



GLEN IMAAL - 125 YEARS ON



INTRODUCTION

2024 is the 125th Anniversary of the First Shot fired in the Artillery Range, Glen Imaal, County Wicklow, Ireland. To mark the occasion, the Artillery Club has commissioned “*Glen Imaal – 125 Years On*”, which captures extracts from print media, An tÓglách, An Cosantóir and numerous publications, regarding the First Shot fired by the Royal Artillery on 23 May 1899 and the First Shot fired by the Artillery Corps on 01 September 1925¹. For completeness, Key Events and Recollections associated with The Glen are also included.

Researched and compiled by Brigadier-General Paul Pakenham (Retd), “*Glen Imaal – 125 Years On*” is dedicated to all personnel of The Artillery Corps, past and present, who deployed to the Glen Imaal for live firing exercises, and to those who supported them in the field, including the Ordnance Corps, Medical Corps and Air Corps.

“*Glen Imaal – 125 Years On*” is also available on the Information Section of the Artillery Club’s website, with a parallel posting on the Club’s Website of an album of 85 (+) Glen photographs along with associated captions, down through the ages².

ROYAL ARTILLERY – IRISH COMMAND

Kerry Evening Post – 24 May 1899³

¹ Author’s Note: In his history of the Artillery Corps published in 2013, (Green Series 4113), Ralph A. Riccio records that the first shot was fired on 10 June 1925. However, It’s likely that the “official / ceremonial” date is 01 September as per articles in An tÓglách, An Cosantóir, and The History of Kildare Barracks, written by Mark McLoughlin and published by Merrion in 2014.

² Link to website: <http://artilleryclub.ie/>

³ Published from May 1813 to September 1917, The Kerry Evening Post was the first rival newspaper to the Chute’s Western Journal. Established by two brothers, John and Charles Eagar, it was the conservative answer to Chute’s more liberal journal. The Kerry Evening Post was much excerpted by Cork & Limerick papers. Vide Irish Newspapers Archives: <https://www.irishnewsarchive.com/kerry-evening-post-newspaper-archive-historic-newspaper>



The following article titled *The Annual Artillery Practice*, with the above photograph, was published in the Kerry Evening Post on Wednesday, 24 May 1899⁴:

“As may be seen by the following, the Royal Artillery practice will not be held at Glenbeigh this year and the range for the whole of Ireland is fixed at Glen Imaal, County Wicklow. The Royal Artillery practice will take place this year at Glen Imaal, County Wicklow, and the Brigade Divisions will be in camp as follows: 1st Brigade Division, under Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons, 79th and 85th Field Batteries, May 20th to June 5th; 2nd Brigade Division, under Lieutenant-Colonel Montgomery, 28th, 76th, and 90th Field Batteries, June the 5th to June 23rd; 3rd Brigade Division, under Lieutenant-Colonel Hammond, 5th, 9th, and 91st Field Batteries, June 23rd to July 12th ; 4th Brigade Division (under Colonel Knox), Royal Horse Artillery, Q and U Batteries, Royal Horse Artillery, July 12th to 29th. Of course, it must be understood that the dates of arrival and departure are approximate, as all the batteries of a brigade division do not arrive or depart on the same day.”

Kerry Evening Post – 31 May 1899



Last February, a local historian and author Mr Liam Kenny provided Colonel Brian O'Connor (Retd) with the following extract from the Kerry Evening Post, published on 31 May 1899, which reported on the First Shot fired in the Glen Imaal Artillery Range⁵:

“A well informed correspondent sends us the following very interesting account of the new Artillery Range at the Glen Imaal: At 1030 am on Tuesday last, the 23rd May 1899, the first shot was fired by the Royal Artillery on this newly-acquired land range

⁴ Quoted extracts throughout this paper, reflect the actual spelling (+) in the original documents.

⁵ Photos via: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/search/results/1899-05-31?NewspaperTitle=Kerry%2BEvening%2BPost&IssueId=BL%2F0001649%2F18990531%2F&County=Kerry%2C%20Republic%20of%20Ireland>



in the Glen Imaal. It has taken twelve long years for negotiations with landlords and tenants for the War Office to secure this celebrated valley for military purposes. As a range for field guns it has no equal in the United Kingdom. With the wonderful recent improvements in the accuracy and range of modern artillery, it has been found necessary to combine most extensive grounds for land ranges. Up to three years ago all guns in Ireland were fired out to sea: but it was always felt that firing at a floating target formed no preparation for war for the mobile guns of the Royal Horse and Field Artillery which would have to engage an enemy on land.”

Subsequently, at the request of this paper’s author, following archival research, Dr Michael Kennedy RIA kindly provided the complete article published in the Kerry Evening Post on 31 May 1899, the following are some additional extracts:

“Thus in the year 1887, several Artillery officers, who wished to give their arm every advantage obtainable, began to traverse Ireland in every direction, at their own expense, in search of some deep pocket or shell trap in the shape of a valley five or six miles long absolutely clear of houses, up to which their far ranging, highly dangerous projectiles, might be fired with impunity”.

“Such a valley was found at Aughavanagh on lands partly owned by Earl Fitzwilliam and the late Charles S. Parnell M.P. both of whom gave their consent to experimental practice being carried out in the years 1888/89. The tenants also signed agreements allowing of two field guns being fired experimentally up this valley of the Owl River. Lugnaculla Mountain, the highest in Wicklow, was to act as a butt for the shell.”

“At the same time, the officers who discovered this range went to the northern side of Lugnaculla into the Glen of Imaal, and there found a series of positions from which guns could be fired in every direction, without going near more than a few tenants’ houses. The ranges in the Glen of Imaal were not quite so long as those in Aughavanagh, but on the other hand, there were more firing positions and batteries could be manoeuvred to a certain limited extent. In each case, ‘Lug’ (as Lugnaculla was called) was the butt [sic] for the shell fired in both valleys.”

“Papers were signed by each of the occupiers in this valley allowing experimental practice; but owned to the determined opposition of a few tenants in the Glen of Imaal, the Artillery authorities were obliged to go elsewhere in search of a suitable Artillery land range.”

“Another Artillery officer then suggested that a pit of sand or a low promontory three miles long at Glenbeigh, County Kerry⁶ should be utilised as a temporary measure. Glenbeigh, from an Artillery point of view, was better than firing at a floating target; but it was soon found that batteries after a few days practice could get no variety, and that their officers got to know the elevation due to the range even before they went

⁶ Dooks Golf Club, a sea-side links overlooking Dingle Bay, Co. Kerry, celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2014. “The course was laid out as a nine-hole golf course in 1889 by members of the Royal Horse Artillery who were billeted at Wynn’s Folly, Glenbeigh. At that time, military units came from all over Ireland for artillery practice in Rossbeigh. These included Scottish officers who had earlier established golf courses near the Curragh Military Base in Kildare and at the Phoenix Park in Dublin.” <https://www.dooks.com/club/history/>



down to fire their annual course. In other words, Glenbeigh, from the first shot, was doomed because the position of the targets and that of the battery were found – one could not be drawn nearer or further away from the other. Guns fired over the bay or along the sand, parallel to the spit of sand which was only 100 to 300 yards wide.”

“Again the targets and the guns were at the same level, whereas in the Glen of Imaal guns can be fired from the crest or from the reverse, or from slopes at targets in similar positions as to slope of ground, and either above or below, or on the same level as the guns themselves.”

Daily Express – 03 June 1899



On Saturday, 03 June 1899, the Daily Express reported⁷:

“Our correspondent gives an interesting account of Glen Imaal, from which we will take some details. At 1020 AM on May 23rd the first shot was fired by the Royal Artillery on the newly acquired land range in the Glen Imaal. It has taken twelve long years for negotiations with the landlords and tenants for the War Office to secure this valley, which as a range for field guns has no equal in the United Kingdom. Up to three years ago all guns in Ireland were fired out to sea. An artillery officer had suggested Glenbeigh, Co. Kerry, but it was soon found the batteries after a few days ‘practice could get no variety’, whereas in the Glen Imaal guns can be fired from the crest or from the reverse, and from slopes.”

“Under the threat of compulsory purchase, a large portion of the Earl of Wicklow’s property in the Glen was at last acquired on the following terms. The tenant’s interest in fourteen townlands has been purchased for over £13,000. They get twenty-five years purchase of their holdings and are readmitted as War Department tenants at a reduction of ten percent on their judicial rents. The houses have been put up for those who must leave their houses for a few hours two or three times a week whilst firing is going on.”

“Twenty-five years ago, every one of these people could have been turned out of their holdings without compensation at six months’ notice. Now a man who has had his

⁷ The origin of the Daily Express article, in this particular format, is *Curragh History* which posted this report on its Twitter Account, now ‘X’ (@curraghhistory), at some stage in the past.



rent cut down, say from £130 a year to £100 a year wants to get a present of £2,500 for his interest in the land, and is immediately reinstated at a lower rent of £90. Besides this, he who has lived all his life and his father before him, on a clay floor, now gets a nice zinc and wood house, with a boarder floor, put up just outside the line of fire.”

“The fact remains that the range in [sic] now Government property, and all difficulties have been overcome through the generosity of the Treasury. Because all the neighbouring farmers come in and ask whether the Government will take up their farms also is no reason why we should suppose the British taxpayer has made a bad bargain.”

Wicklow Newsletter – 02 July 1904. The following is an extract from the Wicklow Newsletter, provided by Dr Michael Kennedy RIA: *“On Wednesday, the 29th ult, General Lord Grenfell, Commander of the Forces in Ireland visited Kilbride Camp and witnessed live firing and musketry practices which were carried out by the East Lancaster Regiment and Northumberland Fusiliers. Last week Lord Grenfell proceeded by motor car to the artillery range in the Glen of Imaal, County Wicklow in order to be present at tactical operations and practice showing the combined action of field howitzer and horse artillery brigades.”*

Irish Examiner – 12 September 1911. The following is an extract also provided by Dr Michael Kennedy RIA, of an article published by the Irish Examiner on 12 September 1911: *“The 5th Division troops will carry out similar manoeuvres in the vicinity of the Glen of Imaal, where a general inspection of the combined troops, about 15,000 men, will be held by the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland on the 25th and 26th September.”*

Gunner Magazine 1940 - Article Written Between 1904 and 1910. In his article titled *“The Glen of Them All”* in the January 1974 edition of An Cosantóir⁸ (see below), Lieutenant-Colonel J.P. Duggan advises that the UK Defence Attaché Brigadier Frank G. MacMullen DSO kindly requested the Royal Artillery Historical Society to provide him with a copy of the Gunner Magazine published in 1942, containing an article written by Lieutenant-Colonel C.O. Head DSO. The following are extracts of the article written between 1904 and 1910:

“Glen Imaal as a practice camp superseded Glenbeigh, on which I made a few remarks in a previous article, and was a great improvement on its predecessor in accessibility and instructional value. It was discovered and pressed on the authorities by that enthusiastic Irish gunner the late Colonel C.D. Guinness, whose father-in-law, Lord Massey, has a grouse moor in the vicinity of the Wicklow mountains....”

⁸ The January 1974 edition of An Cosantóir is available on the Artillery Club's website:
<http://artilleryclub.ie/publications/>



“Our mess at Glen Imaal was a building very similar in appearance and construction to the one we had in Glenbeigh, but was more purposeful origin. It had been built as an outlying barracks⁹ in a troubled period of Irish history, to deal with ‘rebellious’ contingents operating from the hills.....”

“....Glen Imaal had an annexe some two miles away which could accommodate one brigade, while itself it held another. So two brigades were to camp at the same time and shot on alternative days, their batteries following each other successively. The line of fire m’ght be north and south, or vice=versa, the latter being considered the easier for hitting the target, s the light behind one added to its visibility. An additional difficulty in shooting south was that one always had to compete with a large angle of sight, rarely less than 2 degrees 30’ elevation as in that direction we faced a high mountain. In the keen struggle for classification we would feel some sense of grievance if we got more targets in a southerly direction than were given to the other brigade that was shooting with us.....”

“....The School of Gunnery kept its eye on our proceedings at Glen Imaal, though inclined to regard us as only the poor relation of the practice camps in England. Its representative while I was there, Major Sydney Metcalfe, was a genial guide and comforter to any battery commanders requiring his services, and a broad-minded teacher of artillery science within its limits posed on him by the school authorities.”

Bye-laws Glen Imaal Artillery Range¹⁰ – 12 March 1920



⁹ Author’s Note: Perhaps Leitrim Barracks.

¹⁰ Author’s Note: Vide title Glen Imaal, not Glen of Imaal. Sheet 16 denotes the range as Glen Imaal Artillery Range, and the area east of the Range as Glen of Imaal.



Captain Peter Murray (Retd), a Committee Member of the Artillery Club, kindly provided a copy of the Bye-laws for the “*Glen Imaal Artillery Range*” dated 12 March, and signed by W.S. Churchill, His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the War Department. The Bye-laws were made under the provision of the Military Lands Acts, 1892 – 1903. By resolution passed on 17 May 1920, Wicklow County Council consented to the making of the Bye-laws for regulating the use of the lands of the Glen Imaal Artillery Range. The following are extracts from the Bye-laws:

“The signal that the said lands and roads are closed will be:

by day: Red Flags at Leitrim Bank, Camara Mountain, Table Mountain, a point due north of Knocknamunnion, Pollaghadoo, and at ‘Leitrim Barracks, and

by night: Red Lights at Leitrim Barracks, Camara Cross Roads and Government Boundary Donard.”

“The said lands which may be thus closed, including the said roads intersecting the same, are as follows: The town lands of Table Mountain, Crissadaun, Knocknamunnion, Ballyvaghan, Clirnagh, Leoh, Cannow Mountain, Camerahill North, Camerhill South, Lugnaquilla, Leitrim, Knickeen, Stranhely, Lobawn, Pollaghadoo, and those parts of the Townlands of Camara and Coan lying to the East of the County Road leading Northwards from the Ballineddan Upper.”

“The boundaries of the area to which these Bye-laws apply are marked by War Department Boundary Stones.”¹¹

Glen of Imaal - Happy Valley. In an article titled “*Glen of Imaal Marks 125 Years in the Firing Line*” provided to Colonel Brian O’Connor (Retd), Wicklow historian and author Liam Kenny provides an interesting and informative insight into the selection and acquisition of the Glen of Imaal by the Royal Artillery for use as an artillery range. The following are some extracts from this article¹²:

“The peace of the historic Glen of Imaal was much disturbed by the thundering of artillery” ... so ran the opening line from a report in a local newspaper 125 years ago which described the first salvos to be unleashed in the west Wicklow firing range. A century-and-a -quarter later Imaal remains the primary training ground for Ireland’s military.....”

“From the 1880s the Royal Artillery decamped to the distant location of Glenbeigh on the west Kerry coastline to complete its range practices - much to the consternation of the local cockle-pickers..... And there was further pressure to vacate when the dangers to the coastal population were raised in the House of Commons.”

¹¹ For information on these Boundary Stones, including copyright photographs, vide Donard Imaal History: <https://donardimaalhistory.wicklowheritage.org/places/boundary-stones-artillery-range-glen-of-imaal>

¹² The full article was published in the Irish Independent on 20 May 24: <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wicklow/news/glen-of-imaal-marks-125-years-in-the-firing-line/a1570789326.html>



“Faced with these limitations some artillery officers on their own initiative surveyed Ireland for suitable gunnery terrain. The specification was daunting: a valley five or six miles long, absolutely clear of houses, and into which far-ranging projectiles might be fired with impunity.....”

“However, the War Department’s representatives had not reckoned with the negotiating skills of the Glen dwellers. According to a report in the Kildare Observer Her Majesty’s military faced opposition from ‘landlords, tenants, priests, and parsons who joined in strong protest against the occupation of the ‘happy valley’ by the artillery’. Such resistance was nothing new in the Glen with columnists pointing out how an earlier generation of Imaal rebels had defied the redcoats in 1798.....”

“Such condescension aside, the way was now clear for the artillery arm to open fire and the Kildare Observer newspaper reported that there was excitement in the Baltinglass area when columns of horse-drawn artillery from points as distant as Athlone, Clonmel and Waterford made their colourful way through the town on the way to the new firing ground. The first salvo was unleashed on the 23 May 1899 by a battery of the Royal Artillery.....”

Origins and History of Coolmoney House - Glen of Imaal 1832 to 1999



Published by the Defence Forces Printing Press (12809) in November 2013, the “*Origins and History of Coolmoney House – Glen Imaal 1832 to 1999*” was compiled by Commandant Joe Kelly (Retd) from the research notes of Commandant Liam Dooley (Retd). The following are extracts relating to the establishment of the Artillery Range in the Glen.

“No reference to Coolmoney House can be complete without reference to the nearly 6,000 acre Artillery Ranges – the reason the House has been used by the military [Irish Defence Forces] for the past 90 years. Starting about 1887, the Artillery became interested in the creation of a range area in the Glen of Imaal to replace the one already in use in Glenbeigh, Co, Kerry. There were many reports of surveys carried out including test firing from Aughavannah. The original plan was to have a five mile range from Aughavannah in addition to a similar facility from Leitrim.”

“The first report of firing was by a 15pdr on 23rd May 1899. The deeds for the purchase from the Earl of Wicklow for £14,566 were registered on 24th May 1899 with further additions on 23rd July 1900 and 9th April 1901 and 27th May 1905. Ballineddan [Brennan’s Farm] was added in 1925. Stranahely and West Leitrim were



included but must have been handed back to the Irish Forestry as they are not now part of the range area.”

“Tenants were also bought for 25 times annual rent with the possibility of renting back, at reasonable rates, during the off season.”

“Although a 21 day Notice of Intention to make Range Bye Laws were published in newspapers in June 1889, the definite Glen of Imaal Artillery Range Bye Laws dated 12th March 1920 was published and signed by W.S. Churchill, Principal Secretary of State for the War Department. They were countersigned on 17th May 1920 by S.J. Doyle, Secretary to Wicklow County Council.”

“The range was extensively used until it was handed over to the Irish Free State in 1922”.

Coolmoney House was a two-story building over basement with a 15.5m (55ft) frontage and a similar measurement for the depth. It contained 18 rooms amounting in total to approx. 500 sq. m. (5,400 Sq. f.) exclusive of corridors and toilets. The accommodation consisted of eight bedrooms (including Room 21A), Dining Room, Ante Room, Bar, and storage area, with a further six rooms in the Basement for food preparation and staff accommodation¹³.

Boundary Stones Glen of Imaal

Written by Jim Burler in “Donard Imaal History”¹⁴: *“Boundary markers were placed around the perimeter of the Artillery Range. These boundary stones were large granite posts, square in section 30cm by 30cm and 90cm long, incised with the War Department’s initials WD, the broad arrow symbol and a unique number for each stone. In total, 17 stone posts were erected around the perimeter but they did not completely encompass the full artillery range. The inscriptions were precisely done and the completed posts are good examples of the stone mason’s craft.”*

ARTILLERY CORPS – DEFENCE FORCES



¹³The Origins and History of Coolmoney House – Glen Imaal 1832 to 1999, Commandant Joe Kelly (Retd), Defence Forces Printing Press (12809), November 2013.

¹⁴ Link: <https://donardimaalhistory.wicklowheritage.org/places/boundary-stones-artillery-range-glen-of-imaal>



Artillery in Glen Imaal – September 1925. The following is an article, provided by Dr Michael Kennedy RIA, which was published by the Offaly Independent on 08 August 1925, titled “SAORSTAT FORCES' PROGRAMME FOR SEPT”, which cites the Glen of Imaal:

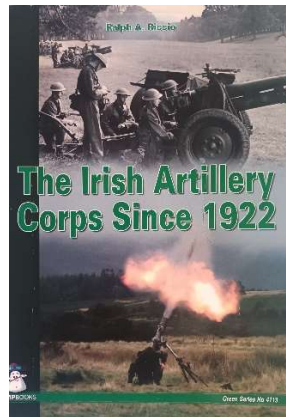
“The Free State Army will carry out important manoeuvres and an extensive programme of training during the second fortnight of this month and the first fortnight of September. These operations will begin with the celebration of the Collins-Griffith anniversary in Dublin on the 16th August, when a grand march by troops will take place through Dublin. During the following week there will be a review of the troops of the Eastern Command in the Fifteen Acres, Phoenix Park by the Chief of Staff.”

“In the weeks following the various Army Commands will in rotation carry out manoeuvres and training in their respective areas. In connection with these there will be drill, rifle shooting and physical training competitions between companies, battalions and brigades. The operations will terminate at the Curragh, where there will be inter-command competitions.”

“The artillery will have shooting practice at the old Artillery Ranges in the Glen of Imaal, County Wicklow. This will be the first time that the artillery has had extended practice of this nature”.

“In view of the forthcoming operations all leave will be suspended during the month of September.”

First Round – Defence Forces Artillery Corps – Wednesday 10 June 1925

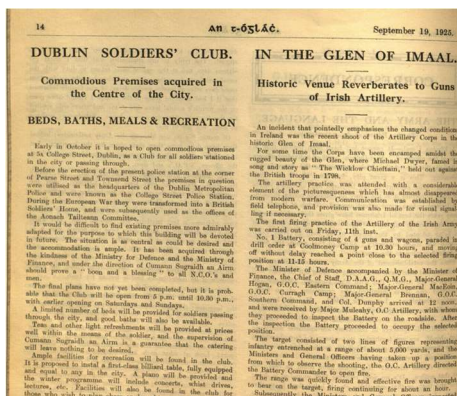


The Irish Artillery Corps Since 1922. In his history of the Artillery Corps published in 2013, (Green Series 4113), Ralph A. Riccio records: *On 10 July 1923, the embryonic Artillery Corps took the first step to develop organisationally along traditional artillery lines, grouping four 18-pdr guns (Mark II) into the 1st Field Battery. The 2nd Field Battery, with four Mark 1 18pdrs, was formed on 05 January 1925. Shortly afterwards on 20 March 1925, the Corps transferred from McKee Barracks in Dublin to the Artillery (later called Magee) Barracks in Kildare, which became its permanent home. The 2nd Battery is credited with the first round in the Glen of Imaal on 10 June 1925.”*



First Shoot – Defence Forces Artillery Corps - Tuesday 01 September 1925

An tÓglách – 19 September 1925¹⁵



Unfortunately, An tÓglách incorrectly cites that the first shoot took place on Friday, 11 September 1925, the correct date being Tuesday, 01 September 1925. The article records:

“No 1 Battery consisting of 4 guns and wagons, paraded in drill order in Coolmoney Camp at 10.30 hours and moving off without delay reached a point close to the selected position at 11.15 hours.”

“The Minister for Defence, accompanied by the Minister for Finance, the Chief of Staff, D.A.A.G., Q.M.G., Major-General Hogan, G.O.C. Eastern Command, Major-General MacEoin G.O.C. Curragh Camp, Major-General Brennan G.O.C. Southern Command, and Col Dunphy arrived at noon and were received by Major Mulcahy O.C. Artillery, with whom they proceeded to inspect the Battery on the roadside”.

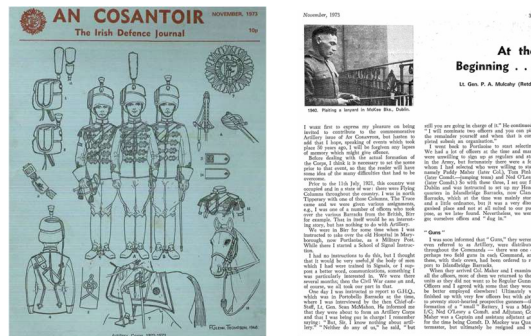
“After the inspection, the Battery proceed to occupy the selected position. The target consisted of two lines of figures representing infantry entrenched at a range of about 5,000 yards and the Ministers and General Officers having taken up a position from which to observe the shooting, the O.C. Artillery directed the Battery Commander to fire.”

“The range was quickly found and effective fire was brought to bear on the target, firing continued for about an hour. Subsequently the Ministers and General Officers inspected the targets and were highly pleased with the results of the shooting. The party returned to Coolmoney, and after lunch the Artillery Camp was inspected.”

An Cosantóir – November 1973¹⁶

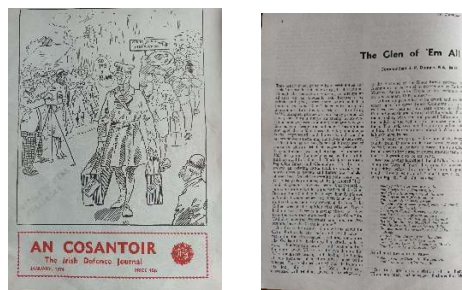
¹⁵ An tÓglách, The Army Journal, Volume III Number 19 (New Series), 19 September 1925, Price two pence. https://antoglach.militaryarchives.ie/PDF/1925_09_19_Vol_3_No19_An%20t-Oglac-19.pdf

¹⁶ The November 1973 edition of An Cosantóir is available on the Artillery Club's website: <http://artilleryclub.ie/publications/>



An article in the November 1973 edition of An Cosantóir, titled “At the Beginning”, Lieutenant-General Mulcahy recorded¹⁷: *“We went to the Glen regularly but it took us a long time to get ammunition. We had guns and we had knowledge but we couldn’t start shooting practices until the ammunition arrived - eventually it did. I remember the morning the first shoot was carried out. The first round was fired at 10 o’clock on 1st September 1925, and was fired by myself to ceremoniously open it up.”*

An Cosantóir – January 1974¹⁸



Lieutenant-Colonel J.P. Duggan’s article titled “The Glen of ‘Em All” in the January 1974 edition of An Cosantóir records: *“In the first shoot ever Major P.A. Mulcahy made an effort at ceremonial on a sacrificial Knapahaun openly engaged. He pulled the firing lever. There was an empty click; nothing happened. He repeated the operation; it was the same again. O.M.E. Johnny Doyle stepped diffidently forward: ‘Your safety catch is on, Sir’, he said. ‘You mean your bucking safety catch is on’ was the retort. The first drops of sweat had been split and traditions of pride in performance and perfection began to be shaped. The embryo of esprit de corps had fallen on fertile ground.”*

Kildare Barracks – From the Royal Field Artillery to the Irish Artillery Corps. The History of Kildare Barracks written by Mark McLoughlin and published by Merrion in 2014, includes a section titled First Shoot (pages 162 through 164). The following are extracts from this particular section:

“Although artillery was fired in the Civil War, there was no chance for the Artillery Corps to fire live shells. Major Bryan Cooper spoke at length in Dáil Éireann in May

¹⁷ This article was republished in the Centenary Booklet of The Artillery Corps – June 2023, available on the Artillery Club’s website: <http://artilleryclub.ie/publications/>

¹⁸ The January 1974 edition of An Cosantóir is available on the Artillery Club’s website: <http://artilleryclub.ie/publications/>



1925, during a debate on army estimates, on the need for artillery officers to experience the effects of live fire in the Glen of Imaal and the necessity to open artillery ranges. The Minister for Defence, Mr Hughes replied that the ‘artillery will get an opportunity in the Glen of Imaal this season of seeing whether they can shoot straight or not’. In the same debate, on a discussion about the cost of maintaining horses in the army, he was asked as to whether the horses used by artillery officers were of any use or just ornamental. Hughes replied ‘For use, undoubtedly. You cannot have an artillery officer walking after his gun, I am sure it would look undignified.’¹⁹”

“Finally, the opportunity arrived. The Artillery Corps carried out their first shoot in the Glen of Imaal on 01 September 1925 when they had received enough ammunition to fire the 18-pounder guns. It was reported in *An tOglaigh* that ‘on the 1st [sic] September was fired by No. 1 Battery the first shell in the first firing practice of the first Irish artillery’. The commanding officer [Major] Patrick Mulcahy recalled that: ‘We had guns and we had knowledge but we couldn’t start shooting until the ammunition arrived – eventually it did. I remember the morning the first shoot was carried out. The first round was fired at 10 o’clock by myself to ceremoniously open it up’²⁰.

“The guns were under the control of the training officer Captain Garrett Brenan and a surviving gun record [history] sheet records six rounds fired on 01 September 1925. This was the same gun that fired 375 rounds during the Battle of the Four Courts from 28 June 1922 under the command of Captain Johnny Doyle and was fired at Passage West, Cork on 08 August 1922.” [Note four 18-pounders were deployed at the Four Courts.²¹]

Key Events (Sample) – Glen Imaal²²



Crossing the Slaney, Coolmoney Camp 1926

¹⁹ Dáil debate 14 May 1925.

²⁰ Article titled “*At the Beginning*”, Lieutenant-General P.A. Mulcahy, *An Cosantóir*, November 1973.

²¹ For an insight of the deployment of Artillery Guns in the Civil War, vide: *Overview of the Recovery, Authentication, Restoration and Conservation of Civil War 18-pounder Mark II Quick Fire Field Gun*, Serial Number 9168; Brig Gen Paul Pakenham (Retd), 2013, <http://artilleryclub.ie/artillery-equipment/>

²² Sources include: Printed Media; *The History of the Artillery Corps*, Ralph A. Riccio, Green Series 2013; *Kildare Barracks – From the Royal Field Artillery to the Irish Artillery Corps*, Mark McLoughlin, Merrion 2014; November 2013, the *Origins and History of Coolmoney House – Glen Imaal 1832 to 1999*, Commandant Joe Kelly (Retd), Defence Forces Printing Press, 2013; *An tOglách* and *An Cosantóir*.



- **1803.** Leirim Barracks built.
- **1831 – 1833.** Period during which Coolmoney House was built for Francis Synge-Hutchinson.
- **23 May 1899.** First Shoot with deployed 15-pounders, conducted by the Royal Artillery, Irish Command.
- **19 March 1920.** Glen of Imaal Artillery Range Bye Laws published.
- **01 April 1912.** The War Department took possession of Coolmoney House and Estate.
- **1922.** Coolmoney House, Estate and Artillery Range handed over to the Irish Free State.
- **10 June 1925.** First Round fired by the Defence Forces Artillery Corps.
- **01 September 1925.** First Shoot conducted by the Defence Forces Artillery Corps.
- **1944.** An Taoiseach, Mr Eamon de Valera visited one of the Corps Demonstration Shoots, conducted during the years of The Emergency (Second World War).
- **16 September 1941.** Tragic training accident, resulting in the greatest loss of life suffered by the Defence Forces, when a premature mine exploded killing fifteen personnel of the Artillery Corps and one member of the Corps of Engineers²³.
 - Depot and School Artillery (5): BS P. McMahon, Sgt Michael Scullion, Cpl Denis Clery, Cpl Colm Heffernan, and Cpl John Taylor.
 - Anti-Aircraft Battalion (10): Lt John Brierton, Lt John Fennessy, Lt Thomas O'Neill, Sgt Thomas Stokes, Cpl Edward Kennedy, Cpl William Shannon, Gnr James McDonnell, Gnr John Murray, Gnr P.O. Hagan and Gnr James Osborne.
 - Corps of Engineers (1): Lt Michael McLoughlin.
- **1944.** Ordnance BL 60-pounders (1942 – 1949), fired for the only time by 41 and 42 Batteries from Ballinreddin (Brennan's Farm).
- **21 June 1949.** First Shoot involving the QF 25-pounder Field Gun (1949 – 2009), from Seskin gun position.
- **19 July 1952.** First Shoot involving the 120mm Brant AM 50 Heavy Mortar (1952 – 2004), conducted by the Artillery School (4 Mortars) and 8 Heavy Mortar Battery, 4 Field Artillery Regiment (12 Mortars).
- **July 1960.** Inaugural 1 Anti-Aircraft Regiment's shoot, firing L60 Bofors in the ground role.

²³ *The Shadow of the Glen*, Lt Richard Coffee, 1 Air Defence Regiment, Commemorative Magazine, September 1989.



- **28 June 1967.** Airlift deployment of a Troop of four 120mm Mortars, Command Post and personnel provided by 19 Heavy Mortar Battery, 2 Field Artillery Regiment, into Leitrim gun position.
- **28 April 1974.** Last QF 18-pounder round fired (1922 – 1974) by Commandant John D. Curtin, Battery Commander, 14 Battery, 2 Field Artillery Regiment.
- **September 1976.** An Taoiseach Mr Liam Cosgrave TD attended the Annual Corps Shoot.
- **26 May 1977.** 4 Infantry Battalion were conducting 81mm mortar live firing when a tragic explosion took place, killing five soldiers, and seriously wounding three others. Those killed were Cpl Gerard O'Donovan, Pte Donal Nugent, Pte Cornelius Buckley and Pte Anthony Hourihane. Those wounded were Sgt Flannan Hough, Sgt Con O'Sullivan and Pte Denis Sheehan.
- **1977.** Last round of the QF 3.7 inch Mountain Howitzer, (1933 – 1977) fired by members of the Young Officers Artillery Course, firing 2,600 rounds of HE and WP, during a four day live firing exercise.
- **19 December 1979.** First Shoot involving the Milan Anti-tank weapon, fired by Lieutenant David Brown, Artillery School.
- **12 March 1981.** First Shoot involving the 105mm Light Gun (1980 -).
- **February 1999.** The last reported sighting of the White Lady, who frequented Room 21A of Coolmoney House. Despite planned restoration projects, Coolmoney House demolished in Spring 1999.
- **30 July 2009.** Last round of the QF 25-pounder (1949 – 2009), fired by Colonel Ray Quinn, Director of Artillery.
- **13 July 2017.** Dedication of Lecture Room honouring Commandant Dave Browne RIP.

Recollections (Sample)²⁴



²⁴ Contents listed in alphabetical order.



The Artillery Club – Glen Imaal – 125 Years On

- **Locations**



Aughavanagh, Ballyroghan, Ballyvaughan, Baltinglass, Brown Hall, Coan, Coolmoney Camp, Donard, Drumgroff, Dunlavin, Graveyard, Glenmalure, Keadeen, Knickeen Ford, Knockanarrigan, Lugnaquilla, Old Mill Hill, Old Mill Ford, Seskin Bridge, Seskin School, Seskin Hill, Table Mountain, Twoomey's House, Wills Ford.

- **Activities**



Artillery Club's Field Trips, Annual Camp, Coordinated Illumination, Corps Camps, C&S Demonstrations, Heli Lift, Live Fire Exercises, Last Round, Night Shoots, Pre-UN Deployment Shoots, Pre-Shoot Conferences, Single Gun Actions and Summer Camps.

- **Appointments**

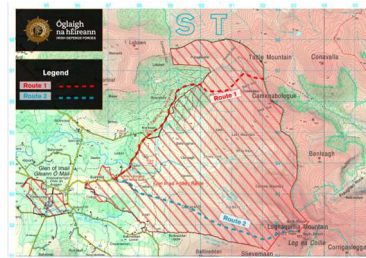


Ack, Anchor OP, Battery Guide, Camp Commandant, Chief Herd – Glen Imaal, Command Post Officer, Detachment Commander, Fire Support Team Commander, Forward Observation Officer, Gun Position Officer, IG, Layer, Medical Officer, Number 1, O Group, OP Officer, OIC Firing Practices, Ordnance Officer, Range Officer, Safety Officer, Section Officer, Senior IG, Fire Support Team Technical



Assistant, Tiffy Sergeant, Troop Commander.

- **Observation Posts**



Camera, Coan, Fauna. Hart, Keogh's House, Leitrim, Ogham Stone, and Stranahely.

- **Gun Positions**



Ballyvaughan Hill, Brennan's Farm, Camara Cross, Coan, Coliga, Donard, Keogh's House, Leitrim North, Leitrim South, Seskin, and Stranahely.

- **Down Range**



Bow-shaped Hole, Bleeding Stone, Cannow Mountarin, Cannow Stone, Camara Hill, Crescent, Crissadaun, Cullanter Rock, Derreen Rock, Knocknamunnion, Knapahoun Stone, Leoh River, Leoh Mountain, Lower Waterfall, Octagonal Shape Field, Pat Curran's Eyebrows, Sheep Pen, Slaney River, Split Rock, Stoney Ridge, The Bluffs, Triangle Stone, Upper Waterfall, and White Rock.



- **Fire Discipline**



Action – Action – Action, AF 617, Adjust Fire, Aiming Point – Number 1 Director, Airburst Repeat, All Sights Zero – Report When Ready, Angle of Sight, Cease Fire, Centre of Arc, Charge 2 Load, Check Delay, Check Firing, Drop 200, Empty Guns – Report When Empty, End of Mission, Fire For Effect, Fire Mission Battery, Fire Plans, Ladder Adjustment, Last Round, Left 200, OT Factor, Met Telegram, Range Tables, Repeat, Safety Line, Seen, Shot 1 Over, Splash, Stand Fast, Take Post, Target Round, Wagon Lines, and Zones of Observation.

- **Stand Easy**



Bob Allens, Charades, Dumb Waiter, Dry Canteen, Drying Shed, Fentons, *Limbers Go Rolling Along*, Messes, Nobel Call, *Over Hill - Over Dale*, Seniority Lists, Table Quiz, *Rector of Donard*, Sing Songs, Slaney River, Twenty-five, Weather, Wet Canteen, White Lady (Room 21A), White Tablecloths, *You'll never be a gCaptain Sir*, and *Your Opening Shot was not so Hot*.

Once a Gunner Always a Gunner - Keep Those Limbers Rolling Along

The Artillery Club

23 May 2024