

# Cumann Uaigheanna na Laochra Sael NATIONAL GRAVES ASSOCIATION



## INVINCIBLES REINTERMENT CAMPAIGN



### The Invincibles

Joseph Brady, Daniel Curley, Michael Fagan, Thomas Caffrey and Timothy Kelly were executed between May 14th and June 9th 1883 for their involvement in the Phoenix Park assassinations the previous year. Their bodies lie beneath the paving slabs of the yard in Kilmainham Gaol where they were executed; this is against the wishes of their families.

The Invincibles were established in the autumn of 1881 by leading Irish Fenians. An assassination society was set up in Dublin within the Fenian ranks. This was a reaction to the killing of Ellen MacDonagh and Mary Deane by the Royal Irish Constabulary near Belmullet in county Mayo. Also a Coercion Act passed by the British Parliament earlier that year which gave the Dublin Castle administration more power. This led to the arrest of 900 members of the Land League throughout the country including leading figures, Charles Stewart Parnell MP, John Dillon MP and Michael Davitt.



*The Invincibles yard and burial site  
at Kilmainham Gaol*

The British Prime Minister William Gladstone and Charles Stewart Parnell held secret talks through intermediaries to break the impasse. An agreement was reached between the two men known as the 'Kilmainham Treaty'. Parnell was released from Kilmainham Gaol on May 2nd 1882; the Chief Secretary for Ireland William Forster resigned his position in protest. William Forster was known in Ireland as 'Buckshot' Forster because of his advocacy of lethal force against the Land League agitation. Forster had been the prime target of the Invincibles but they had failed several times to assassinate him, subsequently the Under Secretary, Thomas Henry Burke became their prime target.

On Friday May 5th 1882 the people of Ballina county Mayo were celebrating the release of Michael Davitt from Portland prison in England. A group of boys marched in the town playing tin whistles and beating a drum, the boys were stopped by the police and the drum was confiscated. A scuffle started between those celebrating Davitt's release and the police when they refused to return the drum to the boys. The police fired into the crowd wounding seven boys, all under the age of sixteen, Pat Melody aged fourteen died later from his injuries.



*Relatives of Pat Melody at his grave in Old Leigue Cemetery, Ballina. Pat Melody was shot by the police in Ballina the evening before the Phoenix Park assassinations.*

News of the shooting in Ballina reached Dublin the following morning. Lord Frederick Cavendish had just arrived in Dublin and was sworn in as the new Chief Secretary for Ireland that afternoon. Later that evening Lord Frederick Cavendish walked from Dublin Castle towards the Phoenix Park. Along Chesterfield Avenue he met with Thomas Henry Burke, the two men walked together towards their respective residences. The Invincibles were already in the Phoenix Park waiting for Burke. Both Cavendish and Burke were assassinated by the Invincibles on Saturday May 6th 1882.

### **The Reinterment Campaign**

The campaign to have the Invincibles reinterred was initiated by the late Dr. Shane Kenna. Shane wrote to the Minister of State with responsibility for the Office of Public Works in 2013 asking the minister to consider exhuming the five executed members of the Irish National Invincibles from Kilmainham Gaol. There was an acknowledgement of his letter but no further correspondence was received.

In June 2017 the secretary of the National Graves Association also wrote to the Minister of State with responsibility for the OPW asking for the Invincibles to be exhumed from Kilmainham Gaol and reinterred in Glasnevin Cemetery. A lengthy reply was received from the Minister outlining the complications with such a proposal. One of the issues raised by the Minister was that the bodies would have been buried in quicklime. In 2001 the bodies of ten Volunteers were exhumed from Mountjoy prison and reinterred in Glasnevin Cemetery. More recently the body of 1916 leader Thomas Kent was exhumed from Cork prison and reinterred in the Kent family plot. Evidence of quicklime was found with the skeletal remains of all the Mountjoy Ten and Thomas Kent.

In September 2018 the Lord Mayor of Dublin Nial Ring met with members of the National Graves Association regarding the Invincibles Reinterment Campaign. The Lord Mayor subsequently wrote to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht requesting the Minister to meet with representatives of our committee 'to discuss how we can bring this proposal forward in a positive way.' To date no meeting has taken place.

Tógadh Priosúin Chill Mhaighneann ag údaráis na Breataine le muintir na hÉireann a chur faoi chois agus fulaingt is cruatán a ghearradh orthu. Cé gur áit stairiúil é, ní áit oiriúnach é mar bhuansuíomh adhlachta do laochra Gael dá leithéidí. Tá dualgas orainn na hInvincibles a shaoradh ó chré phriosúin agus iad a chur in áit atá níos tuillte dóibh, áit ina bhfuil an pobal in ann ómó a thabhairt dóibh gan constaic.

## Council Support for the Invincibles Reinterment Campaign

'That Dublin City Council (Central Area Committee) calls on the Office of Public Works to carry out the necessary excavation works to recover the remains of Joe Brady, Daniel Curley, Michael Fagan, Thomas Caffrey and Tim Kelly, in what is commonly known as the Invincibles Yard at Kilmainham Gaol. The bodies of these five members of the Irish National Invincibles lie beneath the paving slabs of the yard where they were executed in 1883 for their part in the Phoenix Park assassinations. The families of the five men are represented by the National Graves Association and the wish of the families is for their relatives to be exhumed from Kilmainham Gaol and reinterred in consecrated ground at Glasnevin .' (July 2019)

The following is a list of councils that have supported this campaign to date.

- Dublin City Council (Central Area Committee) • Galway County Council • Westmeath County Council
- Wexford County Council • Cork City Council • Tipperary County Council • Louth County Council
- Sligo County Council • Cavan County Council • Carlow County Council • Clare County Council
- Mid Ulster District Council • Laois County Council • Limerick City & County Council • Fingal County Council
- Cork County Council • Mayo County Council • Monaghan County Council • South Dublin County Council
- Derry City & Strabane District Council • Waterford County Council • Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
- Dún Laoighaire – Rathdown County Council • Kildare County Council • Donegal County Council
- Kerry County Council • Meath County Council

### Relatives of the Invincibles

#### George Fullerton

Joe Brady was my great-great uncle. He was my maternal grandfather's uncle. My grandfather was very proud of his uncle and if Joe had lived until 1916 he would have been very proud of his nephew. My grandfather fought in the Rising. I am so proud of my grandfather, his uncle, Joe and all of the brave people who took part in the struggle for Irish freedom. I fully support the Invincibles Reinterment Campaign.

#### Clive Smith

As we remember my great great grandfather Daniel Curley who was executed in Kilmainhan Gaol, we believe he and the other Invincibles rightly deserve a proper burial in Glasnevin Cemetery so us and many others have a grave to visit and pay our respects. We fully support the Invincibles Reinterment Campaign and believe the time is now for this to happen.

#### Martin Williams

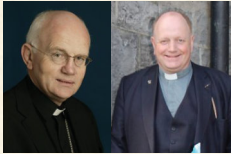
As a descendant of the Invincible Michael Fagan I believe he and the four other Invincibles buried in Kilmainham Gaol should now be given a respectful burial in Glasnevin Cemetery. The yard in which they are currently buried shows no recognition for their part in Irelands struggle for independence. I give my support to the National Graves reinterment campaign.

#### Laura Caffrey

It is time Thomas's remains are returned to our family and reinterred in Glasnevin where the rest of his family are interred, and where we, his living relatives, could pay our respects. It is time for our men to be removed from Kilmainhaim where they have been behind prison walls for 139 years.

#### Sarah Wolverson

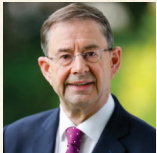
Today the Kelly Family are remembering their great grand uncle Timothy Kelly who was executed in Kilmainham Gaol. The time has come to reinter the five Invincibles in Glasnevin Cemetery. No longer can the wishes of the families be ignored. (9th June 2019).



“We join our voices with all campaigning to have the remains of the five members of The Irish National Invincibles exhumed from Kilmainham Gaol, and reinterred in consecrated ground at Glasnevin Cemetery, in a manner appropriate to patriots passionate about Ireland’s struggle for freedom. May the reconciling voices of Lady Cavendish and Thomas Burke’s sister, fan the spirit of a dignified and reconciling peace-driven proper burial.”

Bishop Eamonn Walsh and Reverend Canon William Deverell

Gabriel Doherty, lecturer in the School of History, University College Cork and a member of The Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations gives his opinion on the reinterment of the Invincibles. “As was to be expected from a regime that ultimately rested not on the consent of the Irish people, but by its power to force its will on them – violently if necessary – the British government sought to put the mark of Cain of a felon’s grave on those who themselves used force to oppose that alien system of government, and whose misfortune it was to fall into their enemy’s hands and be executed by them. Over recent years the Irish state has righted this wrong, and allowed reinterment in consecrated ground, in the cases of the Forgotten Ten and Thomas Kent. But more relevant is the treatment of the remains of Roger Casement, which were, with the consent of the British Government, removed from the grounds of Pentonville prison in London and reburied, with full state honours, in Glasnevin cemetery. Casement’s crime in the eyes of the British government (though not of the Irish people) was that of treason, arguably the most serious crime of all, and yet within fifty years that government facilitated his reburial in Dublin in a solemn, dignified fashion. Approaching 140 years after the Phoenix Park assassinations it is surely time for the Irish state to do something similar, and to allow the families of those executed the elementary dignity of disinterring the remains of their forebears from the precincts of Kilmainham and according them an honourable reburial.”



“I wish to endorse the campaign to move the remains of the Invincibles from their present place of burial where they were hanged in Kilmainham Gaol to a more appropriate burial place in a cemetery. This would be in keeping with what has happened in other similar cases over the years including Roger Casement and those executed and buried in Mountjoy during the War of Independence. Tacáim leis an bhfeachtas seo agus ta súil agam nach fada go ngéillfear don achainí seo.”

Eamon Ó Cuiv T.D.

“At the time of the state funeral (of the Mountjoy Ten) and to this day, as a family we are still extremely grateful and humbled. In truth, we have never been quite sure how to say thank you for what was done and how to convey how much it means to us all. This project has ensured that Kevin’s remains were reinterred appropriately, and that the family could finally feel like he was finally at peace. We would like to see the same for the families of The Invincibles and for them to have the same peace and access to their relative’s grave.” Niamh Barry, grandniece of Kevin Barry. Issued on behalf of the Barry family



In the mid-1960s, as a young man and at the urging of my Dad, Donagh MacDonagh, I worked as a guide at the newly opened Kilmainham Gaol Museum. It was just open on Sundays in those days. It was a wonderful experience as most of the other guides were veterans. As I told people about the execution of the Invincibles I often thought of the fact that their remains were still in Kilmainham Gaol and wondered why nothing had been done to reinter their remains. There was some talk at the time but fifty plus years on nothing has been done. I am 77 and do not have that many years left. It would mean a lot to me to be able to take a trip home for the ceremonies honouring the reinterment. Niall MacDonagh, (California) grandson of 1916 leader Thomas MacDonagh.

Sinn Féin are fully behind the campaign by relatives of the five Invincibles (Joseph Brady, Daniel Curley, Michael Fagan, Thomas Caffrey and Timothy Kelly) who were buried under slabs in a Kilmainham Gaol yard after their execution there in the month of May and June 1883 to have their remains exhumed and appropriately reinterred in Glasnevin Cemetery. Several Sinn Féin councillors have proposed motions to this effect in local authorities around the country or have fully supported motions from other councillors. Mícheál MacDonncha while Ard Mhéara of Baile Átha Cliath also endorsed the campaign.



Aengus Ó Snodaigh T.D.

## Invincibles Reinterment Committee

Michael Kenny, Chairperson	087 261 1709	Aidan Lambert, Secretary	087 620 2680
Gearairdín Nic Caba (NGA)	087 960 0098	Peig Galligan (NGA)	01 280 8287
Eva Ó Cathaoir (NGA)	086 343 4018	Olive Kenna	085 148 1521
Mícheál Ó Doibhilín	086 857 3782	Séamus Ó Mídheach (NGA)	087 629 6433
Gerry McNamara	087 237 5021	Seán Sherwin	087 2361982

<https://www.facebook.com/InvinciblesReintermentCommittee/>

Invincibles Reinterment Committee is a subcommittee set up by and under the auspices of the National Graves Association, P.O. Box 7105, Dublin 2. Tel: 087 2282033 Email: [info@nga.ie](mailto:info@nga.ie) [www.nga.ie](http://www.nga.ie)

For further reading on the Invincibles

