

## A Battle at Glenosheen, in Co. Limerick, 1823

On May 3, 1823 the Southern Reporter published a letter dated Kilfinane, April 30, under the heading: "Daring attack on a Police Barracks: Destruction of the Barracks and four houses; Gallant Resistance and Death of one of the assailants." The editor of the Southern Reporter stated that the letter had come on Thursday May 1, "from an intelligent and respectable correspondent on the spot. Its accuracy may be relied on."

### "DREADFUL OUTRAGE"

The letter stated: "I beg leave to acquaint you and through your very respectable journal, the public of a dreadful outrage that occurred in this neighbourhood last night. About nine o'clock as a party of the 71st regiment, quartered at Kilfinane, were patrolling near the village of Ballyorgan, about two miles from this, they heard some shots at a distance, which they perceived were in the vicinity of Glenosheen, a Palatine village at the foot of Castle Oliver mountain and on the coach road from Cork to Limerick.

"They immediately loaded and under the direction of one of the County Limerick police ran the entire way from Ballyorgan to Glenosheen, a distance of nearly two miles round the road where, when they arrived nine or ten houses were on fire out of a hamlet consisting of 18 or

20; heavy fire of musketry being kept up all the time, the soldiers were marching between the insurgents and the five or six police stationed in the village.

### OCCUPIED BY WHITEBOYS

"On the military party arriving they found the village occupied by between 200 and 300 Whiteboys, who were still firing on the police, which fire was bravely and spiritedly returned by the brave little party from their barracks aided by one or two of the Palatines although the roof of the barracks and three or four other houses about it were on fire.

"The military party opened fire on the insurgents immediately, which being returned by three or four shots and some shouting on the part of the rebels, they instantly fled in all directions, leaving one of their party dead after them. He had been shot in the act of firing one of the houses because some straw was still clutched in his hand. The blood of several of them was traced up the mountain, and it is supposed there must be more dead or desperately wounded.

### CORPSE EXPOSED

"The man that was found was brought to Kilfinane, in the street of which he now lies exposed to public view, but has not yet been claimed. He is a

stout, low young man, with red hair and red whiskers. It is supposed that the party came from the neighbourhood of Doneraile, having been seen coming down the mountain. Had not the party of the 71st come up so opportunely, not an individual in the village would have been left alive, as it appears they had sentinels on every house. Four houses, including the barracks were totally consumed, the fire in the others by great exertion was got under.

"It appears by an express brought in just now by two mounted policemen from Doneraile, that two magistrates of that district had information that the two villages of Ballyorgan and Glenosheen were to be attacked this night; but this was evidently a ruse of the fellows to hoodwink suspicions of their intentions last night.

### "INFLAMMATORY NOTICE"

"I shall give you further particulars as soon as they can be ascertained, such as the number of wounded etc. I may mention by the way, that a notice of a very inflammatory character was posted last Sunday on the chapel door of Glenroe while the people were assembling for Mass, dated from 'Rock-Hall' threatening death and destruction to any persons who took farms in that neighbourhood lately unless they surrendered them instantly. Two houses were burned out last week in the same neighbourhood."

The next report showed parties of

police prowling on the Ballyhoura hills in search of wounded men, whom they did not find. On Thursday May 15 a special session under the Insurrection Act, the first session to be held in Bruff, Blackburn, king's counsel, who presided at the court, dealt with the various causes of the riots and outrages, tithes, high rents etc. He then referred to a fairly widespread belief at the time that the years from 1822 to 1824 would see the liberation of Ireland from English rule. This "Impious delusion", as Blackburn termed it, had been denounced by Dr. Charles Tuohy, Bishop of Limerick, in a recent pastoral:

### BISHOP'S PASTORIAL

"I have reason to know that even under the pretext of religion, the poor credulous people are led astray by those wicked advisors, telling them prophecies and wonderful things to happen in the years 22, 23 and 24. Surely the government of this country is in the hands of God, utterly hidden from the knowledge of men and even of angels; and certainly it would be blasphemy to make God the author of evil."

Before the court at Bruff, John Heafy and Maurice Fitzgerald were charged with having been among the party who attacked the barracks at Glenosheen on the night of April 27.<sup>29</sup> Their trial was postponed until the next day when they were found guilty and sentenced to be transported for life. They were taken from the courthouse and carried direct to the convict hulk at Cobh awaiting to be sent to Australia.

—PADRAIG O MAIDIN