. Daly had been involved in the 1867 Fenian Rising, had served twelve years in prison on trumped-up explosive charges, was elected M.P. for Limerick while still in prison and served three terms as Mayor of Limerick after his release. During his reign as Mayor, Thomas Myles, as we have seen, was made an honorary freeman of the city on account of his medical achievements. As Lee writes, ‘Daly was a revered and venerated figure among the younger generation of physical force nationalists joining the I.R.B. and it was considered a great privilege and honour among the younger set to be invited to the imposing Georgian house in Barrington Street and be granted an audience with the Great Man. De hÓir describes how, during his audience, Daly, by then suffering from a slow form of paralysis and confined to an invalid chair, turned to a long burnished gun at the window and ‘in a very excited manner, like one deeply moved, but feeling helpless in his longing, he said “This is the first gun landed at Howth — an old model but in front of a man it would kill an enemy”. [...] On looking at the gun closer, I saw that it had been inscribed as a presentation to Daly from the Fenians of that day, the I.R.B., as the first gun landed in Howth.’ Daly’s nephew, Captain (later Commandant) Ned Daly, later to be executed for his part in the 1916 rising, had taken a prominent part in the proceedings at Howth as commanding officer of one of the Irish Volunteer units involved. The following week saw Ned Daly at Kilcoole, where, in the landing of arms at this seaside village, he again dis-

tinguished himself.<sup>67</sup> De hÓir later married Ned's sister Nora and took over the running of Daly's Bakery in William Street, which the veteran Fenian had purchased from the proceeds of a lecture tour in the United States.

By August 4, 1914, three days after the Kilcoole landings, Britain was embroiled in World War 1, which would indirectly lead to the first split in the Irish Volunteer movement. After war broke out, Sir Thomas Myles, like countless other Irish doctors and medical students, joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C.), becoming consultant surgeon to the Corps, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel (Boylan 1998, p.291). At its WW1 peak, the total strength of the Corps reached 145,000.<sup>68</sup> There is no evidence that Sir Thomas saw active service on the continent during the conflict, but 'Myles, Temp. Lt.-Col. Sir T., Knt., M.D., F.R.C.S.I., R.A.M.C.' appears in a list of names 'brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for War for distinguished services rendered in connection with the War', or, in common parlance, 'mentioned in despatches'.<sup>69</sup> It would be interesting to know whether this mention related to his conduct in the aftermath of the Easter Rising or in some other phase of the Great War.

Involvement in 1916

After the 1916 Rising, he arranged medical care for wounded Volunteers.

Further Royal honours in 1917. C.B.

Black and Tans incident.

After his death, the *Irish Times* noted that it was 'difficult now to imagine Sir Thomas as a politician.'

At the time of Sir Thomas's death, the Irish press was apparently still guided by the maxim that one must not speak ill of the dead. Different sections of the press, however, used different definitions of 'speaking ill'! The Kirkpatrick archive contains obituaries of Sir Thomas from the *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times*, *British Medical Journal*, *Lancet* and

<sup>67</sup>See 'Limerick Patriot: Commandant Edward Daly: Story of a Great Irishman' in the *Limerick Leader*, 21 June 1922.

<sup>68</sup>See <http://www.army.mod.uk/212fdhosp/ramc.history/#1914>.

<sup>69</sup>*Sixth Supplement to the London Gazette of Tuesday, the 23rd of January, 1917*, printed and published for His Majesty's Stationery Office by Wyman & Sons, Ltd., Fetter Lane, Fleet St., E.C., Thursday, 25 January 1917.

*Irish Press*. Only the last-mentioned<sup>70</sup> made any reference to the deceased's part in the 1914 gun-running, quoting at length from MacArdle (1937) in an article headed ' "No One More Nationalist": How Sir Thomas Myles Risked His Position For The Cause'.

## 7 Conclusion

Later years, death on 14 July 1937, funeral, Dean's Grange.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>July 16, 1937.

<sup>71</sup>Boylan (1998, p.291) gives a wrong date of death, 3 October 1937.

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