

Dynamite Mike Kelly: American Hero & Irish Patriot

BY JAMES M. MOLOHAN



Michael Andrew Kelly was born on September 28, 1879 in the townland of Cloghauninchy beside the Atlantic Ocean in the parish of Kilmurry Ibrickan, County Clare. He was the fourth son of John Kelly, a comfortable farmer whose family was said to have been descended from Captain Patrick O'Kelly who was slain at the Battle of Aughrim in 1691. Patrick's first wife is said to have been a Miss Plunkett, sister-in-law of one of the Irish Jacobites principal leaders, Daniel O'Brien, Viscount Clare of Carrigaholt Castle. Michael Andrew's mother was Susanah Molohan from the neighbouring townland of Craggaun. Her father, John, was from County Longford and had settled in the area during the Napoleonic Wars.¹

He was a prosperous farmer and was a onetime member of the Board of Guardians of the Kilrush Poor Law Union and had been a member of the Famine Relief Committee in the parish during the Great Famine. Susanah was a well educated young woman. Among the school-books which she had studied as a fifteen-year-old was *Whittaker's Improved Edition of Pinnock's Goldsmith's History Of Rome*. Sadly, Susanah died at age thirty-eight from complications following the birth of her fifth child in 1881.²

EARLY DAYS IN NEW YORK

When he was nineteen, Michael Kelly ran away from home and joined the British Army. This was not uncommon at the time in cases of the younger sons of farmers who had a spirit of adventure and a desire to see the world, and indeed one of Michael's cousins did the same thing. Michael's father followed him to Cork and, on payment of a fee, secured his release from the Army.

But the following year Kelly again left home and, this time, arrived in New York on June 18, 1899. His older brother, Thomas, also emigrated to New York. Several of their Molohan cousins were already there, including Paddy Molohan from Ballyvaskin, Miltown Malbay. In 1888 the newly founded Gaelic Athletic Association, of which Paddy was a leading light, mounted what became known as the "invasion tour" of the New York and Boston areas to promote hurling and Gaelic football among the immigrants there. A number of the participants in the tour, including Paddy, remained in the United States.

By the time Michael Kelly arrived in New York, Paddy Molohan was already a lieutenant in the predominantly Irish 69th Regiment (the "Fighting 69th") of the New York National Guard. Kelly followed in Paddy's footsteps and joined the 69th Regiment on April 21, 1903. Kelly was then

Photo:

This portrait of Major Michael Kelly was published in the Irish Advocate newspaper in 1919. Kelly emigrated from Ireland in 1899 and joined the 69th Regiment of the New York State National Guard at age 23 in 1903. His time in that infantry unit was a period of remarkable personal achievement, due in part to his bravery in combat during World War I. He was among the most highly decorated American soldiers during the conflict. Courtesy of Erin Kelly Benitez and John T. Ridge.

Jim Molohan was born into a farming family in County Clare in 1944. He was educated at the local National School, at Blackrock College, Dublin, and at St. Flannan's College in Ennis. His working life was spent in Dublin where he ran a successful import and distribution company in the construction sector. His interest in history and genealogy comes from his grandmother from whom he heard stories which she had heard from her own grandmother who was born c. 1795 and who lived to the astonishing age of 107. Since he retired Jim spends the winter in Spain and the summer at his house on the family farm by the Atlantic in County Clare. ©2019. Published with permission of James M. Molohan.

employed as a clerk in the New York Police Department, a position obtained probably with the help of his cousin Paddy who was also employed there. Kelly became a naturalized American citizen in 1905. He was commissioned as a lieutenant in Company F of the regiment on May 22, 1906.

Several years later Kelly described the 69th as having been originally “formed as a distinctively Irish Regiment for the express purpose of aiding in the liberation of Ireland. The finest types of young Irish Americans joined it...in the ardent hope that, by becoming proficient in military tactics, they might be better equipped to strike a blow for Ireland.”³

When Lt. Colonel John Duncan Emmet resigned from the regiment in 1910, various individuals, notably H.H. Rogers, Jr., son of the president of Standard Oil Corporation, sought his place. Although Rogers was not of Irish descent, he secured the backing of a number of the officers of the regiment. Kelly’s friend, Jeremiah O’Leary, a lieutenant in the regiment, was affronted by the idea of an outsider becoming colonel of the 69th. Kelly assisted and cooperated with O’Leary in organizing the young officers of the regiment against Rogers. They succeeded in having Louis D. Conley, a man of Irish descent, appointed as colonel.⁴

On October 8, 1910, Kelly married Eleanor Dudley Johnston in Falls Church, Virginia. Eleanor came from a genteel family whose circumstances had been greatly reduced in the aftermath of the American Civil War. After high school, she attended a finishing school for young ladies. Her great-grandfather, Edward Bishop Dudley, was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1829 to 1831 and was governor of North Carolina from 1836 to 1841. Kelly’s brother Tom later married Eleanor’s sister, Anna. By the time of his marriage, Kelly had become an officer with the New York City Police Department.

MICHAEL KELLY GOES TO WAR

In 1916, Mexican forces under Pancho Villa attacked the American border town of Columbus, New Mexico, and Kelly’s regiment was dispatched to reinforce the U.S. troops in the area. Kelly was promoted captain at about

Photo: Young Michael Kelly in uniform probably around 1906 when he was commissioned as an officer in the 69th Regiment. In the regiment he maintained a friendship with Jeremiah O’Leary, the supporter of Irish independence who would later be tried for treason under the United States Espionage Act because of his criticism of American policies supporting Great Britain. Courtesy of Erin Kelly Benitez.



this time. On his return to New York, he went back to his civilian job as second-in-command of the Aqueduct Police in New York City.⁵

Two years earlier, World War I had broken out in Europe, and President Woodrow Wilson actively maintained a stance of neutrality, a policy most Americans agreed with. Although Wilson was re-elected in 1916 on a platform of non-interference, by 1917 various events had made him change his mind, and on April 6th of that year the United States declared war on Germany.

Kelly had been opposed to U.S. participation in the war on the side of Great Britain while Britain refused to grant independence to Ireland. However, duty to his adopted country took precedence over his personal views, and when the U.S. entered the war Kelly and his comrades in the 69th Regiment immediately answered the call to arms. Kelly entered the U.S. Army on August 5, 1917 with the rank of captain.

On October 31, 1917, the 69th Regiment (re-designated as the 165th Infantry Regiment)



arrived in France. They were involved in some of the bloodiest battles in the later stages of the war: Champagne-Marne, Chateau Thierry, St Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, and Lorraine. Kelly was promoted to major and became commander of the third battalion (known as the “Shamrock Battalion”) of the 165th. His daring exploits during this period earned him the nickname, “Dynamite Mike.” In his book, *Father Duffy’s Story: a Tale of Humor and Heroism, of Life and Death with the Fighting 69th*, Father Francis Duffy, chaplain to the regiment, wrote that “Kelly is a soldier first, last and all the time. He visits infractions of military discipline with sternness and vigour. His Company stands in awe of him and boasts of him to others. They are well looked after.”⁶ By the war’s end Kelly was one of the most highly decorated soldiers in the American Army. He had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Croix de Guerre with two palms and two stars, and he had been made a Chevalier of the French Légion d’Honneur for extraordinary bravery in combat.⁷

SUPPORTING THE FIGHT FOR IRISH FREEDOM
While still in Europe in early 1919 Kelly became

outraged at the arrest in New York of his good friend, Jeremiah O’Leary, for treason. O’Leary, a former adjutant of the 69th Regiment, was well known in Irish-American circles as an outspoken activist in the cause of Irish independence. O’Leary was fiercely anti-British, and earlier Kelly had been a supporter of O’Leary’s efforts to keep the United States out of the war in Europe. The pro-British American president, Woodrow Wilson, used America’s entry into the European War to harrass and persecute supporters of Irish independence in the United States. At O’Leary’s trial Kelly’s wife, Eleanor, appeared as a witness for the defense because Kelly was still in Europe. When O’Leary was acquitted, thousands of Irish Americans gave him a hero’s welcome on his release from prison. Afterwards O’Leary wrote a book, *My Political Trial & Experiences*, for which Kelly wrote a beautifully crafted eighty-eight page biographical sketch.

After the armistice ending hostilities in Europe, Kelly’s regiment remained for a time as part of the occupation forces in Germany. It returned to New York on April 22, 1919 to a tumultuous welcome, during which Kelly was acclaimed as a hero. Soon afterward he resigned

Photo:
Soldiers from a unit of the 69th Regiment marching on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan in 1916. The regiment’s armory, in background, was completed just ten years earlier—during the same year Michael Kelly became a lieutenant. The regiment entered World War I in October, 1917. It was initially formed in 1849 through efforts of Irish leaders in New York seeking to organize their fellow countrymen in the city. Courtesy of Library of Congress.



his commission and became actively involved in Irish American politics in furtherance of the Irish cause.

In 1919 he became a candidate for presidency of the Board of Aldermen of New York City on behalf of the Liberty Party which advocated recognition of the Irish Republic. Jeremiah O'Leary was a leading member of this group. The sitting president of the board, Robert L Moran, was the Democratic candidate up for re-election with the backing of Tammany Hall. The Republican candidate was United States congressman and former deputy New York attorney-general, Fiorello LaGuardia.⁸ Tammany tried to persuade Kelly to withdraw his candidacy and support Moran, but he refused. The Tammany bosses petitioned the New York State Supreme Court to remove Kelly's name from the ballot on the grounds that some fifteen percent of the signatories to Kelly's nomination petition had failed to comply with election rules. The court concurred, the decision was confirmed on appeal, and Kelly's name was deleted from the ballot. However, on the day of the election over 3,500 voters spoiled their votes by writing Kelly's name on the ballot paper. As a result, LaGuardia defeated Moran by 1,363 votes. Kelly and LaGuardia became quite friendly, and twelve years later La Guardia, then a representative in the United States Congress, offered Kelly's son, John, an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.⁹

Kelly, who had by then become known as "Mike," worked tirelessly for the Irish cause dur-

ing the years of the War of Independence in Ireland. Eamon De Valera had been elected president of the *Sinn Féin* organization in 1917.^{10&11}

When he came to New York on a fund-raising tour in 1919, the British government through its embassy, tried to exert pressure on the U.S. Army not to associate itself with De Valera's mission. Kelly refused to bow to the pressure and, although no longer active in his old regiment, appeared in his full major's uniform on the platform to welcome Dev.¹² Kelly and De Valera subsequently became firm friends.

KELLY'S ROLE IN THE AARIR

In November, 1920, while still in the United States, De Valera split with the Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF) led by Judge Daniel Cohalan and John Devoy and formed the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR). Kelly was a founding member of the AARIR and was designated by De Valera as district secretary for the organisation in New York. The organisation soon boasted a membership of 500,000 Irish Americans, and a year later claimed 700,000 members.

In November, 1920, a flying column of the Irish Republican Army had wiped out an eighteen-man patrol of the hated British Army "Auxiliaries" in County Cork. This precipitated the declaration of martial law throughout the county. On the night of December 10, another member of the British Forces was killed in Cork city.

The crown forces were out for revenge, and on the following night they burned, wrecked, damaged, and looted over two hundred and fifty buildings in the city center, including the City Hall.

Kelly, in his capacity as secretary of the AARIR in New York, sent a telegram to the U.S. State Department petitioning it to sever diplomatic relations with Great Britain for the "burning of Cork City by brutal British troops." The Most Reverend Dr. Daniel Cohalan, as Catholic bishop of Cork had excommunicated some members of the IRA because they participated in ambushes of British forces, and the bishop blamed the IRA for provoking the British Forces into burning the city. This led to a war of words

Illustration:
This advertisement from the *Irish Advocate* was part of Kelly's campaign in 1919 for presidency of the New York City Board of Aldermen. The effort was part of his post-War devotion of considerable time and energy on behalf of achieving independence for Ireland. The campaign did not generate enough support to get Kelly on the ballot, but Kelly's enthusiasm for independence did not decline. Courtesy of John T. Ridge.

by telegram, near the end of 1920, between Kelly and Cohalan. Kelly cabled the bishop “We protest against the use of your spiritual authority



in British interests. You have no right to excommunicate Irishmen for defending their country.” He went on to say that Cohalan’s assertion that killing British military is murder was a libel on the American patriots of 1776 who had used similar tactics against the British. The bishop replied “Nonsense, I desire Irish independence as sincerely as you. When you come with an army able to fight enemy... I will act as chaplain. Scandalous for you to defend touch and go ambushes that... expose the lives of the defenceless and unprotected to the danger of murder and reprisal. Ruin of Cork the result of your policy. Why not get the Irish Republic recognised by the United States?”¹³

Terence MacSwiney, the *Sinn Féin* lord mayor of Cork, had been imprisoned on a charge

of sedition in Brixton Prison in England and had died there after a seventy-four day hunger strike on October 25, 1920. His hunger strike and death had brought worldwide attention to the situation in Ireland. When MacSwiney’s widow Muriel and his sister Mary arrived in New York on December 3, 1920, war veterans and longshoremen under Kelly’s command formed a guard of honour for the arrival of the two women in a display of solidarity and respect for the dead lord mayor.¹⁴

Under the auspices of the AARIR, in 1921 Kelly organized a parade down Fifth Avenue in support of Irish independence. The New York newspapers reported that the attendance was upwards of 60,000 people and featured thirty-eight bands. The grand marshal of the parade was Colonel Louis Conley of the 69th Regiment and the chief-of-staff was Michael Kelly. One of Kelly’s highly publicized protests involved a plan to bring a live jackass and thousands of jeering Irish Americans to a pier to mock U.S. Admiral William Sims on his return to New York. Sims had made a speech in London calling IRA volunteers “jackasses.”¹⁵ The National Security League and others who supported the Admiral requested a police presence to protect Sims. Federal officials took this seriously. Secret Service agents met the Admiral, and a thousand police were deployed to prevent the protest, but Kelly succeeded in handing Sims a letter of protest.¹⁶

Kelly worked closely with Harry Boland after De Valera returned to Ireland after his fund-raising trip in 1919. Boland was *Dáil Éireann’s* envoy in America. Boland returned to Ireland in late August 1921. By October, he was back in New York where on October 15th he addressed a crowd of 11,000 in Madison Square Garden about the situation in Ireland. Kelly was among other speakers to address the meeting. Boland returned to Ireland in late December for the treaty debate in *Dáil Éireann*. Over the next months he tried unsuccessfully to broker a compromise between his friends, Michael Collins and Éamon De Valera. Boland was shot by Free State forces who attempted to arrest him in Skerries, County Dublin, on July 31, 1922, and died two days later.

Photo:

Portrait of Admiral William Sims of the U.S. Navy. The admiral was a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and served as a young military attaché in Europe late in the nineteenth century. An observant officer, his work on behalf of modernizing the military impressed national leaders including Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. He became commander of U.S. naval forces in Europe during World War I. A supporter of Great Britain, he disdained efforts in Ireland to achieve independence and disparaged members of the Irish Republican Army. Courtesy of Britannica.com.



Photo:
Eamon DeValera and Harry Boland during their visit to New York City in 1919. During this visit Kelly supported DeValera, and the two men became friends. After DeValera organized the AARIR, Kelly continued his support and became the AARIR district secretary for New York and one of its leading spokesmen. After DeValera returned to Ireland, Kelly worked with Boland, who remained in the United States for a longer period. Courtesy of Eamon DeValera Archives, University College, Dublin.

THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

Dáil Éireann (the Irish Parliament) split over the issue of accepting the treaty with Britain whereby British troops left twenty-six of the thirty-two Irish counties and these twenty-six counties were granted the status of a dominion known as the Irish Free State with its own government and army. However, the king of England was still the nominal head of state, and this arrangement, together with the partition of the country with six of the Irish counties remaining under British rule, was unacceptable to a large number of members of the Irish Parliament (TDs) and also to a large section of the Irish Republican Army. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was passed by *Dáil Éireann* on January 7, 1922, by a vote of 64–57. Kelly's reaction at first was cautious. The following day he was quoted as saying "We don't know what will transpire after the signing of the treaty ratification. . . . it is a critical time. . . . we will wait and see."¹⁷

Over the next six months efforts to reconcile the two factions failed, and in June 1922 hostilities broke out between the pro- and anti-treaty forces. The split in Ireland was mirrored among the Irish in the United States and in leading Irish American organizations such as *Clan na Gael*. A splinter group of this organization, known as "*Clan na*

Gael-Reorganized," was largely composed of members of the AARIR, and Kelly was one of the principal leaders.¹⁸ This group sought a more radical policy. Kelly, like his friends De Valera and Boland, took the anti-treaty side in a decision that would define his relationship with the Irish cause for the rest of his life. From then on, he became one of the principal leaders in New York of those who were opposed to the Anglo-Irish Treaty. (When Michael Collins, leader of the pro-treaty forces in Ireland, was killed in an engagement with anti-treaty forces on August 22, 1922, Kelly, commenting on his death, said "It is all very tragic."¹⁹)

During the Civil War in Ireland, Kelly continued to support the anti-treaty side. Mrs. Muriel McSwiney, widow of the late Lord Mayor of Cork who had died on hunger strike two years earlier, also took the anti-treaty side. In October, 1922, she paid a fund-raising visit to New York, and Kelly organized a reception to greet her.²⁰

On October 17, Kelly made an appeal to the members of the AARIR to send "words of cheer and comfort" to deValera in Ireland.²¹

By late 1922 Kelly was the AARIR Director of Organisation in New York and in that capacity he wrote on November 3rd to W.T. Cosgrave, president of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State, enclosing a copy of a resolution pro-

testing detention without trial of Republicans and calling on the United States government to investigate their maltreatment.²²

During 1922, Kelly also strongly opposed a move by the Irish Free State government to gain control of \$2,300,000 which had been raised as a result of De Valera and Boland's fund raising in New York. While a court case was ongoing to determine who should gain control of the funds, Laurence Ginnell arrived in New York City on December 27, 1922 as De Valera's envoy to the United States in place of Harry Boland. Ginnell proceeded to demand possession of the consulate of the Irish Free State in Nassau Street, New York. He was accompanied by six men, including Kelly.²³ When Ginnell died in Washington on April 17, 1923, Kelly, representing the AARIR, accompanied Ginnell's body back to Ireland. Ginnell had been an MP in the British Parliament and later a *Sinn Féin* TD and director of propaganda in the second *Dáil*. He had also been jailed on a number of occasions by the British. After the split he was appointed Director of Propaganda by the anti-treaty forces. He had become very friendly with Kelly, who was considered by the Irish Free State government as one of the principal leaders of the anti-treaty position in the United States. On May 3, 1923, Timothy Smiddy, the Free State government's representative in Washington, sent the following telegram to the Department of External Affairs in Dublin:²⁴ "Major Kelly one of the chief heads Irregulars in USA sailed twenty first April with Ginnell's body. Chief motive consult with Dev and important Irregs. Watch him closely."²⁵

Kelly accompanied Ginnell's body all the way to Delvin in County Westmeath where the burial took place on May 2, 1923. The oration at the graveside was delivered by Mrs. Pearse, mother of Patrick Pearse, the executed leader in the 1916 Rising. Kelly, representing Eamon De Valera, also spoke at the graveside, stating that "...he was honored to be appointed to escort from America the remains of the envoy of the Irish Republic back to his native place."²⁶ The *Weekly Irish Times* reported on May 12 that a Republican meeting held in Tuam, County Galway had been addressed by "Major Kelly" of the American Army, who said that the next time he came to Ireland he hoped that there would be a united Ireland.

The tradition in the Kelly family was that Mike travelled as escort of Ginnell's body only as far as Liverpool.²⁷ Kelly may not have wanted his family to know that he had been in Ireland and had not visited them. Divisions caused by the Civil War had run deep, and there was great bitterness between the protagonists. The anti-treaty forces had been defeated militarily before Kelly's arrival in Ireland, and they had declared a cease-fire on April 30th. The reason why Kelly did not visit his family in County Clare was, possibly, because his half brothers, James and Paddy, had been members of the IRA in Clare and had taken the pro-treaty side in the Civil War.

When Michael Kelly arrived back in New York he was welcomed by a committee on behalf of the sixty-five councils of the AARIR in New York. The chairman of the committee read an address of welcome and invited the Kelly to attend the association's annual celebration and convention at Madison Square Garden on May 26th and 27th "where you will have an opportunity of delivering to the people of the United States the message you bear from the President of the Irish Republic." The convention was attended by De Valera's mother, and by Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, the suffragette and human rights activist whose husband Francis, a pacifist, had been murdered by British Forces in Dublin in 1916. Reporting on the convention, the Irish newspapers stated that Kelly had recently returned from a conference with Mr. De Valera.²⁸

We know from contemporary newspaper reports that Kelly went on speaking tours to a number of American cities on behalf of the AARIR to promote the cause of the Republican anti-treaty side in Ireland during the period of the Irish Civil War. Kelly continued to support De Valera after the Civil War while Dev and his followers were in the political wilderness in Ireland. The anti-treaty members of *Dáil Éireann* refused to recognise the legitimacy of the Free State and abstained from taking their seats in the *Dáil* since they would have to take an oath of allegiance to the king of England as head of state. De Valera split with *Sinn Féin* on the issue of abstentionism in 1926 and formed the *Fianna Fáil* party whose elected TDs took their seats in *Dáil Éireann*, saying, when they did so,

Illustration:
This report of
Michael Kelly's
accidental death
appeared in the
New York Times
published on
June 23, 1930.



that they regarded the oath as an empty formula. DeValera founded a newspaper, *The Irish Press*, which was registered in 1928 but whose first edition was not published until September, 1931. Its purpose was to represent the viewpoint of the *Fianna Fáil* party. The newspaper was controlled by De Valera and afterwards by his family. Some of the money which was used to finance the launch of the paper originated in the fundraising carried out in the United States by De Valera in 1919–1920. At a convention of the AARIR in the Pennsylvania Hotel in New York in 1930, Kelly, as chairman of the fundraising committee, announced that \$300,000 had been raised towards the launch of *The Irish Press*. He said that a holding company had been formed in America, headed by attorney Frank P. Walsh. Kelly stated that the printing presses had been purchased and that publication would commence on the following St Patrick's Day.²⁹

In the general election of 1932, De Valera's *Fianna Fáil* party won 72 seats out of 153 with 44 percent of the votes, while their pro-treaty opponents, then known as *Cumann na nGaedheal*, won 57 seats with 37 percent. *Fianna Fáil* formed a minority government with the support of the 7 Labour Party members. The men who had won the Civil War nine years earlier handed over power peacefully to their opponents, and

Fianna Fáil continued in government for the next sixteen years with deValera as *Taoiseach*.

KELLY'S TRAGIC DEATH

Michael Kelly did not live to see the first issue of *The Irish Press*, nor did he see his friend Eamon De Valera come to power as *Taoiseach* of the Irish Free State on March 9, 1932. Kelly died in Fordham Hospital on July 22, 1930 as a result of an accidental gunshot wound caused while cleaning his old service pistol. He was buried with full military honors in St. Raymond's Cemetery in the Bronx. His death and funeral were widely reported in publications like the *New York Times*, the *Irish World*, *Time* magazine and other news sources of the day. Many tributes were paid by his army and political comrades including Eugene Twomey, secretary of *Fianna Fáil*. His death was also widely reported in the Irish newspapers as well as in some British newspapers.

Michael and Eleanor had two children, the second of whom, Thomas (1912–1914) died at seventeen months. Their eldest son, John Edward (Jack) Kelly (1911–1995) was a career soldier who commanded a battalion of the U.S. Army in Europe in World War II.³⁰ He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in 1945, twenty-seven years after his father received the same honor. He commanded the 160th Infantry Regiment in Korea in 1954. He was appointed brigadier general in 1961, and was sent to India in 1962 as an adviser to the Indian Army during its border war with China. At this time he was promoted to major general. He later commanded the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood and afterwards served at the Pentagon. He was promoted to lieutenant general in 1968 and was appointed commandant of the National War College in Washington. He retired in 1970.³¹ Two of John Kelly's sons became lieutenant colonels in the U.S. Army, while a third son, Captain John Kelly was killed in action in during the Viet Nam War in 1969.

It is worthy of note that Michael Kelly was still involved in promoting the cause of his native country when he died, more than two hundred years after his ancestor, Captain Patrick O'Kelly, fell while fighting for the same cause at the Battle of Aghrim in 1691.

Endnotes

- 1 John died in 1864 aged 75. He married Catherine Cullinan who died in 1903 aged 107. She was a member of the Cullinan family from the Ennis area. A Protestant branch of this family were prominent in legal and medical circles in Ennis in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- 2 John Kelly married again and had two more children. When his second wife died he married for a third time and had a further six children. He died in 1916 aged 76.
- 3 In Kelly's introduction to Jeremiah O'Leary's book, *My Political Trial & Experiences*, Jefferson Publishing Company, Inc., 1919.
- 4 Ibid. Conley served as Colonel of the 69th Regiment until 1916.
- 5 The Aqueduct Police was a mounted law enforcement unit created in 1906 to protect reservoirs and equipment that supplied water to New York City.
- 6 For a detailed account of the fighting involving the 165th (69th) Regiment in France see *Duffy's War* by Stephen L. Harris, Potomac Books Inc., 2006. Father Francis Duffy's description of Michael Kelly is in his book, *Father Duffy's Story: a Tale of Humor and Heroism, of Life and Death with the Fighting 69th*, George H. Doran Company, 1919, p.28.
- 7 While serving in France, Kelly became aware that his half sister, Marion Kelly, who was a Red Cross nurse, was stationed close to his unit, and he was able to arrange to meet her. They had not met since Kelly left Ireland in 1899 when Marion was just ten years old.
- 8 After whom New York City's LaGuardia Airport was officially named in 1953.
- 9 During the Prohibition era LaGuardia was accompanied by his friend Michael Kelly when he gave out free beer with an alcohol content of 2.75% in New York. Apparently this was under the legal limit for the alcohol content. See *Oakland Tribune* Aug. 1, 1926.
- 10 The author, as a child, met and shook hands with De Valera in Kilmurry School on polling day, May 18, 1954.
- 11 *Sinn Féin* was a political party established in Ireland in 1905. After the Easter Rising in 1916 it came increasingly militant and in the general election of 1918 it replaced the conservative Irish Parliamentary Party as the political representative of Irish nationalism. Its elected members refused to take their seats in the Westminster Parliament and set up *Dáil Éireann* in Dublin as the Parliament of Ireland.
- 12 "Daring Exploits of Maj. 'Dynamite Mike' Kelly as Related by Members of His Old Regiment" *Irish World* Aug.3, 1930.
- 13 See report in the *Drogheda Independent* Dec. 24, 1920.
- 14 See *Boston Post*, *Lima News* (Ohio), *Athens Messenger* (Ohio), etc., Dec.3, 1920.
- 15 Sims was a noted anglophile. He had been sent to London by the Wilson administration as Senior Naval Representative shortly before the U.S. entered the Great War. He commanded the U.S. naval forces based in Britain during the war. It seems that his "jackass" speech in London led to his recall to the U.S. by the Secretary of the Navy.
- 16 See *Irish Terrorism and the Atlantic Community 1865–1922*, p. 246.
- 17 See *Syracuse Herald*, January 8, 1922.
- 18 See *New York Times*, August 2, 1922.
- 19 See *Evening World*, New York, August 23, 1922.
- 20 Papers of Desmond & Mabel Fitzgerald, P80, Descriptive Catalogue, UCD Archives, Dublin.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 See *New York Times*, December 28, 1922.
- 24 Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, Vol. 2 No. 76, NAI DFA ES, Box 28 File 186. (Royal Irish Academy, Department of Foreign Affairs & National Archives of Ireland).
- 25 The Free State Government referred to the anti-treaty forces as "Irregulars."
- 26 See *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, May 2, 1923.
- 27 Kelly's granddaughter, Erin Kelly Benitez, in conversation with the author.
- 28 See *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, June 11, 1923, and the *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, June 16, 1923.
- 29 Report in the *New York Times*, June 18, 1930.
- 30 The author is indebted to Jack's daughter, Erin Kelly Benitez, for much of the information on the career of her grandfather, "Dynamite Mike" Kelly. Erin has made several visits to her relatives in County Clare.
- 31 General Sir Thomas Kelly Kenny, 1840–1915, of the British Army, who was also born in Kilmurry Ibrickan parish, was a member of the same extended Kelly family as Michael Kelly.