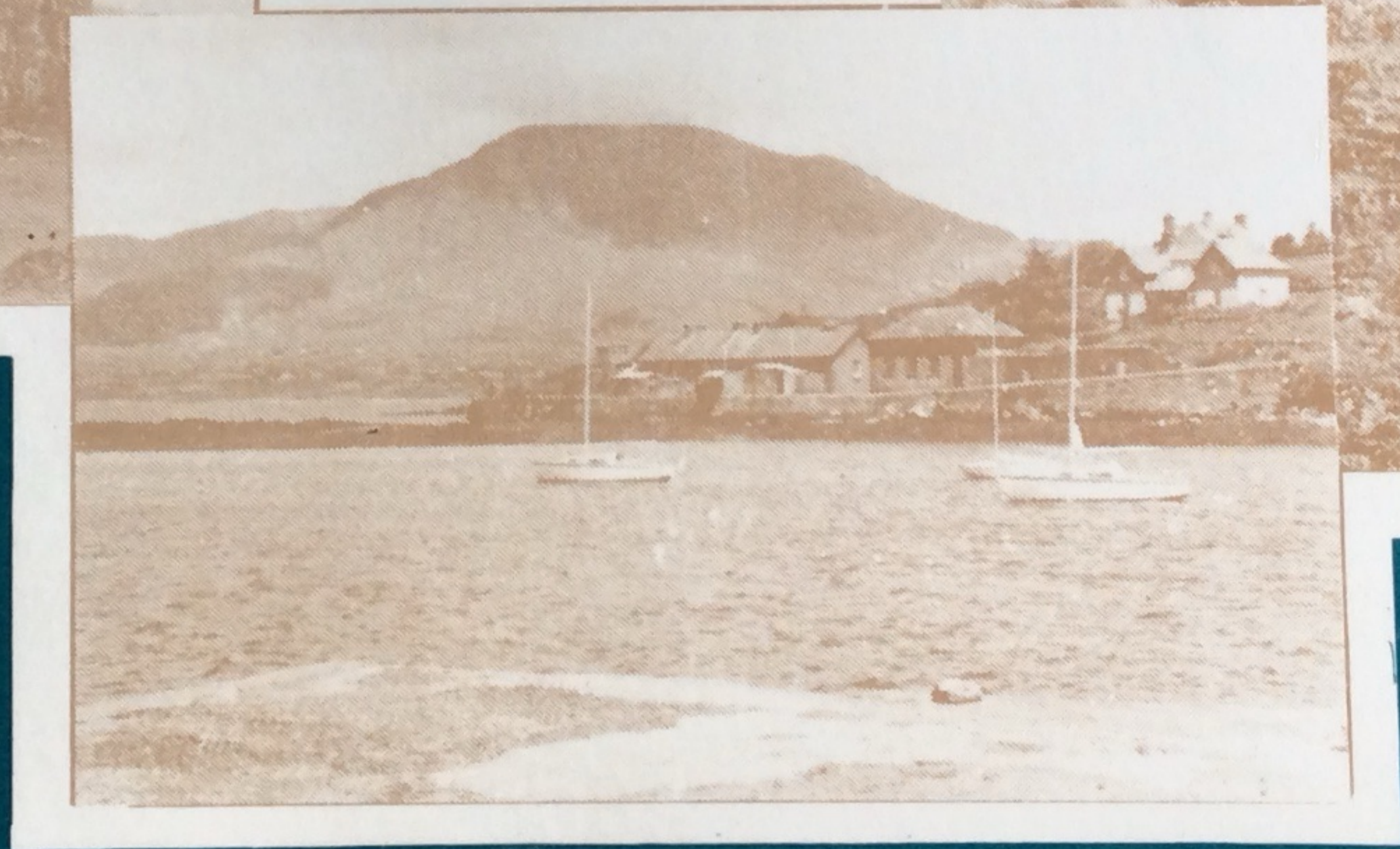
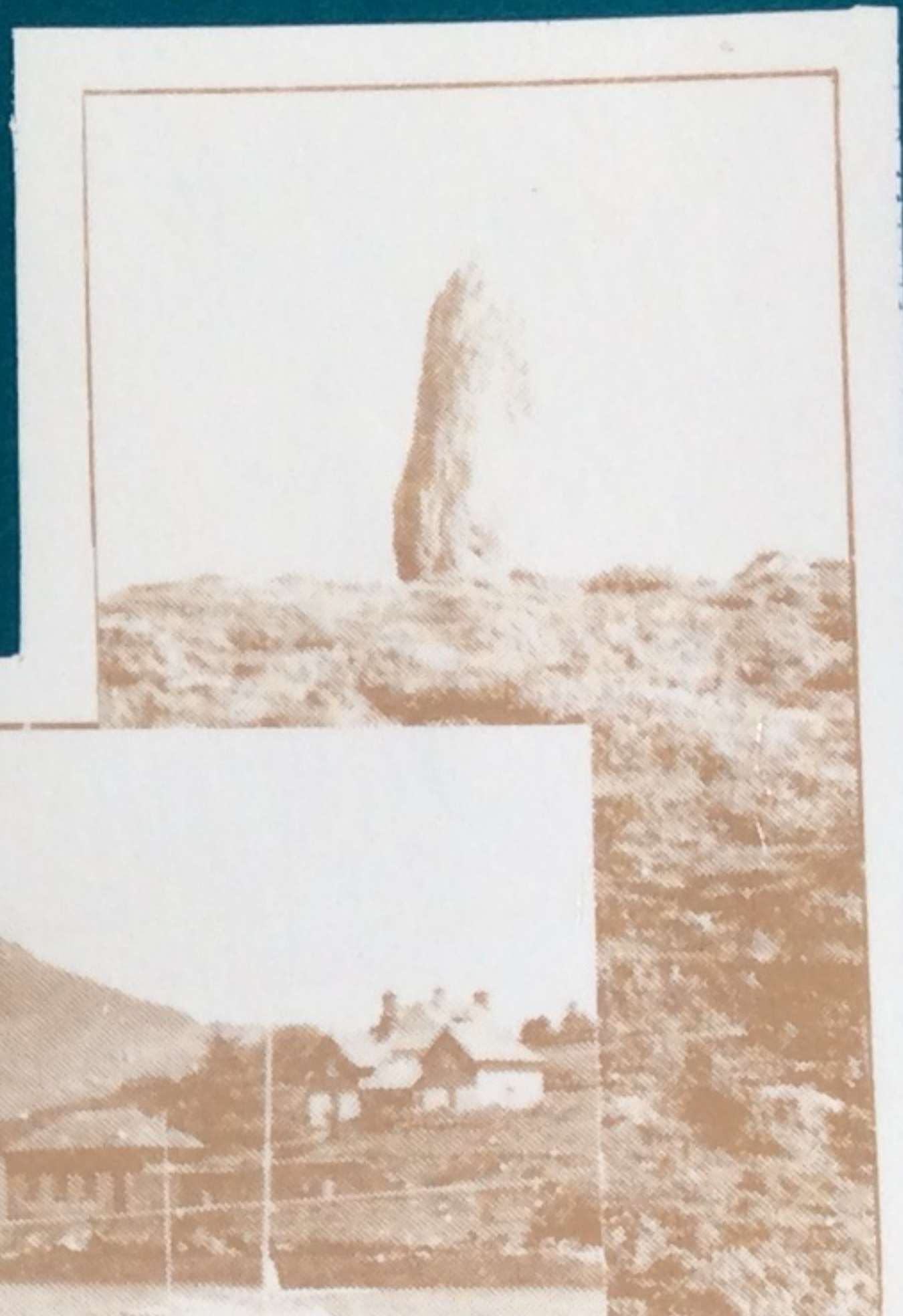


Bere Island



A Short History

Ted O'Sullivan

on average, one third of the old ones, and it is a wonder how the old rents were ever paid, as they seem large even by today's standards. The 'fixity of tenure' became a reality for most of the people when the Estates Commissioners purchased the remaining Clinton holdings on the island in 1906.

East End Land Problems

One group did not fare so well, even though, through Land League activity, they were supposed to have achieved 'Fair rent, Fixity of tenure, and Freedom of sale'. Twenty-nine tenants at the East End and four at the West End had long leases in their possession when they were issued with compulsory purchase orders on 7 March 1898. These were issued by the Chief Crown Solicitor of the day on behalf of the British War Dept. The total area involved was 379 acres 3 r. 33 sq. p., and included the village of Rerrin.

Some tenants in their naïvety took the British War Dept. to court believing their leases to be binding, but lost and had the costs added to their rents. The tenants who were allowed to remain became 'tenants at will' of the War Dept. Although they were required to pay full rent, they had no tenant rights and could be evicted at 24 hours notice with no right of appeal. The

whole East End to the east of 'the red line' - this was how it was marked on the original C.P.O. map - was involved. This line ran in a north-south direction on the western side of the recreation grounds. It coincides with the lane just west of the old school at Laurence Cove.

It is interesting to note that children reared in Bere Island west of the 'red line' in the 1920s and 1930s were taught to treat it with the same fear or respect as would be afforded an international boundary. One woman told me that they would never be allowed to go to the beaches at the East End, though these were nearer to where she was living and superior to the ones she had to use, because it would involve crossing the invisible 'red line'. [M.M.O S.]

War of Independence

The island and the islanders were in the thick of this war, due to the British military presence on the island. There was an active company of local volunteers on the Irish side. They were involved in arms procurement, the Gun Cotton Raid, prison escapes and the transport of goods, money and materials for the cause of Irish independence. The numerical strength of this company in 1919 was 40.

The officers (company captains) were Con Lowney, Pat O Sullivan, Jim O Sullivan and Dan Harrington. The British military strength was given as 150 on Bere Island at the same time. [Liam Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free* pp. 318, 330, 332.]

Gun Cotton Raid

The Bantry Bay Steam Packet Company served Laurence Cove twice a week. It carried passengers and cargo to and from Bantry via Adrigole and Glengarriff. It carried many strange cargoes in its time but none stranger than the boxes of stolen British Navy gun cotton. These were shipped to Adrigole as ordinary merchandise, under the noses of the security forces who were searching the whole area for the missing explosives.

Intelligence officer for the Irish Republican Army, Eugene Dunne of Adrigole, was the shipping agent for the steamship company at Bere Island. Dan Coughlan of the Bere Island Company, Irish Republican Army, kept Dunne informed of events in Fort Berehaven and passed on the information concerning the explosives. It was decided at Béara Battalion level that the store containing the explosives should be raided.

After much planning the raid took place on 5 June 1918. A duplicate key had already been made and tested. The store (present Dept. of Defence office) was situated less than 100m from the barracks of the Royal Marines (present Officers' Mess). A sentry was on patrol between the stone pier and the iron *MacHardy* pier which was north of the present Glenans Sailing School. The raid had to be carried out while the sentry was out of view. During the raid Staff Sergeant Herbert and some engineers passed by but noticed nothing. Fifty-two boxes each containing 56 pounds of explosives were removed. A large number of primers, detonators, drums of electric cable, an exploder and some bags of black gunpowder were also seized.

All the boxes were brought to the shore by the local company of the Irish Republican Army under the command of Capt. Con Lowney. Once at the shore the explosives were loaded onto a boat belonging to Tim Moriarty. There was a great danger of discovery at this point as the British naval ships in Berehaven Harbour were constantly flashing searchlights around the shores. There was a major hitch when it was discovered that, although the boat was fully loaded, half of the haul of explosives was still on the strand.

These explosives were transferred to a store shed nearby owned by John Houlihan. For some reason the military never searched that store and this part of the haul was sent as freight by steamship to Adrigole. The stores and offices were burned down later to confuse the investigators. The exploder and a book of instructions on demolition were hidden in Patrick Sullivan's tomb in the graveyard and were collected later. This was the biggest robbery of explosives anywhere in Ireland during the War of Independence. [The Southern Star , D.O S., T.O S., H.O S., T.McN.]

Prison, Internment Camp 1920 - 1921

The British had constructed a nine-hole golf course between 1900 and 1903, where the army camp is today. It was dug up to facilitate the construction of the prison. The exact date when this happened is not clear but the first prisoners were sent here in mid-1920. The prisoners were a very mixed lot. They included political activists, those suspected of supporting the anti-British forces and many innocents who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Some locals, who had been arrested and interned before this date, were housed in the

guardhouse or in the Lonehort battery prior to being shipped out to Ballykinlar near Belfast. The prison was closed on 10 December 1921 following a truce on 11 July 1921. Peadar Ó hAnnracháin's account of the prison camp (*Machtnamh Cime*) says that there were four timber huts with 60 to 80 men in each. He states that on 4 July 1921 the number of prisoners had for the first time risen to in excess of 200. Prof. Alfred O Rahilly, later president of University College Cork, recorded that there were 150 there when he arrived on 27 May 1921 and the number had risen to 284 by the time he left.

The first British commanding officer (O.C.) of the prison was known as 'an Caipín Dearg' or 'Capee' to the locals. The prisoners negotiated with him and agreement was reached on matters such as visiting rights and food parcels. After some escapes, he was replaced in July 1921 by Captain Martin, a Belfast Unionist, who instituted a very tough regime at the camp. When complaints to him by deputations of prisoners had no effect, they complained to General Strickland, commander in Cork, and organised a strike of the prisoners. A military investigation was conducted by General Higginson. Alfred O Rahilly presented the prisoners' case to the general, who was

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B.D.	Batt Dennehy	K. H.	Katty Harrington
B.L.	Brendan Lowney	L.C.	Lillian Cotter
B.M.	Brendan Murphy	L.O.S.	Louis O Sullivan
B.ON.	Bridgid O Neill	M.C.	Michael Carroll (Bantry)
C.H.	Colm Harrington	M.C.O.L.	Michael C. O Leary
C.M.	Connie Murphy	M.M.	Mary Mullins
Cy.M.	Cyril Murphy	M.M.O.S.	Mary M. O Sullivan
C.M.O.S.	Christy M. O Sullivan	M.O.C.	Mary O Callaghan
D.C.	Dinny Collins	M.O.L.	Mick O Leary (Rerrin)
D.McC.	Dan Mac Carthy	M.S.	Maura Sidley
D.O.D.	Diarmuid A. O Drisceoil	M.W.	Mary Walsh
D.S.O.S.	Desmond S. O Sullivan	P.B.O.S.	Patrick B. O Sullivan (Harbour View)
D.O.S.	Donal O Sullivan	P.H.	Pat Harrington
Fr.S.O.S.	Fr. Seán O Shea	R.O.D.	Riobárd O Dwyer
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J.O.S.	John O Sullivan, Ballynakilla		
J.O.S.	Joseph O Sullivan		