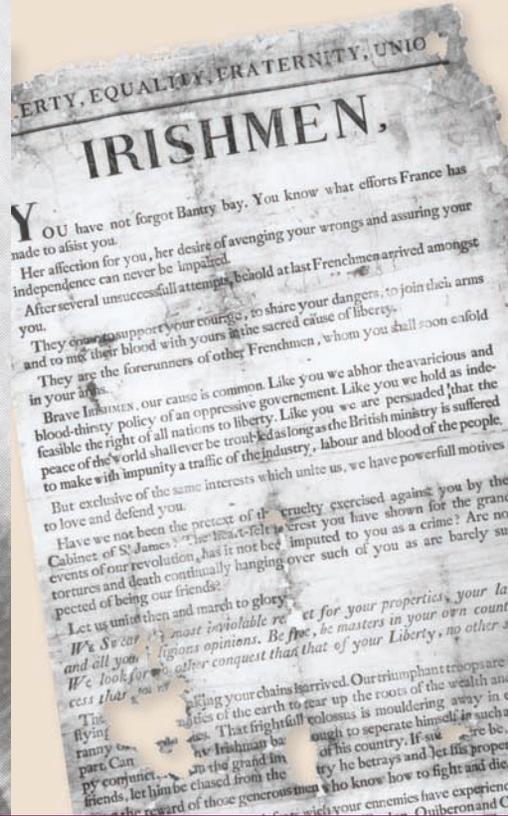


# *In Humberts Footsteps* *1798 & the Year of the French*



# Humbert

General Jean Joseph Amable Humbert was born at "La Coare," a substantial farm in the parish of Saint -Nabord, near Remiremont in the Vosges district of France, on 22 August, 1767. His parents, Jean Joseph Humbert and Catherine Rivat died young, and Humbert and his sister, Marie Anne, were raised by their influential grandmother.

As a youth Humbert worked in various jobs before setting up a very profitable business selling animal skins to the great glove and legging factories of Grenoble and Lyon. In 1789, following the fall of the Bastille, he abandoned his business and joined the army, enlisting in one of the first volunteer battalions. Later he enrolled as a sergeant in the National Guard and in

1792 joined the 13th Battalion of the Vosges and was soon elected captain. On 9 April, 1794, he was promoted to Brigadier General and distinguished himself in the horrific "War in the Vendée", a coastal region in western France. It was during this campaign that Humbert first came under the influence of one of the most celebrated young French commanders, General Lazare Hoche.

In 1796, he was part of the 15,000 strong French expedition commanded by Hoche which failed to land at Bantry Bay, although folklore maintains that Humbert came ashore on a scouting mission. Two years later, he was once again in Ireland, this time at the head of his own small expedition.

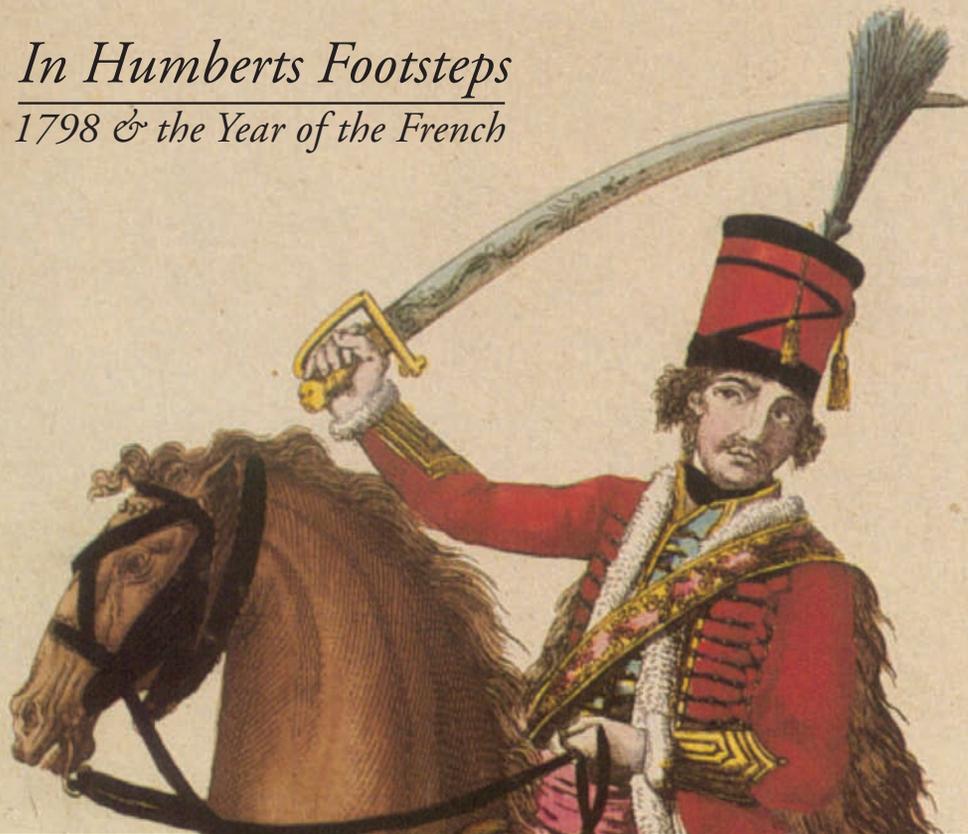
"By a forced march he crossed twenty English miles of bog and mountain, by a road hitherto considered impracticable-reached the royalist position-and at noon on Monday had completely routed a well-appointed army, and seized the town of Castlebar. All these affairs being transacted in the short space occurring between Wednesday evening, when he landed, and Monday, at midday, when he took possession of the capital of the county. ...The same spirit, the same celerity, and the same boldness, distinguishing the close of a career, which throughout had been marked with a daring and success, that elicited the unqualified admiration even of his enemies."

(W.H. Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798*)



# *In Humberts Footsteps*

## *1798 & the Year of the French*



# Humbert

Following the Franco-Irish defeat at Ballinamuck, the French soldiers were transported to England and held there before being repatriated in a prisoner exchange. On his return to France, Humbert resumed his military career taking part in several successful European campaigns, and afterwards the Caribbean campaigns, before being appointed Governor of Saint Dominique (Haiti). A committed Republican, his displeasure at Napoleon's Imperial pretensions led to his fall from favour and exile to Brittany. He was recalled to the army in 1809, once again distinguishing himself and was recommended for the Legion d'Honneur - a recommendation which Napoleon turned down.

About November 1812, having been given permission by Napoleon, on the condition that he never return, Humbert left France for America under the

assumed name of Jean Berthrum, an anagram of his own name and settled in New Orleans. He played an active part in the war of 1812/1813, and distinguished himself yet again at the Battle of New Orleans, under the command of General Andrew Jackson, who would later become President of the United States. He also took part in the Mexican War of Independence and was appointed Governor of Galveston by Jackson.

General Jean Joseph Amable Humbert "Hero of Castlebar and New Orleans" passed his last days teaching fencing and languages at a New Orleans school. He died in bed of an aneurysm at his modest home, 186, Casa Galvo Corr, Espana, on 2 January, 1823. He was given a funeral befitting a former Governor, and was buried in the Catholic, Saint Louis, Cemetery, No 1, Basin Street, New Orleans.

*"A fine well-set up man I heard them say he was. He was friendly to the Irish, and the Irish thought well of him..."*

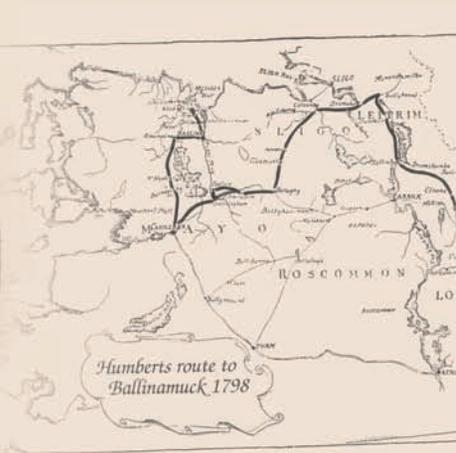
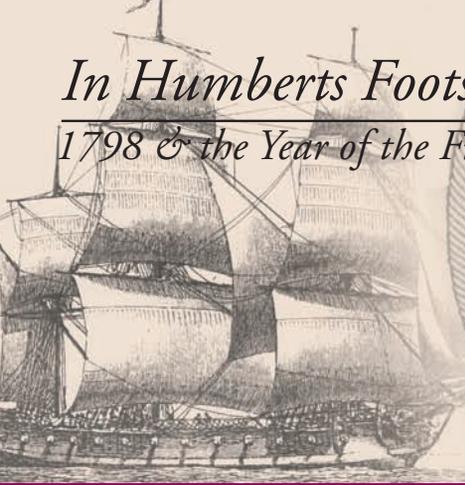
(Collected in 1936 in Killala by Richard Hayes, from Michael Lyons, aged 91, *Last Invasion of Ireland*)

"Had he arrived in Ireland six months earlier and displayed the same intrepidity and enterprise by which he forced his way through Castlebar and on to the Shannon, events might have taken a different turn and a new chapter be written in the history of Ireland."

**(The French Invasion of '98, *Western People*, 30 April, 1904)**

# *In Humberts Footsteps*

## *1798 & the Year of the French*



# Diary of 1798

**JULY 19**

The French Directory sanctions the sending of three military expeditions to Ireland and gives command of the first to General Humbert.

**AUGUST 6**

General Humbert's Army of Ireland (1,019 strong) sets sail from La Rochelle on board three frigates, the *Concorde*, the *Médée*, and the *Franchise*, under the naval command of Daniel Savary.

**AUGUST 22**

The French vessels arrive in Killala Bay, land at Kilcummin, and capture the town of Killala. Irish recruits flock to join them.

**AUGUST 23-24**

The newly formed Franco-Irish Army captures Ballina after defeating a British force near Moyne Abbey. The three French frigates sail for France. (They return two months later with another army of similar size under the command of Adjutant-General Cortez, but quickly realize that they have arrived too late and turn back).

**AUGUST 25-26**

Lord Cornwallis, the Viceroy and commander-in-chief of the British forces in Ireland takes to the field and communicates an urgent request to London seeking reinforcements for his already 100,000 strong army. Generals Lake, Hutchison, and Trench are despatched to reinforce Castlebar, the major garrison town of north Connacht, against an attack from Humbert's army.

**AUGUST 26-27**

General Humbert departs Killala for Ballina leaving 200 French and a strong body of Irish rebels to defend the town. From Ballina, his army of 1,500 French and Irish take an alternative route to Castlebar, via the village of Lahardane, across the mountains to the west of Loch Conn and through the Windy Gap (Barnageeha). The Franco-Irish army was assisted by Father James Andrew Conroy of Lahardane, and led by the United Irishman, Captain William Mangan of Castlebar.

**AUGUST 27**

"The Races of Castlebar": Defeating a much larger force, Humbert takes Castlebar and the majority of the British troops flee to Hollymount and Tuam; some galloped at breakneck speed as far as Athlone in County Westmeath, leaving behind twelve cannon and substantial supplies of ammunition and stores.

**AUGUST 28**

The British garrison withdraws from Foxford to Boyle in county Roscommon. Franco-Irish troops seize the strategic Mayo towns of Westport, Newport, Swinford, Ballinrobe and Hollymount; Claremorris is already in rebel hands. Cornwallis arrives in Athlone at the head of a considerable force but resolves not to counterattack until he has assembled and positioned his massive army.



# Diary of 1798

**AUGUST 31**

In Castlebar, Humbert proclaims The Republic of Connaught and installs John Moore as its first President; he also sets up a civil administration in the town and begins training more rebel recruits.

**SEPTEMBER 3-4**

Cornwallis retakes Hollymount and begins preparations for a dawn attack on Castlebar. Humbert withdraws from the town and advances through Bohola and Swinford towards County Sligo, covering a distance of ninety-three kilometres in thirty-six hours. He leaves behind in Castlebar a small garrison of French soldiers augmented by a strong rebel force. Meanwhile, the majority of the French garrison at Killala are ordered to link up with the main army at Tubbercurry, County Sligo. At Tubbercurry, the Franco-Irish army are engaged by the British who are vigorously repulsed.

**SEPTEMBER 5**

At Collooney, County Sligo, the Franco-Irish army encounter and defeat a sizeable British force under the command of Colonel Charles Vereker. Cornwallis meanwhile divides his main force into two; one half under the infamous General Lake is despatched to pursue the Franco-Irish army from the rear, the other, under his personal command, hold the line of the river Shannon. United Irishmen in Longford and Westmeath rise. They fail to seize the town of Granard but succeed in capturing Wilson's Hospital, near Mullingar. Humbert, who is at Manorhamilton, county Leitrim, resolves to link up with these insurgents and strike for Dublin. He therefore changes direction and heads for Granard, abandoning some of the heavier cannon to make more speed.

**SEPTEMBER 6**

The Franco-Irish army reach Drumkeerin and reject terms for surrender offered by an envoy from Cornwallis.

**SEPTEMBER 7**

Shortly before noon, Humbert's army crosses the Shannon south of Lough Allen, at Ballintra Bridge. While attempting to blow the bridge they are engaged by the British and succeed in repulsing the attack, but fail to demolish the bridge. They rest the night at Cloone, south Leitrim, while Cornwallis with an army estimated at 15,000 men is just five miles away, at Mohill. General Lake is also close on Humbert's heels with a similar sized force. Early the next morning, the Franco-Irish army depart Cloone, but their advance is checked close by the village of Ballinamuck, in County Longford.

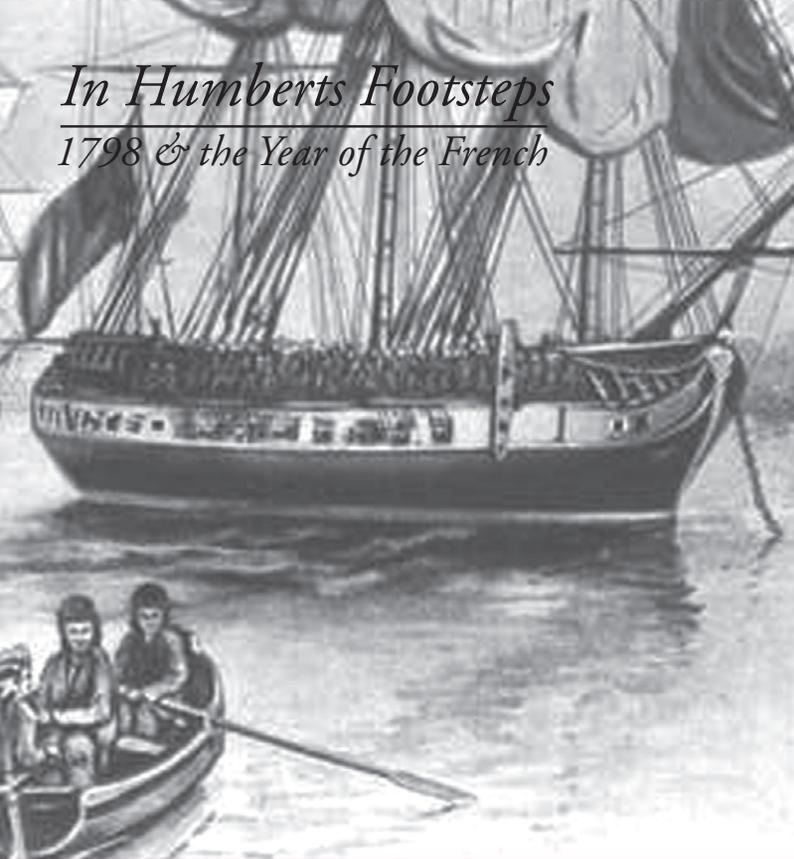
**SEPTEMBER 8**

The Battle of Ballinamuck: General Lake launches an attack from the rear and the French second-in-command, Sarrazin, surrenders the rear guard. Hostilities continue for over an hour before Humbert surrenders. The French are treated as prisoners of war and transported, first to Dublin, then to England, before being repatriated in prisoner exchanges. The Irish are shown no mercy. Upwards of five hundred are massacred, some escape; hundreds more are hanged at Longford, Ballinalee, and Carrick-on-Shannon.

**SEPTEMBER 21-23**

General Trench leads a three-pronged attack on Killala which is still held by a small garrison of the Franco-Irish. Hundreds of rebels and civilians are butchered.

## *In Humberts Footsteps 1798 & the Year of the French*



# *Kilcummin, Killala, & Ballina*

For down from every hillside into Kilcummin strand  
Came anxious, feeble grandsires who knelt upon the sand,  
And offered up with fervent heart a prayer to him on high,  
One blow for faith and motherland they'd see before they'd die.

(Local Ballad, *The Green Horseman*)

On the afternoon of 22 August, 1798, the first contingent of the French numbering 200, including General Humbert, came ashore at Kilcummin, at a spot called Leac A'Chaonaigh (The Flagstone of the Green Moss)-the remainder disembarked close to the present pier, at a spot known as Leac A'Bhaid (The Flagstone of the Boats). Led by Henry O'Keon, an exiled local man and Catholic priest, who was also a serving officer in the French army, and supported by 150 rebels under the command of another local, the United Irishman, Niall Kerrigan, they advanced on Killala. After a brief resistance by the British garrison the town was taken at bayonet point and the Palace of the Anglican Bishop, Joseph Stock, commandeered as the Franco-Irish headquarters. Hundreds of volunteers from the surrounding districts arrived into Killala.

Led by Patrick Duffy, another exiled Mayoman, a troop of French and Irish set out for Ballina on the 23rd, and between the Abbeys' of Moyne and Rosserk routed

a considerable British force, forcing them to retreat to Ballina, and onwards. Before the break of dawn on the morning of the 24th, Humbert despatched a small group of French to reconnoitre the strength of the British garrison at Ballina; the group split in two-one advancing by Barr na Dearg (The Red Gap), the other came through the Belleek demesne, by Bóthar na Sop (The Road of the Straw), where their way was lit by the locals who burned straw torches and gave them food. In appreciation, the French soldiers cut off the brass buttons from their uniforms and handed them out to the locals. Before departing Ballina, the British captured a young United Irishman called Patrick Walsh, and having discovered a French commission authorising him to recruit for the Irish Republic on his person, they hanged him from a public crane. When the French came upon the scene, Sarrazin first kissed the corpse, before ordering his entire troop to file past, saluting, with colours lowered.



*“Killala was  
ours before  
midnight  
And high over  
Ballina town  
Our banners in  
triumph were  
waving  
Before the next  
sun had gone  
down”*

(William Rooney, *The Men of the West*)

# *In Humberts Footsteps* *1798 & the Year of the French*



## *Captain William* **Mangan**

A native of Sion (Zion) Hill, Castlebar, Captain William Mangan, a sworn United Irishman, was nominated by Father James Andrew Conroy, Parish Priest of Lahardane, as the best man to lead the Franco-Irish army from Ballina to Castlebar by a route which lead through the Windy Gap (Barnageeha); the alternative was by the main coach-road through the heavily garrisoned town of Foxford. Humbert agreed to this plan. In the aftermath of the rebellion Father Conroy was charged with treason and hanged from the infamous "hanging-tree" on the Mall, at Castlebar.

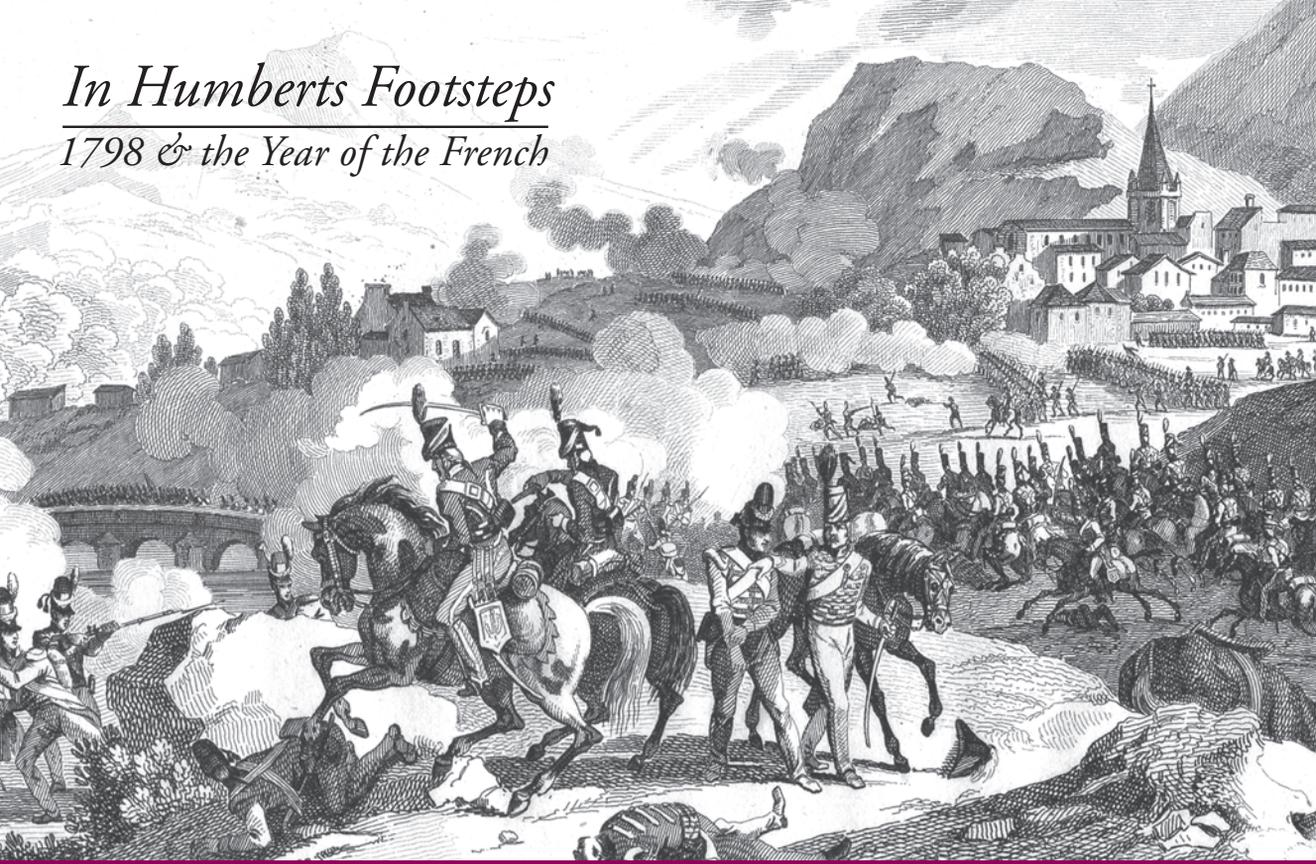
On the afternoon 26 August, Mangan led the army from Ballina in the direction of Foxford. A short distance from the town, the army left the main road and marched by Ballinahaglish road, past the old cemetery, and off by Castlegore Wood to Knockfree, on the eastern side of Lough Conn, near the town of Crossmolina. The weather, which up to then had been unusually good, suddenly broke, and the troops arrived in Lahardane in the midst of a rain storm. After a short stop, during which they were fed by Father Conroy and his parishioners, the wet and weary troops, with Mangan again leading them, set out across the mountains, and about 4.00a.m. came in sight of Castlebar.

It is told that Captain Mangan fought bravely at Castlebar and in all the engagements, up to and including, Ballinamuck. He was one of the lucky few to escape, and after making his way safely back to Mayo, he was proclaimed an outlaw and for the next twelve months made the Hills of Erris his battlefield. In September 1799, Mangan was surrounded by the British at the home of his friend, James Corcoran, near Lahardane. In the skirmish which followed, Corcoran was killed by the British, and the house set alight. With guns blazing, Mangan raced from the inferno, but was captured a short distance away, at the farm of Mrs. Cawley, and shot dead - it is told that every man of the patrol shot him. The soldiers then cut off Mangan's head and spiked it on the entrance gates to the nearby Ormsby mansion, now the Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Gortnor Abbey. Later that night, his headless corpse was spirited away to Addergoole cemetery, and buried close by his comrade, Father Conroy. It is claimed in local folklore that Captain John Ormsby, the British commander on the day, had Captain Mangan's letter of pardon in his pocket.



# *In Humberts Footsteps*

## *1798 & the Year of the French*



# *The Races of* Castlebar

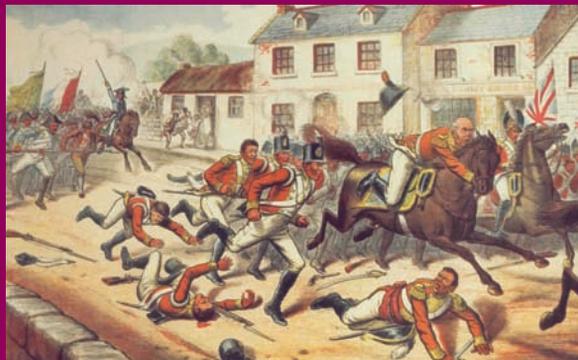
Acting on information received regarding the approach of the Franco-Irish army, the British had barely completed their deployment when Humbert's troops were sighted. About 6.00 a.m. the British artillery opened fire on the advancing Franco-Irish and cut them to pieces. Two further charges were repulsed before Sarrazin identified an area of rough terrain in a defile directly in front of the British artillery which afforded some cover. From this position the French launched a determined bayonet attack, which, when coupled with an equally ferocious assault by the rebel pikemen, so unnerved the

British that they fled the battlefield, abandoning their gunners and artillery. Despite some British heroics, the tide of panic was unstoppable. Although a spectacular victory was achieved, the Franco-Irish losses were greater than the British, due mainly to the cannonade at the commencement of the battle. Following the victory, hundreds of volunteers flocked to the Franco-Irish ranks, including about two hundred members of the Longford and Kilkenny militias. Humbert formally declared a Republic of Connaught with John Moore of Moore Hall, as its first and only President.



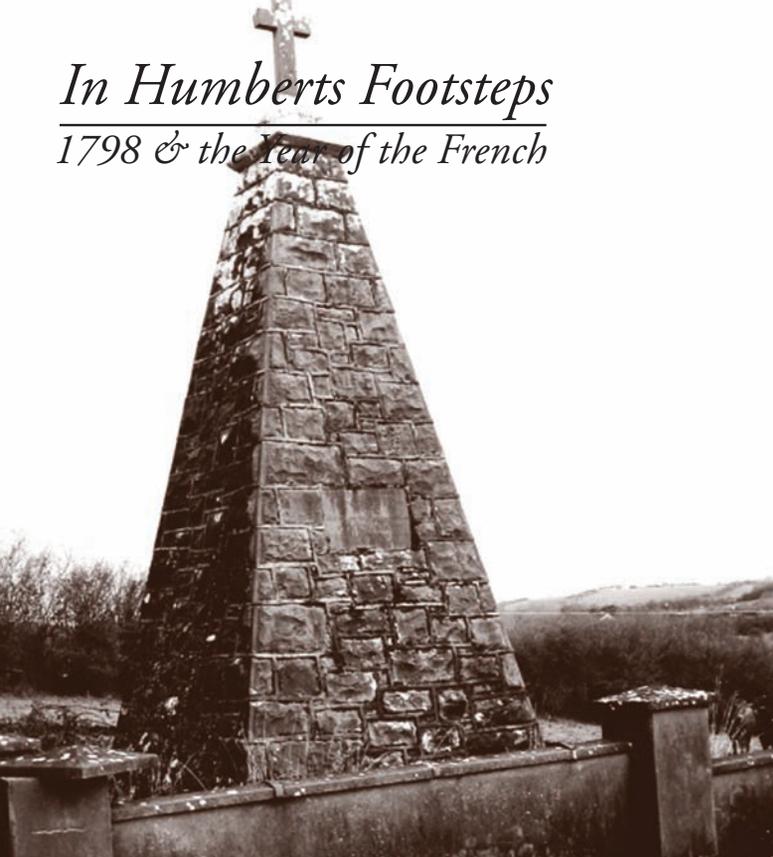
*“Thus hastily equipped for war  
He journeyed on to Castlebar,  
Where he showed good Irish play  
Before the Saxons ran away.  
It made him joyful to behold  
The flutter of the green and gold  
And oftentimes that day he said,  
‘Thank God the green waves o’er the red’.”*

(Folk Ballad, Tom Gilheaney)



# *In Humberts Footsteps*

## *1798 & the Year of the French*



# French Hill

In 1876 a group of Castlebar residents led by James Daly, co-founder with Michael Davitt of the Land League of Mayo and a descendent of the local United Irish Leader Anthony Daly of Coolnabinn, along with Patrick William Nally, a native of Balla, a man whose sporting activities inadvertently contributed to the founding of the GAA, and after whom the Old Nally Stand and the newly constructed Nally Terrace in Croke Park is named, formed a committee to erect a monument on French Hill (Cnoc na bhFrancach), a Ninety-Eight place-name, four kilometres south of the town. It was told in local folklore, that the hill marked the site where four French dragoons under the command of Bartholomew Teeling were shot and killed by a party of Lord Roden's cavalry, as they came forward to offer terms following the British defeat at Castlebar.

The precise location where locals had buried the French soldiers was preserved and identified in local oral tradition since

1798, and when preparing the ground for the monument's foundations, the site of the "French Grave" was excavated and the remains of four corpses, still clothed in fading blue uniforms, complete with white crossed belts, were discovered lying side by side. Within minutes of being exposed to fresh air and daylight, the cloth disintegrated and crumbled into dust. Several artifacts were found, including brass buttons, a bayonet, and three eighteenth-century French coins. James Daly assumed custody of the items. Several months later, the monument was unveiled (July 1876) and in the aftermath the site became the focus for provincial commemorations in 1898, 1948, 1953 and 1998. When speaking at the ceremony on French Hill that inaugurated the centennial commemorations (9 January 1898), James Daly wore one of the French coins, a five franc piece, as a medal, declaring that it "lay for seventy-seven years with the bones of one of the French officers that fell there."



*“Killala still her weary watch maintains  
Beside the ocean’s boom  
And Castlebar in faithful guard remaining  
Around the Frenchman’s Tomb.”*

(William Rooney, *Ninety-Eight, A Centenary Ode*, 1898)

*In Humbert's Footsteps*  
*1798 & the Year of the French*



# Gen. Sarrazin

*(Humbert's second-in-command)*

Jean Sarrazin was born at Saint-Sylestre, Loiu-et-Garonne, 15 August, 1770. He was described in 1798 as being "a veteran of many battles, he stood five feet ten inches tall, was of stout build with a handsome oval face, deep set blue eyes, curly hair and a fair complexion." Born into a poor farming background, Sarrazin was a teacher before making the military his chosen career, and like Humbert, before coming to Ireland he had served in the Vendée campaign; he also served with distinction in Germany and Italy, and was promoted. He gained further recognition and promotion for his part in the Irish campaign, especially at Killala, Ballina and most notably at Castlebar, where he fought with great bravery and single-handedly captured a British standard.

In 1811, Sarrazin deserted the French army and fled to England, the country to which many believe he had been spying for throughout most of his military career. In his absence he was condemned to death, but at the Bourbon Restoration he re-joined the army, and was later sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. After his release he returned to England and was in receipt of a substantial English pension. He died there in 1840.

*"Sarrazin was suspected of being in the pay of England from the time of General Humbert's capitulation at Ballinamuck in 1798. At the passage of the French prisoners through Dublin, he was allowed to walk about the city on parole, whilst Humbert and the other French officers were still prisoners."*

(Richard Hayes, *Last Invasion of Ireland*)

# *In Humberts Footsteps*

## *1798 & the Year of the French*



# Cornwallis

Educated at Eton and the Military Academy at Turin, Charles, Marquis Cornwallis (1738-1805), former Viceroy of India, was best known to his contemporaries for his surrender to George Washington, at Yorktown, in 1781, following a defeat which ended the war and ultimately cost Britain her American colonies: he also served in Europe. He was descended from Sir William Cornwallis of Suffolk, a Royalist who in 1660, after the Restoration, was made Treasurer of the Household.

In June 1798 he was posted to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant and commander-in-chief of the British army, thereby uniting the military and civil administrations. In addition to suppressing the rebellion, he was also instructed to prepare public opinion to carry the Act of Union, "with the great object of consolidating the British Empire." While his strategy of "measured severity, clemency and coercion," did pave the way for the Act of

Union to be passed, he also endorsed and supported the barbaric tactics of General Lake. When informed of Humbert's landing, Cornwallis took personal command of the British forces in the field and was already in Athlone when news of Lake's humiliating defeat at Castlebar reached him. On receipt of this communication, he immediately despatched an urgent message to London requesting "as large a reinforcement as possible," despite the fact that at the time he had about 100,000 troops at his disposal in Ireland. At Ballinamuck he commanded a force of over 35,000 men.

After serving successfully in Ireland, and overseeing the implementation of the Act of Union, Cornwallis returned to England and was immediately appointed a pleni-potentiary to the congress that brokered the Treaty of Amiens. In 1805 he was once again posted to India as Governor General and commander-in-chief and died there in 1805.

*"The life of a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland," said Cornwallis, "comes up to my idea of perfect misery. I wish I were back in Bengal."*

*In Humberts Footsteps*  
*1798 & the Year of the French*



# Gen. Lake

"I remain in the opinion I originally held that General Lake is not fit for command in these difficult times. It is unfortunate that he (Pitt) should have lost the advantage of General Lake's services where he was really well placed and brought him to one which is above his capacity. He has no arrangement, is easily led and no authority."

(Camden)

Once referred to as being a sectarian, conservative, martinet, Lieutenant-General Gerard Lake (1744-1808) succeeded the mild and humane Abercromby, as commander-in-chief of the "Irish Army" - a post he held until the arrival of Cornwallis. It is told that Lake belonged to the class of Englishman who entertained a huge contempt for foreigners of every description, most especially the Irish and the French. The author Valerian Gribayedoff described him as being "a man raised in the belief that one English soldier was a match for at least two Frenchmen, three large Spaniards or four Dutchmen and any number of savages, and he never failed to manifest this hatred throughout his career."

Born in London, 27 July 1744, Lake was a career soldier who had joined the army at the age of fourteen, won promotions in Germany during the Seven Years War, and served as Lieutenant-Commander under Cornwallis in America. (In 1785 it was given in evidence before a committee of the British House of Commons that half

the Rebel Continental Army of America was Irish). Despite his military experience, he was a politically naive soldier, and his terror methods (dragooning) in Ireland, which were described as "playing the very Devil with the country," are directly credited with fanning the flames of the 1798 Rebellion throughout the country.

Lake's most noted success was his much celebrated and brutal defeat of the Wexford rebels on Vinegar Hill, while his most famous defeat was at Castlebar where he was humiliated, and fled the battlefield in such a hurry, that he left his personal luggage behind: he got his revenge at Ballinamuck. In 1799 he was brought into Parliament by the notorious Lord Castlereagh, specifically to vote for the Act of Union, and afterwards was posted to India. In 1804 he was created a Baron, and in 1807, a Viscount. This soldier, who was once described by one of his commanders when he said of him: " he had little intellect or military skill" died in London in 1808.

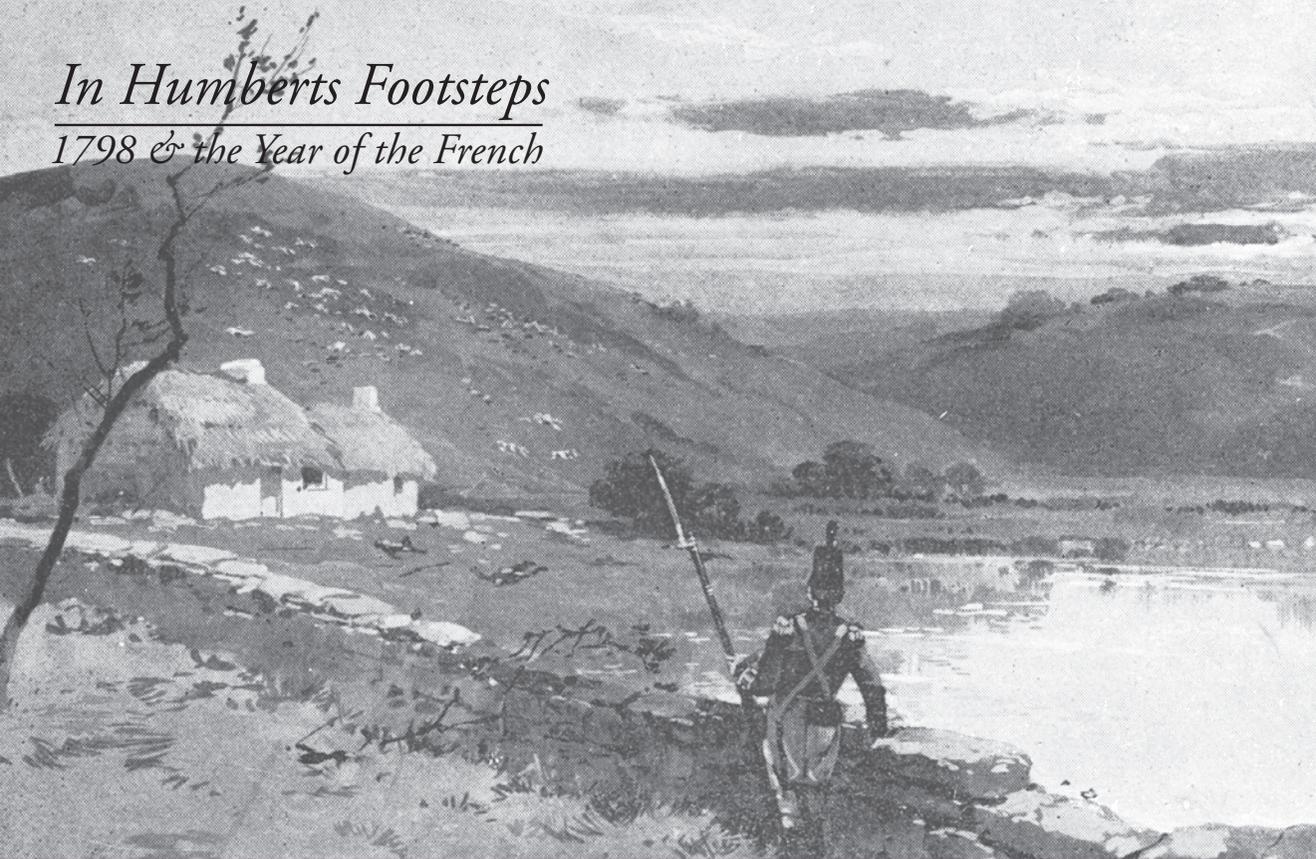
*"... The French were received to composition and shortly exchanged, [Ballinamuck] but the Irish were slaughtered without mercy; and the cruelties afterwards exercised on the unresisting peasantry, will render the name of General Lake remembered for ages in those remote districts of Connaught."*

(Tone's Life, Volume 2)



# *In Humberts Footsteps*

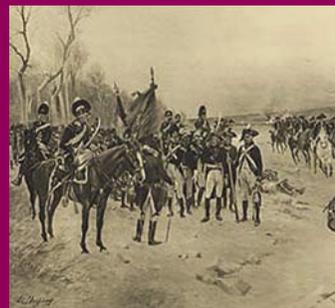
## *1798 & the Year of the French*



# *The Battle of* Ballinamuck

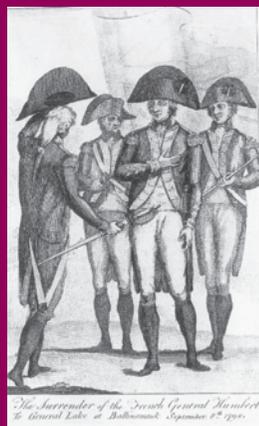
General Humbert and the remnants of his Franco-Irish army faced overwhelming numbers at Ballinamuck. Lord Cornwallis was on his right with 15,000 troops, General Lake was to his rear with over 14,000, while another 6,000 were closing in from the flanks. The conventional battle lasted only about half an hour before Humbert surrendered: Sarrazin had surrendered earlier. While the French surrender was being taken, the 1,000 or so Irish volunteers under General George Blake and Colonel Bartholomew Teeling continued to fight on, that is until they

were scattered and ruthlessly pursued with great slaughter by a massive British infantry and cavalry attack. Upwards of 500 were slain and 200 taken prisoner, most of whom were hanged, including General Blake, Baron James O'Dowd, and Gunner James Magee. Mathew Tone, younger brother of Theobald, who along with Teeling had sailed with Humbert, were taken to Dublin and hanged-despite being officers in the French army. The French were treated as prisoners of war and transported, first to Dublin, then to England, before being repatriated.



*“Every straggler that was overtaken was cut down by the Hompeschers and Foxhunters who hung upon Humbert's rear; and when the invaders laid down their arms at Ballinamuck, if blood could have atoned for treason, it was fearfully exacted-for the sword and halter were used with an unsparing hand. it is impossible to form any correct estimate of the number sacrificed to the fury of the soldiers...No questions were asked... No quarter was given and to use Musgrave's words 'dreadful havoc' was made among the unfortunate wretches who who were excluded from mercy and cut down by the hundred.”*

(W.H.Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798*)



*The Surrender of the French General Humbert to General Lake at Ballinamuck, September 8th 1798.*

*In Humberts Footsteps*  
*1798 & the Year of the French*



# Killala

## *The Last Stand*

On 23 September, 1798, General Trench commanding a British force of more than 3,000 men, supported by several artillery pieces, descended in a three-pronged attack on Killala, which was still being held by a small contingent of rebels and a handful of French. Despite a spirited resistance, the rebels, most of whom were armed with their long Irish pikes, were no match for the might of this British war machine, and now outnumbered, and outgunned, they were also out-manoeuvred. After a brief, though ineffective stance close by Moyne Abbey, where their ranks were decimated by the expert and accurate firing of both the British artillery and infantry, the rebels scattered and were mercilessly pursued

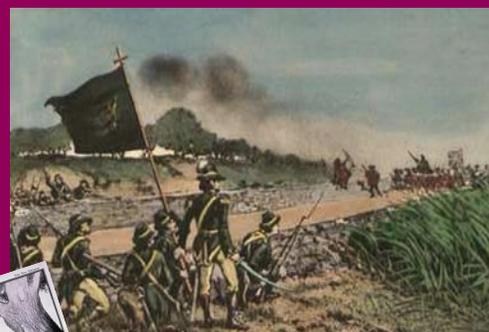
back to Killala by the cavalry. No account of the Irish rebel dead exists, but it is believed that upwards of 600 may have been slaughtered in the action, and hundreds more in the weeks following. The stretch of road leading into Killala was afterwards known as Casán an Áir (The Pathway of the Slaughter). When writing of the re-taking of Killala, W.H. Maxwell had this to say "The affair that ensued was not an action but an execution." Among the hundreds who were slain that day were the local rebel officers: Captain Ferdy O'Donnell, Major Toby Flanagan, Captains Luke Nealon, John Kennedy, John Mulhern, and Lieutenant Henry Nealon. The French were treated as prisoners of war.

Well they fought for  
poor old Ireland  
And bitter was their  
fate,  
What a feeling of  
pride and sorrow  
Fills the name of  
Ninety-Eight

**(John Keegan Casey, *The Rising of the Moon*)**

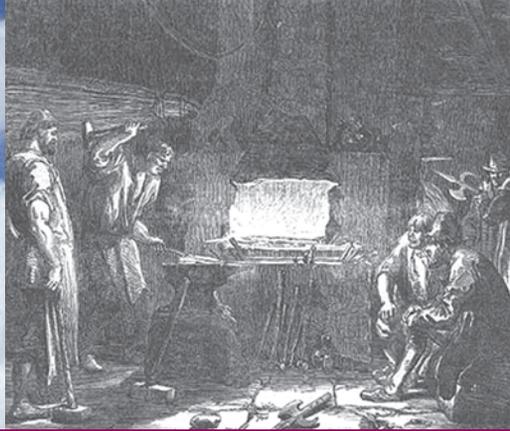
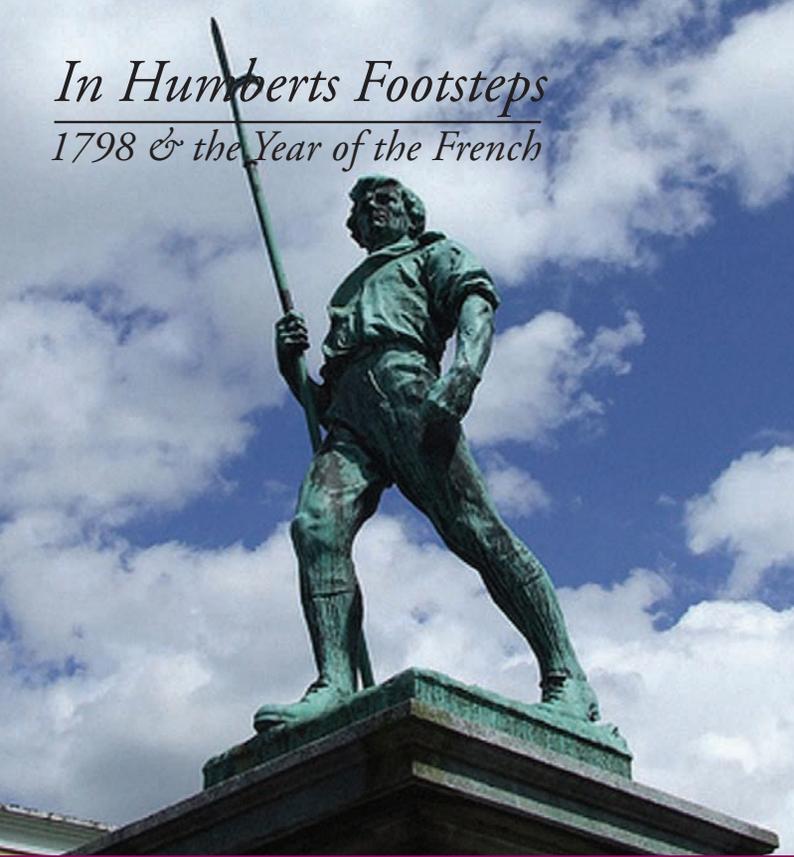
*"...we marched to Killala-when we came to the town their fire was great, upon which General Trench gave orders to force the town, upon which the Queen's Regiment stormed it in such a way and such terrible slaughter as took place is impossible for me to describe..."*

(Joshua Kemmis, Ballina, 25 September 1798; NLI Frazer MS 11/89)



# *In Humberts Footsteps*

## *1798 & the Year of the French*



# The Pike

The favoured weapon of the Irish rebels of 1798 was the pike. Although nearly obsolete as a weapon of war at the time, the pike was very well suited to the largely untrained rebels; furthermore, it was simple and cheap to manufacture, and easy to hide. In 1798, the common Irish pike consisted of a pointed spear-like blade-head mounted on a timber shaft, with occasionally an inward curving hook below the base of the head, which was often referred to as "The Bridal Slasher" or "Tammy Hawk." Irish pikes were usually between eight and twelve feet in length-blade included, with the shaft generally fashioned from young ash trees. Although the symbolic halberd style axe-blade pikes were manufactured on a small scale and used in some counties during the rebellion, they were more widely adopted by Irish rebels in the early-nineteenth century.

A solid mass of pikemen standing shoulder to shoulder was one of the few military formations capable of breaking, or repulsing, a cavalry charge. Depending on how many ranks of pikemen involved, which in most cases was either two or

three, the pike-drill would commence with the front rank grounding the "butt" of the shaft against the right foot, while retaining a double-handed grip on the upper shaft, with the point inclined upwards at about the level of a horse's chest. When this manoeuvre was successfully completed, the second rank would then extend their weapons and stab at the advancing cavalry, while the third sought to cut the leather reins, or bridles, with the curved hook. After the rebellion of 1798, several British cavalry regiments modified their equine apparatus by incorporating, or in some cases substituting, chain for leather in an effort to combat this effective practice.

The former British army officer and contemporary writer, Jonah Barrington, described the Irish pike as being "irrestible in close combat, even against infantry," while an anonymous rebel survivor stated: "Nothing of course could be better in its way than the pike at close quarters... no cavalry could stand the pike, for when the horse got a prod he reared and the rider was either thrown out of the saddle or could not use his sword, so we had him at our mercy..."

*"For we are the  
brave boys that  
can thrash them,  
And we are the  
brave boys that  
can smash them,  
When we come  
with our long  
pikes to the field,  
And we make  
them cry out  
that they yield."*

(Traditional Ballad)



# *A Modified Roll-Call of the* **Franco-Irish** *Forces*

**Big Mathew Dominic Loughney** from Kilcummin who piloted the French ships: he survived the rebellion.

**The McGuires** from Crossmolina; Hugh Senior and his sons, Roger, Ned, and Hugh Junior: Hugh Senior was hanged, while his sons were transported.

**John, Patrick, and Thomas Corcoran** from Castlebar: they escaped to Canada.

**Cathaoir O'Gallchabhair** from Bellacorick: proclaimed an outlaw, he was later pardoned.

**James McNamara** from Caffoly: hanged at Crossmolina.

**Dáithí MacSuibhne** who hailed from Ballycroy. Known as "Dáithí na Míodoige" (David of the Dagger/s). He was proclaimed an outlaw, but with his brother and sister escaped to America.

**Father Owen Cowley:** died while on the run.

**Father Tom Munnely:** escaped to America.

**Father Manus Sweeney:** hanged at Newport.

**James O'Malley** of Eden Park, Knock: hanged at Ballinamuck.

**Richard Jordan**, also of Knock: hanged at Claremorris.

**Manus O'Nearaigh** of Bonniconlon: missing in action.

**William Jordan**, also of Bonniconlon: hanged at Sligo.

**Captain "Red Roger" Gallagher** of Attymass: hanged at Foxford.

**Patrick Foley, Francis McGlynn, George Hector, William Cauldwell, Christopher Nowland, Robert Kelly, Erward Madden;** all members of the Longford Militia who deserted at Castlebar: transported for life.

**Dr. Patrick Barrett** of Ballina: hanged at Ballina.

**Colonel Mathew Bellew:** hanged at Killala.

The three Swinford women known only by their surnames - **Larkin, Ryan, and Brennan**, who prevented a detachment of dragoons from reaching Castlebar: they escaped capture.

**George Chambers** of Kilboyne, near Castlebar: hanged at Ballinrobe.

**The Gibbons Family** from Westport. The father "Johnny Eamain" and his sons, John Junior "Johnny the Outlaw" and Edmund. For their part in the rebellion, John Senior and Edmund were transported, while "Johnny the Outlaw" was hanged at Westport: the only man ever to be hanged in the town. Many other members of the extended Gibbons family, especially the Newport branch, also took part in the rebellion and suffered as a result.

**James Joseph McDonnell** from Carnacon "The best known of the United Irish Chiefs in the West": he escaped first to Europe, then America.

**Robert Gillard**, a young French soldier who settled down in Bonniconlon with his bride, Bridget Neary; his descendants still live in the Mayo townland called "Gillardstown."

**Grenadier Captain, Jean-Paul Laugerat** of Barbégréne, Charente, western France: he fell at Castlebar.

A French soldier named in the folklore of Mayo as **Michael Lavelle** who remained in Mayo after the rising. He married a local girl from Crossmolina, Mary McGloin, and having survived the horrors of '98, he died during the Famine of the 1840s.

"To subvert the tyranny of an execrable Government, to break the connection with England-these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant and Catholic and Dissenter-these were my aims."

(Theobald Wolfe Tone)

*In Humberts Footsteps*  
*1798 & the Year of the French*



# Honoured in Song and in Story

## *Mise' gus Tusa*

An raibh tú gCill Ala  
Nó i gCaisleán an Bharraigh,  
No' bhfaca tú 'n campa  
'Bhí ag na Francaigh?  
Mise' gus tusa 'gus ruball na muice  
'Gus bacaigh Shíol Aindí, bacaigh Shíol  
Aindí.

Free Translation  
Were you in Killala  
Or in Castlebar,  
Or did you see the camp  
That the French had there?  
Myself and yourself and the pigs tail  
And Bucky/Booky Highlander.

**(Bliain na BhFrancach, Songs of 1798, The Year  
of the French, Seán O'Brádaigh [1982])**

## Mise 'gus Tusa



## *The Connacht Rising of 1798*

When Humbert sailed into Killala,  
Our country lay bleeding and torn,  
Our bravest all dead and in prison,  
Her fugitives banished forlorn.  
But in spite of defeat and disaster,  
Of ruin, of death and despair.  
At Tara or Wicklow or Dublin,  
The Connachts are ready to dare.

**(IFC 1858:41-2)**

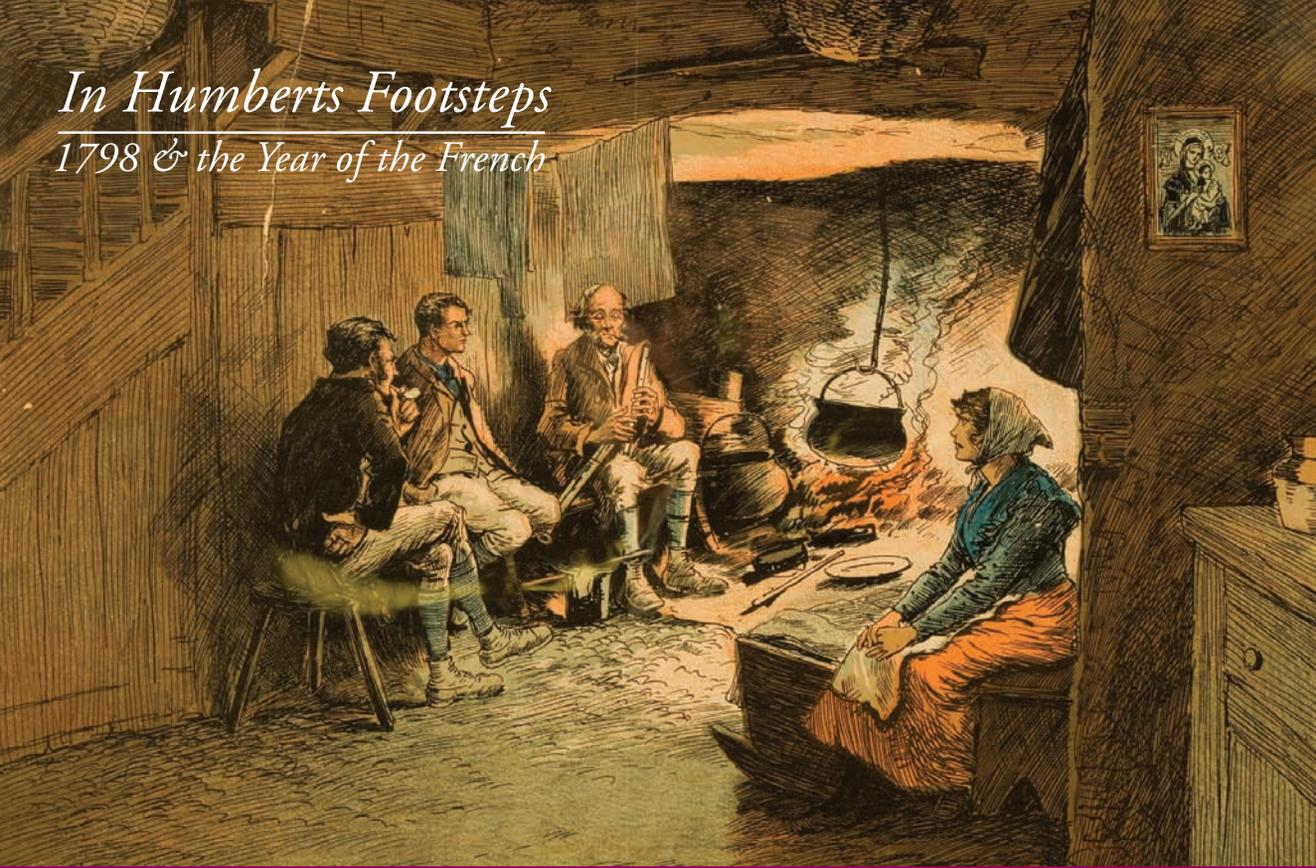
## *The Lamentations of Patrick Brady or The Heroes of Ninety-Eight*

We fought at New Ross, and we fought upon Vinegar Hill,  
And in sweet Castlecomer where the Colliers joined us with free  
will;  
Out of fourteen engagements we received not a wound or a scar  
Till I lost my two brothers at the battle of sweet Castlebar.  
To march with the Frenchmen it left me much troubled in mind,  
To think I should go and leave my two brothers behind;  
Through the sweet County Leitrim to Granard our way we took;  
And were attacked by the army at the village of Ballinamuck.

**(Irish Street Ballads, Colm O'Lochlainn [1946])**



# *In Humberts Footsteps* *1798 & the Year of the French*



## *Honoured in Song* **and in Story**

Castlebar Races  
*rig*

French March 1798

Lord Send The French Without Delay

### *Tim O Shaughnessy*

One day the glorious tidings  
Flashed through the wand'ring land-  
"The French are in Killala,  
The hour is now at hand,  
For which we've sigh'd and waited,  
And prayed for fervently"-  
"Then forward boys, for Ireland,"  
Cried Tim O Shaughnessy.

**(Lays of South Sligo, John O'Dowd [1889])**

### *Robin Gill*

They lost no time, fell into line,  
With Humbert's gallant band,  
Where pledged were all to stand or fall  
To free their native land.

**(Collected in 1938 by James McKenna from Patrick Gill,  
grand-nephew of Robin Gill)**

### *Mylie of the Spear*

When at Killala in the west,  
The Frenchmen they did land,  
Bonfires blazed on every hill to hear the message grand,  
Of Erin's sons upon the run who then did volunteer,  
To go at once and join the French  
Was Mylie of the Spear.

**(NFC 181)**

*"We shall never conquer Ireland  
while the Bards are there."*

(Queen Elizabeth 1st of England)