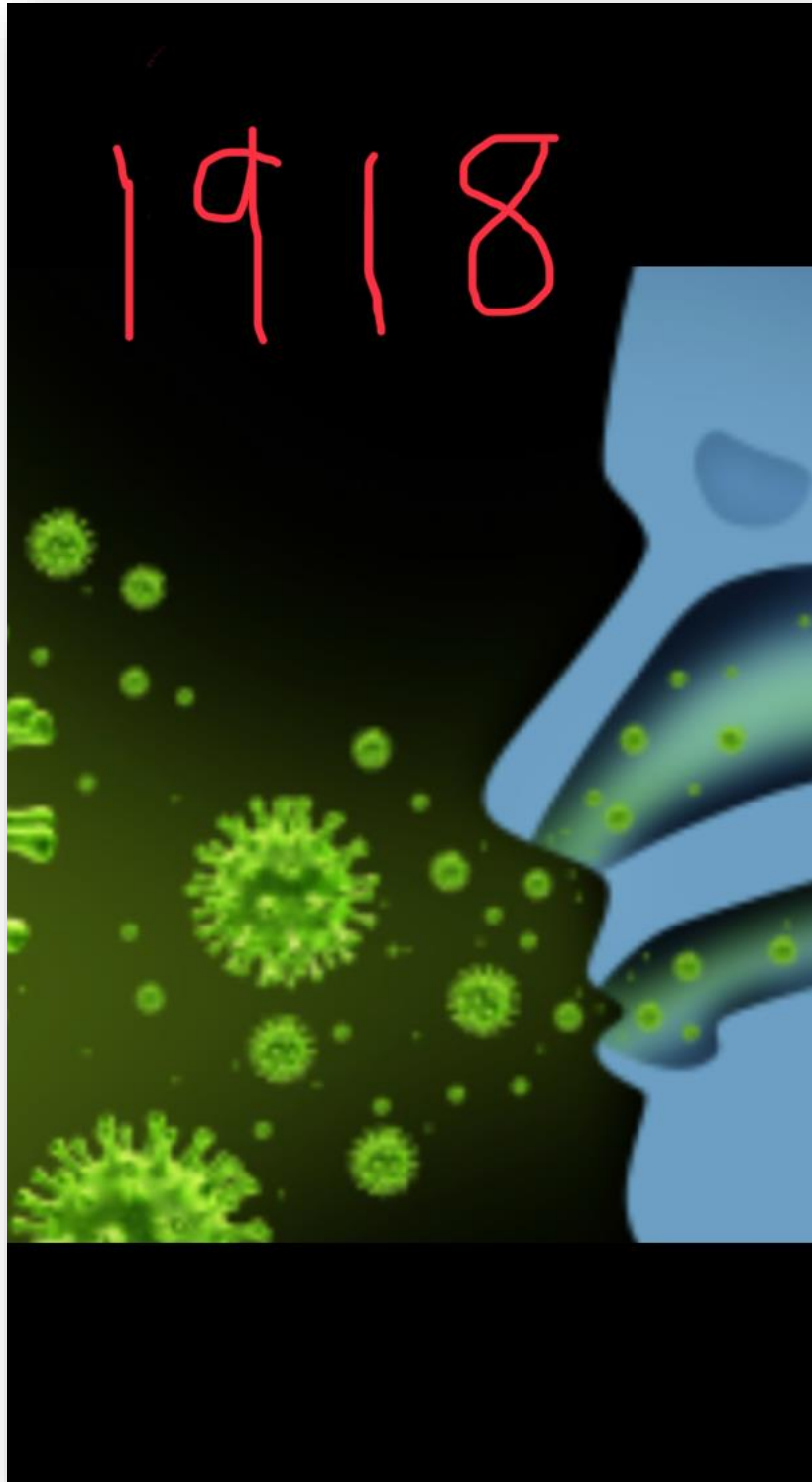


## War and Influenza- A Perfect Storm



We began by asking if there were any connections between World War 1 and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918/19? We wanted to look at this question in relation to the world, Ireland, Kildare and Celbridge. Did the War play a part in spreading the disease? Why was Kildare so badly affected? Were there families caught up in both tragedies? Were poor people more at risk of dying?

Before the war even ended some governments were planning on how to deal with the plague that would probably follow. The headline in Wexford's **People** was "*a plague of some kind follows all great wars*".[1] It is thought that the flu originated from an army camp in Texas although there were reports of an outbreak in France in 1916. Thousands of American troops were being sent to war on big ships causing the flu to spread to Europe. Soon there were more deaths from flu than combat .[2] By June/July 1918, 20% of German troops were laid up with the flu and ½ of American casualties were flu victims.[3] The war was a perfect breeding ground for the flu with mass movement of people and overcrowded, filthy conditions. Soldiers and their food (poultry and pigs) were often housed close together.[4] This caused the disease to spread rapidly. Nobody wanted to reveal the fact that their armies were infected with the flu. Irish doctor Kathleen Lynn's theory was:

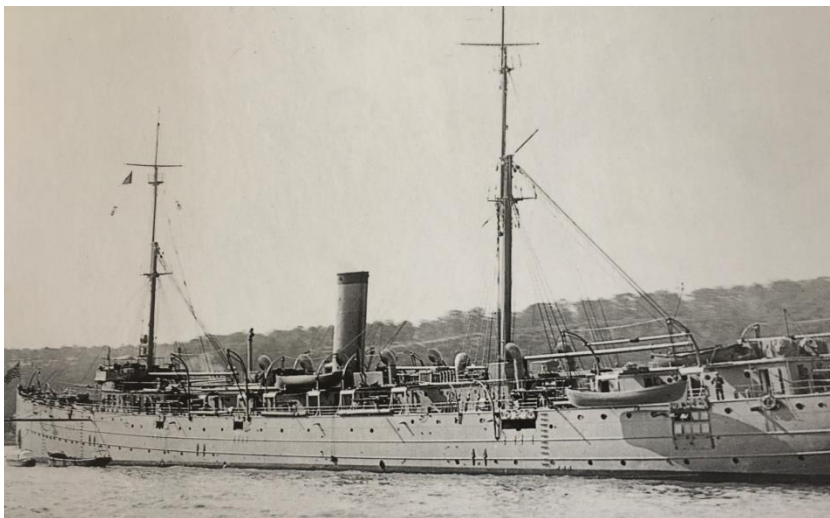
*"in France and Flanders the poison matter of millions of unburied bodies is constantly rising up into the air which is blowing all over the world with the winds hence the influenza plague is universal."*[5]

Spain was a neutral country and not censored. They were free to report on the flu and so it became known as the Spanish Flu. There were three waves of the flu between spring 1918, autumn/ winter 1918 and January /April 1919. It spread around the world. There were an estimated 50-100 million deaths.

## Ireland

The first reported case of influenza in Ireland was on the U.S navy ship, the USS Dixie which was docked off the coast of Queenstown (Cobh), Cork, in May 1918.[6] This links the arrival of the flu directly to the war. Katie Mc Menamin was a child during the pandemic. She thought that the navy base in Lough Swilly was the reason why Donegal had such a high rate of influenza-3<sup>rd</sup> highest in 1919.[7]

[8]



Around 800,000 were infected in Ireland and at least 20,000 died with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> waves the worst. Many doctors and nurses were at the front when the flu struck and as the war ended, civilian hospitals filled up with soldiers.

*"Fear of catching the disease lead to hostility towards returning soldiers, who were identified as being one of the causes of the disease spreading."*[9]

Because of the association with soldiers, it became known as the Khaki Flu, Flanders Flu and the War Plague.

Articles in the **Derry Journal** blamed soldiers:

*"its appearance in some parts of Ireland followed soon upon the return of soldiers."*[10]

Dr. Kathleen Lynn, who worked closely with influenza victims, described the front in Flanders as a breeding ground for disease calling it a "*Factory of Fever.*" She insisted that returning soldiers should be quarantined and their uniforms disinfected.[11]

There were huge protest marches against conscription. A Women's Day against conscription was held 9/6/ 1918 and in Dublin alone 40,000 women signed the pledge.[12]

In late October the Chief Medical Officer was warning of the dangers of large gatherings.[13]

Sadly, people ignored his advice. Large gatherings of people for Armistice Day celebrations probably caused the disease to spread.

Later in 1918 there were more huge rallies countrywide for the election.

By the time Armistice Day arrived Ireland had another great war on its hands...Influenza!

[14]



# INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC.

## OUTBREAK STILL SPREADING.

That the epidemic was still spreading was the summary of the situation given on Saturday at the office of the Superintendent Medical Officer of Health for the City of Dublin. Nor does the news from the country districts prove less disquieting. If the public would only wake up to the seriousness of the condition of things, and avoid meeting in crowds, the risk of spreading the infection might be minimised.

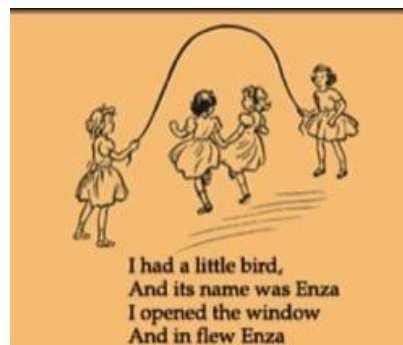
Sir Charles Cameron earnestly recommends managers of schools not to re-open them until Monday next, November 4th, and urges people to refrain from public assemblies. It is to be feared that the mortality returns for last week, when they are issued, will show an increase upon the figures for the preceding fortnight. Following the death of the Rev. Thomas Murray, Chaplain of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, which was recorded on Saturday, there comes the death of the Rev. Father Molony, a colleague of his, who has fallen a victim to the ravages of the prevailing malady.

The Catholic Cemeteries Committee state that for the past seven or eight days the funerals to Glasnevin Cemetery were about 240. In normal times the number for a like period would be about 90. There was a large number of interments yesterday.

[15]

The Irish Times reported:

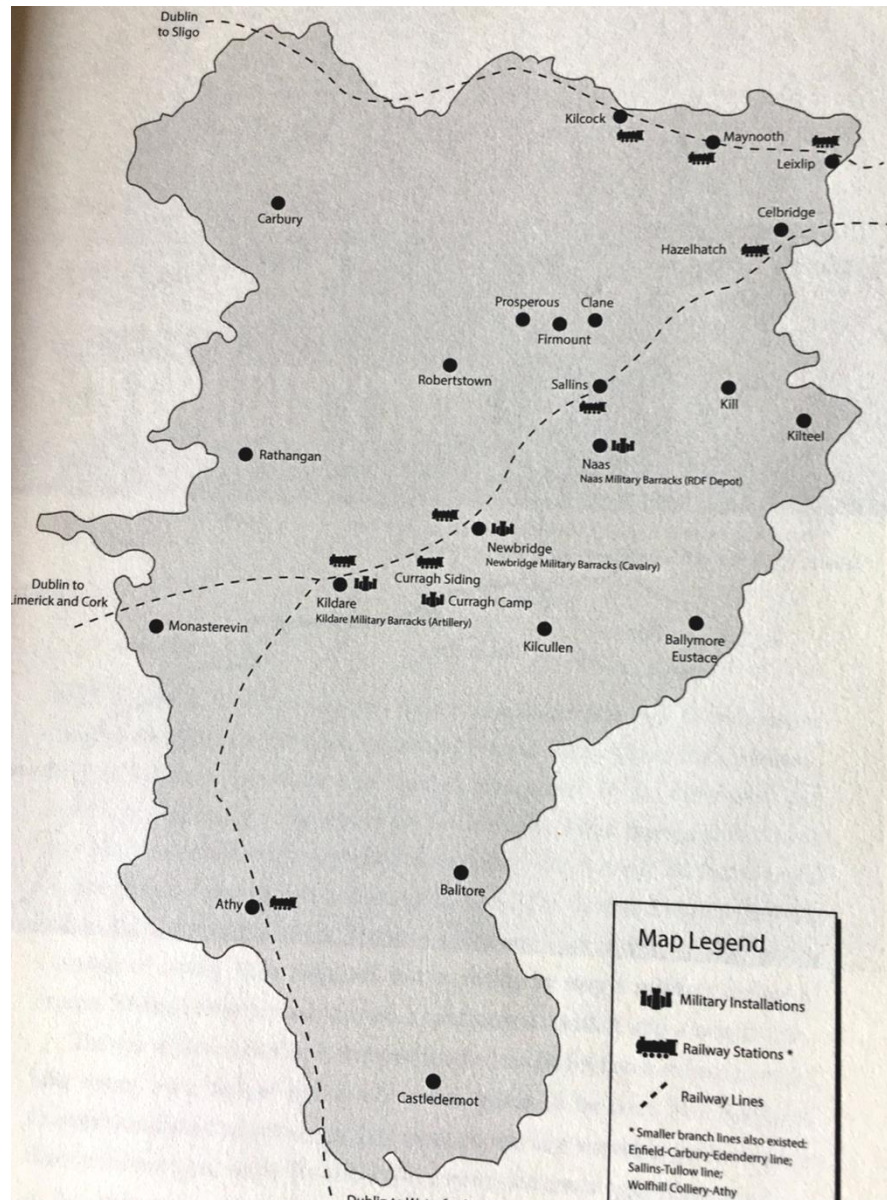
*"the number of victims continues exceptionally high...Yesterday from early morning to well after midday, cortege after cortege reached Glasnevin cemetery, sometimes as many as three corpse laden hearses being seen proceeding up Sackville Street."*[16]



[17]



## Kildare



[18]

On this map of Kildare we see many British military camps and train stations. These were both big factors in the spread of influenza. Kildare had four big military camps, Kildare Military Barrack's (artillery), Curragh Camp, Naas Military Barracks (R.D.F depot) and Newbridge Military Barracks (cavalry). Firmount Hospital for wounded soldiers is marked.

Between 1914 and 1918 Kildare contributed well above the average number of recruits to the British Army.[19]

Towards the end of the war the camps in Kildare saw the return of an overwhelming amount of sick soldiers. What you need to understand is the fact that most of the soldiers who came home hadn't been treated or quarantined.

The effects of the pandemic on County Kildare were disastrous. In 1918 Kildare suffered the highest death rate from influenza per head of population in the entire country. Over 750 men from Kildare sadly perished in the war while another 369 people died of the flu.

The **Kildare Observer** reported :

*“there was scarcely a family in Naas that had not been afflicted by flu.”***[20]**

Nearly 1,200 people from Kildare died as the result of the war and the flu.**[21]**

According to the **Irish Independent**:

*“In Kildare few families are escaping the epidemic and in Naas it is very virulent and several young persons have succumbed. In some cases, entire families have been stricken. Two of the local doctors Dr. O'Donal Brown and Dr W.P. Murphy are suffering from it ”***[22]**

Throughout Kildare, schools, cinemas and other public buildings were closed. It was difficult to find doctors to replace those who were ill, and doctors were offered larger fees. **[23]**

Half of Kildare's flu deaths in 1918 occurred in Naas. The Kildare senior football team were beaten in the semi-finals of the Leinster Senior Football Championship in Croke Park on 27/10/1918 because they were missing some of their best players.**[24]** There were power and water shortages in Naas. That made it very difficult for people to cook and keep clean.**[25]**

On 2/11/1918 the **Kildare Observer** published a detailed article about the flu.

*“Naas and district has surely had more than its share of the influenza epidemic.”*

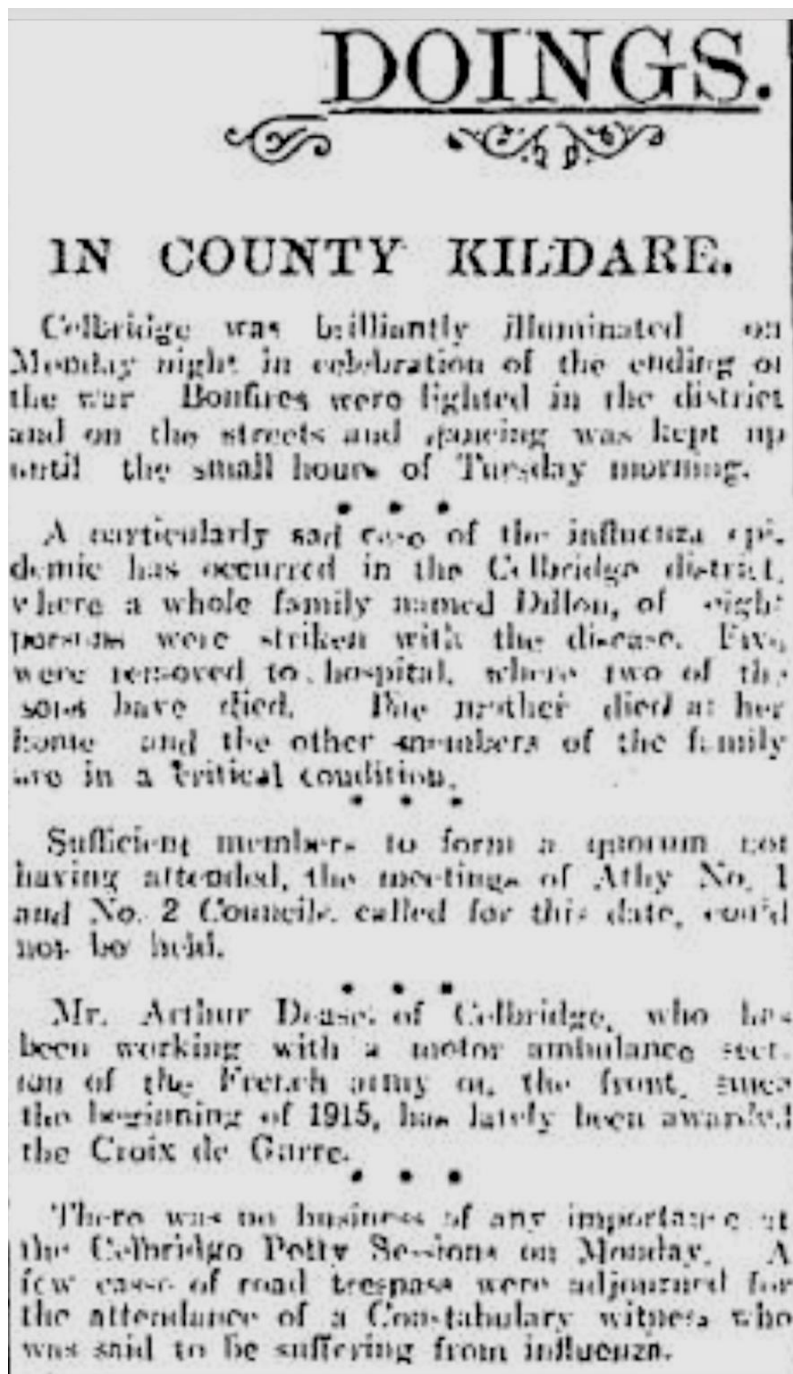
The article says that the doctors weren't sure what was happening. It also tells that nearly all the schools had been closed. The newspaper urged people to cancel major events and big gatherings. People were being advised to bury victims speedily and not to have wakes. We think that must have been very hard on the victims' families. There is an interesting mention of the army at the end of this article.

*“The military authorities have shown a wise and timely discretion in forbidding the troops to frequent theatres and other places of amusement.”***[26]**

## Celbridge

According to the **Irish Times** 290 Celbridge men volunteered to fight for Britain in World War 1.[27]  
Colonel Claude Cane, wealthy Celbridge land owner, said "*Celbridge I am proud to say, has as good a record, as any place of its size in the Kingdom.*" [28]

We think this article from The Leinster Leader is important because it tells a lot about Celbridge as the war ended, hit by the perfect storm of war and influenza.



**DOINGS.**

**IN COUNTY KILDARE.**

Celbridge was brilliantly illuminated on Monday night in celebration of the ending of the war. Bonfires were lighted in the district and on the streets and dancing was kept up until the small hours of Tuesday morning.

A particularly sad case of the influenza epidemic has occurred in the Celbridge district, where a whole family named Dillon, of eight persons were stricken with the disease. Five were removed to hospital, where two of the sons have died. The mother died at her home and the other members of the family are in a critical condition.

Sufficient members to form a quorum not having attended, the meetings of Athy No. 1 and No. 2 Councils, called for this date, could not be held.

Mr. Arthur Dease, of Celbridge, who has been working with a motor ambulance section of the French army on the front, since the beginning of 1915, has lately been awarded the Croix de Guerre.

There was no business of any importance at the Celbridge Petty Sessions on Monday. A few cases of road trespass were adjourned for the attendance of a Constabulary witness who was said to be suffering from influenza.

There were huge losses and sacrifices made by the men and women from Celbridge. It's no wonder that people were celebrating the end of the war in the street. We read also that local man, Arthur Dease, was awarded the Croix de Guerre.

In the same article we read about the sad, tragic story of the Dillon family. Out of a family of eight, four of them died from Influenza. [29] One of the boys, Michael Dillon, was a pupil in our school.

## Our School

We started looking through our roll books from 101 years ago and noticed that our school was closed for influenza three times.

1. 14/10/18-18/11/18
2. 2/12/18-24/12/18
3. 3/2/19-10/3/19

Wednesday 3rd 16 10 4th 19 4 5th 11 6 6th 2 2 7th - - 8th - - Total 77 55	Wednesday 3rd 16 12 4th 10 7 5th 19 5 6th 2 1 7th 1 1 8th - - Total 77 51	Wednesday 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total	Wednesday 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total
Thursday 1st 19 12 2nd 19 18 3rd 16 8 4th 10 6 5th 11 7 6th 2 1 7th 1 7 8th - - Total 78 53	Thursday 1st 19 12 2nd 19 13 3rd 16 9 4th 10 6 5th 19 6 6th 2 1 7th 1 1 8th - - Total 77 48	Thursday 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total	Thursday 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total
Friday 1st 19 11 2nd 19 17 3rd 16 13 4th 10 6 5th 11 6 6th 2 2 7th 1 1 8th - - Total 78 53	Friday 1st 19 9 2nd 19 12 3rd 16 13 4th 19 4 5th 10 7 6th 2 1 7th 1 1 8th - - Total 77 44-1	Friday 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total	Friday 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total
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Sunday 1st 19 10 2nd 19 15 3rd 16 11 4th 10 6 5th 10 5 6th 2 1 7th 1 1 8th - - Total 77 69	Sunday 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total	Sunday 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total	Sunday 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total

MONTH'S SUMMARY.			
Cash Received.			
From Pupils between 3 and 15 years	£	s.	d.
From Pupils 15 years and over			
For Extra Subjects			
Total			
Totals for			
School Days	No. on Roll	No. Present	
5 1st Col.	787	267	
4 2nd Col.	308	198	
3rd Col.			
4th Col.			
Extra Days			
9 No. of Days	695	465	
Average		785	516
Proportion of daily average attendance to 100 average on Roll.			



In our school on 2/9/1918 there were 84 pupils enrolled and by the end of the year on 27/6/1919 there were 67 enrolled. The reason for this drastic drop was probably that so many children were hit by influenza but it also could have been due to other reasons.

We also know that 25 boys were struck off the roll.[30] There could be many reasons for this, but we know at least 3 boys died because we checked the civil records.

Those boys were Michael Dillon, Charles Graydon and Henry Duggan.

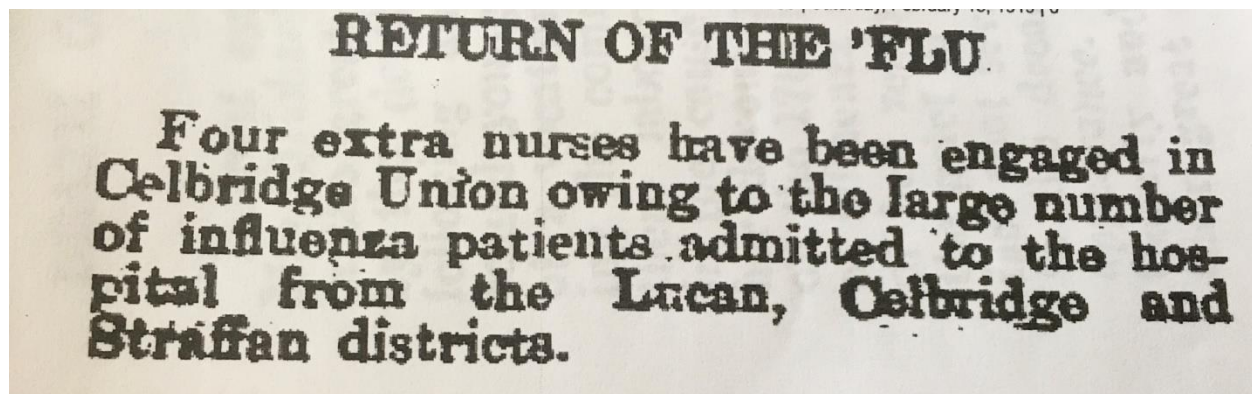
Michael was in 3<sup>rd</sup> Class and 12 years old when he passed due to influenza. His family was one of the most affected as all 8 members caught it. Michael, his brother, sister and mother died. This could have been because they lived very close to the railway and the canal. We know troops were travelling to different army barracks in Kildare. His dad was a labourer. He died on 9/11/1918.

Charles Graydon was only starting 5<sup>th</sup> Class when he died aged 13. He lived on English Row where the Mill is now. Charles died on 30/10/1918. His father was a soldier and was also named Charles.

Henry had only reached 1<sup>st</sup> Class when he died aged 11. He lived in Beatty Park and his father was a labourer. He died on 23/3/1919

The principal of our school was Michael Kevany. His daughter died from Influenza on 25 /11/ 1918 aged 8. She lived in Main Street, Celbridge. Her older brother was the only boy in 7<sup>th</sup> Class.[31]

Clongowes, the wealthy boarding school, is only a few miles from our school. They also lost 3 boys. However they had 300 pupils and a huge staff, so in fact they lost a much lower percentage. This was mainly due to the fact they were very well off and had maids and nurses. They also were very smart, as they socially distanced the sick. [32]



## Double tragedies

The Buckley family had a tragic tale, affected both by war and influenza.

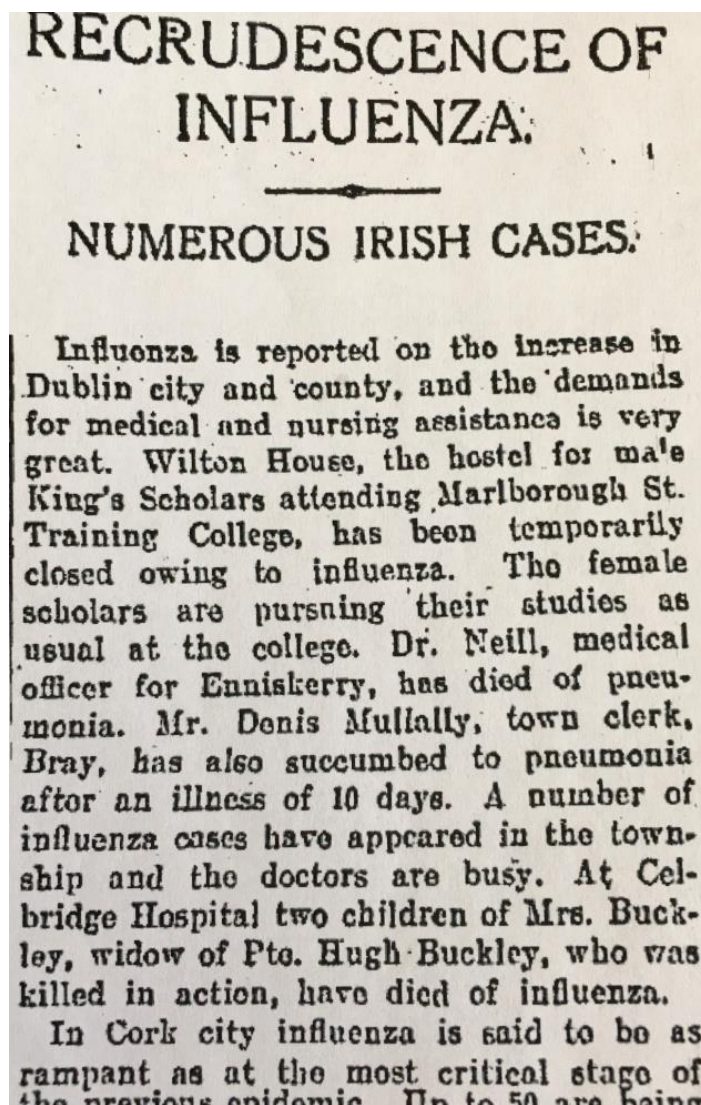
It starts with Hugh Buckley, who died in the war on 3/11/1914.

He was in the Connacht Rangers 2nd Batt. He was a private. He is commemorated at the Ypres Meningate memorial. [34] His brother Peter died from war injuries in 1918. [35]

Hugh left behind his wife, Mary Buckley (nee Graydon) and daughters, Kathleen and Madeline Rose Buckley. We already spoke about Charles Graydon, one of our pupils who died. He was actually Mary's nephew.

Kathleen and Madeline both died of influenza, on the 9th and 11th February, 1919.

Before the war she had already lost two children. [36]



The Cornallys were another family affected by both war and influenza. They lived and worked on the railway at Hazelhatch. Elizabeth Cornally was married to a soldier, Patrick Cornally. They married on 12/11/1911. Patrick went to fight in World War 1, he was a private in the Irish Guard's 1<sup>st</sup> Batt. He died on 12/9/1917. Just a year later, both Elizabeth and her daughter Rose succumbed to influenza. [38]

297	October	Leahy	Female	Spinster	29	Domestic	Influenza	L. Wallace	Present at Death	Present	October	At Paisley
		Celbridge				Servant	Broncho					
		Hospital					pneumonia					
							Certified					
298	October	Elizabeth	Female	Widow	25	Widow of a	Influenza	L. Wallace	Present at Death	Twenty	October	At Paisley
		Cornally				Soldier	Broncho			fourth		
		Celbridge					pneumonia					
		Hospital					Certified					
299	October	Patrick	Male	Married	33	Labourer	Influenza	John Johnston	Present at Death	Twenty	October	At Paisley
		Kearney					Broncho			fourth		
		Celbridge					pneumonia					
		Hospital					Certified					
300	October	Rose	Female	Spinster	2	Daughter of	Influenza	Lizzie Wallace	Present at Death	Twenty	October	At Paisley
		Cornally				a Soldier	Broncho			fifth		
		Celbridge					pneumonia					
		Hospital					Certified					
301	October	Brigid	Female	Spinster	27	Domestic	Influenza	L. Wallace	Present at Death	Twenty	October	At Paisley
		Kane				Servant	Broncho			sixth		
		Celbridge					pneumonia					
		Hospital					Certified					
302	October	Thomas	Male	Bachelor	30	Croom	Cardiac	John Johnston	Present at Death	Twenty	October	At Paisley
		Fagan					disease			ninth		
		Celbridge					Certified					
		Hospital										
303	October	Brigid	Female	Spinster	13	Daughter of	Influenza	Las Moore	Present at Death	Twenty	October	At Paisley
		Moore				Sgt. Moore	Broncho			thirtieth		
		Celbridge				R.I.C.	pneumonia					

Doctor O'Connor, father of fallen war hero Hugh O'Connor, was worried about the filthy streets in Celbridge spreading influenza.

**INFLUENZA AGAIN.**

The following was read from Dr. Charles J. O'Connor:—

"Dear Mr. Shortt,—Will you kindly ask the Council to issue an order to have all the yards in the town of Celbridge and district cleared of manure and other unsanitary rubbish, and have all premises and out-offices limewashed as we cannot say how soon we might be visited by another outbreak of influenza and septio pneumonia."

It was ordered that the necessary work be done.

## The Gogartys

The Gogarty's tale shows us that the influenza was not just an epidemic, but a *pandemic*.

It all starts on the main street of Celbridge where shopkeeper Matthew Gogarty in his sixties and his son, Michael (39), both died on the 1/12/18. Influenza! [40]

That is not the end of the story though, Michael was a big strong man in his prime (his nickname was the Bear) yet he died of influenza! This particular strain of influenza was unusual as it often attacked strong young men.

But the tale is not over as in Naas, there was another branch of the family, shopkeeper Michael Gogarty and his son, Terence or T.J. Gogarty. The shocking truth is that T.J. died of influenza 24/10 1918. [41] T.J.'s elder sister Lillie, who had a hat shop in Montreal, died of influenza as well, aged 33, a few days before her brother in Naas.

Finally, the eldest of Michael's children May or Sister Veronica (she was a nun) died 17/2/1919 of influenza in Belgium. [42]

That's 5 Gogartys who died of influenza, all in different parts of the world and all in the space of a few months.



*"The strongest man in Celbridge, Gogarty, who used to lift 20 stone bags of wheat died.."*

[43]

[44]

**DEATH OF MISS GOGARTY.**

With the utmost regret we chronicle the death of Miss Lillian M. Gogarty, daughter of Mr. Michael and Mrs. Gogarty, South Main street, Naas. The sad event took place at her brother's residence, Montreal, Canada, on October 26th, from pneumonia following influenza. To the bereaved parents and family we tender our sincerest sympathy.



#### HIS SON.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Farrell, and carried in silence:—"That we express our sincere regret at the death of Mr. Matthew Gogarty, formerly a member of this Board, and of his son, and desire to convey our deep sympathy to the members of their family in their bereavement."

The Clerk desired to be associated with the resolution of condolence.

#### COAL.

Dr. Cosgrave wrote stating that there had been no fire in Donadea dispensary since the winter came in, and coal was urgently required there.

It was ordered that one ton of coal be procured.

#### MIDWIFE ILL.

Dr. Cosgrave certified that Nurse Larkin, midwife of Kilcock district, was still unfit to resume duty, and a further two weeks' leave was granted.

#### DEATH OF A NURSE.

Mr. R. H. Paisley, Master, reported:—"I regret to inform you that Miss Lucy Kelly, workhouse midwife, died on the 1st inst. All the eave gutters needed to be cleaned, and there were also some repairs necessary."

The Clerk said Nurse Kelly had obtained leave of absence a fortnight ago to visit her sister, who was ill from influenza, in Manchester. The sister died, and Nurse Kelly contracted the influenza and died on her return to Dublin.

Historian Ida Milne interviewed people who were children during the pandemic. She spoke to Tommy Christian who was from Ardclough, a neighboring village to Celbridge. Ardclough is beside both the railway and the canal. Tommy was 5 in 1918. His father was a cobbler. His whole family caught the flu. First they got terrible headaches then sore throats. They couldn't swallow anything, they had to drink liquids such as gruel and Bovril. They couldn't sleep for 3 weeks. His aunt that looked after him when he was sick and gave him a boiling hot cloth around his neck to cure him. The district nurse was old and had to travel by bicycle from Celbridge.

His mother died in 1919 a year after the flu, Tommy felt she never got over it. His father remarried. He was taken in by his aunt but his sister got sent to another relative in Clane. His life was never the same. Later in life he married the canal barge keeper's daughter and raised a family.

Robert McDowell from Belfast was also 5 in 1918 but from a very different background. His father was a wealthy tea merchant.

Even though he was only 5 he noticed that something bad was happening in the world. He and his Dad used to bring newspapers and magazines to soldiers in hospital, not knowing the risk of catching the flu but soon it invaded his house

*"I could see the local GP and my parents gazing down at me looking worried"* he said. He felt odd and had a fever.

His little brother was ill and his nurse died. Because they were a wealthy family, they had servants and nurses. He managed to survive the flu and double pneumonia.

He began to recover as the war ended *"I remember being taken out of bed by the nurse and brought over to the window where a large Union Jack was raised."* The nurse just said "we won".

He remained a fragile child and didn't go to school until he was 11. [46]

**WHISKEY AND INFLUENZA.**  
**TO THE EDITOR OF THE IRISH TIMES.**  
SIR,—Now that a considerable quantity of whiskey is to be released from bond, and that the medical profession consider its use a preventive of pneumonia supervening in cases of influenza, I would suggest that the Public Health Committee approach the War Cabinet with a view to having supplies distributed among the city chemists. My point is that the working classes cannot procure whiskey when ordered by a doctor, even if they could afford to pay the present high price. Allow the chemists to sell whiskey at sixpence per glass on the production of a doctor's prescription, and let the Government make up the loss of profit. It is not a great concession to ask when a question of saving lives is involved.—  
Yours, etc., "H. V. L." [47]  
Dublin, February 21st, 1919.

*Influenza*

*Bovril Ltd. wish to express their regret at the shortage of Bovril during the recent influenza epidemic.*

*The proprietors of Bovril, recognizing that those who are deprived of the body-building powers of Bovril may more easily fall victims to the epidemic, have done their utmost to increase the supply, but the lack of bottles has seriously hampered—and still hampers—their endeavours. Efforts are being made to collect empty bottles, and it is hoped that supplies will soon be increased by the release of men for the bottle factories.*

*It is suggested that those consumers who have a stock of Bovril should avoid purchasing at present, and thus leave the available Bovril for those who have more pressing need of it at this critical time.*

Other cures included cold water baths, cinnamon, ginger, garlic and quinine.

We found many connections between World War 1 and Influenza. It began in Army camps and was spread worldwide by soldiers on ships and trains, in barracks and trenches. We think Kildare was badly affected because it was an army county with canals and railways. Sadly we discovered there were many families who were affected by World War 1 and Influenza. We think it was easier to recover if you could afford to isolate at home with good medical care.

Who thought we would finish our essay sharing thoughts by email while caught up in another Pandemic?

The Spanish Flu seemed unbelievable but now we understand as we are experiencing something very similar. We were shocked to see how people attended huge gatherings and didn't listen to Charles Cameron like we listen to Tony Holohan. Some cures suggested nowadays are even wackier –drinking bleach for example! Some of us thought that there is a pattern of plagues over time and that we are here today because our ancestors survived the 1918/19 Pandemic.

Will our descendants be on a History Squad in 2120 researching Covid19 during their own Pandemic?



[48]