

story of Cullen tragedy in the history of the 1798 rebellion, a story that includes treachery, revenge, murder, theft, arson, and eviction of a widowed mother and her children.

When Mary married William Clowry, probably in 1792, or 1793 she moved to his prosperous farm at Ballybromhill to begin her new life. By the year 1798, she was settled happily and rearing with her husband a young family, when the flames of revolt erupted in the County on May 25th., destroying within a few short weeks the peace, tranquility, happiness, and security of her married state. Events unfolded when a neighbour from the locality, - an Orangeman named Watson - was stopped as he drove home in a horse and cart near the area called the "Fighting Cocks", by a party of armed men. "What would you wade in?", yelled out one of the group. The luckless Orangeman, through being in a state of some intoxication and not realising his grave danger, shouted back, "Papists blood!". He was immediately shot dead.

After the battle of Kilcumney, near Goresbridge, on 26th June 1798, between the Rebel forces commanded by Fr. John Murphy, and English troops led by Sir Charles Asgill, a number of rebel bands were scattered through the County seeking shelter as they attempted to escape into the Wicklow hills. One such band took shelter in the barn of an adjoining farm to the Clowry homestead, where they were apparently given hospitality by Mary and her husband.

News of this reached certain ears, and within a short span of time an armed group attacked the Clowry home during the hours of darkness. Amidst the ensuring carnage, as her husband was being led to the courtyard to face execution and holding a young child in his arms, Mary pleaded with the killers to spare his life, offering gold and other valuables in a desperate attempt to save him. But to no avail, blood must be spilled, and her husband, still holding his child to him, was basely shot dead. The now widowed and sorrowing mother of a young family, was given to understand that the death of her husband was in direct retaliation for the killing of Watson. She was then robbed of the gold and valuables, her house looted, and put to the torch.

Following on this tragic experience, Mary moved with her family to Ballintrane, where she had a house built. However, due to the hostility of the local landlord - Brewster - she was evicted, going to Kilbricken where the family finally settled.

**Bridget Cullen. Daughter of Edmund. 1768 - 1820**

If Mary is the enigma in the Cullen history of 1798, so, too, has Bridget added her share to the family puzzle.

She married twice. Her first marriage was to a Brennan of Carlow, according to the family tree, and of him there has been much speculation. In the treatise dealing with Paul Cullen, we note that Jack Hughes from Kilcruit and Jack Brennan were by blood and marriage related to the Cullen Family. Jack Brennan was the husband of Bridget, Pauls sister, and therefore his brother in law.

Some sources have speculated that Jack Brennan, executed along with Paul, was the son of Bridget Cullen, - not her husband - and therefore a nephew rather than a brother in law. However, if Bridget's age in 1798 is taken into account, she would have been thirty years old, and assuming her marriage took place when she was eighteen, her son - if he was the first born - would only have been around eleven or twelve years old. Even allowing another year or two to the boys age, one could in reason ask, would the authorities risk the backlash of an already volatile and angry population by imposing and executing a death sentence on one so young?. There is also the futher consideration of there being no record of issue from Bridget's first marriage. On the face of it then, such speculation, without more definite evidence, may be discounted.

There has also been the suggestion that the Brennan to whom Bridget was married, was Lieutenant Phillip Brennan of the Bagenalstown Infantry. This man is buried in Dunleckney Cemetery, approximately three miles outside of Bagenalstown, and from the details on his headstone that particular suggestion can be ruled out. However a plausible explanation for all this confusion may lie in the following suggestion which I offer to the reader of this work.

There are some reasonable grounds to present the possibility that Pierce Brennan, the husband of Catherine Cullen (*see page 1&2*) who was Bridget's half-sister, and Lieut. Phillip Brennan were closely related, even to the point of being brothers, and that Jack Brennan, married to said Bridget, was nephew to both Pierce and Phillip. Although widespread, it is worth keeping in mind the particular association of the Brennan name in the 1798 period with the Wells, Tinnegarney, Kilcarrig, Royal Oak, Gormona, and Leighlinbridge area's.

Then question then is...where is the executed Jack Brennan buried?.