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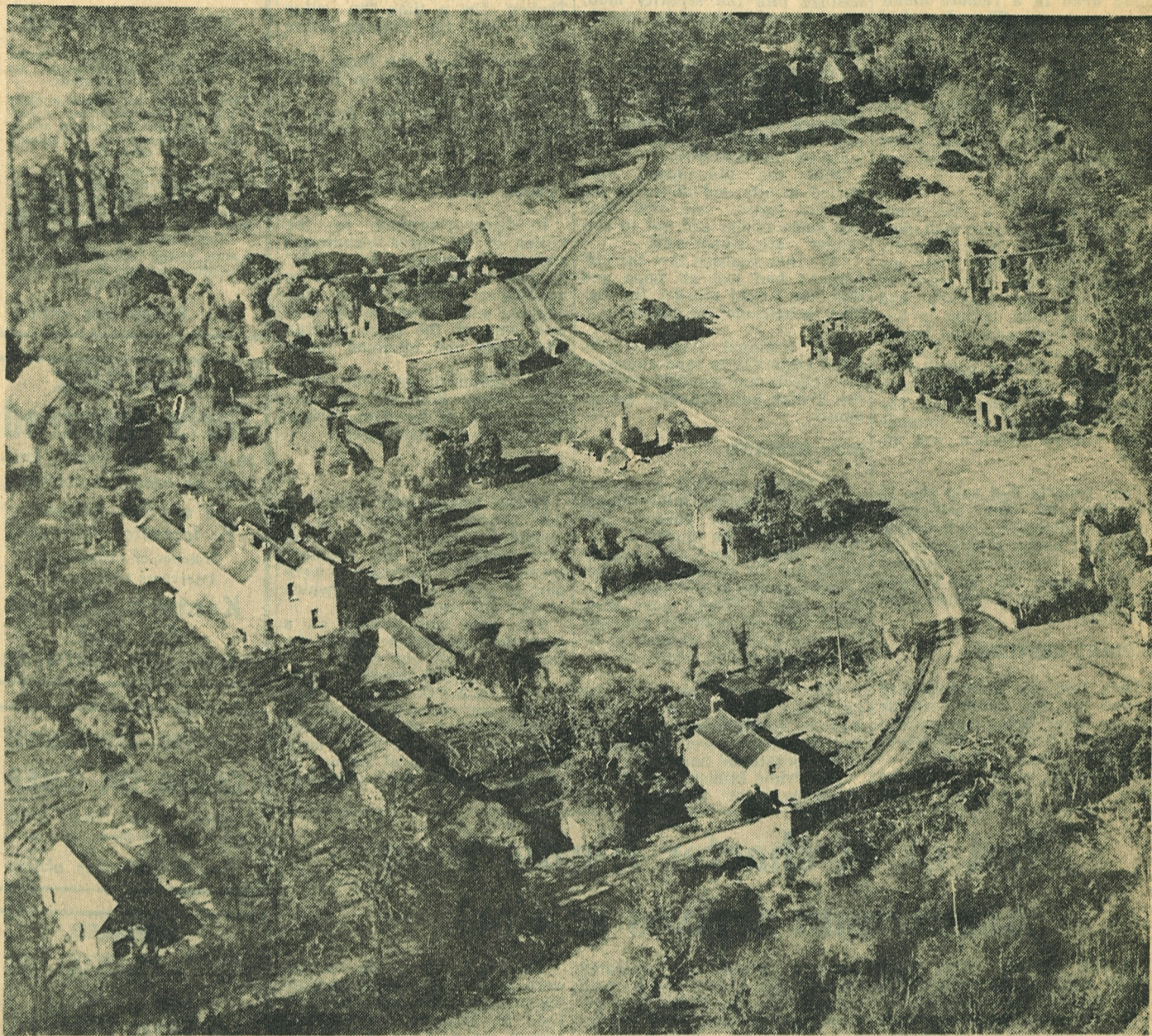
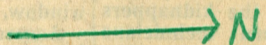
WASC 792
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Satellite town was once "boom" area

By Sylvester O'Sullivan



The ruins of Ballincollig powder mills

THE idea of the development of Ballincollig into a satellite town, one of an eventual ring of such towns around Cork city, has now ceased to be a novelty for it has been talked about and admired for the last three years or so.

What may be of some interest today is something that is not generally known, the long forgotten but indisputable fact that away back in the early years of the last century, long before county councils or planning authorities or development agencies or the like were ever dreamed of, Ballincollig was already a thriving community in which hundreds of workers found employment and their families found homes in which they lived out their peaceful, at least uneventful if not prosperous lives. Not alone was Ballincollig of the 19th century of greater fame than the proposed satellite town which it is designed to become before the close of the present century, but its name was internationally known.

GUNPOWDER MILL

In the year 1794, Ballincollig became the site for one of the few gunpowder mills in the British Empire when a royal factory was established there on the meandering banks of the lazy Lee, five and a half miles from the centre of the city. The only other royal powder mills in existence then were at Woolwich and Edinburgh. The Ballincollig gunpowder complex, as we would style it nowadays, was a number of single and double mills linked together by a series of canals, the remains of which are still to be seen today. The function of the mills was granulating and drying gunpowder, manufacturing charcoal, refining sulphur, refining saltpetre and making casks and hooped barrels for the storage of the gunpowder.

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THE BARRACKS

As soon as the Ballincollig powder mills went into production, a regular guard used to be despatched from Cork Barracks for security duties, but in 1806 the decision was taken to build Ballincollig military barracks. This was completed by 1810 and its massive imposing walls have been a distinguishing landmark down to the present day. The vast area of land running north to the river remained in military occupation or under military control down to the present day. In the last year or so, road widening operations by the County Council in Ballincollig village saw portion of the old wall removed and rebuilt further back from the road in a similar style of masonry.

For many years the Department of Defence has adopted a dog-in-the-manger attitude with regard to the land encompassed within the walls. An endeavour was made by a group of Cork businessmen to establish a race-

unwanted land at Ballincollig and offered a tract of 25 acres to Cork Co. Council at a price in the region of £170,000. The Co. Council have since acquired the land and have earmarked it for residential and amenity development in conjunction with the over-all plan for the promotion of the satellite town. A golf course, pitch and putt course, tennis courts and a swimming pool are envisaged there.

GUNPOWDER PIER

However, to get back to our story about Ballincollig powder mills, the gunpowder, as we have already mentioned, was packed in barrels which were manufactured in the mills and they were transported by horse and cart to the city where they were transhipped to Liverpool. A pier was built on the Marina, the remains of which are still to be seen today in the vicinity of the junction with Centre Park Road and this was long known as Gunpowder Pier and on it a powder house was also built.

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was at Ballincollig. During the War of Independence, reinforcements for the British Regulars and the Black and Tans were stationed at Ballincollig on call to go into action in the various ambushes around Cork.

VARIED HISTORY

In 1922, the British vacated Ballincollig Barracks after more than a century of occupation. After the evacuation, it was taken over by Republican forces, who, in turn, evacuated it and set fire to the principal buildings on the advance of Free State troops in 1923.

For the next seventeen years, Ballincollig Barracks lay derelict. In 1940, at the start of the "Emergency" in this country, it was taken over by units of the Irish Army and work was started in the rebuilding of the main blocks.

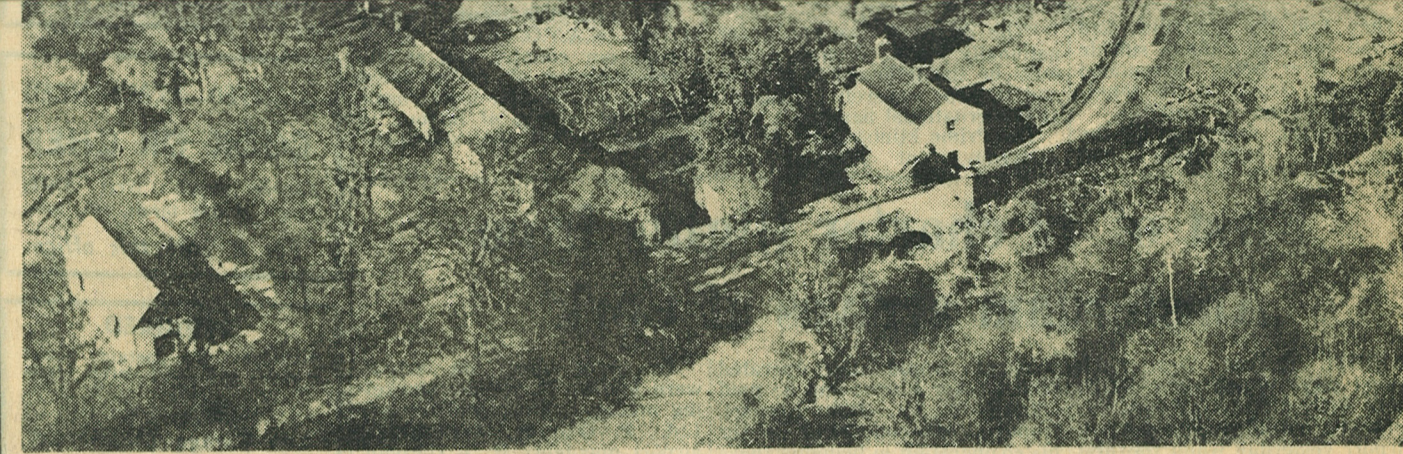
In 1958, the Government decided to name the barracks Dun Ui Murchadha, in memory of Comdt. Walter Leo Murphy, a native of Ballincollig, who was killed by Crown forces on June 27, 1921. He was nineteen years old at the time. On that Monday evening — two weeks before the truce — Comdt. Leo Murphy was holding a conference with some of his officers in a house in Waterfall when the house was surrounded by British troops. He made a bid to escape but was mortally wounded. He is buried in the Republican Plot in St. Finbarr's.

With planning and development proceeding apace, projections for the future predict a population of 20,000 for Ballincollig by 1990—in 1659, according to the census of Ireland, it had a population of 25 people.



Young
Liberals

phones "tapped"



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So prosperous did the venture become that by 1837 200 people were employed in the mills and 16,000 barrels of gunpowder were produced annually. The workers lived "some distance from the mills in two ranges of neat little cottages." The workers, however, fully conscious of the hazardous nature of their employment and the consequent risks which they faced daily, were never too happy about the safety arrangements and they expressed their fears in the form of deputations to the authorities. They were assured that owing to the location of the mills, if an explosion occurred in one, it would not endanger the others, and to allay fears still further a system of regular inspection of the mills was instituted.

TRAGIC EVENT

Tragedy did eventually strike and a massive explosion occurred in the early years of the present century. One mill was blown up completely, killing 50 people. The mills fell into disuse shortly after this and the manufacture of gunpowder was removed from Ballincollig to Gateshead in England.

According to "The Rise and Progress of the British Explosives Industry," which was published in London in 1909, the royal factory in Ballincollig was established in 1794 "... on land adjacent to the Cavalry Barracks, and with very excellent water-power provided by the River Lee. It continued to be worked for government purposes until 1834, when it was sold to Sir Thomas Tobin, Liverpool, and subsequently took the style of the "Ballincollig Royal Powder Works, Limited." As such, it did a large business in Ireland and in export powder shipped from Liverpool for the African markets. In 1898 it pas-

sed into the hands of Messrs Curtis and Harvey. For the last few years it has been standing idle. . ."

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course there, but they failed to get the necessary land from the Department. That fruitless effort awakened nostalgic memories for an older generation of Corkonians who had fond and vivid recollections of the old Cork Park Racecourse, the "prettiest racing venue of the South."

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A dried-out canal, once used to transport gunpowder

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EASTER, 1917

The first meeting was held there in 1869 and the last on Easter Monday, 1917. After that, the racecourse and most of the old Cork Park was sold by the Corporation of the day to Ford's. Old Corporation records tell us that "At a special meeting of the Council held on November 22, 1916, an offer of £10,000 for the purchase of the freehold of the Park and Marina Building site and portion of the Public Roadway on Victoria Quay was submitted on behalf of Messrs. Henry Ford and Son (of Detroit) with stipulations that the buildings to be erected shall cost at least £200,000 and that at least 2,000 adult males shall be employed in the factory; that a fair wage building clause shall be inserted in all building contracts and a minimum wage of one shilling per hour paid to all adult males to be employed in the factory when completed. It was unanimously decided to accept this offer."

LAND EARMARKED

In the past year, however, the Department of Defence changed its intransigent attitude towards the disposal and utilisation of its

narrow to permit of the passage of anything but lighters when the tide suited. The convoys of horse-carts loaded with barrels of gunpowder from Ballincollig to the city were always brought in under heavy military escort. There was a warehouse in Washington Street where the powder was stored prior to being conveyed to the Marina and shipped.

On one occasion, a barrel broke open while being conveyed to Gunpowder Pier. A trail of gunpowder lay on the street back to the warehouse until sparks from horses' shoes on the cobbles street set fire to the trail of powder turning it into a lighted fuse. The flame ran back along the street and blew up the warehouse.

GARRISON BOON

Ballincollig Barracks housed several hundred officers and men, mostly regiments from the Royal Artillery in those days, and their presence spelled prosperity for the miniature garrison town of Ballincollig. The "gunners" used to make for a night out in the city on Saturday nights, coming in by train on the old Cork-Macroom railway.

There was no public road transport between Cork and Ballincollig in those days and if a soldier missed the last train to Ballincollig, he had to get the "Muskerry Tram" as far as Carrigrohane and walked the rest of the way back to the barracks. With the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, there were 6,000 British troops living under can-

vas at Ballincollig. During the War of Independence, reinforcements for the British Regulars and the Black and Tans were stationed at Ballincollig on call to go into action in the various ambushes around Cork.

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Young Liberals

phones "tapped"

Young Liberal chairman Peter Hain claimed yesterday that the telephones of leading Young Liberals were being tapped and mail appeared to have been opened.

"We have seen recently some sinister attacks on civil liberties. The police raids on members of the International Socialists are one example. The banning of the anti-internment demonstration from Trafalgar Square is another. The current season of political trials is yet another," he said at the opening of the Young Liberal conference in Morecambe.

"This represents a threat to political freedom. And the Young Liberals have not escaped attention. There seems little doubt that the telephones of leading Young Liberals, including Young Liberal headquarters, are tapped.

MUST RESIST

"On several occasions mail appears to have been opened. We must resist vigorously such moves."

Afterwards Mr. Hain (22), former chairman of the Stop the Seventy Tour Campaign, responsible for the cancellation of the 1970 rugby and cricket tours of South African teams, said: "I can't really go into detail on this because it will involve other people — but I know it is going on.

"However it is not clear whether the phone tapping is by BOSS, the South African security police, or by their British counterparts, or by some collaboration between the two."

Mr. Hain said he would not have made the allegation unless he had fairly certain evidence.