

**'Supernatural manifestations, accompanied by cures'
– the phenomenon of the 'Templemore miracles',
1920**

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On 16 August 1920, District Inspector William Harding Wilson of the Royal Irish Constabulary was shot dead in Templemore by a party of IRA volunteers consisting of Paddy Kinnane, Jimmy Leahy, 'big' Jim Stapleton, John Fahy and Jack Ryan. Reporting the death of Wilson to Dublin Castle, County Inspector Dunlop from Nenagh stated that 'his fearless manner in dealing with Sinn Féin was the cause of his death'.¹ Later that night 'wild scenes were witnessed' in the town as the military engaged in reprisals. Templemore town hall was burned to the ground as were local creameries at Castleiney, Loughmore and Killea. Houses were damaged and shops looted.² The town hall burning resulted in the deaths of two members of the Northamptonshire Regiment, Captain Sidney Beattie M.C and Lance Corporal Herbert Fuggle. The regiment

¹ RIC county inspector's report for Tipperary north, Aug. 1920. (N.A.I., CO 904/112)

² *Tipperary Star*, 21 Aug. 1920.

was based at Richmond Barracks (now the Garda Síochána College).

The regimental diary stated that Beattie 'died of accidental injuries received at Templemore', and Fuggle had 'accidentally burnt to death'.³ The *Irish Times* reported that Beattie had entered the burning town hall to 'rescue a trapped civilian with complete disregard for his own safety', but the *Tipperary Star* reported a different account that the military and Black and Tans had taken petrol at gunpoint from Moynan's garage and used it to set fire to several premises in the town.⁴ It was also reported that when the town hall was set ablaze, 'a cheer was given and a voice shouted 'Sinn Féiners all lie down'.⁵ Shortly after the deaths of Beattie and Fuggle the first reports of 'supernatural manifestations, accompanied by cures' taking place in the area appeared in local, national and international newspapers.⁶ Attention focused on the town of Templemore and also a cottage in the townland of Curraheen near Gortagarry, several miles away. It was reported that religious statues in the Templemore premises of newsagent Thomas Dwan, the adjacent RIC barracks and also

³ Operational diary of the 1st battalion of the Northamptonshire regiment in Ireland, 1919-23. Archives of the Northamptonshire regiment, Northampton.

⁴ *Irish Times*, 12 Nov. 1920.

⁵ *Tipperary Star*, 21 Aug. 1920.

⁶ *Irish Times*, 23 Aug. 1920.

the house of Thomas Dwan's sister-in-law Miss Maher at the Curraheen cottage were shedding tears of blood. James Walsh, a sixteen year old farm labourer from Bouladuff, Thurles who was employed by Miss Maher and lived in the cottage, claimed that he was experiencing Marian apparitions. He also alleged that a 'holy well' had sprung from the floor of his bedroom. The *Tipperary Star* reported that 'after the outburst on Monday night some of the statues from which blood had been oozing were taken by Walsh to Templemore, and it is believed that it was this that saved the town from destruction'.⁷ The *Limerick Leader* reported that 'prominent townsmen assembled around the bleeding statues and offered prayers aloud, thanking God that the town was saved and that none of the inoffensive people of Templemore suffered any casualties'.⁸ Following the death of Wilson it was reported that the Black and Tans had sworn retribution and to 'make the Catholics pay for it'.⁹ Some local people believed that divine intervention had taken place to prevent the town being completely destroyed in revenge for the death of Wilson, and that 'our Lady had saved Templemore'.¹⁰ On 31 August 1920 County Inspector Dunlop reported the incident to the inspector general of the RIC in

⁷ *Tipperary Star*, 20 Aug. 1920.

⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 3 Sept. 1920.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Dublin Castle stating that 'on 20th inst. miraculous apparitions are alleged to have appeared in Templemore and Curraheen. Sacred statues belonging to a man named Walsh and a constable stationed at Templemore are alleged to have begun to bleed, and several miraculous cures are said to have taken place.'¹¹

Thomas Wimsey of Templemore barracks was the constable referred to. The *Tipperary Star* reported that the statue had been given to Wimsey by Jimmy Walsh several weeks earlier, and had been kept in his room inside the barracks. Dunlop had the statue removed from the barracks and placed with the other statues alleged to be bleeding on an improvised altar which had been erected in the yard beside Dwan's newsagents shop on Main Street. This followed an incident during which the barracks was besieged by a large crowd of pilgrims when rumours spread that the bleeding statue of Constable Wimsey was within.¹² Many people entered the barracks and had to be forcibly removed by the police. The *Tipperary Star* reported that Wimsey left the RIC to join a religious order.¹³ The relevant extract from the RIC service register shows that Wimsey, a Catholic from county

¹¹ RIC county inspector's report for Tipperary North Riding, Aug. 1920 (N.A.I., CO 904/112).

¹² *Tipperary Star*, 20 Aug. 1920.

¹³ *Tipperary Star*, 4 Sept. 1920.

Mayo who had joined the constabulary in 1913 resigned from the force on 7 September 1920 with 'no reason given'.¹⁴ Jimmy Walsh was not known to the local police or to have had any overt involvement with the Irish Volunteers or Sinn Féin before these incidents began, but his brother had been arrested for militant activity and imprisoned without charge or trial in Wormwood Scrubs gaol in London, where he had undergone a 'trying hunger strike'.¹⁵

Dunlop reported that a pilgrimage to Templemore had started from all parts of Ireland with many thousands thronging daily into the town.¹⁶ By 4 September upwards of 15,000 persons per day were making the pilgrimage to Templemore and then onwards to Curraheen. This influx brought an economic windfall to the area which reportedly 'must have done better than many a seaside town in Ireland this year'.¹⁷ Dunlop reported that the alleged miracles were having a positive effect on the locality, describing the conduct of the large crowds as exemplary, while newspapers renamed Templemore as Pilgrimville or Pilgrimstown. To cater for the thousands of visitors described by newspapers as 'the halt, the maim and the blind,' additional trains departing from

¹⁴ RIC general service register, (N.A.I., HO 184).

¹⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 23 Aug. 1920.

¹⁶ *Tipperary Star*, 4 Sept. 1920.

¹⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 20 Sept. 1920.

Kingsbridge station in Dublin were added to the normal schedule.¹⁸ The Reverend P. Collier, a correspondent for The *Catholic Times* newspaper visited Templemore on 23 August and wrote that his train from Dublin was packed with pilgrims. He estimated that 6,000 to 8,000 people were at Dwan's yard, many of them having been there overnight. He saw four statues, each trickling blood down the face, neck, breasts and body.¹⁹

The alleged visionary James Walsh was described by newspapers as a 'simple-mannered youth' or a 'saint if ever there was one'.²⁰ He told journalists that he had spent a period of time in the Cistercian Monastery in Roscrea as a novice, leaving because of ill health, but that he intended 'to re-enter a religious order' in the near future.²¹ Walsh became an instant celebrity both within Ireland and internationally, and within days advertising had appeared in newspapers offering 'photographs of the boy to whom the blessed virgin appeared' for sale.²² Pilgrims visiting Templemore travelled on to Maher's cottage at Curraheen which was also regarded as a place of pilgrimage because of the reported existence of the

¹⁸ *Irish Times*, 23 Aug. 1920.

¹⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 4 Sept. 1920.

²⁰ *Irish Times*, 23 Aug. 1920; *Tipperary Star*, 20 Aug. 1920.

²¹ *Irish Times*, 23 Aug. 1920.

²² *Tipperary Star*, 4 Sept. 1920.

holy well in Walsh's bedroom. The practice of pilgrimage to holy wells pre-dates the introduction of Christianity to Ireland but in more recent times they have been closely linked with Marian devotion. Pilgrims visiting Curraheen adhered to the traditional practice of reciting five decades of the rosary before kneeling beside the well for more prayers. They then walked three times around the well before drinking from it, and then taking water to bring home.²³ Walsh shared many of the characteristics of other Marian visionaries. Generally they are young people from rural backgrounds who have shown strong religious devotion prior to becoming visionaries. Many have been involved in religious practices such as pilgrimages, devotions, processions and prayers, which have been defined as 'popular piety'.²⁴ In 1974 Pope Paul VI, writing in *Evangelii nuntiandi* (article 48) commented that such piety 'indicates a certain thirst for God such as only those who are simple and poor in spirit can experience. It can bear such excellent fruits and yet is fraught with danger'.

The throng of pilgrims prompted one elderly local to make an analogy with the Alaskan gold rush of 1897-98 that he had experienced, remarking that 't'was easier to get from Skagway to the Klondike' than from Templemore to

²³ Peter Harbinson, *Pilgrimage in Ireland: the monuments and the people* (London, 1991), p. 230.

²⁴ Donal Flanagan, *The meaning of Knock* (Dublin, 1997), p. 46.

Curraheen.²⁵ Walsh told reporters that he had first started to experience Marian apparitions on 14 August 1920 and that religious statues in his bedroom subsequently began to move and shed tears of blood. Acting on instructions from the Virgin Mary, Walsh dug a heart-shaped hole in his bedroom floor from which a holy well appeared, 'producing a great volume of water'.²⁶ As reports of the apparitions and miracles spread so did the number of visiting pilgrims, with many people claiming to have been healed either by direct contact with Walsh or by exposure to the bleeding statues. Some visitors were not convinced of the veracity of the Templemore apparitions however. One journalist wrote that he came 'to see a miracle and saw one ... it was not a miracle of bleeding statues but rather one of pathetic belief'.²⁷

The *Limerick Leader* reported the case of former soldier Martin Monahan, the first person claiming to have been cured by Walsh. Monahan had spent three years in the military hospital at Richmond Barracks after being injured by shrapnel during the Great War. He claimed to have entered Dwan's yard on crutches but left 'with full use of his limbs' after Walsh had touched his legs with one of the statues.²⁸ Patrick

²⁵ *Tipperary Star*, 4 Sept. 1920.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 Aug. 1920.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30 Aug. 1920.

²⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 28 Aug. 1920.

Shea, whose father was an RIC Sergeant in Templemore during August 1920, wrote in his autobiography that his father had seen Monahan 'leaping around like a circus tumbler' after visiting Dwan's yard.²⁹ Local curate Reverend John O' Neill observed that knowing Monahan, he was satisfied that the cure affected on him was genuine, as were the reported cures of Mrs. Campion of blindness, and Helena Crowe of paralysis.³⁰ Other well-publicised cases included those of Miss. Guerin of Limerick and Cornelius Gavin also of Limerick who were allegedly cured of 'paralysis' and 'acute hip disease' respectively. Despite the influx of pilgrims and the reported cures the official position of the Catholic Church towards events in Templemore and Curraheen was one of 'extreme reserve'.³¹

The cautious attitude of the Catholic Church towards the Templemore miracles was consistent with their usual procedure when investigating such claims. Following reported apparitions at Guadalupe, Mexico in 1531 which were accepted as genuine by the Catholic Church, three centuries passed without other confirmed cases. The nineteenth century brought a resurgence in Marian apparitions, drawing large

²⁹ Patrick Shea, *Voices and the sound of drums: an Irish autobiography* (Belfast, 1981), p. 49.

³⁰ *Tipperary Star*, 4 Sept. 1920.

³¹ *Irish Times*, 23 Aug. 1920.

numbers of pilgrims to sites such as La Salette (1848) Lourdes (1858) and Pontmain (1871) in France, Knock, Ireland (1879), and Fatima, Portugal (1917). Knock was the last significant Marian apparition of the nineteenth century but did not receive ecclesiastical recognition from the Catholic Church until 1936. Two Episcopal commissions had investigated the alleged apparitions and cures and interviewed all fifteen visionaries, finding 'no fault with their credibility'.³²

At the height of the fervour which surrounded the Templemore miracles Bishop Fogarty of Limerick warned mass goers that 'they should restrain their judgement and not allow themselves to be carried away by excitement or popular rumour'.³³ The parish priest of Templemore Reverend Kiely refused to visit the statues, expressing the opinion that great caution should be exercised.³⁴ Local IRA commander Jimmy Leahy stated that most of the older clergy treated the whole affair with caution but some younger priests appeared to look 'upon Curraheen as another Lourdes, and James Walsh as a saint'.³⁵ Walsh began to travel to other towns in the company

³² James Donnelly, 'The revival of Knock shrine' in *History and the public sphere: essays in honour of John A. Murphy* (Cork, 2004), p. 187.

³³ *Limerick Leader*, 13 Sept. 1920.

³⁴ *Tipperary Star*, 30 Aug. 1920.

³⁵ Statement of James Leahy, (Bureau of Military History, B.M.H./WS.1553), p. 43.

of clergy, first visiting Mount Mellary and then Cashel, where he stayed overnight in the presbytery on 10 September 1920 as guest of parish priest Monsignor Innocent Ryan. The *Irish Times* reported that statues and a crucifix in the presbytery in Cashel had begun to bleed when touched by James Walsh.³⁶ As news of his presence spread 'a piteous and clamorous crowd of invalids' arrived at the presbytery and requested that they be allowed to see and touch the statues which were on display outside the building.³⁷ Monsignor Ryan wrote to The *Irish Times* in an attempt to stem the flow of pilgrims and to prevent events similar to those occurring at Templemore and Curraheen taking place in Cashel. In a letter to the editor he cautioned the public not to put their faith in statues or crucifixes, but in the 'blessed sacrament'. He asked the editor 'for space to tell the public that there are no bleeding statues or crucifixes here for anyone to see'.³⁸

Many members of the clergy visited Templemore and Curraheen as pilgrims including Doctor Patrick Clune, Archbishop of Perth. At this time Clune was acting as an intermediary between the British government and Sinn Fein leadership. Clune met IRA commanders including Jimmy Leahy on several occasions during his stay in Templemore, but

³⁶ *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1920.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 Sept. 1920.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 Sept. 1920.

when the time came to depart he could not leave the town because of the huge number of pilgrims. Clune approached the IRA for assistance and Leahy commandeered a car which had brought pilgrims from Galway to Templemore. The driver was ordered to take the Archbishop to Limerick. On arrival Clune offered money to the driver, who refused to accept it. When questioned as to why he would not take the payment he replied 'sure wasn't I commandeered in the name of the Republic!'³⁹

When the miracles began local IRA volunteers were as interested and intrigued as anyone else at the events that were taking place. Many volunteers were staunch Catholics with a particular devotion to the Virgin Mary and also to the rosary. For example, on 2 June 1921 an ambush took place at Modreeney near Borrisokane in north Tipperary during which four RIC constables were killed. While the ambush was taking place Paddy Kennedy, the IRA officer commanding was observed firing at the police with a shotgun at close range while his rosary beads hung around his neck.⁴⁰ Reporting to IRA headquarters on the bizarre events which were taking place in Templemore, Edward McGrath, Vice Commandant of No. 2 Tipperary Brigade stated that the town was packed with 'pilgrims, beggars, stall-holders and undesirables. The police

³⁹ *Western Australia Record*, 27 Nov. 1920.

⁴⁰ Statement of Liam Hoolan (B.M.H./ WS.1553), p. 16.

and military had disappeared off the streets and the IRA had taken over. They controlled traffic, introduced parking and restored order'.⁴¹ It was as if an informal truce or understanding had been reached between the IRA and crown forces due to the extraordinary circumstances which prevailed at that time. IRA volunteers acted as stewards to control the large number of pilgrims, but did not appear on the streets in uniform (as shown in Figure 1). The absence of the military and police from the area was used to reconnoitre potential targets and suitable locations for future ambushes. Jimmy Leahy, in his capacity as IRA Brigade O/C imposed a levy of 2/6d per day on all motor cars bringing pilgrims from Templemore to the holy well at Curraheen.⁴²

The levy was ostensibly imposed to pay for repairs to local roads which had been badly damaged by the throngs of pilgrims and to pay the expenses of IRA men involved in traffic and crowd control duty. The imposition of the levy caused an outcry. Count O' Byrne, Sinn Féin TD and chairman of north Tipperary County Council met Leahy and other senior IRA commanders. O' Byrne pointed out that the levy was highly irregular. Leahy replied that 'everything had to be

⁴¹ Statement of Edward McGrath (B.M.H./ WS.1522), p. 14.

⁴² Statement of James Leahy (B.M.H./ WS.1553), p. 43.

irregular to deal with the situation that had arisen'.⁴³ O' Byrne further suggested that the council should take over the collection of the levy. Leahy refused, saying that he intended to buy arms and ammunition with any balance left over after deducting the Volunteers expenses.⁴⁴ Pilgrims were reported to be 'loud in their praise of the 'splendid men of Óglaigh na hÉireann' who maintained order and also prevented excessive profiteering by shopkeepers, caterers and hoteliers.⁴⁵

Such profiteering was stringently dealt with by the IRA who imposed a scale of charges after 'due enquiry, deliberation and consideration of the abnormal conditions prevailing'.⁴⁶ One newspaper report detailed the IRA court-martial of a driver from Cork who had charged pilgrims six pounds instead of the normal thirty shillings fare to transport them to the holy well at Curraheen.⁴⁷ Collection boxes on behalf of the IRA and Cumann na mBán were placed along the pilgrimage route, and this provided a substantial windfall for the Brigade, with a total of £1500 contributed by pilgrims.⁴⁸ This money was subsequently delivered to the Brigade quartermaster and went towards the purchase of arms and

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Statement of Edward McGrath (B.M.H./ WS.1522), p. 15

⁴⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 3 Sept. 1920.

⁴⁶ Statement of James Duggan (B.M.H./ WS.1510), p. 16.

⁴⁷ *Tipperary Star*, 4 Sept. 1920.

⁴⁸ Statement of James Leahy (B.M.H./ WS.1454), p. 44.

ammunition. Several days after the miracles began Leahy and other Brigade officers arranged a private interrogation of Jimmy Walsh. They had started to view the 'whole business with incredulity,' and were also seriously concerned that volunteer discipline was being compromised.⁴⁹ Leahy later recalled that pilgrims had begun to give lavish tips to some IRA volunteers and some that had previously 'abstemious and enthusiastic (...) took to drink and began to forget that they were engaged in a life and death struggle for the country's freedom'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

Fig. 1: Pilgrims filing past the statues in Dwan's yard, Templemore, 22 August 1920. Photograph by W. D. Hogan.⁵¹



Source: Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland. (N.P.A., Hogan Collection, HOG214)

A meeting took place in Dwan's house between Walsh and an IRA delegation led by Jimmy Leahy. Walsh told Leahy that when he had last spoken to the apparition, the Virgin Mary had indicated her approval of IRA guerrilla tactics including the shooting of Black and Tans and RIC, and wished to see the campaign intensified. Leahy recalled in later life that he found it difficult 'to keep a straight face' and concluded that Walsh was either 'mentally abnormal or a hypocrite'.⁵² Following the meeting the local IRA leadership decided that

⁵¹ Note the IRA volunteers on either side of the arch.

⁵² Statement of James Leahy (B.M.H./WS.1454), p. 44

conclusive action should be taken to halt the influx of pilgrims and bring the Templemore miracles to an end. Leahy contacted Michael Collins and expressed his concern about the situation in Templemore and Curraheen and the detrimental effect it was having on volunteer discipline and military operations in the area. Collins ordered Dan Breen to contact 'the fellow who operates the bleeding statue' and interview him, to which Breen reluctantly agreed.⁵³ Collins and Breen were not renowned for their piety or religious devotion, and Collins in particular had a reputation for being actively anti-clerical. His maiden political speech in London in 1908 was described as a 'violent attack upon the influence of the Catholic hierarchy and clergy'.⁵⁴ Jimmy Walsh was brought to Dublin for interrogation. It is not known whether Walsh came voluntarily to Dublin or was required to do so by the IRA, but Séamus Robinson, the O/C of no. 3 Tipperary Brigade found to his annoyance that 'the now notorious Walsh' had been brought by Breen to an IRA safe house at 71 Heytesbury Street, Dublin.

This house was used as a Dublin headquarters for Tipperary volunteers, and at the time of Walsh's arrival, a wounded volunteer from Clonmel called Michael Lambe was

⁵³ Statement of Dan Breen (B.M.H./WS.1739), p. 36.

⁵⁴ Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 71.

in the house suffering from gunshot wounds. Robinson stated that just before volunteers Dick McKee and Paddy Daly arrived to take Lambe to the Mater Hospital for treatment, 'Breen arrived with Walsh hoping to get him (Walsh) to invert his bleeding miracles'.⁵⁵ Robinson did not approve of Walsh's presence at the house and believed that it was 'no wonder '71' was raided for the first time immediately after'.⁵⁶ Jimmy Walsh was then brought to O' Neill's pub in Dublin, a safe haven for IRA volunteers. While Walsh was waiting in the pub to be interviewed by Breen at the request of Michael Collins, who was also present in O' Neill's, some of the more devout IRA members present insisted on kissing Walsh's coat and addressing him as 'Saint'. Commandant Dinny Lacey of No. 3 Tipperary Brigade requested of Walsh that the next time he 'met the Blessed Virgin Mary, be sure to insist on nothing less than a republic'.⁵⁷ Breen interrogated Walsh for fifteen minutes and concluded that 'he was a fake'.⁵⁸ Phil Shanahan, who owned another Dublin pub frequented by Tipperary IRA members, was asked by Breen to drive the visionary back to Templemore and that was the last Breen 'saw of the failure

⁵⁵ Statement of Séamus Robinson (B.M.H./ WS.1721), p. 123.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Statement of Dan Breen (B.M.H./ WS.1739), p. 112.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

Walsh'.⁵⁹ On his return to Dublin Shanahan offered Breen water from the 'holy well' at Curraheen to drink, but Breen forcefully declined the offer. After Jimmy Walsh had been interrogated by Breen in O'Neill's, pub, Breen briefed Collins about his encounter with Walsh and his opinion that the apparitions and miracles were not genuine. Collins acerbically replied 'one can't take any notice of what you say Breen, because you have no religion'.⁶⁰

Leahy then visited Canon M.K Ryan in Thurles and requested that the alleged apparitions and cures be denounced from the pulpit; thereby deterring pilgrims from travelling to Curraheen, but this request was refused by Canon Ryan.⁶¹ Tension existed between the church and the IRA over the conduct of the conflict, with Cardinal Logue remarking of the volunteers in 1918 that 'no object would excuse them, no hearts, unless hardened and steeled against pity, would tolerate their cruelty'.⁶² Peter Hart argued that Irish republicanism had a long history of political anticlericalism dating back to its roots in the 1790s, but that this should not be confused with any lack of faith on the part of individual volunteers, the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Patrick Murray, *Oracles of god: the roman catholic church and Irish politics, 1922-37* (Dublin, 2000), p. 7.

overwhelming majority of whom were practising Catholics.⁶³ On 7 September 1920 at the height of the fervour surrounding the Templemore miracles Doctor Harty, Catholic archbishop of the diocese of Cashel and Emly delivered a homily during which he denounced political violence. He commented that despite intense provocation, 'every crime committed was a stain on the faith, and also on national honour'.⁶⁴ He also referred to his recent visit to Pope Benedict XV in Rome who encouraged the people of Ireland while working for the glory and freedom of their country to always do so 'within the law of God'.⁶⁵

Having been rebuffed by the Catholic Church, the IRA took violent and decisive action to end the phenomenon of the Templemore miracles and resume the conflict in earnest. The RIC barracks at Golding's Cross was on the pilgrimage route which had developed between Templemore and Walsh's cottage at Curraheen. An ambush took place on 29 September 1920 near the barracks, in the course of which Constables Edward Noonan Terence Flood were killed. Constables Marnane and Ferris were wounded but managed to escape. Flood was initially reported missing but later found at Gortalough near Templemore, 'his body riddled with

⁶³ Peter Hart, *The IRA at war, 1916-23* (Oxford, 2003) p. 123.

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 6 Sept. 1920.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

bullets'.⁶⁶ After the ambush a party of pilgrims were stopped by the IRA and ordered to deliver the body of Constable Noonan to Richmond military barracks, Templemore.⁶⁷ It was reported at the time that many local residents had fled the area fearing a repetition of reprisals.⁶⁸ As the IRA had intended, the ambush brought a substantial number of military and police reinforcements to the area who 'engaged in a reign of terror by indiscriminately firing into houses and across fields'.⁶⁹ Commenting on the reprisals, the RIC county inspector expressed his opinion that when the IRA committed an outrage 'no steps are taken to protect the locality from the consequences'.⁷⁰ The fear of reprisals for the Killoskehan ambush drove pilgrims from Templemore and Curraheen, never to return, and the phenomenon of the 'Templemore miracles' ended as suddenly as it had begun. The Northamptonshire Regiment from Templemore went to the 'holy well' at Curraheen and Dwan's yard in Templemore where they removed crutches and other items left behind by pilgrims. Some soldiers decorated themselves with religious artefacts while others feigned lameness, and began using the

⁶⁶ Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), p. 127.

⁶⁷ Statement of James Leahy (B.M.H./ WS.1454), p. 42.

⁶⁸ *Freemans Journal*, 30 Sept. 1920.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ RIC county inspector's report for Tipperary North, Nov. 1920 (N.A.I., CO 904/112).

crutches, parading around the streets in mockery of the miracles. Rumours spread that Templemore would be burned to the ground as a reprisal for the ambush and 'pilgrims, stallholders and tramps all made a hasty exit' ... the abnormal conditions brought about by 'Walsh and his miracles had lasted for three weeks'.⁷¹

Séan Harling, a Commandant in the second battalion of the Dublin Brigade, Fianna Éireann worked as a courier for Dáil Éireann from 1919-21. In September 1920 Michael Collins instructed him to travel to Tipperary and return with one of the 'bleeding statues'. Collins had received complaints from the Catholic clergy that IRA members had engineered a religious statue which would bleed at specific times. Harling recalled that when he returned to Dublin Michael Collins examined the statue at length, and then 'took hold of the statue and banged it off the side of the desk, and of course out fell the works of the alarm clock. "I knew it", he says. So that was the end of the bleeding statue'.⁷² The mechanism of an alarm clock had been concealed inside the statue, which was connected to fountain pen inserts containing a mixture of sheep's blood and water. When the clock mechanism struck a

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kenneth Griffith and Timothy O'Grady, *Curious journey: An oral history of Ireland's unfinished revolution* (Dublin, 1998), pp 158-9.

certain time it would send a spurt of blood through the statue's heart giving the impression that the statue was bleeding.

Following his interrogation by Dan Breen, Walsh was taken to the Salesian College at Pallaskenry, Limerick and placed in the care of Fr. Aloysius Sutherland, at the request of clergy from Templemore. In 1923 Walsh emigrated to Australia, initially staying with relatives in Melbourne, and eventually settling in Sydney. The 1932 census for Sydney gives his occupation as 'medical student', and shows that by then he was married with three children.⁷³ By the 1950s his marriage had ended, his teenage son had died tragically young, and Walsh was employed as a lay teacher in a Catholic school. In a remarkable coincidence, he was recognised by a visiting Irish Christian Brother who had been in Templemore at the time of the miracles over thirty years earlier.⁷⁴ The matter was reported to the Cardinal who expressed his concern that 'Walsh might be a dangerous type of person to have teaching in one of our Catholic schools'.⁷⁵ The diocese also contacted the police, seeking information that could be used to dismiss Walsh from his teaching post. The police had no negative

⁷³ Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 30 June 1933 (C.A.C. Nq 319.4 AUS).

⁷⁴ Correspondence between the author and the Walsh family, Sydney, Australia 12 July 2012.

⁷⁵ Correspondence between provincial and general, 5 Sept. 1953. Christian Brothers Archives Sydney (PLD5/09/1953).

information on Walsh, but he was still dismissed by the Catholic Church. After his sacking Jimmy Walsh was employed as a hospital porter, but spent the rest of his life trying to enter various religious orders, becoming a novice in a Benedictine Monastery. He was unsuccessful in these attempts however because he had once been married and was now separated. Jimmy Walsh died after a prolonged illness on 12 March 1977, and was buried in Sydney. He had never returned to Ireland.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Correspondence between the author and the Walsh family, Sydney, Australia, 21 Nov. 2011.