

Template cover sheet which must be included at the front of all 2016 Decade of Centenaries History competition entries

Title of project: The Coltwood Incident

Category for which you wish to be entered (i.e. 1916, World War 1; Women in the Revolutionary Period, local/regional category):

Local/Family history

Name(s) of class / group of students / individual student submitting the project:

Adam Ó Murchú

School roll number (this should be provided if possible):

19811s

School address (this must be provided even for projects submitted by a group of pupils or an individual pupil):

Gaelscoil Eoghain Uí Thuairisc, Ashgrove, Carlow

Class teacher's name (this must be provided even for projects submitted by a group of pupils or an individual pupil):

Bríd Uí Mhaoluala

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The Colt Wood Railway Incident

*“.. In all probability the first shot fired
in the Rising” ...*



Adam Ó Murchú

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Réamhrá/ Introduction

Is mise Adam Ó Murchú. Táim i rang 5 i nGaelscoil Eoghain Uí Thuairisc i gCeatharlach. Tá nasc an speisialta ag mo chlann le 1916. Scaoil mo Shin-Sean Uncail, Paddy, an chéad philéar in Éirí Amach 1916! Rinne mé an tionscnamh seo dhá-theangach ionas go mbeadh gach duine sa chlann agus an pobal i gcoitinne, nach bhfuil mórán Gaeilge acu in ann é a léamh.

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My name is Adam Murphy . I am in fifth class in the Gaelscoil Eoghain Uí Thuairisc, in Carlow. My family have a special link with 1916. My great-grand uncle Paddy, fired the first shot in the Easter Rising 1916. I developed this project in two languages so that everyone in my family and the general public, who may not have much Irish, can read it.

How I am connected to Patrick J Ramsbottom

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Patrick Joseph Ramsbottom

My great grand uncle



**Edward Ramsbottom, brother
of Patrick Ramsbottom** *My
great grand father*



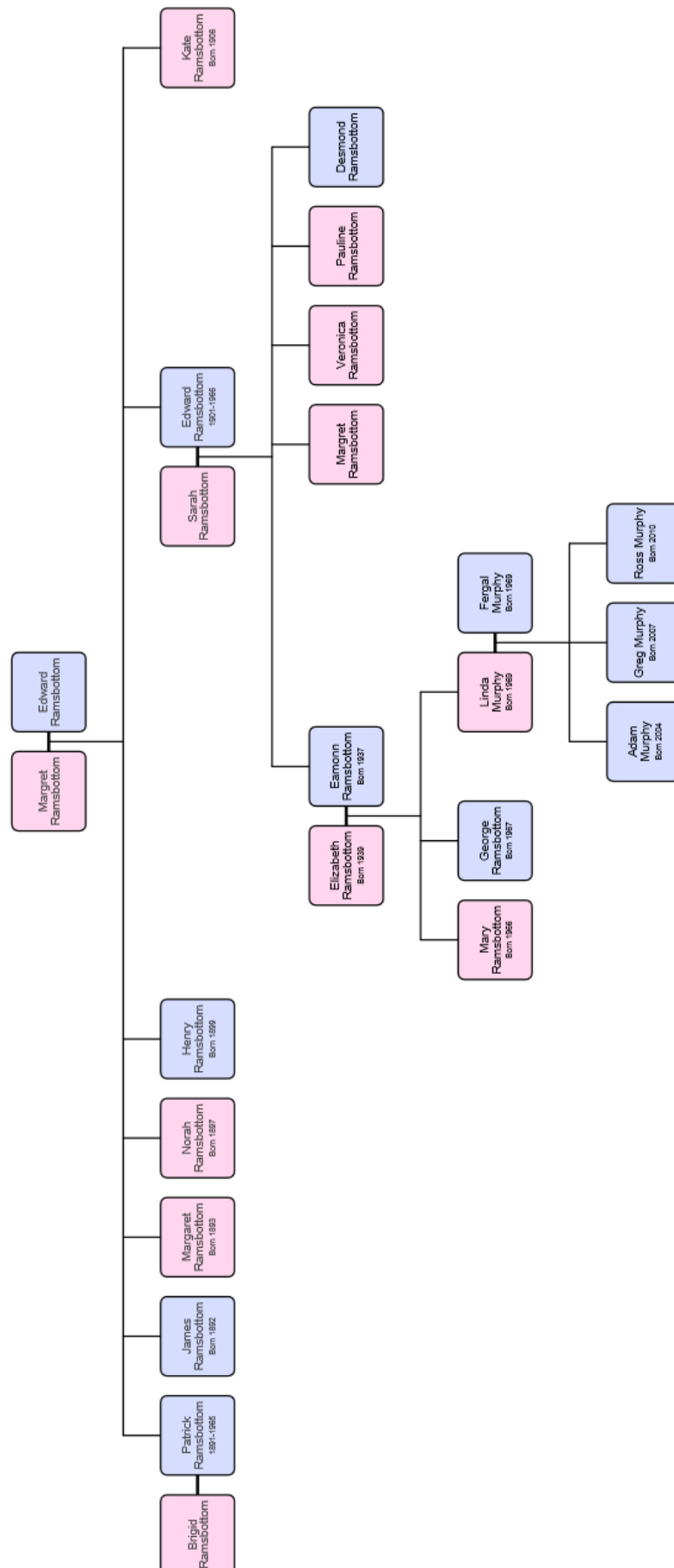
**Eamonn Ramsbottom, son of
Edward Ramsbottom** *My
grandfather*



**Linda Murphy nee
Ramsbottom, daughter of
Eamonn Ramsbottom** *My
Mother*



**Adam Murphy son of Linda
Ramsbottom** *Me!*



Scéal Mo Mhuintire /My Family History

My great-grand uncle was Patrick Joseph Ramsbottom, he was known to his family as “Paddy” and to his comrades as “An Fear Mór” because he was over 6ft tall. He was born on 21st May 1891 and he was the eldest son of Edward and Margaret Ramsbottom. Edward and Margaret had the following children: Patrick Joseph (born 1891), James (born 1892) Margaret (born 1893), Norah (born 1897) Henry (born 1899) Edward (born 1901) and Kate (born 1906).

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1901.
(Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.)

FORM A. No. on Form B. 77

RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 31st of MARCH, 1901.

| NAME AND SURNAME | RELATION to Head of Family | RELIGIOUS PROFESSION | EDUCATION | AGE | SEX | RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION | MARRIAGE | WHERE BORN | IRISH LANGUAGE | If Deaf and Dumb, Blind, or Lame |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----|-----|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Edward Ramsbottom | Head | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 34 | M | Grass & Potatoes | Married | Queen's Co. | | |
| Margaret Ramsbottom | Wife | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 33 | F | Housewife | Married | Queen's Co. | | |
| Patrick J. Ramsbottom | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 9 | M | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| James C. Ramsbottom | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 8 | M | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| Margaret Ramsbottom | Daughter | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 7 | F | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| Henry S. Ramsbottom | Son | Roman Catholic | Read | 4 | M | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| Edward S. Ramsbottom | Son | Roman Catholic | Read | 2 | M | | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| Edward S. Ramsbottom | Son | Roman Catholic | Read | 8 | M | | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| Margaret Ramsbottom | Daughter | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 18 | F | Grass & Potatoes | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.
(Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.)

FORM A. No. on Form B. 7

RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.

| NAME AND SURNAME | RELATION to Head of Family | RELIGIOUS PROFESSION | EDUCATION | AGE (See Remarks) | SEX | RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION | PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE | WHERE BORN | IRISH LANGUAGE | If Deaf and Dumb, Blind, or Lame |
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| John Ryan | Head | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 50 | M | Grass | Married | Queen's Co. | | |
| Margaret Ryan | Wife | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 48 | F | Housewife | Married | Queen's Co. | | |
| William Ryan | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 12 | M | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| Joseph Ryan | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 9 | M | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| William Ryan | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 7 | M | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| John Ryan | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 5 | M | Scholar | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| William Ryan | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 27 | M | Shop Assistant | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| William Ryan | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 15 | M | Shop Assistant | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |
| John Ryan | Son | Roman Catholic | Read and Write | 15 | M | Shop Assistant | Unmarried | Queen's Co. | | |

Blianta a Óige/Paddy's Early Years

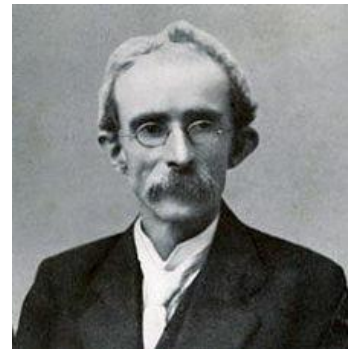
Records from the census of 1901 (top table above) show that Paddy lived with his family in Maryborough (now known as Portlaoise). In 1906, Patrick joined Sinn Féin and the Gaelic League. The 1911 census (second table) shows that Patrick was then living in Athlone, Co. Westmeath having moved there in 1910. Patrick worked as a shop assistant for the Prior family in Athlone. He continued his involvement with the republican movement and joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Athlone and organised a branch of Na Fianna Éireann.

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Just as World War 1 started, Patrick left Athlone and moved to Dun Laoghaire in 1914. It was at this stage that Patrick joined the "B" company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers.

A Shaol go dtí 1916/ His Life up to 1916

My great grand-uncle's involvement in the Easter Rising began before 1916. In October 1914 Paddy returned to his home in Portlaoise. At this time, there were only about a dozen Irish Volunteers in the whole country. Tom Clarke (pictured) asked Paddy to meet with him and to organise the IRB in County Laois. Tom gave him the authority to enrol and swear in new members and expected that only men with "proper national outlook" would be enrolled.



On October 17th 1914 Paddy held a meeting in Portlaoise and established the Irish Volunteers, he was elected company captain and had about a dozen members in Portlaoise.

In Paddy's witness statement from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 (Witness document number W.S 1046) he said:

"There was a strong pro-British element in Portlaoise at that time, and due to local Parliamentary Party influences it was very difficult to get recruits for the Volunteers under the leadership of McNeill".

The Company had a "parade" one night per week. These parades/practices included drilling and teaching members how to use bayonet and guns. Between 1914 and the Easter 1916

Rising, the Company got gelignite and fuses from the coal mines of Wolfhill. These were then brought to Dublin and given to the Volunteer headquarters. Fundraising events were also organised to help buy arms.

A fundraising “Aeridheacht” (a kind of open air day of entertainment) was organised in Portlaoise in September 1915 to help buy arms. During 1915, members of the Irish Volunteers visited the Portlaoise Company. In the autumn of 1915 members of the Portlaoise Company attended a lecture in the Headquarters of the Irish Volunteers, in Dublin, where they heard a lecture about demolishing a railway. The Laois Company marched at the funeral of O’Donovan Ross as well.

Cúlra Éirí Amach 1916 /Leading up to the Easter Rising 1916

At a Company meeting in January 1916, Piarais Béaslaí (pictured) and Lieutenant Eamon O’Kelly addressed the meeting and spoke about an urgent need for more intensive training due to the impending Rising.



At a meeting of the Portlaoise Company on Sunday 16th April 1916, the meeting was informed that a Rising would definitely take place and the date and details and the company’s duties would be informed. After this meeting Paddy was told it had been decided to rise at 7pm on Easter Sunday 23rd 1916.

Duties assigned to the Portlaoise Company were to demolish a railway line from Waterford to Dublin with

“ the object of holding up and delaying the advance of enemy troops that might be sent to Dublin from Britain via Rosslare or Waterford.”

Plans were made to cut the Waterford-Portlaoise line at Colt Wood, which is located between Portlaoise and Abbeyleix. It was also decided to cut the Kilkenny-Kildare section of the line but no exact location was decided and this line was never cut. When this had been done the Company was to go to the Scallop Gap near Borris, Co. Carlow and to wait for further orders.

An Áit a Tharla an Eachtra/Colt Wood



The picture (left) is a monument to the Colt Wood incident. The monument has three plaques: a copy of the Proclamation; a picture of a derailed train; and a dedication which names the Volunteers, my great-grand uncle included.

Designed by Robert Ballagh

Before Easter Sunday night Colm Houlihan, who worked for the Great Southern and Western Railway Company, took a number of tools from the workshop. Paddy took charge of six members of the Portlaoise Company on that night. The six members were Laurence Brady, Thomas F.Brady, John Muldowney, Patrick Muldowney, Michael Sheridan and Colm Houlihan.

At 7pm sharp they made their way to way to Colt Wood and began their work. They used the tools that Colm Houlihan had given them and cut down telegraph lines and telegraphy wires. They also removed several lengths of rail and some sleepers. While they were doing this, three local girls the Sheerans and a Miss Whelan passed by and they were taken prisoner until the work was completed. They were then brought to their homes and warned not to go out again that night or to give any information about what they had seen to anyone.

Once the job had been finished the Company took shelter in Colt Wood close to the railway.

The Railway Company sent one of their workers, William Dalton to investigate the signal failure on the line. While he was doing this he moved closer to where Paddy and the other members of the Portlaoise Company were hiding. My great grand uncle called out to him to "halt". The man did not do as Paddy asked and so he fired over the railway worker's head.



*Derailed Train at Colt Wood.
(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)*

This was, as Paddy said,

"..In all probability the first shot fired in the Rising".

The Railway Company worker extinguished his lamp and escaped into the darkness without any injuries.



Soon after the Volunteers had left the wood, the railway worker returned with five colleagues and four policemen. As the train approached the site, it was derailed and crashed onto its side as they passed over the demolished section of the railway. The engine driver and the fireman were flung from the cabin of the train but nobody was injured.

Cad a Tharla tar éis an Eachtra? / What Happened after the Event?

The Laois Volunteers were delighted with their success and made their way back to a “safe house” Brady’s, Lalor’s Mills. They stayed in this “safe house” for several days and the Bray sisters (Kathleen, May, Noreen and Breda) took care of them while they were on the run.



When they heard that the Rising in Dublin has failed the group split up. Many of the group later went on to take part in the War of Independence and the Civil War.

On the Tuesday night the Laois Company tried to contact Carlow/Kilkenny Volunteers but they couldn't and kept trying for the next couple of days to find out what had happened. At the Easter Saturday meeting they had been told not to believe misleading newspaper reports so the company stayed together hoping that the Rising would spread throughout Ireland. On Monday the first, Eamonn Fleming went to Dublin and found that all the leaders had been captured. Fleming returned to Dublin with my great grand uncle they were told by Fr Augustine that the Rising was definitely over. They stayed at Fr Costello's house that night, because of the military presence but they went home the next morning.

Father J.J Carney from Portlaoise asked them to surrender to the county inspector of RIC in Portlaoise but they refused and decided to go on the run:

“We dumped our guns at Brady farm. While on the run I kept in touch with the other men...I remained on the run for about eleven months during which time I collected gelignite and detonators”

When he came off the run Paddy organised Companies of Volunteers having spoken with Michael Collins my great grand uncle made these companies into a Battalion. Paddy was made Battalion Commandant of what was known as the Laois Brigade. He became an armed escort for Kevin O' Higgins TD who was visiting Laois to collect money for the Dáil Loan.

Laois County which was the largest amount subscribed in any county in Leinster except Dublin. Paddy brought the money on his bicycle to Dublin in a bag! Page | 11

"There were numerous raids for me in different parts of the county but I never left my area except on duty."

A report published in the "Nationalist and Leinster Times" dated 28th October, 1918 shows an application from the rail company for compensation due to the derailing in the "Queen's County" Quarter Sessions:

"ECHO OF EASTER WEEK

Derailing of Engine and Carriage. His Honor, Judge Fitzgerald continued the business of the Quarter Sessions at Maryborough on Monday. The G.S.W.R. Company applied for £328 - 9 - 6d compensation for the alleged malicious destruction of 60 yards of the permanent way, 12 30 ft. rails, 66 sleepers, 208 bolts and one locomotive engine and one bogey brake carriage early in the morning of the 24th April last on the lands of Clonadadoran. "

THE NATIONALIST AND LEINSTER TIMES

April 29th 1916

RAILS TORN UP.

ENGINE AND CARRIAGE DERAILED.

SERIOUS AFFAIR NEAR MARYBORO'.

A great sensation has been caused in Maryborough and district, and, indeed, all over the country by the news that on Easter Sunday night, at a spot known as Colt Wood, about three miles from Maryborough, on the Maryborough to Waterford line, the rails were torn up and the telegraphic communication cut. The station-master at Maryborough (Mr. Dunne) was the first to surmise that something was wrong, and not satisfied with the pilot's information that all was well, he despatched a porter along the line with a lamp. When the porter came near the spot where the outrage took place, his lamp was, it is stated, fired on three times, and immediately extinguished the light and returned. The stationmaster, in the meantime, detained the special excursion train which was returning from Thurles, and sent an engine and carriage along the line to discover whether it was possible. The driver, however, overstepped the mark, and engine and carriage toppled over into the ditch, all the parties, police and railwaymen, locally escaping injury. It was then found that about eight or ten yards of rails had been taken up. The damage was quickly repaired the following day, by laying a new road, and the trains are now running as usual. It is unknown up to the present who the perpetrators of the thing must have been, but the police are actively engaged hunting up clues, and scouring the country in motor cars.

On Easter Sunday night a farmer named Nolan, who lives at Ardreigh, Athy, when walking along the railway line there discovered that a telegraph pole had been cut down and placed across the rails. He removed the obstruction and proceeded to a signal house where he reported the matter. The outrage must have been perpetrated between 8 and 9.30, as about the former hour the line was clear a train having passed. At the time of the discovery a train was almost due, and though the obstruction would have scarcely caused a wreck there can be little doubt but that the act was a malicious one. The police visited the scene and are pursuing inquiries, but no arrests have as yet been made.

A youth in the Wolfhill district has been arrested and conveyed to Kilkenny Jail arising out of a reported attempt to take a ride from the local police barracks. The boy is the son of an ex-member of the R.I.C. No importance is attached to the affair.

A Shaol tar éis an Eirí Amach/ Patrick's Life after the Rising

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Paddy was arrested in November 1920 and was interned in the Curragh Camp, Arbour Hill and then Ballykinlar in County Down, from where he was released in December 1921.

He joined the Gardaí in 1927 and was stationed in Duncannon, Co. Wexford, Carlow and the Phoenix Park. After Patrick left the Gardaí, he got a job in the Department of Education. In November 1953 he was successful in his appeal for a Military Service Pension, after he had been refused in 1941. I discovered during my research that he lived in Sandbrook near Ballon County Carlow. My family and I lived in Ballon up to two years ago and our house would have been about two miles away from his! While he was living in Sandbrook he made his first pension application. Through John Kehoe, of Tullow museum, who contacted one of the oldest residents in the area, Mr. Keppel in Rathrush, who is about 85 years old, we found out the connection was actually to to Sandbrook House. During the civil war,

local Volunteer units burned many of the “Big Houses” in the area.

ROINN 665

NÁ CURRTHAR EANTUAIRISC AR AN GELÚDACH SO.

An Uimhir, An Gao.

34 21520

An Uimhir ag Roian Eile, 22571

Ramabottom, Path. 705

No. 2 long. Sandbrook

Gardaí de chana Tullow

Thomás Pádraig Keppel

Dublin Co. Carlow

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When it was empty, it was taken over and used as a boarding house for newly appointed Civic guards stationed in County Carlow. Paddy was one of these these men.



Sandbrook House 2015

When he reapplied for his pension in 1942, he was living at Black Horse Avenue in Dublin. It would seem likely that he lived in Ballon when he was stationed in Carlow and in Black Horse Avenue when he worked in the Phoenix Park.

He married Brigid Concanon, (Brigid was known as Daisy) and they had no children. Paddy died in March 1965 and is buried in Portlaoise Co. Laois. Daisy died on 3rd March 1971.



Focal Scoir/Conclusion

Táim an-bhrodúil as an eolas ar fad atá bailithe agam anseo. Ta súil agam go mbeidh tuiscint níos fearr ag daoine ar an ról a bhí ag muintir Laoise agus go h-áirithe mo shin-sean uncail Paddy mar gheall ar an taighde seo ata déanta agam.

Foinsí/Sources

Interviews with family members

"1916 IN LAOIS" by Jim and Brendan Fleming

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY Witness Statements and Pension Application

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The Nationalist and Leinster Times

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"Stories from 1916" by Eoin Cody

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John Kehoe, Tullow Museum