

Introduction

This picture shows children playing soldiers in Leixlip village. Not so many years later and within walking distance a real battle took place with very tragic results. There were many lives lost including a past pupil from our school Anthony O' Reilly, who was not much more than a boy. We will tell you about daring plans, failed ambushes, violent battle and terrible consequences. This is the story of the forgotten Battle of Pike's Bridge.



Setting the scene

The War of Independence began in 1919. The Irish used surprise attacks on British forces in Ireland, this type of warfare was called 'guerrilla warfare'. In response the British sent over soldiers known as the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries. The most violent day was 21st November when in retaliation for the execution of British spies and Auxiliaries, the Black and Tans fired on the crowd in Croke Park killing 14 people. In July 1921 a truce was called. In October 1921 a group, including Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, went to London to negotiate a treaty. A treaty was signed forming an Irish Free State made up of 26 counties. Ireland would have its own army, flag and currency but would remain part of the British Empire. TDs would also have to swear allegiance to the British King.

In 1922 a Civil War began between people who supported the Treaty, led by Michael Collins and those who opposed it led by Eamon De Valera. The events in our essay took place in the villages of Leixlip and Celbridge during this Civil War.

Mayhem in Kildare

The anti-treaty column in our area was led by Patrick Mullaney, a National School teacher in Leixlip. The day after the Civil War began, Mullaney was arrested and imprisoned in the Curragh. He escaped in August and took command of several brigades in the Meath and Kildare areas.

Mullaney and his men blew up railway lines, bridges and cut telegraph wires so that messages couldn't pass through. Of course they needed funding to get guns so they got it from sympathisers, collections, and holdups. They robbed post offices, mail vans and even shops. They burnt signal cabins in Leixlip, attacked Lucan Barracks, and cut telephone wires. They actually attacked and damaged bridges that they would have used themselves- Celbridge and Louisa Bridge. They attacked Celbridge Workhouse and later set it on fire. They robbed a postman of his stamps and money. They left a trail of destruction throughout Kildare.

Baldonnell Aerodrome

Baldonnell was an Irish Free State Army base which held aeroplanes, cars and ammunition. It was a big target for the anti-treaty side. Mullaney had a heroic plan to take over Baldonnell, steal some planes and bomb Leinster House. He had about 30 Free State soldiers from Baldonnell working with him. According to local historian Jim Doyle, our past pupil Anthony O'Reilly played an important role in this plan and was forced to join the Free State Army to go undercover to see what was going on. It was planned to get help from Kildare, Meath and Dublin but this did not happen

"One hundred men were promised from the Dublin Brigade but only twenty turned up"

It was called off by Dublin Brigade officer Todd Andrews.

It was also called off a second time by Andrews. The plan for the third attempt was to steal arms and vehicles and bomb Beggars Bush barracks. Anthony O'Reilly was ready to

open the gate to let them in and two pilots were ready to steal two planes but the reinforcements from Dublin didn't arrive so yet again Todd Andrews called it off.... Again!! Mullaney was furious and so was O'Reilly.

"On the night of the third attempt some of the guards at Baldonnell deserted to Mullaney's column and Mullaney cried when Andrews called it off"

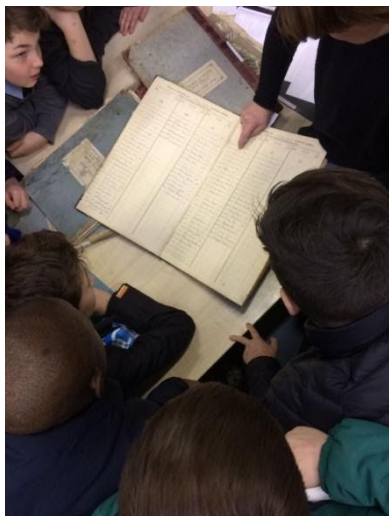
On his way out O'Reilly stole a Lewis machine gun.



Baldonnell Camp was manned by about three hundred men and thirty officers. P. Mullaney had the co-operation of about thirty soldiers in the camp, and his men were in the guard room ready at the signal to take over the camp with the guard. As only twenty men turned up from Dublin, Todd Andrews decided to call off the operation as he had not enough men to take away all the material and to attack Dublin with the help of the planes. We returned to our areas. We were called to carry out the same operation on two more occasions within two weeks, but the operations were cancelled owing to the Dublin Brigade not turning up. On the night of the third attempt, some of the guards at Baldonnell deserted to Mullaney's column, and Mullaney cried when Andrews called it off. Shortly afterwards his column was surrounded at Leixlip and captured after a four hour fight. Three

Celbridge Men

Five of the men in Mullaney's column were from Celbridge. They were Thomas Cardwell, John Dempsey, Thomas Kealy, Charles O' Connor and Anthony O' Reilly. We found their details in the 1911 census and also in old roll books from our school.



Anthony O' Reilly was the only one of these men executed and we wanted to learn more about him. Local historian Jim Doyle has done extensive research on O' Reilly and he came to speak to us.

Anthony O'Reilly was born on 13th June 1902. He was born in Celbridge Workhouse. His mother's name was Bridget O'Reilly. He had a twin sister Julia Mary who died aged one due to convulsions.

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Arna h-eisiúint de bhun na hAchta um Chláru Sibhialta 2004 Issued in pursuance of the Civil Registration Act 2004 </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Éire Ireland </div>											
Clár Uimhir Registration Number } 7222750 i gCeantar an Chláraitheora Maoirseachta in the Superintendent Registrar's District of } Celbridge				Breith a Chláraitheora i gCeantar Birth Registered in the district of } Celbridge i gContae in the County of } Co. Kildare							
Uimh.	Dáta Breithe Date of Birth	Ainm	Gnéas	Ainm, Sloinne agus Ionad Chónaithe an Athar	Ainm agus Sloinne na Máthar agus a sloinne roimh phósadh di	Céim nó Gairm Bheatha an Athar	Sinú, Cáilocht agus Ionad Chónaithe an Fhaisnéiseora	An Dáta a Chláraithe	Sinú an Chláraitheora	Ainm Baiste má tugadh é tar-éis chláru na Breithe agus an Dáta	
No.	Ionad Breithe Place of Birth	Name	Sex	Name and Surname and Dwelling-Place of Father	Name and Surname and Maiden name of Mother	Rank or Profession of Father	Signature, Qualification and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar	Baptismal Name if added after Registration of Birth and Date	
459	1902 Thurlesbury Hospital	Anthony	M.	Bridget Reilly Carmarthen			R. M. Paisley Cousin Celbridge Workhouse	1902	[Signature]	Edward Reilly Registrar	

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.
Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.

FORM A.

No. on Form B. 1

RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.

NAME AND SURNAME.	RELATION to Head of Family.	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.	EDUCATION.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.		RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION.	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE.			WHERE BORN.	IRISH LANGUAGE.	If Dead and Dead only; Blind, Imbecile or Idiot or Lunatic.		
				Male.	Female.		State for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule the number of—	Whether "Married," "Widowed," "Single," or "Divorced."	Children born alive to present Marriage, if no children born, alive, write "None" in column 11.					
1. Christian Name.	2. Surname.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1. Lawrence	Mullen	12	Young	Roman Catholic	62	—	Farmer	Married	29	3	2	Ballinacorney	—	—
2. Alice	Mullen	Wife	Roman Catholic	62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Ballinacorney	—	—
3. Julia	Mullen	Daughter	Roman Catholic	27	—	Farmer's Daughter	Single	—	—	—	—	Ballinacorney	—	—
4. Mary	Mullen	Daughter	Roman Catholic	26	—	Farmer's Daughter	Single	—	—	—	—	Ballinacorney	—	—
5. Anthony	Mullen	Boarder	Roman Catholic	8	—	Schooler	Single	—	—	—	—	Ballinacorney	—	—
6. Patrick	Mullen	Boarder	Roman Catholic	60	—	Farmer's Servant	Single	—	—	—	—	Ballinacorney	—	—

I hereby certify, as required by the Act 10 Edw. VII., and 1 Geo. V., cap. 11, that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.

Signature of Enumerator. *H. G. Dalton* Signature of Head of Family. *Lawrence Mullen*

He was fostered by the Mullins family.

He went to the Abbey National School in 1911. We can see from the roll he had regular attendance which could mean good health. The confirmation name he chose was Desmond.

Date of Entrance.	Register No.	PUPIL'S NAME IN FULL.	Date of Pupil's Birth.	Religious Denomination (written by Parent or Guardian)	Residence (Village, Townland, or Street if in a Town.)	Parent or Guardian (Name and Address)	School.
1911 Sep 14	1351	O'Reilly Anthony		Rb	Simmentstown	St Paul	
" " 14	1352	Bullen Leo		Rb	English Road	St Paul	
" " 18	1353	Comer John		Rb	Elm Hall	Farmer	
" " 21	1354	Palmer William		Rb	Moortown	St Paul	
2 Jan 2	1355	Flanagan John		Rb	Bog Lane	St Paul	

According to Jim Doyle, local oral accounts tell us that Anthony lived with his mother as he grew older and his nickname was the "County Boy".

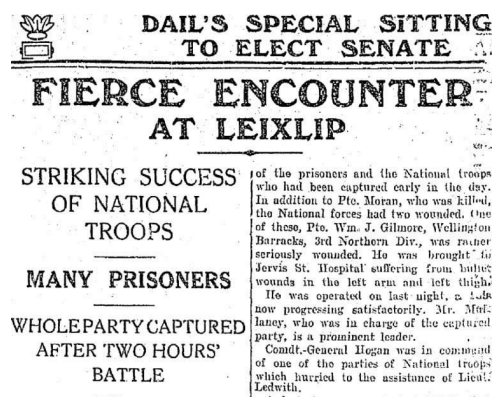
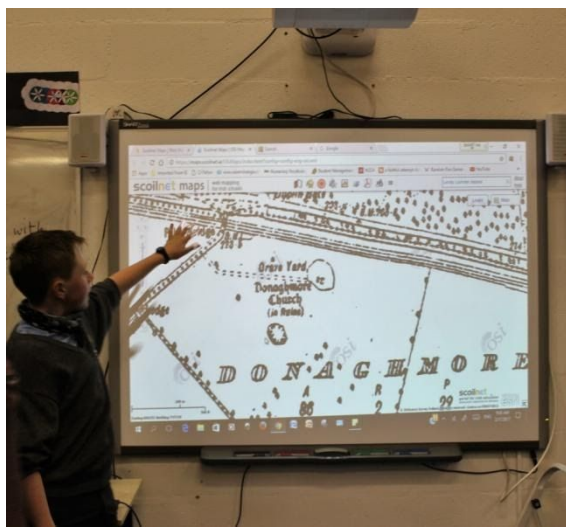
Anthony joined the IRA in his teens and was in a column led by Mullaney during the War of Independence

The Military archives provided this information:

Private Anthony O'Reilly
Service number: VR16188
Enlisted: 4th April 1922
Unit: 3rd Infantry Battalion

Previous old IRA service: member of B Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Meath Brigade.





Battle of Pike's Bridge

On the 1st December 1922 Mullaney's column stole a car and took over Grangewilliam House. They positioned themselves in the nearby Graveyard, as it was a good vantage point to see Pike's Bridge, the road, canal and railway. Meanwhile a Free State army lorry carrying supplies from Lucan to Maynooth broke down on the road leading to Pike's Bridge. While trying to fix the truck, they came under heavy fire from Mullaney's column. The soldiers ran towards the canal seeking cover. They then found themselves being fired at by a Thompson gun and they ran over the bridge. Mullaney's column seeing this, hopped in the stolen car to ambush them. Two of the men from the lorry were forced to surrender, while the other soldier got away.

"We took the best cover we could get... I then saw armed men with rifles. I and two of my companions were surrounded. One of us escaped. I and my companion Sergeant Montgomery were made prisoners"

Some reports of this battle claim that the shooting came from between the graveyard and the house itself but after our trip to the grounds we found that it would be practically impossible for that to have happened as it was too far away.

The soldiers were brought to Grangewilliam house and were held there. They were offered food. Meanwhile, the soldier that got away ran to Maynooth barracks and met up with Commandant Ledwith. Ledwith sent for reinforcements from Portobello, Naas, Trim and Lucan. At around 13:45 Ledwith, with 12 soldiers he had encountered on the Dublin Train, headed towards Grangewilliam. They reached Grangewilliam and were immediately put under heavy fire. Two men were separated from the group and one of them, Private Joseph Moran, was shot dead. An hour later reinforcements arrived and surrounded Grangewilliam. Mullaney was forced to flee towards Ballygoran where at around 16:00 they eventually surrendered.

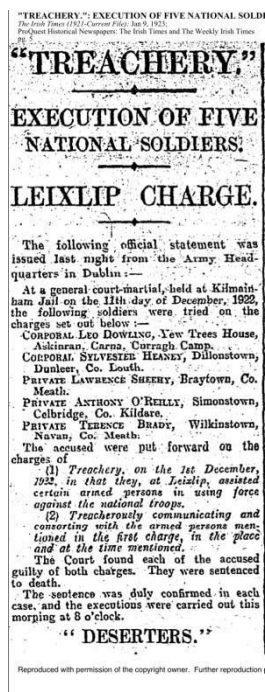
It was like a chapter from a Red Indian novel. We crept along under cover until we suddenly saw about twenty men, three of them in uniform...We hesitated...they opened fire...We replied of course and it was all over inside ten minutes.

The column was captured, including Anthony O'Reilly. They all knew their upcoming fate. Arms and ammunition including 21 rifles, a Lewis machine gun, a Thompson submachine gun and revolvers were recovered.

Executions and Jail

On 27th September 1922, the Provisional Government granted itself emergency powers so that any person charged with taking up arms against the state or even possessing arms without permission could be tried in a military court and face the death penalty.

Corporal Leo Dowling, Corporal Sylvester Heaney, Private Anthony O'Reilly, Private Lawrence Sheehy and Private Terence Brady were sentenced to death for:

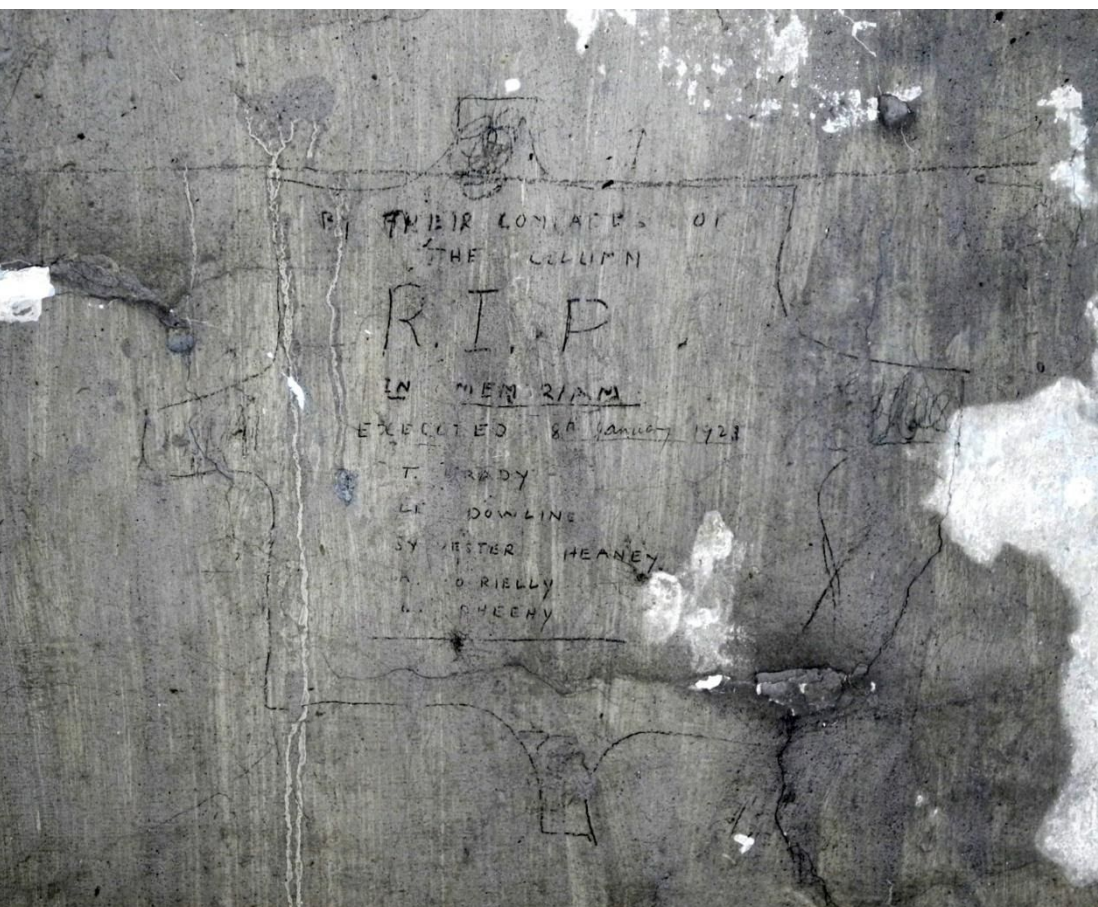


" Treachery on the 1st December 1922 in that they at Leixlip assisted certain armed persons in using force against the National troops. "

This was the first time men from the National Army were executed for deserting and was a warning to other men.

The men were executed on 9th January 1923 by firing squad. They were buried in Kilmainham Gaol.

The rest of the column escaped execution and were released in 1924. Mullaney was fired from his school but the parents organised a strike in protest and he got his job back. He later returned to Mayo.



IE/AL/1923/125

To the Memory of
FIVE BRAVE IRISHMEN
Who Died for Ireland.

LEO DOWLING. LAURENCE SHEEHY.
SYLVESTER HEANEY. ANTHONY O'REILLY.
TERENCE BRADY.

(Executed in Kilmainham Jail on January 8th, 1923.)

They told you that the Army you were joining was the Army of the Irish Republic. They put the false title up on placards for you. They told you that in order to establish the Republic it was necessary to utilise the Treaty, so that you could be armed and equipped for the purpose of establishing the Independence of Ireland. By false pretences they led you along, telling you they were framing a Republican Constitution, and that they would have no Governor-General, and that they would never take the oath of allegiance. Lyingly they whispered in your ear that when the time came they would stand up against England and say they would not have these things.

That was how they beguiled you and many boys like you into their army.

And then you saw them attack, not England, but your former comrades of the Irish Republican Army. You saw them bring in their King-pitted English Constitution while they abolished the Republican Courts and all the Republican institutions. You saw your Commander-in-Chief stand at the salute for the representatives of the English King in Ireland. You saw them raiding, night after night, the homes of those revered ones, the Men of 1916. You saw them bring into the army men who had never fought for any cause but England's while they murdered, officially and unofficially, the men who were fighting without pay for the cause of Ireland. You saw the Rory O'Connors and the Liam Mellowes, names historical in the fight for Irish Independence, facing the firing squads, while the Tony Lawlers and the William English Murphys, who never fought for any cause but that of England, were in the counsels of your Higher Command. You saw that you were ranged in arms on the side of Empire, against the ancient and undefeated cause of Ireland.

Then your eyes were opened. You saw that by treachery and falsehood, you had been betrayed; and like honourable men you returned to your old allegiance, to fight for the only cause worthy of your manhood—the Independence of your country.

For this they executed you. For this you died.

Meanwhile around the world

Around this time, many interesting things were happening. We noticed alongside reports on the Leixlip Battle in The Irish Times of December 1922 there was a story about Howard Carter discovering the tomb of Tutankhamun in Egypt. We thought it was strange that we all knew so much about that and so little about events that took place on our doorstep!

<p>IN THE VALLEY OF KINGS.</p> <p>FIND WORTH SEVERAL MILLIONS.</p> <p>HALF A MOUNTAIN EXCAVATED.</p> <p>IRISH TIMES FOREIGN SERVICE. FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.</p> <p><i>LUXOR, Friday.</i> "We are greatly gratified," said Lord Carnarvon to me this morning. "Perfectly splendid," said Lady Evelyn Herbert, his daughter. "So great we are unable to comprehend it all," said Mr. Howard Carter, who is Lord Carnarvon's able field director. "It is a world-beater," said I questioningly.</p>	<p>TO-DAY'S LONDON PAPERS.</p> <p>DRAFTING A PEACE.</p> <p>DIFFICULTIES AT LAUSANNE.</p> <p>"THE TIMES" OF TO-DAY SAYS:—</p> <p>The facts that are now crystallising in the atmosphere of the Conference (Lausanne) are that the balance of population and of political power in the Near Eastern countries has been remarkably changed through that strange combination of general peace and local war with which these countries have been afflicted. As our Correspondent says, this is a "landmark in history. For the first time in three thousand years there is now no resident Greek population in Asia Minor." A new Turkey, with a militant nationalism, has pushed the Greeks out of Asia Minor, together with a large number of Armenians.</p>	<p>LEIXLIP BATTLE.</p> <p>AMBUSH PARTY.</p> <p>BIG SURPRISE.</p> <p>22 MEN CAPTURED.</p> <p>OFFICIAL STATEMENT.</p> <p>The national Army Headquarters last night issued the following official report:— "A detachment of troops engaged a party of irregulars located at Leixlip, Kildare, to-day, and after a short engagement captured 22 prisoners, 1 Lewis gun, 1 Thompson gun, 21 rifles, 7 revolvers, 5 bombs, and over 1,000 rounds of ammunition. "The casualties amongst the troops were one killed and two wounded. "Three of the irregulars were wounded."</p>
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Many World War II leaders were coming to power.

- **Stalin** was appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party.
- **Hitler** gave a speech to 50,000 national-socialists in Munich.
- **Mussolini** took control of Italy.

The strangest fact in 1922 was that the longest attack of hiccups begins: Charlie Osborne gets the hiccups and continues for 68 years, he dies 11 months after it stops.

The National Archives of Ireland

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Residents of a house 12 in Celbridge (Celbridge, Kildare)

☐ Show all information

Surname	Forename	Age	Sex	Relation to head	Religion
Cardwell	Leonard	50	Male	Head of Family	R Catholic
Cardwell	Susan	40	Female	Wife	R Catholic
Cardwell	Stella	17	Female	Daughter	R Catholic
Cardwell	Eva	15	Female	Daughter	R Catholic
Cardwell	Thomas	11	Male	Son	R Catholic
Cardwell	Annie	7	Female	Daughter	R Catholic
Cardwell	Leonard	3	Male	Son	R Catholic

[Report any error in transcription](#)

Cardwell Tragedy

Less than a week after Thomas Cardwell was arrested for his part in the battle, his family once again were indirectly victims of the Civil War. On 7th December 1922 in Celbridge, Annie Cardwell (18), was tragically shot by a lad named Patrick Brady. The incident took place in the Cardwell household when Annie and Patrick were messing around the house with a gun. You see, the Cardwell house was used as an arsenal so there would be some guns locked up and some lying around the house.

“We were pointing the gun at each other and clicking. I put the rifle down behind the door of the room, and Annie and her brother went into the kitchen. When they came back I said I would give her a fright, and I took up the rifle and pointed it at her and it went off. I was thunderstruck when it went off. We were always on the best of terms, and there were no angry words or dispute between us prior to the rifle going off. I immediately went for the priest and doctor. No one regrets the incident as much as I do”

Private Joseph Moran

Service number: VR14685

Enlisted: 4th August 1922

Joseph Moran was from Kilcock He was shot dead during the battle. He was fired on from Grangewilliam house.

“Moran was shot about an inch under the eye and the exit wound was found, large and jagged in the back of his neck. The bullet travelled in a downward, backward and outward direction.”

His remains were sent to Kilcock on 3rd December 1922 by motor car for burial.

Return of the Bodies

After the Civil War, De Valera put pressure on the government to exhume the bodies of the executed men. On 31st October 1924 Anthony O'Reilly was buried in Donaghcomper, Celbridge, alongside the Mullin's family who had fostered him as a child.

About 3,000 people attended. This was a huge crowd for the burial of an orphan in a small village with poor transport links.

"Business was completely suspended in Celbridge, shops were shuttered and windows were blinded during the period of the interment.... IRA forces were present under Commandant P. Mullaney...."

Voyage of Discovery

On 17th February 2017 our History Squad went on a field trip looking at locations that featured in our essay. Our first stop was the Workhouse where Anthony O'Reilly was born. Next was Louisa Bridge, blown up by the Leixlip Column. Then we looked at Lidl because one report said the ambushed troops were brought to Walsh's pub which was on that site. Then we saw the canal and Pike's Bridge where the battle took place.



We went under the bridge. We thought that it was amazing how little the scene had changed in nearly 100 years. Then we went to Grangewilliam House.



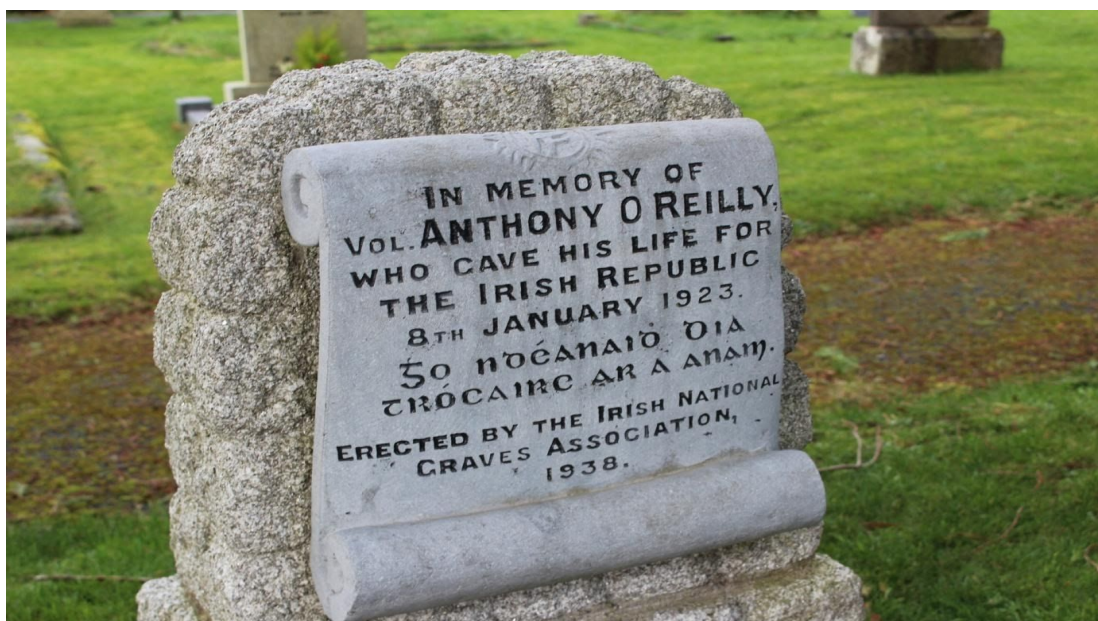
Mullaney's men took over this house and kept their prisoners there.

We went into the medieval graveyard in the grounds and we think that's where the first shots were fired.





Our last stop was the graveyard in Celbridge. We found Anthony O Reilly's grave and the Cardwell's plot. It was great day and helped us to know where and how everything happened.



We finish with a painting called Allegory. It tells us about the Civil War and our story in symbols. We can see destruction, death, despair and disappointment. The Battle of Pike's Bridge led to the loss of seven young lives. The total death count in The Civil War has been estimated as 4,000 with 77 executed. Almost a century later people are only beginning to talk about that era. The time has come to talk about *all* the Forgotten Battles.