

Towey Ballad

A Ballad about Michael Morris Roe, Thomas Towey and Michael Rogers.

There is a town of Ballaghaderrin, the pride of broad Mayo,
And from it we have lost a man, that's gallant Morris Roe,
Likewise Michael Rogers, they were taken as you've seen
Through Callery, who is the plague you know, of Ballaghaderrin.

There was the grandest sight you know in Ireland ever seen,
That was held that day at Ballaghaderrin,
For the bands did play upon that day as joyful as of yore
And the tunes were God Save Ireland and Paddies forevermore

For grand Ballagh town, I pen it down, and can't say half enough,
When they carried round about the town a hundred cribs of turf,
And the bands did play upon the way, till they got up, you know
And built it up close to the house of Mr Morris Roe

And you know upon that market day, I narrate with my pen
They took brave gallant Towey, the best of Irishmen.
The crowds did rush along the town, the truth to you I'm saying
And the peelers did escort him and took him to the train

And then from our view the train she flew to Galway gaol so far,
And brave Morris Roe and Rogers were in gaol in Castlebar
For you know they got 2 months in there, as you all do know,
And they will come out, both clean and stout, the pride of grand Mayo

And the grandest of all news, I am sure, that you have read and seen,
Is a letter that I've read today in Ballaghaderrin
It came from gallant Towey and he wants to let you know
That he is willing for to stop in gaol (jail) for the beautiful Mayo.

But cheer up, my gallant Irishmen, on valley, hill and dale.
For surely they will all come out, both free and safe from gaol.
When Casey too, and Broder's crew, the process serving scruff
And may the devil feed and cherish them, they're hungry scuts enough.

From TCD Archives

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Referenced in 'A Dominant Church' by Liam Swords page 275 reference 72

Telling of Thomas Towey an evicted tenant of Barnaboy and his leading Plan of Campaign on the Dillon estate during the land war. His actions helped bring Dillon a rack-renter to his knees.

Towey Ballad

The *Towey Ballad* was written around 1886 about three *Land War Heroes* from the Ballaghaderreen area. They were Thomas Towey, Michael Morris Roe and Michael Rogers.

The *Towey Ballad* displays action by Thomas Towey of Ballaghaderreen, Michael Morris Roe and Michael Rogers in an era when British land owners in Ireland actually lived outside Ireland enjoying the high life in London and elsewhere. Being rack-renters they charged excessive and unjust rents from Catholic tenants which drained local Irish resources that they spent in their home country.

This taking of land from the Irish and planting with English and Scottish settlers was known as the *Plantation of Ireland*. This was started about 1550 with Co. Leix and Offaly, then Munster followed by Ulster in 1608. The remainder, except Connaught, was planted by Cromwell around 1650.

Conditions from about 1879 to 1903 were terrifying and shocking for tenant farmers in Ireland especially Co. Mayo which included Ballaghaderreen area until 1898. There were mass evictions, bankruptcies, crop failures and famines. Within the Catholic Irish there was great agitation, intimidation and refusal to pay exorbitant rents to absentee landlords. Evictions increased ten fold. This became known as the *Land War Period*.

The Viscount Theobald Dillon and descendents were British absentee landlords and rack-renters of the Ballaghaderreen area from about 1700 to 1900. Thomas Towey was an evicted tenant of Barnaboy who led a Plan of Campaign on the Dillon estate during the land war. His actions helped bring Dillon, a rack-renter, to his knees. (*Note: Luke and Thomas Dillon and their descendents, who later built Dillon House and Monica Duff & Co, Ltd, are not of the same family.*)

Anne Deane wrote about Thomas Towey's action in the *Land War* said:

"Tom Towey unfurled the *Plan of Campaign* on the Dillon estate three years ago and brought the noble rack-renter to his knees. Now Tom has been thrown on the roadside to perish. Nevertheless he continues his agitation and the arrest of brave gallant Towey was recorded in a local ballad which describes how crowds followed the police to the station from where he was escorted to Galway jail".

Anne Deane's writing is in a book titled *A Dominant Church*, by Liam Swords, which is a social and political history of Ballaghaderreen and its surrounding area from about 1800 to 1960.