

# A Bloody Sunday Incident and the Looby Family of Cashel

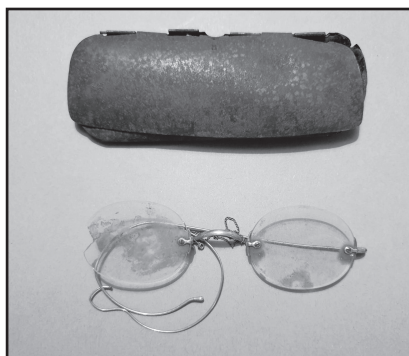
By Seamus King

On 14 June 2019, Margaret Looby, originally from Cashel, presented a pair of spectacles to the GAA Museum in Croke Park. They weren't just any pair of spectacles. Gold-rimmed, they included one cracked lens with a stain on it, which was in fact dried blood. They were also quite old, over an hundred years and the significance of the cracked lens and the dried blood was that the accident to them happened in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920 during the Irish War of Independence.

The person who wore the glasses on the day was unknown until late 1958 when the *Big Sycamore* by Joseph Brady was published.<sup>1</sup> The book included an account of the happenings in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday, when Michael Hogan, the Tipperary footballer from Grangemockler, was among those shot dead. The account includes the following:

All at once people began to appear on the field, like rabbits coming out of burrows on a summer evening. The danger was past. They went to inspect the dead. Marty did not know

where to look for his friend. Suddenly, there was a cry, 'Here is the footballer!' At the Railway end, about twenty-five yards from the north corner of the pitch, close to the cinder track, his body lay, shrouded in a fawn overcoat. No one has ever identified the person who had so respectfully covered Mick Hogan's body. He was in his football togs and jersey of white and green, the Tipperary colours. The grass was red with his blood. A bullet had entered under his left shoulder blade, another at the back of his ear. Death must have been instantaneous.



The publication of the book and the story of the unknown woman covering the dead body of Michael Hogan revealed her identity. A large headline, **A Forgotten Heroine: Eye Witness of Irish Girl's Bravery**, appeared in *The Standard* of 26 December 1958. The revelation came from Senator P. F. Baxter<sup>2</sup>, Leas-Cathaoirleach of An Seanad. Senator Baxter told the newspaper he had come to Dublin for the match and was staying at John Fennessy's in Sandymount. He mentions some of the other guests in the house, including Seamus Burke, T.D. for Tipperary, and a lady named Annie M. Burke from Dromore West, County Sligo. He continued: 'Miss Burke had been giving Domestic Economy courses

in South Tipperary. One of these she had just completed and she had stopped off at Dublin on her way home to Dromore West. In company with John Fennessy and his brother Paddy, a Tipperary creamery manager, and Miss Burke, I went to Croke Park. We had seats on the sideline very near where the Hogan Stand was later erected. When the shooting started at the canal end there was an immediate stampede in the opposite direction and towards the exit.'

Senator Baxter goes on to describe the scene, how they lay on the ground until ordered to advance with their hands up. He managed to catch up with some of his friends. 'There was blood on Miss Burke's face, where a fragment of her glasses had broken and cut her.'

He described how some of the Tipperary players were among them, one of who had blood on his hands. He asked him was he wounded and he replied that it was Mick Hogan's blood.

'But where is Mick Hogan?' I demanded. 'Look over there,' he replied.'

'I looked, and my companion, Miss Burke, looked also and there, lying on the field beyond the goal-posts, was the body of Mick Hogan. Miss Burke was gone like a flash. Without any thought for her own safety she went out to where Mick Hogan lay and covered his body with a coat. A priest was shortly on the scene and I think I heard somebody in the crowd say it was Fr. Crotty of Mullinahone... Miss Burke remained kneeling beside the dead player until he had received first, Conditional Absolution and later, Extreme Unction. She then came back and joined the brothers Fennessy and myself. Sorrowful and bewildered we left the playing pitch and wended our way through a maze of side streets, which I have not since identified.'

Senator Baxter concludes his account by stating that 'Annie M. Burke was indeed a brave girl in a generation when men and women were exceptionally brave, and I feel it a duty for the sake of history to have the story of her heroism recorded.'

### **Born in Dunmore West**

Anne Marie Burke was born in Dunmore West, Co. Sligo on 31 October 1896, the eldest of seven, three girls and four boys, of parents John Burke and Catherine Gorevan. She went to the local National School in the townland of Farrellmacfarrell, Dromore West.



*L to R: Mrs. Duggan, whose husband was a Detective Garda in Cashel, Mrs. Murphy, whose husband, Jackie, was a tailor in the town and Margaret, the daughter of William and Anne Marie Looby, as a young girl outside the Looby home at the junction of Bohermore and Ladyswell Street, Cashel.*

There was no local secondary school. Anyone wishing to have further education had to go to boarding school. However, it happened that a young graduate became the principal of the national school and, with the support of parents, and permission from the Parish Priest, he set up a tutoring group for interested pupils. Their classroom was the gallery in the parish church! The groups were always small and many did very well. They were prepared for entrance examinations to colleges, Civil Service, etc. Anne Marie Burke was prepared to enter the Munster Institute<sup>3</sup>, a prestigious educational institution for the dairy industry, and she went there in 1913 at the age of 17 years.

All students had to reside at the Institute, where they were under the supervision of an experienced matron. There were a number of training courses available as well as provision for the training of students with a view of qualifying for the position of 'itinerant instructor in butter making and in poultry keeping under the County Committee of Agriculture and Technical Instruction'.<sup>4</sup> We don't have a record of the course pursued by Anne Marie Burke but, in the light of her later work, the above description appears to fit the bill. She must have been a good student because on the completion of her course she received a scholarship from the Department of Agriculture to continue her studies in England. She went there in 1915 to the College of Science in Derbyshire. Before she went her father died and she was reluctant to take up the offer, but her mother insisted.

How long she stayed in England and what course she pursued we don't know but it does appear to have led to a degree. When she returned to Ireland, she had to work for the Department, because that was part of the condition of the scholarship. Her work took her to many places. She spent three months in County Down at one stage and had digs from a family involved with the Orange Lodge. She said they looked after her

very well. At another time she was at Cashel giving courses, which may have been in 1921. She stayed at Corcoran's Hotel<sup>5</sup> on Main Street and was involved in a gun incident.



*Anne Marie Burke, Sligo*

She was sitting one evening in the lounge of the hotel, knitting, 'when a young man ran into the room, thrust a revolver into her hands, asked her to hide it, saying the hotel was surrounded with soldiers and then disappeared. It must have been Winter, because she said she was wearing a big cardigan. She stuffed the gun inside the waist of her skirt, under the cardigan and when the soldiers entered the room she did not move, but continued knitting. Luckily for her, the one in command was polite and did not ask her to move. She said she was terrified. The owner of the gun did not return for ages and, in the meantime, she had to keep it hidden. When he eventually went back, she told him off and warned him never to do that to anyone again!'<sup>6</sup>

## **The Looby Connection**

We don't have accurate knowledge of the places Anne Marie Burke worked during the 'twenties but her job took her to different parts and for varied periods of time. It is known that she worked in a creamery in Hospital, Co. Limerick during this time and also in a creamery in South Tipperary, where Paddy Fennessy was manager. At some stage she returned to Cashel a second time to work in Hanley's creamery but on this occasion it was for a longer stay. Instead of residing in Corcoran's Hotel, she took rooms in Mrs. Looby's boarding house, which was located at the junction of Bohermore and Ladyswell Streets.

She had two rooms in this establishment, which suggested it was a more permanent residence than on her first visit to the town. It was while residing there that she first met Mrs Looby's son, William, and Margaret Looby is of the opinion that the acquaintance began in 1924.<sup>7</sup>

The Loobys were one of Cashel's most esteemed families which 'contributed nobly to the betterment of the old City's civic, economic and national status.'<sup>8</sup> William Loobys's father, Richard, was a merchant and baker and a member of Cashel Urban Council.<sup>9</sup> While still a youth William Looby threw himself wholeheartedly into the Sinn Féin movement and later joining the Irish Volunteers he did an amount of valuable work in the advancement of Republican ideals. Because of his sympathies and activities in the cause of Irish Independence, he came under the notice of the British authorities who, in the early days of 1921, took him as a hostage and kept him in prison until after the Treaty was signed in December of the same year.

## **Five Different Prisons**

Arrested on 19 February 1921, William Looby was incarcerated in Tipperary Military Barracks and he was to remain there until 8 April. While in prison there he was taken around the country strapped to the back of an armoured car.<sup>10</sup> It was occasional practice for the British Military to strap prisoners thus while on patrol. We can track his time in prison through the letters he wrote regularly to his sister Stasia,<sup>11</sup> in which he described his situation, made requests for his needs and looked for information on his family. The first of his letters from Tipperary Military Barracks is dated 19 February and the last is 15 April. After approximately two months in Tipperary Military Barracks, William Looby was transferred to the Old Military Barracks, Fermoy soon after the middle of April. His first letter from there is dated 19 April and there is a second six days later.

After a short period there it appears he was moved again early in May to Kilworth Rest Camp. His first letter to his sister from there is dated 6 May and there is a second one dated 8 May. William Looby was moved from Kilworth Rest Camp to Spike Island Military Prison about the middle of the month. His first letter from Spike is dated 18 May and he was to spend approximately six months incarcerated there. He wrote to his sister at least once a week and his last letter from there is dated 13 November. His next letter is from Maryborough Convict Prison and it is dated 20 November. It would appear that he was being prepared for release at this stage and word of his expected release is given in the

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**ORDER UNDER MARTIAL LAW.**

WHEREAS it appears to me that for securing the restoration and maintenance of Order in the Martial Law Area in Ireland, it is expedient that

*William Looby* of *Ladyswell, Cashel.*  
in the County of *Tipperary*

should, in view of the fact that he is a person suspected of acting, having acted, and being about to act in a manner prejudicial to the restoration and maintenance of Order in the Martial Law Area in Ireland, be subjected to such obligations and restrictions as are hereinafter mentioned :

Now I HEREBY ORDER that the said *William Looby.*  
shall be interned in *The Military Internment Camp, Limerick or Ross Island*  
and shall be subject to all the rules and conditions applicable to persons there interned and shall remain there until further orders.

If within seven days from the date on which this Order is served on the said *William Looby* he shall submit to me any representations against the provisions of this Order, such representation will have due consideration. If I am satisfied that this Order may be revoked or varied without injury to the restoration and maintenance of Order in the Martial Law Area in Ireland I will revoke or vary this Order by a further Order in writing under my hand. Failing such revocation or variation this Order shall remain in force.

Dated at Cork this *26* day of *June* 1921

*W. G. ...*  
Lieutenant *A. A. G.*  
for **MAJOR-GENERAL,**  
Commanding 6th Division,  
**MILITARY GOVERNOR.**

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last of his prison letters addressed from Maryborough on 7 December, the day after the Treaty was signed.

### **The Letters**

As already stated virtually all of the letters are to his sister Stasia, but there are two to his mother, including the first one from Tipperary Military Barracks: 'Dear Mother: Just a line to let you know I am all right here in Tipperary Military Barracks. There are five other boys with me so I am not alone and don't fret about me. Tell Stacia to send me a pair of shirts, a razor, shaving soap & brush and £1.'

He didn't receive a reply from his mother so in his next letter he wrote to Stasia requesting the above items and adding: 'We are getting on well here. There's plenty of company and nothing to complain about so you needn't be uneasy about me.'

In his next letter he acknowledged the receipt of the items requested and added: 'I don't want anything else at present. We get everything we want from a Miss Kittie Power in Tipp and I have sent my shirts to her to get washed.'

A letter on 11 March paints a picture of a happy prisoner:

Dear Sister: Just a line to let you know I am well and strong. I am wearing the new trousers and I will send out the old one to Miss Power to send it home to put a new seat in it. You need not send it to me until I write for it. I don't think I want anything else at present. I have enough of clean under clothing for a while. We get plenty to eat and we enjoy ourselves singing songs at night time, and the military are very friendly with us, so we have nothing to complain about. How is mother, the children and all of you, also Katie Cahill and the Miss Meaneys? How are my mother and father getting the health? I hope they are all right, also Joe and Path.

'You can send me a towel and a box of tooth powder, also a box of boot polish, I don't think I want anything else at present.

'All the boys here are in the best of health. Paddy O'Brien from Tipp, who worked as a clerk in Mat Hanley's Creamery with me is here. Tell Bill Donnell's sister if you see her that her brother is strong and well. I have no more to say only to tell my mother not to fret that I am all right. If I have forgotten to say anything you will have to forgive me. With best love to all. From Willie.'

A letter on 23 March gives this information: 'There are thirteen boys here now, so we are not lonely and we are all in the best of health.'

A letter on 25 March relates how a support group in Tipperary help the prisoners: 'The girls here in Tipperary are very kind to us; they send us in anything we want, tea, bread & butter, meat, cakes, etc, so we are all right, we have plenty of company here.'

In a letter on Easter Monday, he says 'I am very glad Bill Donnell was released though I was very lonesome the morning he was going home... The priest is allowed to come to

us every Monday morning to hear our confessions and give us communion, so we are all right thank God.'

One of the last Tipperary letters to Mrs. Grant was from a Jim Delahunty. It is dated 18 April and states: 'Just a note to say that Willie Looby was removed from here today. I don't know where he was taken to. He didn't know himself when he was leaving us. He was in the best of health and spirits. He wasn't sorry to be removed as he didn't like the 'joyrides'.'

This suggests that all may not have been as well as William Looby's letters to his sister suggested, most to do with the receipt of items of food and clothes and messages of goodwill to the family was well as requests for information on his father and mother. Maybe, he censored his true situation!



*William Looby*

### **Old Military Barracks, Fermoy**

The next letter from Willie is from the Guard Room, Old Military Barracks, Fermoy and dated 19-4-1921: 'Dear Sister: I arrived here last night with Bob Mockler. I am all right and in good health. We don't know how long we'll be kept here so don't send any parcel until I write again.'

In a second letter from the same address on 26 April, he has nothing new to add and his future is still uncertain.

His next letter is from No. 8 Hut, Kilworth Rest Camp. Dated 6-6-1921, the tone is much improved: 'I arrived here from Fermoy this eve and am very glad of the change. This is a very nice place, we have plenty of company, plenty of food and a large place to exercise. You need not send anything for the present as I have a pair of clean shirts and drawers and we can do our own washing here so we are all right.' In a P.S. he adds: 'Send me some money and 5/- worth of cigarettes. I don't want anything else at present, except a polishing brush and clothes brush.'

In a second letter from Kilworth on 8 May he tells his sister he is in good health and is enjoying himself. He adds: 'I want some money and cigarettes, also a half dozen soft flat collars, size 16 and tie and a few collar pins and a rack.'

### **Spike Island**

The sojourn in Kilworth didn't last long and the next letter, dated 18 May is written from No. 18 A Block, Military Prison in Field, Spike Island, Cobh, Co. Cork: 'Dear Sister: I arrived here last evening after a nice drive by lorry from Kilworth to Cobh and thence to Spike

by boat; there were fifty of us together and we enjoyed the scenery along the sea coast, it is beautiful. There are about four hundred internees here. It is a nice place in summer and there is plenty of room for exercise and drill. I didn't like to be leaving Kilworth; it was a very healthy place, we had plenty of the best food and could have a couple of visits a week. I had one last Sunday and one the Sunday before. We are allowed to get anything in the way of parcels that are sent us here, so you can send me a barmbrack, a pound of butter and anything else you like.'

Probably the longest letter of all he wrote while in prison was written to his sister on 29 May. It was written after receiving a number of letters and parcels that had been delayed:

I like this place all right. I am getting settled down just now; the grub was a bit slack for the first week but now that we can get parcels from home we won't be badly off... We are carrying on as best we can here under the circumstances, an occasional swim in the sea, and a look across the river at Cobh, breaks the monotony here but it only happens once a week... All the boys here believe that things will be allright in the short time and that an honourable settlement will be arrived at, otherwise we believe there will be no settlement... We can go to confession every week, we have a chapel in the exercise yard and eight o'clock mass every Sunday and holiday morning. I wear my new clothes only on Sundays and holidays. My old coat is nearly worn out but it is all right for this place working around. Sometimes we don't wear any coats as the weather is warm... We get the Independent and the Examiner here every day, a bundle of papers come for the internees every day but they are sometimes a day old... We are the same here as if we were outside troubled about nothing only to get our washing done and our rooms cleaned up and our beds fixed up. We have physical drill every day and an Irish class also. I can say all my prayers in our own language now nearly, so we are not idle.

In a letter on 1 June Willie informs his sister that they can write two letters only per week, one on Sunday and the second on Wednesday but that they can receive any number of letters. A letter on 15 June describes the beautiful weather they're enjoying. He also informed his sister that they can have 'a bath once a week which is very refreshing. I had a bath every day for the past week.' In a letter on 19 June he says: 'I am in the best of health and very strong and we are enjoying ourselves well considering the circumstance. I was never a minute sick since I left home if it isn't the soft bed that's doing it and I sleep well at night time and have nothing to complain about, thank God.' Later in the letter he adds: 'We are not allowed any visitors here but we don't feel the time. There are about five hundred here all told and twenty sleep in each room and dine at one table. The grub is pretty good and we nearly always have sweet cake for tea, because somebody out of each room gets a parcel every day and sometimes four or five in the same room get parcels the same day so we are not badly off.' He asks his sister to send him a coat hanger to hang his new coat on because it gets wrinkled when he puts it in the hamper. He also adds that some of the boys have been supplied with clothes and boots 'and we all hope to be supplied with a full rigout soon.'

Following the Truce in July the expectation of release was increasing. This was reflected in a letter from Willie dated 17 July: 'Things are as usual here, no release up to present



but if negotiations between our leaders and the leaders of the Empire prove satisfactory, we expect to be at home within a month from now. We are watching events every day with a keen interest and discussing the whole situation between ourselves.” A letter three days later continues in the same vein: ‘Dear Sister: Just a few lines to let you know I am in good health and expecting to be home again in a short time, please God. All the boys here are in good spirits and we are very hopeful of the present situation.’ Later he adds: ‘We enjoy ourselves here as if we were outside. We had a sports on last Sunday, and a concert on Sunday night, so we are not in the least troubled and sometimes we forget we are in prison at all.’ In a letter on 24 July, Willie says: ‘All the boys here believe that a settlement will be arrived at before long and we are not a bit down-hearted.’

### **Hunger Strike**

The peace and quiet of the place was disturbed by a ‘hunger’ strike by the prisoners in the beginning of August. There is no inkling of anything about to happen in Willie’s letter on 3 August: ‘There is nothing new to speak about here and very little news on the papers those days. We are all well and strong here, thank God, and are watching the papers every day for some further developments but I suppose we’ll have to wait awhile as everything can’t be done at once.’ Four days later all is changed: ‘Dear Sister: I received your letter yesterday evening and was thinking you’d be surprised at the action we were taking, but such things are considered necessary in places like this and it was with the free vote of all that action was taken. We were determined to fight the issue and had just settled down to it when we got orders to desist but all is well that ends well.’

The letter continues: ‘I am very strong after the three days fast and think that it has done us all good. When the strike was called off we were waiting for about two hours before we got anything and then we got only a half-pint of milk and water at six o’clock Friday evening, but about two hours after we got a cup of Bovril. On Saturday we were worse still, we weren’t allowed anything but milk and water only, anything in the way of a bit of bread that we could smuggle from the fellows who were exempt from strike, and they were as bad as ourselves as they refused to go for the rations while we were on strike, they were in a block for themselves while the fight was on. It was only this morning that we satisfied ourselves with enough of bread and margarine and tea and we did eat it. I sent a wire Friday evening did you get it. I think there was about 200 wires sent out after the strike was off.’<sup>12</sup>

The first letter following the strike makes no reference to the event: ‘There is nothing new to tell you about here only that M. Colivet<sup>13</sup> of Limerick City and Sean Moylan<sup>14</sup> of County Cork both T.D.s have been released... We gave them a great send-off, every man stood to attention on the square and we all sang the Soldiers Song together as they passed through the gates. Poor Colivet looked very lonesome while he was shaking hands with us. He was raised shoulder high and brought across the compounds and I’m sure the cheering was heard in Cobh, the poor fellow’s wife died a short time ago and he couldn’t go to her funeral..’ He adds: ‘We are all well here, thank God, and expecting to go home very soon. We are all fitted out with a suit of clothes, boots, socks and shirts, all military ones.

There's another letter around this time – the date has been torn off it – and it continues with the preparations for going home: 'We are expecting to be going home shortly and all the boys are making souvenirs to bring home with them. If you sent me a couple of half-crowns and two shilling pieces I would make a couple of rings and a Tara Broach. You could send them in a parcel as we are not allowed to get any silver but it comes all right. If you put them into a two lb bag of sugar or in the bottom of a cocoa tin they would come all right. I would like to have something to bring home from here.'

In a later letter, he says: 'We are expecting to be demobbed early next month and we won't be too unlike demobbed men... All the boys here are very busy making souvenirs to bring home, it is like a foundry. You would be surprised to see some of the things that are made. I have two very nice signet rings made and I am making another, I shall make a broach then.'

A letter on 17 August states that the grub is just middling but the parcels make up for it,

'The beds are pretty comfortable and we sleep well considering that we haven't much to do to make us tired. We have mass every morning for the past month at half-past eight and breakfast after.'

In a letter to Frank Kennedy on 21 August, Willie gives us some new information on prison life at the time: 'We have four hurling teams here, men from Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connaught, two senior teams and two junior teams. One senior and one junior team is in A Block and the same in B. Block and I tell you we do have some matches and excitement also, it helps to pass the time. When on Block plays against the other I tell you there's some cheering and some fine hurling too.' There appears to be some further protest by the prisoners at the end of August. In a letter of 31 August Willie states: 'Don't send any more parcels for the present as we are not accepting them.'<sup>15</sup>

Frustration with their continued incarceration is expressed in a letter of 7 September: 'I am in good health, thank God, but we are all tired of this place and hope to be out of it soon.' A similar sentiment is expressed a week later: 'We are all tired of this place.' There is a certain resignation to their lot in the letter of 21 September: 'We are all well here and making the best of our enforced holiday, there is not much talk of our release now but we expect it will be one way or the other in a short time.' Four days later a similar sentiment is expressed: 'It is hard luck on us in here but we are not down hearted yet anyhow and things may look better in a short time... I can't think of anymore only that we are all in good health here and wishing for the day when the gates of Spike are opened to us and we are free to look after our destinies without interference from any outsider.'

In the course of a letter on 12 October, Willie says: 'I suppose things are much the same outside, everything quiet as usual. It will be the day of our lives when we are leaving Spike. We mean to make it such whenever it will be, which I hope won't be long.' The frustration of waiting for release must have led to some incident as the content of the letter of 26 October implies: 'I'm sure you were all worried at seeing the account of Spike on the papers but you need not be troubled about me as I am in good health and

all right notwithstanding the hardships of the past week. Michael Staines, T.D., with a representative of the British Government were here yesterday and made an enquiry into the matter, the result of which we expect will be in our favour.<sup>16</sup> The outlook begins to improve in the letter of 6 November: 'There was nine released from here yesterday and we expect there will be more during the week.' In a letter to his sister a week later he advises her to send no more parcels for the present 'as we are expecting a change here for the better.'

### **Moved to Maryborough**

Willie's next letter is from Maryborough Convict Prison on 20 November:

Dear Sister: We arrived here on Saturday morning at 7.30 after a long and tiresome journey. At 7 o'clock on Friday night we got orders to pack up for transport and in less than a half-hour five hundred and fifty men were on parade in the square. We had a big delay there before we were marched to the pier and got on the boats. I happened to be on the first boat with about one hundred and fifty others and we were hanging around the river until all the others were put on board their boats. We arrived at the pier in Cobh and marched to the railway station. It was five minutes to one then. There was another long delay here and it was about 2-30 am before we started on our journey. The train stopped for about ten minutes at Thurles and early as it was there were people waiting on the platform... We arrived in Maryborough about 7.30 and marched to the prison, which is about a quarter of a mile from the station. The prison is a fine up to date place, hot and cold water and the rest but it's a prison. All the same anyhow we are not sorry to be left Spike. The cells here are nice and clean. There are two in each and the doors are open all day and all night... We can get parcels here the same as usual so you can send a cake, a couple lbs of sugar and a tine of cocoa.<sup>17</sup>

In a letter dated 27 November Willie tells his sister that Cumann na mBan are looking after them well in Maryborough sending in bread and butter every day. 'The people here are very good. They come up every day to the back of the prison and speak from the field to the fellows at the windows on the top floor.' He continues: 'We are in sections here just the same as in Spike, 20 in each. We get rations cooked and ready for each section but every two eat in a cell instead of eating together that's the only difference. I'm with a chap from Cork city, and Mockler and another are in the second next cell to us. All the same fellows are together here as in Spike... This place is a big improvement on Spike. The cells are very clean and the beds are alright also. There is plenty of convenience for washing, hot and cold water and a fine drying room, steam heated.'

Willie Looby's last letter to his sister is dated Wednesday, 7 December. He still hadn't definite word of his release: 'I am in good health as usual and we expect to be all home shortly... The papers are looking well those days. I saw on to-day's that we were prisoners in a free Irish State.'<sup>18</sup>

### **Internees Return Home**

The internees were eventually released on Saturday 10 December. On that morning a special train left Maryborough at 10 o'clock with about 400 internees. The ultimate

destination of the train was Cork with stops along the way. The Cashel internees arrived at the railway station on Saturday night and were greeted by a great turnout of citizens. The brass and reed band and the fife and drum band took part in the popular welcome and there was an intense feeling of jubilation as the crowd returned from the station. There was a general expression of delight at the safe arrival home of the courageous young men, who had endured much during their incarceration.

Special mention was made of William Looby, President of Cashel Transport Workers Union 'a most popular young man not alone with his own comrades in the Transport Union, but amongst the public in general, who long ago learned to respect his rectitude and patriotism.'<sup>19</sup>

William Looby had to adjust to civilian life but we have little information on this period of his life. He wasn't involved in the Civil War, which commenced during 1922. During the year his father, Richard, passed away. His father had been a member of Cashel Urban Council for a number of years, was co-opted as chairman during 1921 and was re-elected on 15 February 1922. On the occasion of his re-election he was absent because of illness and he was wished a swift return to health, But such was not to be as he died on 22 February, at the age of seventy-one years. Willie became a member of Fianna Fáil when a branch of the party was founded in Cashel.



*Wedding photograph of  
William Looby and Anne Marie Burke*

According to his daughter, her ' father and his brother, Patrick Christopher, worked in their father's bakery which was in Bank Place. I do not know when that closed. My mother told me once that the family lost a lot during the "Troubles" but I do not know if that included the bakery business.'<sup>20</sup> It would appear that they lost the bakery business and that it may have been taken over by Sweeneys. We do know that William Looby continued in the bakery business and was an employee of Sweeneys in Cashel. The business employed eighteen people and in a newspaper article William is stated as earning £3-11-3 per week in 1924.<sup>21</sup>

In that year he made the acquaintance of Anne Marie Burke, who was residing in his mother's boarding house. According to their future daughter, he asked Anne Marie to do something for him and this led to a closer acquaintance.<sup>22</sup>

This acquaintance was eventually to lead to marriage but not until 1931. According to their daughter this long delay was due to Anne Marie's desire to help out her own family. She was earning a substantial salary, was the eldest of seven, three girls and four boys, and felt the need to help out at a time when jobs were difficult to come by. In 1928 Anne Marie's job took her to Freshford, where she worked in a creamery owned by the Meagher Brothers. Again, according to their daughter, William Looby used to cycle to Freshford every Sunday to see her. The wedding eventually took place in November 1931, when the couple were married in St. Canice's Catholic Church in Kilkenny. The officiating priest was Canon Bowe, a friend of the Meaghers. The decision to have the wedding in Kilkenny rather than Dromore West was because it was too far for the Cashel family and friends to travel. Her mother, youngest brother and a sister travelled to Kilkenny for the wedding. The best man was his friend, John Ryan, and the bridesmaid was Bridget Grant.

### **Early Death**

The newly married couple came to live in Cashel, where Willie continued his work at the bakery while Anne Marie decided to give up her job and settle down to being a full time housewife. The Marriage Ban on married women working hadn't yet come in. She looked after Mrs. Looby senior. She also re-established part of the house as a boarding house to supplement their income. Their daughter, Margaret, was born in 1932 and a son in 1934, who lived for one day only.

Willie's health was none too robust. He had endured sufferings and hardship in the course of his young life. In her Military Service Pension application, his sister, Anastasia Looby Grant, included an incident from the General Election in December 1918. The headquarters of the Sinn Féin campaign in Cashel was in Looby's house: 'The opposite party made an attack on the house one night and Willie and his brother were beaten with sticks and irons. Willie was beaten unconscious and didn't regain consciousness for a night and a day. He got a blow on the head with an iron and it has affected him ever since.' The family were very concerned about his health when he was incarcerated in Spike Island so much so that Willie's mantra in most letters was the state of his health, which was invariably fine, as if to reassure the family.

According to his daughter 'my father had plans to start another bakery that would specialise in cakes etc. and plans were well on the way when he fell sick in 1936, first with pneumonia, followed by pleurisy and later by appendicitis and eventually heart failure that caused his death.'<sup>23</sup>

In the course of his obituary notice in the *Nationalist*, following his death on 6 September 1937 at the age of forty-five years, reference was made to his health: 'The rigours of the Black and Tan campaign told heavily upon his none-too-robust constitution, and for the past few years, his health gave reason for anxiety to his wife and relatives'. Following his death and funeral mass the funeral proceeded to The Rock Cemetery, the cortege being extremely large and representative. On the previous evening at a meeting of Cashel Urban Council a resolution was passed in respect to his memory and in recognition of his patriotism. In the course of the resolution it was stated 'The deceased young man, who

participated in the National struggle, as did his patriotic father, suffered much in order that the aspirations of the bravest hearts in the country, may be realised.<sup>124</sup>

### **Last Years**

Anne Marie Burke and her daughter Margaret continued to live in Cashel following his death. Her daughter takes up the story:<sup>25</sup>

As I said she became a happy housewife, looked after her mother-in-law (died in 1935) and developed the "boarding house" side of things. She also had a small poultry business and supplied the few local hotels with chickens. She was offered a job in the creamery but decided against in order to look after her young daughter. After my father's death she continued taking boarders and developed her poultry business but in 1940 became seriously ill; I do not know what it was, but she told me some years after that it was after that illness she decided she wanted to be living near her mother in Co. Sligo. We moved there in 1942. She had great plans for the future. She planned to have what would now be called a B&B at the sea side, with a small restaurant and before we left Cashel we thought we would be moving into a place that an uncle was buying, on behalf of Mam; it fell through at the last minute when it was discovered the people selling it were not the real owners - a Will had never been made. So we went to Sligo and lived with an aunt for a few months while my mother searched in vain for a property. Eventually she rented a small house in Ballisodare. Later she decided to try for a farm that was on auction. That, too, fell through. By then our money was running out so in 1947 she accepted a position in a Training College in England, as matron of the residential section - she was responsible for the domestic staff. My grandmother came to be with me. While home on holiday in August 1948 my mother was unwell. She returned to her work but was back within two months, and she knew there was something wrong. She was treated for ulcers but eventually in early part of 1949 she was admitted to Sligo County Hospital and was diagnosed with cancer. She bravely accepted the diagnosis, got her affairs in order, made all her funeral arrangements. said she was to be buried with her father as it would be too expensive to bring her back to Cashel.

Anne Marie Burke died in hospital on Easter Sunday 1949 at the age of fifty-two years and was buried in Grangemore cemetery.

## References

- 1 Published by M. H. Gill and Son Limited, Dublin, November 1958, the book was a fictionalised account of the early life of the Browne family of Grangemockler by Monsignor Maurice Browne (1892-1979) under the pen-name, Joseph Brady.
- 2 Senator Patrick Francis Baxter (1891-1959) from County Cavan was a T.D. for the Farmers' Party, 1923-27, and a Camann na nGaedhael senator from 1934-36, and 1938-1959.
- 3 The Munster Institute was opened in 1838, when the Commissioners of National Education decided to add agricultural education to their school program. The building was located just outside the city on the Western side. In the course of time the curriculum was extended to prepare students for positions outside agriculture. The Dairy School, the first to be established in the United Kingdom, became the outstanding feature in the Institute. Following the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Act of 1900, it was decided that the Albert Agricultural College in Dublin, should thenceforth be devoted to the training of male students only, the Munster Institute being reserved for the training of women in butter making and domestic economy.
- 4 *Cork Past and Present: Educational Facilities*, pp.115-132, (no date given).
- 5 The hotel was where the Supervalu store is now located.
- 6 Information given to author in an email from her daughter, Margaret Looby, 23 July 2019.
- 7 In conversation with the writer.
- 8 *Tipperary Star*, 11 September 1937.
- 9 Richard Looby was a member of Cashel Urban Council., When the Sinn Fein Club was founded in Cashel, Richard Looby was the first president and Francis Phillips was the first secretary.
- 10 In her application for a Military Pension, because of her work in Cumann na mBan, William Looby's sister, Anastasia Looby Grant, made this claim.
- 11 This was Anastasia Looby Grant, who acted as head of the family and retained all his letters. The full name, Anastasia, is not used in the correspondence but the shortened version, Stacia, and sometimes, Stasia.
- 12 There is no reference to this event in the *Cork Examiner*.
- 13 Michael Colivet (1882-1955) was Commandant of the Irish Volunteers for Limerick City & East Clare and led the Easter rising in Limerick. He was elected as Sinn Fein MP in the 1918 General Election. Re-elected in 1922 he refused to recognise the Dáil and he lost his seat in the 1923 General Election. He refused to take the Oath of Allegiance and enter the Dáil with Fianna Fáil in 1927 and soon after retired from political life.
- 14 Sean Moylan (1888-1957) was born in Limerick and was a Commandant of the Irish republican Army and later a Sinn Fein and Fianna Fail politician. He was elected to the Second Dáil while in prison but left with the other anti-Treaty T.D.s after its ratification. Elected a Fianna Fáil T.D. in 1932 for Cork North, he continued to be elected until 1957, when he lost his seat but was elected to the Seanad. While in the Dáil he served as Minister for Agriculture, Education and Lands. His period as Minister for Agriculture was from May to November 1957 while a Senator, making him the first representative from the Seanad to be appointed a Government Minister.
- 15 The *Cork Examiner* reported on this protest on August 30: 'We have been informed that twenty men detained at Spike island Internment Camp have been on hunger strike since Sunday at 3 o'clock, and unless unconditionally released over 450 more will commence a hunger strike this afternoon at 6 pm. The twenty at present on hunger strike are men who have been tried and convicted by military courts, and in demanding their release these prisoners are relying on the decision of the Master of the Rolls in the cases of Messrs Higgins and Egan. The men served their demand for release, threatening to take action unless it was complied with, and as it was not, they commenced a hunger strike at 3 o'clock on Sunday afternoon.'

- 16 The *Cork Examiner* reported on October 21: 'Only very meagre details of the internees' outbreak at Spike Island have come to light so far. Matters have quieted down as far as active work of destruction is concerned, but on Wednesday evening before nightfall, the untried prisoners were observed being subjected to a strict personal search as they passed from the moat, where they had been confined during the day, into the interior of the fort, where their dilapidated sleeping and living quarters are situate. It is in doubt whether the internees had a roof to shelter them from the previous night's rain.' It appears that the prisoners protest led to the destruction of Block A after which they took refuge in the fortress moat.
- 17 The *Cork Examiner* reported on November 14 'that all the prisoners now interned at Spike Island will, by Tuesday at the latest, be transferred from there to Maryborough, Queen's County, the totally unfit state of the quarters now occupied by them being assigned as the reason for the change'. The newspaper reported on November 19 that the prisoners were transported from Spike Island to Cobh by the two garrison launches, Cambridge and Wyndham and then transported by train to Maryborough: 'While the train was being got ready the prisoners amused themselves by cheering and singing the 'Soldier's Song'. The station was strongly held by Cameron Highlanders, and no access to the platform was permitted.'
- 18 The *Cork Examiner* reported on December 8 that the immediate release of all internees was ordered: 'All persons now interned under Regulation 14 B of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations.'
- 19 The *Nationalist*, December 14, 1921.
- 20 In a letter to the writer.
- 21 *Post Advertiser*, July 21, 1986.
- 22 In conversation with the writer.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 The *Tipperary Star*, September 11, 1937.
- 25 In a letter to the writer.