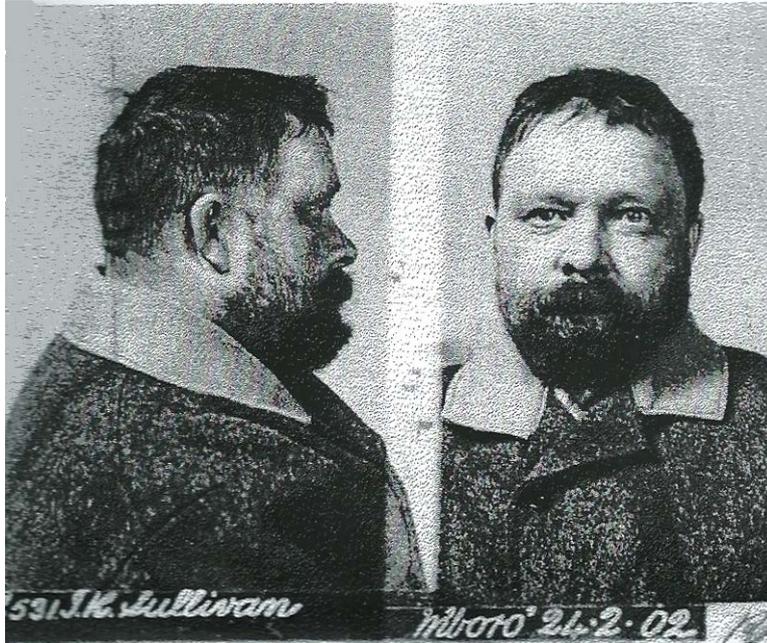


The “Bard”



Seán Riobaird O Súilleabháin was the acknowledged leader of the Land War in the North Cork area. He was universally known as ‘the Bard’ though he was not a poet but the nickname was taken from the Irish of name, Riobaird. He played such a distinctive role that he had to have a recognisable nickname.

He was born in Glenleigh, Kilcorney on the 4th of February 1852 and became involved in the Land War in the late 1870s when the Land League was leading the struggle for tenant farmers’ rights. Because of his courage and daring in the Land War he quickly became a hero to the people but public enemy number one for the authorities in North Cork.

His wife, Ellen O Mullane was a devoted wife and partner in his struggles. They lived in a house supplied by the Land League in Glantane East.

With constant harassment and convictions the authorities were determined to remove him from the leadership but could not do so in his native area as no jury would convict him. He was eventually convicted on a trumped-up attempted murder charge in Nenagh on 19th December 1891 by a ‘packed jury.’ He was sentenced to 24 years hard labour. Ellen reared their six children while he was in prison and broke stones on these roads to survive. Without the generosity of local people they would not have survived.

He was released on 18 December 1906 and returned to Millstreet. He was an active supporter of William O’Brien and the ‘All for Ireland League.’ He also played an active part in the War of Independence saluting the departure of the Auxiliaries from Millstreet shortly before his death. Ellen lived out her later years in Ballinatona and passed away surrounded by her family.

This is a monument to both of them and to all those who fought to achieve the ownership of the land of Ireland for the people of Ireland and the political freedom we enjoy today.

The Muskerry 'Bard'

Come boys pledge a toast in a bumper most bright,
To the men who lie fettered in prison to-night.
Condemned by packed juries and perjurers base,
But there is one beyond all who is worthy of praise.
He who spoke through his rifle wherever he went,
That renowned legislator for lowering the rent.
For moral force theories could never accord,
With the noble desires of this patriot Bard.

Near the Muskerry mountains he first drew his breath,
And imbibed the pure air of his dear native heath.
And e'er he had grown to the age of a man,
To battle for freedom he bravely began.
Though England's proud warriors may boast of their skill,
Their fleets and their armies, discipline and drill.
Far dearer to me was the Volunteer Guard,
That obeyed the command of the Muskerry Bard.

He defeated for years, all the limbs of the law,
And for daring and pluck struck each deepest with awe.
And the threat of his name spoken ever so tender,
Had made the most mean-hearted grabber surrender.
Twenty five times at least in the dock did he stand,
And was never betrayed by his brave hearted band.
Though often was offered a bounteous reward,
For a member to swear on this chivalrous Bard
And each time as he nobly escaped from the dock,
He commenced with fresh vigour to comfort his flock.
The widow and orphan and all in distress,
And compelled the base tyrant their wrong to redress.
The agent and bailiff his rule did deplore,
Sure he kept the vile sheriff from many a door.
For coercion and peelers had failed to retard,
The invincible sway of this conquering Bard.

But like the career of the great Hugh O'Neill,
Which was crowned with success till the Siege of Kinsale.
A traitor at last had appeared in the fold,
Who deluded his leader and sold him for gold.
And the Judges of Ireland who never were slack,
To consign to the prison, the rope, and the wrack.
A rebel, if he were as just as the Lord,
Gave a score and four years to the veteran Bard.

In the cells of Mountjoy, he is left to bewail,
The afflictions and wrongs of the sons of the Gael.
But the day's not far off when those tyrants so bold,
Shall surrender that freedom they dare not withhold.

When he and his comrades, in triumph and glee
Can revisit the homes which they fought for to free.
While each hillside in letters of fire will record,
And proclaim the release of the warrior Bard.

But should faint hearted cravens attempt to condemn,
The intrepid exploits and adventures of him.
And the terrors he struck into traitors and all,
Who evinced a desire to keep Ireland in thrall.
Their cowardly aspersions are spiteful and vain,
Sure, his country's right he strove to maintain.
So, if freedoms grand cause has been hampered or marred,
All you who love Erin "oh blame not the Bard".

*

Monument to the 'Bard'

To the memory of

Seán Riobaird O Súilleabháin, 1851-1922
("The Bard")

Land War Leader 1870-1903

and his wife
Ellen O'Mullane, 1848-1924

*

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha

*

Erected by the people of
Aubane and Kílcorney

14 August 2016



Unveiling the monument to the 'Bard' at Musherá

His grave in Old Kilcorney Graveyard



John Robert O Sullivan made Millstreet famous during the Land War. His fight with the landlords and land agents led to intense repression in Millstreet between 1881 and 1891. At one stage the small town of Millstreet had more than 80 armed police to enforce the law. This book tells the story of his life, the main events of the Land War at that time and his eventual conviction in 1891 at a show trial in Nenagh before 'a hanging orange judge with a packed jury'. He received 24 years hard labour leaving a wife and six small children behind. This is also the story of their struggle to survive in the face of impossible odds.



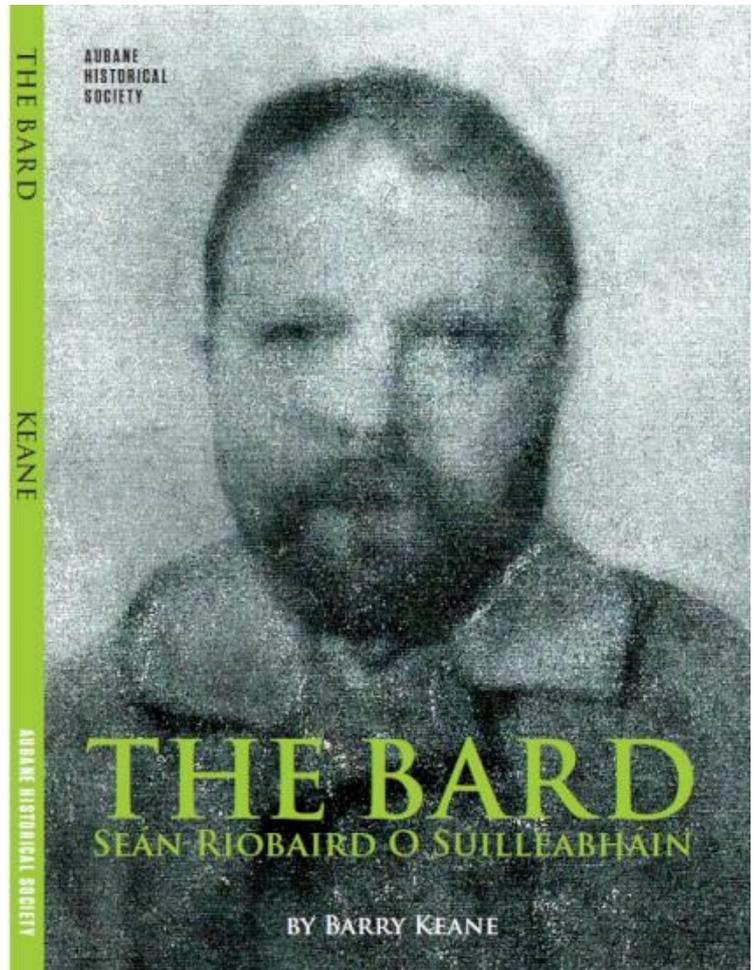
About The Author

Barry Keane is a History and Geography teacher and the author of a number of books and articles across many subjects including Protestant decline in post-independence Ireland. He is also a mountaineer and has authored a series of five hill walking and rock scrambling guidebooks for the South of Ireland. Most importantly for this book he is the great grandson of the Bard.



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His biography by his great grandson