



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

SIXTEEN FILMS and WHY NOT PRODUCTIONS present

# JIMMY'S HALL

DIRECTED BY  
KEN LOACH

SCREENPLAY BY  
PAUL LAVERTY

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Directed by **Ken Loach**  
Screenplay by **Paul Laverty**

UK-FRANCE / 109' / colour / 35mm / 1.85 / Dolby Digital

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# INTRODUCTION

Paul Laverty, Writer

Sometimes an idea for a story can land in your lap like some benign present from on high and you feel like thanking the lucky stars. *Jimmy's Hall* came this way, a long distant ripple from Nicaragua, via an old friend Donal O'Kelly, an actor and playwright whom I had the good fortune to meet there in the eighties while the United States was busy making carnage of the Sandinista revolution and its people.

Over three years ago Donal and Sorcha Fox were planning a community theatre project in County Leitrim to highlight the plight of asylum seekers in Ireland, many of whom were held in limbo for years with the threat of deportation hanging over their heads. Donal imagined a theatrical/dance event with them, linking their plight back to the story of Jimmy Gralton, the only Irishman deported from his own country as an "illegal alien" without trial way back in August 1933.

The spark to invest so much effort in a story is always a question of the gut. As I read of Jimmy Gralton's life I wondered out loud to Donal if it might make for a film in its own right. I was struck by the community effort to build a hall with voluntary labour on Jimmy's land where they could meet to debate, think, study, give classes, and of course sing and dance without interference from anyone, including the Church and the State which were intertwined around each other. Jimmy and his comrades were determined to build a free space in an increasingly authoritarian country dominated by the ideology of the Catholic Church, who insisted education was the sole preserve of Holy Mother Church.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is hard to quantify the control the Church exerted not only over the daily lives, but over the imagination of a nation, especially after the Eucharistic Congress in 1932 which was the perfect platform for de Valera to demonstrate he was a safe pair of hands to the Catholic hierarchy. Many have commented on the Church's decline over the past decade but its grip on power has been deep and stubborn. As I write these notes today on the 23 Sept, 2013, the third last day of the shoot, the *Irish Times* reports on an agreement reached on the "transfer of the first Catholic primary school in the State to become multid denominational and to move out of the Catholic Church control." On the day the film started a priest on the board of the Trustees of a major Dublin hospital called for a rejection of recent (extremely limited) abortion legislation introduced by the Government to protect the lives of women.

It was both the conciseness, and the possibility of complexity unfurled, that made it such an attractive premise. The hall itself felt like a character. I spoke to Ken [Loach] and could sense the same gut reaction, and I noticed that glint in his eye at the prospect of meat and mischief in a story. Rebecca [O'Brien] too was intrigued by the possibility of another film in Ireland, set a decade later from the period we explored in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*.

With typical generosity Donal and Sorcha were delighted that we were interested and encouraged me to begin research into the detail of Jimmy's life and the hall.

First stop was Efferagh in County Leitrim, and the sparse crossroads in the countryside opposite a pub called the Black Swan. By one corner was a wooden sign with the words, "Site of the Pearse-Connolly Hall. In memory of Jimmy Gralton, Leitrim Socialist deported for his political beliefs on August 13<sup>th</sup> 1933." Though burnt down by "persons unknown" on New Year's Eve 1932, it was still possible to imagine the outline of the hall in the overgrown grass.

It was a wet, miserable January day, and the only sound was that of crows from the trees opposite. But gradually I could hear in my mind's eye the sound of feet tapping, and music drifting down over the 80 year gap. I couldn't help but smile at the thought of Jimmy's secret weapon in the battle against drabness: his stylish gramophone brought back from the States, and his collection of records. I was to hear stories of people travelling over 30 miles on their bicycles to hear the latest new record from across the Atlantic while local parish priests fumed against the devil's music and the "Los Angeles-isation" of Irish culture.

I read news reports of over 500 people attending the Republican Courts (in parallel to the boycotted British-run courts) held in the hall, set up during the War of Independence in 1921 to solve land disputes. To implement the court's decisions Jimmy and his comrades formed the Direct Action Committee, which challenged not only the property rights of big ranchers, but upset the right-wing flank of the IRA. On one occasion the hall was surrounded by soldiers while Jimmy fled out a back window. It was little wonder that he had to flee for his life to the States in those troubled times (May '22) leading up to the civil war which tore Ireland asunder.

As I stood there with the sermons by local parish priests O'Dowd and Cosgrove ringing in my ear from 80 years back I remembered the words of a rich farmer from *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, who told the two IRA brothers in the story that if their like were to win the war, Ireland would end up a "priest-infested backwater."

Beyond the site of the hall was Jimmy's family home, now abandoned and in a state of disrepair set on a few acres of boggy land now covered in reeds. It was not hard to

imagine a tough life against the elements. The Plantation story was implicit in the landscape, with many humble Catholic families etching out an existence on poorer land supplemented by trips to Scotland to pick potatoes. I imagined Jimmy's fierce sense of social justice forged against this backdrop, and nourished by politically aware parents.

In *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* we made a key decision. We tried to be truthful to the spirit of the times, but with fictional characters. In this story we were faced with a new challenge. There are key public events in Jimmy Galton's life that we know from public sources, principally newspaper reports of the time, and word-of-mouth passed down through the generations.<sup>2</sup> I owe a great debt of gratitude to Paul Galton and his father Jim Galton in particular. Jim's mother and father, Packie and Maggie Galton, were both cousins of Jimmy from two different sides of the family and were very close to him. It was even Jimmy who suggested they marry, and he left the farm to Packie and Maggie after his deportation in '33. Paul and Jim shared stories with me passed down through the generations, and I had a wonderful day with Jim who showed me the places where some key events took place like the cattle drives to implement Republican court decisions in the 1920s, and the community action to force the return of the Milmoie family to their cottage (whose descendants are still there) after they were evicted from the Kingston Estate in the early 1930s. Jimmy was asked to speak to mark the occasion and his main point rings hauntingly true in Ireland of 2013.

As I listened to Paul and Jim pass on their stories and considerable insight it became obvious too that there is so much about a person's personality, inner thoughts, fears, vulnerabilities, imagination, and subtleties of relations with friends and loved ones that is beyond historical record. There is likewise so much that is beyond the reach of subjective memories passed down from those who knew Jimmy (in their way), and then passed down in turn again to Paul and his generation.

In a film we have to grapple with the inner life, the contradictions, doubts and motivations or we will be left with the damp squib of a public skeleton. So after discussion with Ken we made another key decision. This would be a story "freely inspired" by the lives and times of Jimmy and the hall. Our story doesn't pretend to

<sup>2</sup> There are two documentaries, one by Pat Feeley for RTE radio, *The Galton Affair* and a particularly helpful booklet by him of the same name, and another interesting documentary made by Michael Carolan commissioned by SIPTU trade union that apparently never got an airing on TV, despite its quality. There is a later document to Pat Feeley's written by Des Guckian which also records the main public events in Jimmy's life and I was lucky enough to trace a recording of Maggie Galton, Jimmy's cousin, made not too long before she died. Her *My Cousin Jimmy* was a warm personal record of her childhood memories.

be a conventional biopic. We know he brought back records of Paul Robeson from the States, but did he bring back Bessie Smith? Did a young and curious free spirit like Jimmy go dancing the Shim Sham and Lindy Hop at the Saxony Hotel in Harlem while he lived in New York, the only place in the United States where black and white could dance together openly? Nobody knows if he did or not, but in our version we imagine he did.

Paul Gralton thought it feasible Jimmy might have brought back some blues from New York, so we have a jazz band playing in the hall instead of a record playing on a flimsy gramophone. (Not long after Jimmy was deported there were anti-jazz marches led by priests in Mohill, not far from where Jimmy lived, so these debates were in the air). We know about the boxing, painting and literature classes at the hall, but the personalities and mix of Jimmy's friends who taught at the hall, and helped him run it, are imagined. I read of the denunciations from local parish priests O'Dowd and Cosgrove, and others too, and the pronouncements of local bishops, and after weighing that up, and trying to imagine the times from the point of view of a local priest, we have drawn the fictional characters Father Sheridan and his curate Father Seamus. They struck us as more insightful than the priests of those crude sermons. We know Jimmy went to confront one of them. What he might have said, and how, are imagined.

I asked Paul Gralton if there was any hint that the unmarried Jimmy (he did finally marry in New York towards the end of his life, long after deportation) might have had a secret sweetheart given his personality and "the catch" he would have been in those times having returned from abroad. Paul's reply struck a chord. "You would never know even if he had." So did this impulsive, generous man have a secret love? Who knows, but he does in our version, and she is called Oonagh. This is a freely inspired guess, nothing more, nothing less, sparked by the character that took hold as we tried to imagine the man in the round. Does that do an injustice to Jimmy? I hope not. And would the absence of that tenderness, the secret and the intimate, if that had been our choice, have been an even greater injustice to this charismatic ball of energy that Jimmy seemed to be? There are no arithmetical answers to these imponderables. I could only engage with the script if we dived in boldly, and if we have erred, I hope it is in the spirit of Jimmy's Hall itself.

How can we know the depth and intricacy of his relationship with his mother Alice? Jim and Paul told me that Alice ran the local mobile library in the area. Did she read to Jimmy, a bright and curious child, and teach him to think, criticise and welcome ideas from beyond Leitrim? I relied on that to imagine the kernel of a loving relationship which in turn led to unbearable choices for Jimmy as the political

pressure mounted on him. I can only guess that as a teenager who had the courage to desert the British Army because of his political convictions and challenge his superiors at such a tender age he must have had some grounding from his family.

Of all the sources I came across, I was particularly struck by a transcribed interview with Packie Gralton, who helped Jimmy hide when he was on the run. He was asked what Jimmy was like as a person. I imagined an old man smiling at the memory of a soul mate: “Ah... he was a free man... a free man.”

Taking the sources as a whole what struck us, in essence, was a man who had seen the world, lived a full life, and with a generous spirit; who tried to bring the best of what he had learned and experienced back to this modest little hall at a country crossroads some 50 yards from where he was born. He had been a soldier, a sailor, a miner, a docker, a taxi driver, worked in bars and no doubt much else besides. He left school at 14 but judging from the stories and how he wrote and spoke he must have been a man who read and studied. He had a sharp tongue and no doubt this got him into trouble, even accusing Peadar O’Donnell, a fellow-traveller and supporter, of needing to be the “bridegroom at every wedding and corpse at every funeral.” Writing back from New York to Father O’Dowd after his deportation he wrote, “... even the cloak of religion can no longer cover the imperialist hooligan that hides behind it.”

Having travelled the world, and witnessed the roaring twenties in the States, followed by the depression after 1929, and the ripple of misery that flowed from there around the world, he must have seen tremendous poverty and brutality, but he never seemed to turn into a cynic.

I was struck by anecdotes of his generosity (housing a homeless man in New York who stole his trousers) and sense of humour. He was no sectarian. His sister, based in the States, was a nun who attended the hall to enjoy the music during a visit to Ireland until warned off by the local Parish priest. Jimmy was very popular with many of the other nuns too in a convent in the US where his sister was based. Jimmy was intensely political, a committed socialist, but we had a sense of a man who appreciated that we need many types of nourishment, including fun and companionship. People travelled for miles to attend the dances despite the denunciations from the pulpit.

As well as digging into the secrets of the characters another major challenge was trying to imagine the texture of lived experience of the 20s in the flashbacks, and the quite different atmosphere of the ’30s after a decade of authoritarian rule of the Cosgrave Government, not from the safety of hindsight, but in the moment with the



characters. Historian Donal Ó Drisceoil from University College Cork, who worked with us on *Barley*, was once again a bedrock of support to outline the political atmosphere of the times, fill in the details and answer endless questions – which he did with the sharpest of observations.

On a visit to the National Archives in Dublin I confirmed what Donal had told me: the records relating to Jimmy's detention and subsequent deportation have mysteriously disappeared. What is intriguing, and what we couldn't find out, was when this happened. The vital question is how the decision was made in such secrecy and who was privy to it. It reminded me of the subversive first page of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Milan Kundera gives details of a famous propaganda photo of communist leader Klement Gottwald on a balcony in Prague in 1948. In freezing weather Gottwald's comrade Clementis, by his side, gave his own furry hat to his bareheaded leader. Four years later Clementis was charged with treason and hanged. The Communist Party airbrushed him from the photo and history. But like the corner foundations of Jimmy's hall poking through sods of grass, Clementis's hat still remains. Kundera wrote, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." It was not enough that Jimmy's Hall was burnt to the ground, that he was deported from his birthplace – the official record of the events disappeared into nothingness too. Little wonder so few had heard the story of Jimmy Galton, even in County Leitrim.

What attracted us to this story too was the physical courage of Jimmy and his comrades in intolerant times. I was reminded of this on day 26 of the shoot when six people were set upon in Athens for distributing posters for a youth festival organised by the left. Fifty Golden Dawn fascists attacked them with baseball bats and they were seriously injured and hospitalised. On day 29 of the shoot on the 17th of September 2013 a hip hop artist Pavlos Fyssas was chased by an armed group of 30 Golden Dawn members and then stabbed to death. While the circumstances were very different, and it would be specious to draw exact parallels (though the *Guardian* did mention Golden Dawn have been encouraged by clerics) it did make me reflect on the physical danger to our characters who refused to bow the knee before the Catholic elite in both Church and State, especially after the massive display of Catholic power following the Eucharistic Congress of 1932 when over a million attended mass at Phoenix Park in Dublin. It must have been terrifying for Jimmy and Co. to be called "antichrists" and the "anti-God people" each Sunday from the pulpit with hatred whipped up in an hysterical fashion. A mine was placed at the entrance to the hall, which did not explode because it was faulty. The hall was shot into (though in defiance they danced

on) and I have little doubt Jimmy's friends must have feared for his life. It seems not much had changed, a decade later from Jimmy's first flight, when a crowd of 2,000 in Dublin, egged on by a priest, burned down the [James] Connolly House in 1932.

I hope this little tale will be an antidote to the instinct to conform and the tugging of the forelock to those in power. Between takes I found myself wondering who would be the modern day equivalents to the antichrists of Jimmy's time. Would it be Chelsea Manning, sentenced to 35 years on day seven of the shoot, for revealing torture and murder by US troops while the murderers go unpunished? Or Ai Weiwei, China's most famous artist who had his art studio, which was also to be used as an education centre, demolished by the Chinese authorities because they could not control his criticism or wit? Or Julian Assange, who finds himself facing serious personal allegations that, out of all sense of scale, dwarf in the public narrative the systematic crimes against humanity he and his collaborators had the courage to expose? Or Edward Snowden for revealing how the State and Corporations collaborate on massive surveillance of our private lives? Or independent trade union activists risking life and limb in the maquila factories along the Mexican border, or the vicious sweatshops in China? Or gay activists in Russia, or women educationalists in Afghanistan, or those brave teachers in Greece threatened by Golden Dawn with having their ears cut off if they continued to teach immigrant children? Or those activists today in Ireland who demand a transparent accounting of deals done in private between politicians and financiers that have had massive repercussions in public services that will affect every level of life for the foreseeable future, or who have criticised Irish budget details discussed in Germany before the Irish cabinet even saw them? What a mockery of the democratic process.

It seems clear we need a Jimmy's Hall of the imagination, whether material, virtual, or a combination of both, if we are to be citizens; a safe free space where we can meet to think, debate, listen, learn, organise and analyse the world around us, and examine how power is shared, or not, in our daily lives. If our resistance is to last we need the nourishment of mischief and friendship in the process. It was Emma Goldman who told the Bolsheviks, "If I can't dance I don't want your revolution" and the executed Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wira who wrote "Dance your anger and your joys, dance their military guns to silence, dance their dumb laws to the dump, dance oppression and injustice to death..." Somewhere, somehow, in every corner of the world, Jimmy's Hall and Clementis's hat, reveal themselves, despite the brutality.

[P.L. Sligo Sept 13, revised Edinburgh, Oct 13.]

## **‘DAYS OF BRAVE MUSIC ’: A NOTE ON THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Donal Ó Drisceoil

Jimmy Galton returned to Leitrim from New York in June 1921, just as the Anglo-Irish war was coming to a close. That conflict between the Irish independence movement and the British state had largely sidelined unresolved issues of land ownership, workers’ rights and class power in general within Irish society. These now briefly emerged more clearly. Galton’s radical class politics, particularly the challenge to local landowners posed by the land courts based in his Pearse–Connolly Hall, made him powerful enemies. As civil war loomed over the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in the early summer of 1922, he was driven out by the pro-Treaty Free Staters, who would soon take power in a partitioned Ireland.

While Galton enjoyed the relative political freedom and socio-cultural vibrancy of New York in the ‘roaring twenties’, the Free State government of Cumann na nGaedheal, in alliance with the Catholic Church, ruled over an economically stagnant Irish Free State that was socially restrictive and culturally repressive. Inequality worsened, policies favoured bankers, business owners and cattle-exporting big farmers, and the urban working class and rural poor fared badly. The Labour Party was a weak and ineffectual opposition. In 1926 anti-Treaty republican leader Eamon de Valera and his followers split from Sinn Féin, who refused to sit in the Free State parliament, and formed the Fianna Fáil party, which entered parliament in 1927. It took advantage of the weakness of the Labour Party and the left to win the support of workers and small farmers in the depression after 1929. At the same time, it reassured elites, including the bishops, of its adherence to Catholic and capitalist principles. Fianna Fáil’s promise to release political prisoners, undo the Treaty and actively seek an end to partition ensured the initial support of the IRA and, despite red-scare mongering, it won power in 1932.

The victory of Fianna Fáil coincided with Galton’s return to Ireland to help his elderly parents run the farm following the death of his brother. This was a honeymoon period for progressives in Ireland following a decade of repression and

conservatism. The socialist republican and novelist Peadar O'Donnell summarised it thus: 'the bright world of 1932, when Cosgrave's Government was smashed, and bitter years of defeat and defamation were avenged... "executions" and "excommunications" denounced and disowned.' These were 'days of brave music', wrote O'Donnell, when Fianna Fáil's victory promised 'Land, Work, Wages, the Republic.' Gralton threw himself back into agitation – aimed mainly at maintaining pressure on Fianna Fáil to deliver on its progressive promises, such as land for the landless. He rebuilt the hall, bringing music and dance to the youth and hope to the struggling poor.

But dark clouds hovered above this new political landscape. The Catholicisation of the state was crowned in June 1932 when over a million Catholics attended the Eucharistic Congress. Censorship and ecclesiastical condemnation of 'evils' such as dancing, jazz and 'immodest fashions in female dress' intensified, and new laws would soon restrict social freedom even further, especially for women. The tariff war with Britain initiated by de Valera hit the pockets of large farmers hardest, which helped to radicalise the prosperous pro-Treaty constituency in a fascist direction, symbolised by the adoption of the 'blue shirt' uniform by the Army Comrades Association (ACA) in 1933. Anti-communism became violent, with attacks on socialist meetings and buildings and the silencing of the left within the IRA. Gralton's socialism, combined with the challenge his hall presented to Church control, made him a prime target for a coalition of enemies: the Church, local big farmers and businessmen (organised in Catholic societies such as the Knights of St Columbanus, as well as in the fascistic ACA), the police Special Branch and conservative elements of the local IRA.

In December 1932 the rebuilt Pearse-Connolly Hall was burnt to the ground by right-wing IRA men and in February 1933 (following the example set by the Northern Irish government in deporting British communist Thomas Mann in October 1932) Gralton was served with a deportation order, based on his naturalised US citizenship. It was signed by de Valera's first minister for justice, James Geoghegan, a right-wing Catholic with strong connections to the reactionary power nexus in Gralton's area. Jimmy went on the run but, despite local support and a national 'Gralton Defence' campaign, he was eventually tracked down and deported to the USA in August 1933, never to return. The 'brave music' faded, along with the glowing embers in the ashes of Jimmy Gralton's hall.

*Dr Donal Ó Drisceoil was historical advisor on Jimmy's Hall. He is a Senior Lecturer in History at University College Cork and has published widely on Irish political, labour and radical history.*

## **JIMMY'S HALL - SYNOPSIS**

March, 1932, County Leitrim. Jimmy Gralton has come home after a decade working in America. The Ireland he returns to, ten years after the Civil War, has a new Government and fresh hope for Jimmy's people – farmers, workers, the young, the rural poor. Jimmy's first love, Oonagh, is married now. And the Pearse-Connolly Hall, a beacon for the local community, which Jimmy and his friends built, lies empty.

Jimmy has returned to Ireland to look after his mother, Alice, and when he gets to her cottage all his old friends are present and correct – Mossie, Tommy, Sean, Dezzie, Finn and Molly. He says he wants a quiet life now. But Jimmy Gralton is an activist, a leader. None of them really believes him.

Father Sheridan, the parish priest, hears of Jimmy's return. He knows that a man who people follow, a man of action, is back in his parish. To him Jimmy Gralton is a man that the Church cannot control.

Meanwhile the young people want to dance. They have heard the stories about the hall – the dances; the classes in literature, art, sport and music – and they want to know if Jimmy will open it up again. There is nothing else for them here. Jimmy says no. Not this time.

But then he goes to the hall, and thinks back to how it was before – a safe haven for the local community to learn and to sing and dance, away from the glare of Holy Mother Church; a home for the Republican Courts that gave the people a justice denied them by the collusion of Church and State. And he thinks back to Oonagh Dempsey, dancing, defiant, his true love whom he asked to come with him when he was driven out to America. He said she would always be in his heart and now he has returned, she still is.

The hall is reopened. Soon the place is alive with music – Jimmy has brought back a gramophone from America and with it he brings the Shim Sham, the Lindy Hop, joy and hope. The classes begin once more, too – Sean teaching Yeats, Mossie teaching boxing, Molly teaching music and Oonagh teaching dance.

Father Sheridan is aghast. His curate, Father Seamus, preaches restraint – repression breeds belligerence; leave them and they'll wither away. But Sheridan sees this as the beginnings of a communist insurrection, with Gralton a man with fire in his soul and a plan in his head.

The evening dances start up again, wondrous and vital, just like the old days. Sheridan is on hand to take names of the people coming to the dance. Next day at Sunday Mass, he reads them out. A young girl takes a beating at her father's hands as a result, but a seed has been sown – she still goes back to the hall for her dance class the next day.

Sheridan does his rounds, cajoling the locals to steer clear of the hall. Not only does the Church have Jimmy in its sights but the Army Comrade's Association are circling – proto fascists who see Jimmy and his friends as Reds to be routed.

Meanwhile, the IRA call on Jimmy to help reinstate a family evicted from their cottage by a callous landowner. They know that Jimmy has a way with words and can rally a crowd. It will become a challenge to landed estates countrywide.

When Jimmy agrees, and delivers an energizing speech against an Ireland divided by wealth and class, he knows his fate is sealed. It begins with shots fired at the hall during an evening dance. It continues when the hall is burned down. And it ends when the guards come for Jimmy, eventually taking him to the docks to be deported back to America. The crowd is made up of the young people who have danced at Jimmy's Hall – as he is led away, they promise to keep dancing.

## **SYNOPSIS**

In 1921 Jimmy Galton's sin was to build a dance hall on a rural crossroads in an Ireland on the brink of Civil War. The Pearse-Connolly Hall was a place where young people could come to learn, to argue, to dream... but above all to dance and have fun. As the hall grew in popularity its socialist and free-spirited reputation brought it to the attention of the church and politicians who forced Jimmy to flee and the hall to close.

A decade later, at the height of the Depression, Jimmy returns to Co. Leitrim from the US to look after his mother and vows to live the quiet life. The hall stands abandoned and empty, and despite the pleas of the local youngsters, remains shut. However as Jimmy reintegrates into the community and sees the poverty, and growing cultural oppression, the leader and activist within him is stirred. He makes the decision to reopen the hall in the face of what they may bring...



## **KEN LOACH**

Director

### **Why did you want to tell Jimmy Gralton's story?**

It is a story that brings so many things together: it challenges the idea that the left is dour and dispiriting and against fun and enjoyment and celebration. It also shows how organised religion will make common cause with economic power. They did it in the case of Jimmy Gralton and continue to do so. Church and state become agents of oppression. In this case – though it's barely mentioned in the film because of time – those who would appear to be progressive regressed, like de Valera, whom people thought would encourage open minds and tolerance. In fact, the first thing he did was to seek the approval of the church and get them on his side. Principles were expendable in the interest of realpolitik.

### **Is it intended to be a companion piece to *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* and if so, how?**

Well it's set just ten years later and there's a line in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* where the Anglo-Irish landowner says, "This country will become a priest infested backwater," and lo and behold, it came to pass. It's been a struggle ever since. The church has now lost a lot of credibility because of the scandals. But when we were making the film people absolutely understood the power of the Church and the power of the priest to determine who would be successful or not in the community.

### **To what extent is this film history and to what extent fiction?**

The film is 'inspired' by the life and times of Jimmy Galton. There isn't a huge amount known about the details of his life and personality. That's sad in some ways because clearly he was a brilliant man, but it gave us the freedom to imagine a private life and explore those choices he had to make. We wanted to give the audience a character that has richness and is a rounded person, not just a two-dimensional activist. That balance is very difficult and it always comes down to the details – can he have a relationship with someone? And then what might that relationship be? We can share and imagine the secrets. We did not want the priests to appear as caricatures, which would have been a danger if we had just dramatised the historical record. It was more interesting to imagine a priest who while he was ferocious in his hostility, nevertheless had another dimension to him – he respected his enemy's integrity. Jimmy had real qualities that the priest couldn't ignore. What we tried to do was round the characters whilst being true to the historical facts.

### **What is the significance of the hall?**

I think it's an embodiment of a free spirit, a place where ideas can be tested and expressed, where poetry, music, sport can all be celebrated, where people can express their talents and, of course, dance.

### **So what is the role of dance and music in the story?**

It is an expression of freedom. Always dangerous to those who seek to exercise control.

### **How did you go about capturing dance and music on film?**

You can do it in various ways. You can choreograph the camera and the dancers and make it very stylised, but that was the antithesis of what we wanted. People learned the dances to a point where they could enjoy them and express themselves. Then we had to find camera positions and images that would capture that. I think it's to do with the angle you shoot at and it's to do with the lens you use: it comes down to technical issues. The images that I always have in my head are the Degas images of dance where you feel you're sitting in a box, alongside. It's not right in the middle of the stalls, where everything is straight on to you, he's at an angle, and he's slightly above the dancers, and you see not only the dancers but you see what's in the wings. You observe the dancers rather than being in the middle of them and you observe the joy and the comedy and the communication between them.

**Rather than using a taped track you filmed your musicians live. Why?**

Well because you've got to see the effort of playing. We've done that in our films for half a century – it's quite amusing that one or two people have started doing it now and it's presented as a breakthrough! It's the only way you can see people really playing, and the interaction between the musicians and the dancers, otherwise there's just something slightly wrong, slightly missing. It just needs to be live. It does mean that the editor has got to be good at cutting music and maybe joining two or three bits of music together. But Jonathan [Morris] is very good at that.

**Why did you build the hall in situ, as opposed to using a studio?**

Building a real hall was much easier. The landscape is very important – the landscape of that part of Ireland, the lives people lead because of that landscape and the bogs and the mist and the rest. The temptation in the studio is that you don't make it the actual size, yet the actual size imposes a discipline that I think you can sense as an audience. In a studio, walls can be moved and you get a shot you could never get in real life. In addition, the natural light in the hall is beautiful. Sometimes, Robbie [Ryan, DOP] had to supplement it, but the reality was always there in the room.

**And why did you choose to film it in Leitrim, where the original hall was situated?**

We looked all over the west of Ireland but in fact Leitrim was the best, not only because it was the truest to where the story actually happened but because it's quite an empty county so the impact of modern technical things isn't so great. It's also quite deserted. A lot of people have left because of the lack of jobs, so it's quite easy to film in. In the end there seemed no reason to go anywhere else.

**How did the locals respond to you telling a local story?**

They couldn't have been more welcoming. We had a lot of young people in the film and their commitment was very strong. What's great is that they weren't cynical, they were very open-hearted and generous and absolutely committed. They worked their socks off and their enjoyment was infectious.

### **What was the casting process?**

We tried to keep a strong connection to the area, but there wasn't quite the range of people in terms of professional actors. So we had to spread the net a bit wider. It's just a long process – we see as many people as possible, anybody who shows interest. Kahleen [Crawford, Casting Director] is very good at drawing them in. We tried to cast as many parts as locally as possible because the sense of community is very important in this film – it isn't just one or two characters and a bunch of extras. Everyone who is in it became part of the process – and, I hope, felt embedded in the project. I think you can always tell when there are big scenes in films and people have been hired from a casting agency. They just turn up and they're placed by the assistant directors and the director directs from a monitor. You can't do that. Well you can but it shows in the fabric of the film.

### **Why did you choose Barry Ward to play Jimmy?**

Jimmy, as written, is politically very committed, he's got a genial spirit, he's got empathy with people, he's got a history of working class struggle, of working in different manual jobs, of travelling around the world. There's a warmth and a generosity to him as well as a shrewdness. Finding all those elements was quite tricky. We didn't want him too young and we didn't want him too old – in real life I think he was about 40 when this happened. So we saw lots and lots of people but Barry was the one who seemed to bring all those qualities altogether.

### **Who was Jimmy Galton?**

In real life he was a dedicated activist. I've met many over the years, dedicated trade unionists and organisers, people drawn to politics – once it gets its claws into you, it doesn't let go. When Jimmy came back to Ireland, having been kicked out ten years earlier, reopening the hall was a big decision. Once the hall is re-opened they're going to be after him again. And once they're after him, he's either got to abandon the politics in order to stay or face the same huge battle as before. There was a feeling that the change of government would open possibilities but somebody with Jimmy's politics would know that a politician like de Valera would betray the interests of the working class. Jimmy understood class struggle, and that conflict is inevitable. So it's a very difficult question for him to dive back into politics when he's returned to be with his mother, to help look after the farm. He's exhausted after twenty years of travel and yet in the end what else can he do? If you're political you have no choice.

**What parallels are there between Jimmy's Ireland and Ireland today?**

Well I guess it's the same struggle. There was a financial crash in '29 followed by a decade of depression and mass unemployment. That seems to be the case now: it's a huge struggle for the left to get any purchase in the political argument; it barely does. Politics is presented as a narrow discussion between different right-wing parties, and yet there is great hardship with the poorest taking the hardest cuts, lots of young people with no future, and in Ireland mass emigration to look for any kind of job security. So it's very similar in that respect: financial crash followed by economic depression.

**Can film-making make a difference or affect the debate?**

No I'm not sure it can really, not much. By-and-large films reinforce the status quo because those are the big films that get made and get the big budgets and get the most advertising. They either reinforce the status quo or they're just an escape valve. But I think that's pretty well always been the case. The medium is capable of much more but commercial cinema and the people who run it are not concerned with that. On the other hand, films can make connections, ask questions, challenge received opinions. At the very least, films can give value to the experience of ordinary people. It is through the drama of everyday life, its conflicts, struggles and joys, that we may glimpse the possibilities for the future.

# CAST

## **BARRY WARD**

Jimmy

### **Who was Jimmy Galton?**

Jimmy Galton was a very liberal minded and forward thinking man from Leitrim. Born in 1886 he was a farmer and a working man all his life. He travelled the world as well: he joined the American Navy, was up and down the East coast from Canada down to South America, and was even reportedly in Calcutta at one point. So he brought a lot of ideas and worldly notions back to Ireland, back to place of his birth in Leitrim. Then he established this hall that he thought the community were in dire need of. And he ran into lots of trouble thereafter.

### **What was his motivation?**

I definitely think there was a party animal in there somewhere. He had a real love for good times, and he wanted to share that with others. But he was also very politically minded and he wanted to implement his political ideas. He had spent time in the British Army, he was kicked out, he worked in the mines in Wales, worked on the docks in Liverpool: so he saw the plight of the working class and tried to do something about it. Wherever he went he was politically involved; even in New York he had halls not dissimilar to the hall in Leitrim where they would hold political meetings and classes – he had a big thing for education, a passion he inherited from his mother who always kept books in the house. They both read widely and he noted the importance of that. So wherever he went he tried to encourage other working class people to educate themselves.

**When we begin this film, he has just returned from America...**

He had left for the States for ten years. When this movie opens he's returning in '32. His mum is on her own on a farm so he comes back to tend the farm and look after her because she's too old and frail to run the place herself. But also he considered it safe to return home at this time because in '32 there had been quite a right-wing government in the form of Cumann na nGaedheal, present day Fine Gael. They had just been ousted and Fianna Fáil had come in. And Fianna Fáil were considered a party of the left and came in on the back of all of these kind of left-leaning electoral promises. So he came back thinking it would be safe for him to return.

**How much did you know about him before you began this film?**

There's very little about Jimmy Gralton out there in terms of literature so I found what there was and that was effectively a couple of pamphlets really. Even when Paul [Lavery] was researching the story for the writing of the script he sifted through government documents on the deportation and they've been totally obliterated: 'Let's have no trace of the fact that we have deported a man without fair trial.' So you can't find a great deal of information about it. We spoke to family – there exist some cousins and nephews and they're all still very much keeping the legacy alive. He's very much alive in local folklore but hopefully this film will bring Jimmy Gralton to a wider audience.

**Aside from his political beliefs, what sort of man do you think he was?**

I think he was a very enlightened human being, very sympathetic to people's plights. I think it physically pained him to see anybody treated in an unjust way. He was always sticking up for people and he was an incredibly generous man. Every report I read, he was forever dishing out money. He didn't have a lot but when he came home from the States he brought home with him a gramophone and some records, for the people to experience some of the great stuff that was going on elsewhere in the world. The really nice detail was when he finally was deported and went back to the States he sent back a load of money to the people who had housed him while he was on the run – with strict instructions to have a party.

### **What was the casting process?**

Ken brings people in for a ten-minute meet-and-greet chat. The auditions entail improves about subject matters and scenarios and scenes that have nothing to do with the film. For the whole duration of the auditions you have no idea what it might be for. Now obviously word was out that it was a movie about Jimmy Gralton and the Jimmy Gralton story. But as to whether he was the main guy, or not, or whether it was around the fringes of that scene, nobody knew.

### **What do you think Ken saw in you?**

I've not really spoken to him about it, but I think it's something of the everyman in Jimmy that he wanted rather than casting a big star. Obviously Jimmy Gralton is a very attractive man – a lot of people listened to him, went to him, followed him. But he was also an everyman and everybody has a bit of Jimmy Gralton in them. So I think he went for an average Joe.

### **How important is dance in this film?**

The authorities, namely the Church and government, didn't want him stirring up a hornet's nest. It suited the powers that be to keep people subjugated and keep them down. He was the antithesis of that. He thought, "Let's rise and let's live and celebrate, let's dance and let's sing." One of the things that he had brought back from Harlem was this kind of provocative dancing: things like the Lindy Hop and the Charleston that involve closer proximity than people would have been used to. When church and government saw that they just thought sex, wildness, booze and cavorting. Without ever attending the classes themselves. It was fun and it was exercise; it was soulful and joyous. Yet it was something they felt they couldn't control.

### **How is your dancing?**

To say I'm passable would be putting it kindly. We had about four weeks of rehearsals in London before we came out to Ireland, which was tough. I just couldn't get the basics. But it's like anything – you spend enough time doing it and you'll pick it up. By the time we got to shooting the scenes I was flying.



### **What is the significance of the hall to the local people?**

It works on two levels; one is the fact that they could go and have fun and celebrate and dance. Because in an earlier scene you see me come across kids at a crossroads dancing, and they're dancing outdoors – it rains in this part of the world for 300 days of the year or thereabouts so it's very restrictive. For them to have somewhere where they can go and do the things they love and listen to new music and read new literature and experience the world from the safe confines of a hall, that's a big, big attraction.

And then on another level it's the fact that the political situation here was far from stable. There was a lot of capitalist exploitation and wealthy landlords who were being very, very harsh on their tenants, evicting people at the drop of a hat, all in the name of money. Within the hall they set up a land league and a court where they were trying to implement real justice – several cases came to them as a last resort. There was a properly established court where they would sit and listen to both sides of the case and give what they deemed to be a fair ruling. And then with the help of the community and locals they would implement it by sheer force of numbers.

### **How would you describe Oonagh and Jimmy's relationship?**

I think it's a really sweet and powerful but unconsummated – circumstances drove a wedge between them and they never got together really. Simone [Kirby, who plays Oonagh], Paul, Ken and I had lengthy discussions about this. Here are two young, single people and it's written in the stars they are going to get together. In '22 he flees, they continue writing to each other, but Jimmy has no intention really of coming home. Oonagh has to get on with her life, she meets someone, marries and they have a family. And that's the end of it. So then when Jimmy comes back ten years later their love is still very, very strong. But their hands are tied, there's nothing they can really do about it. It's got to be put down as a lost opportunity.

### **Is Jimmy the leader of this gang or just the man who speaks for them?**

Ken stressed from the very beginning that there is no real leadership in this. Although people look up to Jimmy for advice, it was very much a democracy at work and each man has an equal say. I think Jimmy made sure that that was seen to be the case. Because even though the hall was largely built with his own money and savings from the States, and indeed it was on his own land, in fact it belonged to the community. Everyone built it with the fruits of their own labour, so anyone who chipped in had an equal ownership of it.

**What has it been like making this film?**

I had friends who worked on *Barley* so they told me incessantly about the day-to-day runnings of working on a Ken Loach movie. They loved it. So I kind of knew what was in store – but then at the same time I never knew what was coming up in the script so there was always that brilliant element of surprise every day. That’s very conducive to a good performance and it’s very, very actor friendly because you’re experiencing it as the character is – you have to live it in the moment.

**You’re from Dublin; do you know Leitrim?**

My family hail from here; my dad’s Roscommon and his grandparents are Leitrim. So in many ways it’s a returning to roots. I had two weeks in Drumshanbo, which is Leitrim as well, before official rehearsals and the rest of the cast arrived. I was working on local farms and I just met the kindest, warmest people. They thought I was half mad because I was looking for a scythe to practise when they were cutting grass with tractors. But that’s what I needed to do. Now I can cut and foot turf as well as scything and raking.

**Have you played a role like this before?**

No, it’s my first lead in a movie. And I’ve been dying to work with Ken, as most actors and anybody into film would be dying to work with Ken Loach. So it’s a dream job. I’m not even speculating on what it will do career-wise – you’ve just got to enjoy it for what it is now. Before this I’d done bits and bobs, TV and film. This is my fourth or fifth feature but in the last three or four years I’ve been doing lots of theatre. Mostly Dublin based – I’ve been very fortunate to have done quite a number of shows at the Abbey Theatre (National Theatre of Ireland) in Dublin. I was chugging along quite contentedly.

## **SIMONE KIRBY**

Oonagh

### **Describe your character.**

I'm playing Oonagh who is Jimmy's love interest. In the '20s they were sort of a couple we think and then he leaves, comes back ten years later and she's married with kids – but they still have this very strong bond. She's also on the board of trustees for the hall and she teaches dancing there.

### **How do you imagine her past?**

In the '20s when Jimmy leaves he asks her to come with him but she's the only daughter, her mother is fading and her father would be lost without her... you can tell that she's probably one of these women who's been taking care of everybody and the house for a long time. She's probably a very hard worker and has had a lot of duties and responsibilities from quite a young age I think.

### **Is she based on a real life figure?**

Not in Jimmy's story but I did say to his relatives that I was playing the love interest and we were thinking perhaps Jimmy might have had his eye on someone – someone who had their eye on him.

### **How did you come to be cast?**

My agent in London sent me for a meeting with Ken and we just had a five minute chat. Then I was asked to come back a couple of weeks later to do some improvisations, then after that I did another round in London and then I came for two days to Dublin so it was a long process. Even when I had been offered the part I didn't know my character's name. We knew it was built on Jimmy Gralton so we were all looking online to see who this guy was. I had seen very little about his personal life so I asked Rebecca [O'Brien]. Ken called me back just to say, "Okay let me just explain a little bit who you are, it's a fictional character, it's not a biopic," and that's when I let go and went, "I have no idea so I'm just not going to think about it anymore – I'll just turn up and play whoever they want me to play."

### **How did you find playing period?**

I knew from quite early on in the auditions that it was set in the 1930s, and that's around my grandmother's times so that interests me. It's lovely to do a costume thing.

### **Much of your previous work has been in theatre. How has this differed?**

It's actually more like theatre than it is any film or TV than I've done before; Ken's much more involved with us in my experience than any other director in film. So it's actually more my theatre experience that lends itself to this than anything else.

### **What effect does not having read the full script have on your performance?**

I find it really liberating actually – I'm not playing for something that I know is going to happen to her in the future. I can only play what I know now. It makes total sense to me: just play what you know. Even though we try and do that anyway as actors, it's a bit of a gift to genuinely not know what's round the corner.

### **Have you filmed scenes that have gone in unexpected directions as a result?**

Yes. The very, very first day I didn't have any lines. The camera was quite far back and it was sort of hard to get a grasp on it – I'm used to being told where my mark is and things like that. I was feeling a little bit like I didn't really know what to do with myself. Then Mikel Murfi started throwing in lines that were not in the script that he had been told to throw in and I got a bit of a shock. I laughed, completely out of character and then I realised, 'Okay this is the beast – I have to be on my game all the time with this.' Any surprises after that I've been able to react to properly. I was reminded just to stay in character for them.

### **How have you found the singing and the dancing?**

When we were in London Barry [Ward] and I were immediately sent off to learn how to dance together. We had three classes a week and then we went to a ballroom once. I love dancing so I revelled in it. Luckily I did some step dancing when I was younger, so I picked that up quite easily – she's supposed to be a big dancer in the room so it would look terrible if I didn't know step dancing. Then I just loved learning the Lindy Hop, though they're not supposed to be experts at Lindy Hopping, they're just supposed to be able to shake a leg. Actually, I was a bit sad once the big dance scenes were over because we were learning for ages and now we don't have to do them anymore. The Rivoli Ballroom is around the corner from where I live in London, so we've already said when we go back we are definitely going to go some night and do some more Lindy Hopping!

### **What is the Lindy Hop?**

When you see old videos of them doing it in America, they are flinging each other around the place. It's really athletic actually. We are doing a much, much tamer version with basic spins and twirls. The thing is that unlike step dancing you're pressed against each other a lot more, which is why it was controversial at the time.

### **How active is Oonagh in local politics?**

Jimmy's the one flying the flag, and some of the boys are much more active, but Jimmy and Oonagh are very likeminded politically. They'd had discussions with each other about politics. It's not just that they fancy each other – they actually connect on that level. They're socialists – it's all about helping some of the underdogs really, helping people who've been ousted, picking people up and making things more fair.

### **What is your background in theatre and film?**

I'm from Ennis originally, I moved to Galway when I was 17 and I did youth theatre and then I trained properly a couple of years after that in Dublin. I lived in Dublin for another few years after that then I moved to London for work – I wanted to do more stuff like this really. The irony being now I have come back to Ireland for what's been probably my biggest role.

## **JIM NORTON**

Father Sheridan

### **Describe your character.**

Father Sheridan is the parish priest of this small community. He is very rigid in his beliefs, but he is, I think, essentially a good man. He's doing the best he can from what he knows – he's following the dictates of the Catholic Church at that time, which were very tough and obsessed with controlling the moral life of the people in the community.

### **When Jimmy Gralton returns to Ireland and rebuilds the hall, what does that mean for Sheridan?**

Oh it's a huge threat to his position because he obviously knows Gralton by reputation and he knows there's trouble ahead. At that time the church's Parochial Hall was the centre of cultural and social life. Suddenly someone is coming back and it was like opening up an alternative entertainment. Not only that, but Gralton is bringing his socialist ideas which of course as a Catholic priest he would have been very frightened of. And then there's the dancing. The church was obsessed with dancing – they used to say that dancing in the dance halls and not doing the pure Irish dances was dancing on the hobs of hell. They were afraid of giving these people their freedom, giving the young people the opportunity just to be who they were, to be young.

### **But you say that you feel that he is a good man at heart?**

Yes I think he is, though it's hard to know; I'm ambivalent about it. It's always difficult playing someone that you're diametrically opposed to – and I am diametrically opposed to everything that he says and does. But I think deep down he does have a genuine vocation and he does think that he is doing the right thing.

### **Is there also a personal clash with Jimmy, rather than just a moral one?**

Yes, I think he's threatened by him; he's threatened by the fact that he is a bright, intelligent, articulate young man with very strong ideas. Father Sheridan sees that as in conflict with his authority. It's hard for us to understand today the power the Church had over people's lives. It wasn't just about morality and Catholicism, there was also a political element as well, still very much aligned with the government and with the people who were for the Treaty [of 1922]. Gralton obviously was from the other side; he was a Republican and also had been to America and was bringing back ideas and attitudes that the Catholic Church didn't want.

### **What is Sheridan's response?**

Father Sheridan is quite devious in the way he goes about trying to find out if Gralton is going to stay. He goes to his mother and says, you know, "Is it likely that he's going to stay or maybe he'd be better off in London". He actually offers to get him a job in London – anything to get him out because he can see trouble ahead. He can see that not only is his authority going to be questioned but what Gralton is bringing in to the parish are not qualities of life that Father Sheridan wants to see.

### **Yet we do see Sheridan listening to jazz music himself at one point...**

That tells us that there is an element, a part of his personality and his emotional life that he hasn't even investigated. It's kind of frightening in a way to him to find that he's responding to this rather wonderful music. He has been told that this music that comes from Africa is jazz and jazz means sex and sensuality. That's part of his conditioning. Yet there he is, having had a few whiskies and listening to Bessie Smith and being quite moved by it. Maybe in that scene he begins to understand what it is that the young people see. And also begins to realise what he has missed in his life.

**You mentioned earlier that it's hard for people today to understand the complete power of the church in Ireland at that time. Did you experience that yourself?**

Well I grew up in Dublin in the '40s and '50s and I was sent to what my parents assumed was the best possible school, the Christian Brothers, which was the most hateful, dreadful and deeply unpleasant period of my life. I spent a long part of my life undoing the damage that I felt was done to me by these people who were put in charge of what they laughingly called my education. If education is a preparation for life it wasn't, from my point of view, a very good one. It was based on fear and abuse and violence and I ended up as a very angry person when I left school and regretted the fact that I didn't stand up for myself more than I did. This was in the '50s – I mean can you imagine what it was like in the '30s, the power, the conditioned reflex that people had to the Church and to their authority? This is why now in present day Ireland there are young people who would be amazed to know how teenagers at that time were so deeply affected by the power of the Church.

**This is the second time you've worked with Ken Loach...**

I worked with Ken 20 years ago; we did a film called *Hidden Agenda*. It was interesting because I was actually working out in Los Angeles at the time when I was cast. I remember flying in from LA on a really cold, wet winter day and meeting Ken on Albert Bridge. I was dressed in denims, I'd just got off the plane with my suntan and we were there shivering. We went along to his office and we just talked about the film. The next day I was on the set and it was just a magical experience. Even then I was very well aware of his work and a big fan of his but I just loved the way he worked. I loved the trust he gave the actors and working with my mate Brian Cox we had a really good time – and it was a good film as well.

**How did the part in *Jimmy's Hall* come about?**

I was rehearsing Conor Macpherson's new play *The Night Alive* in Dublin and I knew that Ken was casting the movie. I also knew a bit about Jimmy Gralton because my grandmother came from Clones in Monaghan. I remember as a child hearing a talk about this man who had been the only Irish person ever deported from Ireland. When I read about the movie in the paper, I said I know that name, so I got in touch with Ken and we had a chat and a meeting and a discussion about Father Sheridan. A few days later they rang and said we'd love you to do it. At that point I had no idea who the character was and as we are talking now, I still am finding out – that's the great journey that you make with someone like Ken.



## **ANDREW SCOTT**

Father Seamus

### **Who are you playing?**

I played Father Seamus who is a young priest in the village and the junior priest to Father Sheridan. He is an example of a more modern, benign and accessible Catholic Church, a representative of the new church that would have been emerging at that time. Probably slightly less intolerant and less paranoid and maybe a bit more humane and modern, trying to introduce arts and culture and that kind of thing to local communities.

### **What is his relationship with Sheridan?**

Although he's evidently quite different from Sheridan I think he's actually very fond of him. I think he tries to understand him, to understand the motivation behind what's political for Father Sheridan and what is personal. These priests used to live together in the same big houses, you know with housekeepers and everything. So, there would probably be quite a balance between them in a way. I think that goes slightly awry when Father Sheridan starts to take some rather extreme decisions. Seamus is not belligerent, and he's not particularly powerful, but I think that while trying to remain within the confines of his job he tries to make his point.

### **And what does he make of Jimmy Galton?**

Well, I suppose they are probably a little bit more similar in age and I think they share a great love of the arts and culture and all that comes with that. Seamus is not as scared of culture and music and the arts; he doesn't see it as something to be frightened of. So, I don't think he's as scared of Jimmy as Father Sheridan is. In fact that's what Father Sheridan's chief problem is: it's that he's actually intimidated by Jimmy.

### **What appealed to you about this film?**

Well, I mean that answer is the same for everyone – it's Mr Loach, there's no doubt about it. He's kind of a hero of mine so I was happy to. I would have done the catering to be perfectly honest, even though that wouldn't have been good for anybody 'cause I'm a terrible cook. But, yeah, the idea of working in that way, with a script as a basis but having the opportunity to improvise in a lot of stuff, is wonderful. It's so enjoyable to be able to make films in that way – to strip them back and be involved in a story where you don't necessarily know what the outcome is going to be. That's really, really exciting. Maybe some actors might find that a little discomforting but I think other actors find it really exhilarating. Certainly for me it was extraordinary.

### **What stood out for you from the shoot?**

What stood out for me really was Ken and the extraordinary calm and passionate way that he goes about making films. It shows how if you concentrate on what you should be concentrating on, which is to try and make the drama as dynamic as possible and as truthful as possible, then you can make brilliant performances out of people who aren't actors and very truthful performances out of other actors. I suppose I had that really rare feeling when you just absolutely trust everything he says. There was a very nice atmosphere but not an overly serious one, which I think is always good for creativity, even if the subject matter can sometimes be serious. And my family are from that part of the country. My father is from Mayo and my godmother lives in Sligo where we filmed. It was just lovely to spend a little bit of time in that beautiful, beautiful part of the country as well.

### **Have you worked in this way before?**

I've done a little bit of improvisation in the theatre and a little bit in comedy as well. What's unusual in this is that we don't know how the story will turn out – which is truthful, because as human beings we don't know the outcome of our stories. There's a temptation if you know the end of a script to not be ready and open to things moment by moment. I think that's what the very free thing about working with Ken is about. You just go into a scene and then you play the truth of the scene. Because he's aware of the whole line of the story you just play it day by day which means you don't think "Oh God, I've got that big scene two on the 17th" because you don't have a schedule in the same way you do on other films. So, you don't feel pressure in that way. You just go up and you just give yourself over to the moment. In a strange way it's really relaxing.

### **What was it like playing a man of the cloth?**

You're very aware of the Church's power. I've already played a couple of priests in my time for some reason. I do have a lot of, actually a lot of questions and doubts about organised religion – a lot of Irish people do. Particularly in the light of the way the Catholic Church has conducted itself in the past 20 years. What they do very well with the priests in this film is to realise that they're trying to act in the best way they know how. They had enormous power at the time – and some of them abused it, there's no doubt about it. But I think a lot of them are just trying to keep going with something that they were taught to do by the previous generation of priests before them, and they before them. Growing up in Ireland in the '80s I probably would have known some of these priests, or at least my mother would have. Someone like a Father Seamus would have been an old man then. So, I would have known a little bit about what they were like. They were at least trying to be modern but it's very difficult, very difficult to try and break through. I think it's very important in our culture to have questions; for everything to be questioned in order for things to be healthy. The Catholic Church wasn't questioned at all. That's very regrettable.

# **FRANCIS MAGEE**

Mossie

## **Describe your character.**

I'm playing Mossie Maguire, one of Jimmy's oldest pals and a stalwart of the whole movement. He's a down to earth, dependable geezer from the area, and a good family man – he has his wife Angela and two children, one of whom, because they're so poor, they've had to send her to Scotland with an auntie. That cuts really deep. He's been in jail for quite a long time for his political activities. He fought in the War of Independence – he's used a gun before and he would do it again – but he's kind of disillusioned now that the British haven't been kicked out, and the situation for people like him hasn't changed a bit – the Church still all powerful, the wealthy hanging onto the wealth and not sharing it with the rest of us.

## **What does Jimmy's return mean to him?**

First and foremost Jimmy and Mossie are personal friends, so that means a lot. Mossie would stop a bullet for Jimmy, I think. It just reawakens a lot of hope and optimism, Jimmy being back on the scene: he's one of those guys that has the charisma that the rest of us lack. And he gets things done; we'll follow him but we're not leaders really.

## **What does the hall itself represent for Mossie and the community?**

Well, Mossie has a line where he says, "It's more than just a building, it's what we are, everything. This place gives me life." So it's just hope, optimism that things can be better. For Mossie, who runs the boxing classes in the hall, to see the young ones dancing and having fun, as well as learning, it means it's not all dour socialism. It's a place of entertainment as well and that's so valuable for this rural area.

**How did your casting come about?**

I think initially I met Ken in London when they were just seeing who was around. Then I met him in Dublin some weeks later, did improv and heard nothing for a while. When I heard I'd got it I was delighted – and scared. Ken is very much an actor's director. I never know what he's going to come out with next, but that keeps you on your toes.

**Have you been victim to any surprises on set?**

We were doing a scene in the hall, a singing lesson for the ladies. We did this scene for hours from this angle, that angle, we do it one more time and then suddenly from the back of the hall the door was kicked in and in comes the Free State Army. Hardly anyone knew that was going to happen. I had an inkling, actually, 'cause I saw them outside. But the point is any shock that's on the faces of whoever the camera's pointing at is real.

**Did you get to dance?**

He's a bit of a mover but Mossie's more of a singer. They had me do a solo – I've never sung on a film or a TV show, so that's a first.

# **MIKEL MURFI**

Tommy

## **Describe your character.**

I play a guy called Tommy Gilroy. He's the ex-head of the Flying Column in the War of Independence. Tommy might not have necessarily spent any time in jail, but he'd have been very anti-English, probably would have gone all round the place, leading the Flying Column, shooting Black and Tans whenever he could, then fought in the Civil War on the anti-Treaty side. He's a good pal with Jimmy and Mossie and they'd be close allies. They don't always agree on what's going on with the hall, but they work it out.

## **Is he a fighter or a thinker?**

I think he's bought into Jimmy's philosophy wholesale, in the sense that he won't want to act in a violent manner, unless he thinks it's absolutely necessary. I think the political climate at the time was such that people had fought each other in the Civil War and figured that that was enough of that. If we could stand arms down and get people to bear with one another for ten years, five years even, at peace, that might start something. People could settle down and then politics might take over.

## **How did you come to be cast?**

I'm the only one of the core cast around Jimmy who's from Sligo. I imagine that was an attraction to Ken in the first place. I guess, also, that when you meet him and you're improvising those meetings, in the audition period, that there's something in you that he sees – something that fits with what they think is the closest they can get, in an actor, to the character. A lot of the work that you're doing is just intuitive, rather than things that you could go away and craft as an actor.

**What did you know of this story beforehand?**

I never knew it beforehand and I was not particularly interested in history, but in a very short space of time, during the rehearsing period, with Ken and with Donal [Ó Drisceoil], the historian, talking to us, you build up a very quick, efficient composite of what was happening in that locale at the time.

**You're a Sligo man. Does this feel like a particularly local film?**

Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean, the authenticity of it is superb, but that's Ken, and Kahleen as well, the Casting Director – between the pair of them they've auditioned and interviewed every extra on the thing. It's astonishing and when you look around, it's so authentic. The people they've brought on board for the dance hall sequences are all local and they're magic. I don't know if you've talked to Aileen [Henry, see below] yet. Aileen's from over the road and she would have danced in dance halls in this locale not long after the time. It means the woman sitting there beside you, who is from this place, could have been in this hall, just as easily. It's very affecting and it's lovely for people in the locality to know that, somehow, this person Jimmy Galton is being honoured.

# **SORCHA FOX**

Molly

## **Describe your character.**

Molly lives and works on a farm. She has aging parents that are not well, so she looks after them. She loves music, so though she hasn't had any training, she teaches music in the hall. She wouldn't have had a formal education, but she would have been very interested in books and would have read a lot, so I think she's educated herself about politics. The hall means everything to Molly. Because what it represents is a glimpse of an alternative Ireland, where there is real equality, and real justice. And also for a woman in rural Ireland at the time, and a subsistence farmer, the freedom of expression through dance and through music and literature would have been an absolute lifeline.

## **What sort of a person is Molly?**

I think she's probably passionate rather than angry. Yet she's cautious insofar as I think she realises the potential threat they're under from the forces that they're opposing. But she has decided that it's worth it, because to not do anything isn't an option for her.

## **What was your favourite scene you filmed?**

I do a bit of singing so it was lovely to be able to do that in this film. Molly sings a song called 'Siúil a Rún', which means 'Walk My Love', that she's teaching the children. It's kind of a slow, beautiful song, half Irish, half English. Ken and all the crew and the cameras were out of the way. And at one point I was looking down the hall and only the class were in front of me and I could see the Leitrim Hills out the windows of the hall, and you could see nothing else apart from the world you were in. That was magical.



**What is your background and how did you come to be involved?**

I'm from Dublin originally, but I moved seven years ago to just down the road in Leitrim so I would be local. Myself and my partner at the time, Donal O'Kelly, did a piece called Jimmy Gralton's Dance Hall. I think Donal had sent a little poem that he'd written about Jimmy Gralton to Paul. So Paul got over and saw the thing we did and started researching the story and I have been involved ever since.

**What would you say is at the crux of this story?**

The hall it wasn't just a political place, and it wasn't just a dance hall. It was a combination of something that really gave people the image of an alternative. It offered freedom in the forms of physical freedom and dancing, and then the freedom that comes with education. And so it was actually a truly empowering place. But at the same time plugged into an international movement. And I think that's why it was so dangerous to the powers that be.

# **MARTIN LUCEY**

Dezzie

## **Describe your character.**

Dezzie is an old friend of James Gralton from a working class family. He's very enthusiastic about the education of kids and about getting the rightful owners back on the land. Basically he is interested in fair play.

## **What does Jimmy's return mean to him?**

It's like a new light again. He remembers how it was. He remembers how good it could have been. Dezzie fought in the War of Independence. That was his primary concern at the time, to get complete freedom from Britain. And that didn't fully materialise. The middle classes got their land and their lives back together. But the hand-to-mouth farmer like Dezzie did not get anything and it doesn't look like it's going to improve. So that's why I want Jimmy back because I know he's a good leader. He's charismatic. He has the energy and the intelligence to rally people. And I know that that's what we need.

## **What does the hall mean to them?**

The hall signifies a place where likeminded people can meet. And it's a place that's of benefit to the working class, to the education of the poor. The rich get worried when the poor get educated. Dezzie's very aware that education is important – he takes part in the literature classes. He's there in the class to learn himself, but he's also there to make sure that people are coming in to organise and to help in any way he can. He's very, very enthusiastic about the hall.

**You were in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*. How did you come to be cast in this film?**

Well I heard that Ken was casting and I rang Kahleen [Crawford, Casting Director]. Word had it with all the other *Wind that Shakes the Barley* actors that he wasn't casting anybody from that film. So when I was called again, if I got half a day's work I would have been just over the moon. But to get seven weeks was a dream come true. I went home and told my wife, it's like meeting family. It's so comforting – there hasn't been a voice raised in either production, not once. Nobody ever had a cross word with anybody, or any of the stuff that sometimes goes on in other sets. Whether you're in for a day or whether you're playing James Gralton, everybody's treated the same. We all get ready in the same place, we travel with the buses, we eat at the same table. It makes it more than a film, it's an experience.

**Are you a Leitrim local yourself?**

No, I'm from Cork. Ken did say to try and tone down the Cork accent because it's very strong, especially when you get excited. So I've been trying to be aware of that. But though the landscape is definitely lovely Leitrim, I think the story is Irish. James Gralton just happened to live in Leitrim but when the English left the Church took over and that was all over Ireland. We're only just getting out the other end of that now.

# **SHANE O'BRIEN**

Finn

## **Describe your character.**

I'm playing Finn, who would have been one of Jimmy Gralton's closest friends. Finn would've been a friend back in the '20s as well, in the early days before Jimmy headed to America for the first time. So they'd be pretty tight. Finn was in the same brigade as Tommy [Mikel Murfi]. Tommy would've been my superior officer. But I think Finn's a bit tired of military action, and he's newly married, so he's enjoying the whole time in the hall and what Jimmy's all about. While Finn agrees with putting people back into their homes, if they've been evicted, or been abused in any way, I'm not the all-out militant that the likes of Tommy would be.

## **And what is his role in the hall?**

His background is as a creamery worker, so he's quite good with his hands. He can do a bit of manual labour, so he helped with building the hall, and the carpentry and so forth. Outside of that, really he's just kind of a handyman.

## **What is the nature of the community we're seeing here?**

It's mainly a farming community, I'd say. Trying to make a living on two or three acres, very little money, some of them tenants living on the property of the local landlord. They're the type of people that would be in Jimmy's group and that he represents.

## **Why has the hall become so important to them all?**

I think the beauty of the hall is it's a free space where people can express themselves, and it isn't under the control of the church. In those days, they pretty much controlled every community activity, or had some say in it. In the hall people can be themselves. They can dance and express opinions, they can learn new skills, they can learn how to box, or sing, or paint, or dance. The Church has no say in it, and that is why they fear Jimmy.

**Why do people like Finn gravitate towards Jimmy?**

He's a man that's willing to make a decision. He's a leader. A charismatic man, very likeable, very gentlemanly, with a very strong will and a strong backbone. And he's travelled a bit as well, he's been to America for ten years so he has seen horizons beyond Ireland. There's a colour to him and people like that.

**How did you react when you first learnt Jimmy Galton's story.**

I'll hold my hand up – history wise I had a very, very basic knowledge. It did anger me a bit learning about what they did to him. But look, I'm all for moving on – it's good to know your history, but not be shaped by it completely. I believe times have changed, and we need to change with them.

# **SEAMUS HUGHES**

Ruari

## **Describe you character.**

I'm playing Ruari. He was one of the lads that came to the hall in the '30s. He probably wouldn't have been around in the 1920s because he was too young. So he'd be a very enthusiastic supporter of the hall and the principles of the hall. It's the times that have politicised him – there's a bit of anger there. He was probably someone who was looking for a little bit of leadership, like many people back in the day I imagine. It wouldn't have taken much to get like-minded people to come together behind the likes of Jimmy Gralton. Ruari would have heard about him, because he'd gone away. Then Jimmy comes back with a bit of an aura, has seen a bit of the world – it's just what people need.

## **What does the hall represent to the local people?**

People are disparate. They can only see themselves coming together under the auspices of a church or a political party. Not for themselves, by themselves. It always seems to be on someone else's terms. This hall represents our terms, for us. They've rebuilt this hall themselves. They have pride and ownership of it. It's a bubble of freedom in an otherwise rather repressive life and state.

## **What is the dynamic between Jimmy and his friends?**

It's extremely socialist and democratic. Everyone's voice must be heard – that's the principle of the entire hall. Even when we have our meeting about whether or not to take direct action Jimmy says we need to speak to the youth as well. It is their hall because they would stand to lose out also. So there is that genuine democracy that is fostered between women and men of all ages.

**What did you know of this story beforehand?**

I had actually heard of Jimmy Gralton. I've always had an interest in history – probably since school. I always thought that what they don't tell you was more interesting than what they do! I knew Leitrim was a hotbed and that Jimmy was one of the instigators at that time. Once I knew what this film was about I had access to several books written by family members and biographers. But most helpful was being up in Leitrim, meeting Jimmy's cousins, family friends, seeing exactly where he was from. I learned a lot about what the time was like. And of course the accent is something you're listening out for – I'm from Galway City and a Galway accent is different from a Leitrim accent. Even then it's complicated – it depends where you are from in Leitrim; and it depends where you are in Galway!

**How have you found working with Ken Loach?**

Ken lets you find your way in to scenes and allows whatever your honest reaction is to happen. From there the character emerges. There's a sort of village feel to it all – when you spend time with these people the character emerges. It's a wonderful process.

# **AILEEN HENRY**

Alice

## **Describe the character you're playing.**

I am playing Alice, the mother of Jimmy Gralton. She's lived through very hard times and she has buried another son, so she is very pleased to have Jimmy home. She's a very strong woman, intellectual, fond of books. She would've brought Jimmy up to be upright and thoughtful and to love his country and she would've taught him all the values of life.

## **How does she feel when he comes back and she sees how the story starts to unfurl?**

Well I think she would've been very, very proud that he saw the needs in the area and he started up this hall. He built this on his own land. He put all sorts of activities in there that were educational and good for the local community.

## **What do you think Alice wants for Jimmy?**

Well I think she wants him to be happy. She wants him not to make a hasty decision that might affect the rest of his life. She feels that if he goes down the road of Oonagh, that may become a disaster and that he might never find anybody else for himself. I'm sure she's glad he's back, but I'm sure, like every mother, she wouldn't see that much of a future for him in a country that's in dire straits.

## **Where do you come from?**

I grew up in this parish, in a small town so I know the hardships that there were. I was a psychiatric nurse when I was young and when I got married, married women couldn't be employed and so I had to leave. I ended up living on another small farm down in North Sligo and myself and my husband worked the farm and built it up from nothing. Then at some stage my husband was made redundant so I went out to work and I got work in a healthcare company and I worked there for about 25 years. I was a union activist there and I became involved in an awful lot of things. I've never been idle.



**How did you come to be cast?**

I have never done any acting before. I got a phone call from our local union office to say that they were doing a film but me in my naivety thought it was something to do with union activities because it's the 100 year anniversary of the foundation of the union in Sligo. I went in there and I met Ken Loach and I wasn't aware who Ken Loach was, not being a film person. I just did what I was asked to do and I didn't ask any questions.

**Have you enjoyed the experience?**

Fantastic, absolutely, but it's just the whole ethos of everybody. I've never seen a frown on anyone's face.

**How does it make you feel learning about Jimmy Gralton's story?**

I'm very sad and very upset. Jimmy was young but his elderly mother that had to see him deported already after burying her husband and her son – how any mother would feel going through that kind of drama I don't know. I think it's a heart-rending story. They shouldn't have allowed it to happen. There seemed to be no consideration for his mother either and I find that terrible

**How have you found working with Ken Loach?**

Well it's an experience never to be forgotten: his gentleness, his attitude, just listening to him. He makes everybody comfortable – all the actors, all the crew, everybody will tell you the exact same thing.

# **AISSLING FRANCIOSI**

Marie

## **Describe your character.**

My character is Marie O'Keefe. She's about 18 years old, and she's quite feisty and rebellious. Her father Dennis is very much a Free-Stater, quite conservative and on the side of the Church. Marie is going through a rebellious teenage phase, and so she goes against everything that he believes in. When she hears that James Gralton is back, and sees her father's reaction, and how angry he is, obviously this intrigues her – she wants to know who this man is. She's heard about the dance halls, and she's a young, spirited girl, so she wants to dance in a hall, as opposed to just by a roadside, so she urges Jimmy to reopen the hall. That leads her in to a little bit of trouble with her father as a result.

## **How much did you know about this period, and about Jimmy Gralton, beforehand?**

To be honest, I only had a limited knowledge from junior school, so I was actually really grateful to get an opportunity to find out about such an important part of our history. I did lots of reading, and we had history lessons before we started. I learned that it was such a complicated and fractured time. Ken really pushed the point as well that it was not like there were good guys and bad guys. Everyone had their reasons for doing what they did. It was also nice to learn sean-nós dancing, because I hadn't had any experience of Irish dancing, and not even that much of Irish music really. Doing this has kind of opened me up to all that.

## **Where are you from in Ireland?**

I'm from Dublin, but until I was about five I grew up in Italy, and then moved over to Dublin with my mum and brothers.

### **How has it been working on this film?**

The only way I can describe it, and it's not actually an overstatement, is life-affirming. There have been days where the atmosphere is amazing. Ken walks the walk, you know, he doesn't just talk the talk. He knows everyone's name, he's so respectful, and there's a really loving, caring atmosphere, from everyone from the crew to the production to the actors. Apart from my finger it's been the best experience.

### **Your finger?**

We had a scene where my father is disciplining me. We were doing the scene, I fell over at one point – that was part of the scene – and then on the second take, I came outside almost fainted. I couldn't understand why, because I'm not a fainter at all. They force-fed me chocolate biscuits, and then I was fine. When I regained full consciousness, my finger was really sore. But I wanted to finish the scene because the energy was just great. At the end of the day, I went to get my finger checked and I had fractured the knuckle. I think that it will add to the scene, at least!

# CREW

## REBECCA O'BRIEN

Producer

### Foundations.

At first I thought that *Jimmy's Hall* would be a nice, easy film to make. We had no idea that it would expand into the biggest film we've done. That's in terms of budget, production values, as well as cast and crew. We had a dance team, two different bands that we concocted ourselves, and of course we built a bloody hall in the middle of nowhere. I remember doing the budget and then thinking, 'Oh gosh, this is quite a big film.'

Fortunately our wonderful French supporters, Why Not and Wild Bunch said, 'Let's do it again in the same way as we did *Looking for Eric*, *The Angel's Share*, *Route Irish...*' So, they came on board very happily in the same arrangement that we had before, whereby they cashflowed the production up front, trusting us to get on with the work while the legal process was still in train.

Because it was a bigger budget this time we thought we would probably need more money from other funders. So we approached the BFI, Film 4 and the Irish Film Board (because obviously it is a very Irish film, and needed Irish support) and all of them said yes. As usual, it was more complex wrangling three public funders – you've got three more sets of lawyers and financiers, and what one does the others want to do as well, so you end up with a lot of paperwork, but there was never a conflict. The financing was pretty straightforward because of the French funding.

We could not have made this film without their support from the very beginning because we had a huge prep period. We needed to be able to be in Leitrim, we needed to have location managers working early on to find the right sites, and we started casting in January and location recce-ing in the winter. We also had to train our actors in dancing and we were teaching people in Leitrim and Sligo dancing for at least a couple of months before the shoot began. So, we had to think ahead of the

game and that's obviously a bigger production number.

Our partners always leave us to make the film we want to make. I think it's partly to do with the fact that we are experienced. They know what they're getting; they have seen us deliver films within the budget and on time before. They feel safe enough that we don't have a completion bond for instance and they know how fiercely independent we are. Ken likes to work in the way that he does, without interference, and they've understood that over the years that actually it is best to leave him to it – they get a better film that way. Of course, it's generous of them to let us get on with it and it's quite brave of them too. That culture has got a lot worse in recent years. There is a lot of executive involvement in projects but with us they know that we don't appreciate it very much. We would much rather show them what we can do later.

### **'For peace comes dropping slow...' Filming in Leitrim.**

We chose in this case to film in quite an inaccessible place, yet it was always a real bonus that we were able to make it in Leitrim. The real Jimmy Gralton grew up in South Leitrim and though we filmed in North Leitrim it was still amazing to be able to do it in the right county. It was purely the coincidence of the locations being right – we would have filmed in Mayo if the locations were better there. But we needed places with as few modern bungalows as possible and we needed a town big enough to support us nearby, which was Sligo.

Sligo isn't the most accessible place but once we were there we were extraordinarily lucky – it rains for 50% of the time in this area yet we didn't lose anything because of the weather, not one day. To choose a place which is so wet, because it's so close to the Atlantic, is almost completely bonkers but the weather smiled on us. When you're building a hall on a bog it helps if it's not raining.

A lot of the cast were local as well, so it's actually been more of a community film than I ever imagined we could make. That has meant that the local people have been able to own the film in the way that you always want a film to belong to the area. That in turn makes it all the better because it's their film as well as our film. And I'd like to think it practises what it preaches, because everybody had a great time making it.

### **A companion piece, not a sequel.**

This film is a depiction of life ten years down the line from *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* and I think it's a bit more optimistic in a way. Historically it's a companion piece: it takes the same arguments and looks at how they evolved – the Irish Free State had been around for 10 years by this time, and it's interesting to see where the power lines now lie. We consistently fail to learn from history – it's really important to re-visit, see where we went right and where we went wrong. Making a film like this gives you that opportunity to see what lessons we need to learn.

### **So Long, Farewell?**

This is Ken's last big film, I think we can safely say that. There were a few teary people around on the shoot but I feel quite positive. For a start I don't believe it's Ken's last work because I'm sure he'll pop up with a documentary or something small. And I like the idea of having gone full circle with him. I started working with him on *Hidden Agenda* and the team that we've managed to put together can't last forever so it's nice to end it on a high. Or not even end it but to feel, 'Okay, here's a body of work.' One of my next jobs will be to sew all that together and find a way of using modern techniques to present that body of work and put the films in historical context. If you look at Ken's films they form a social history of the last 50 years. That should be preserved as well as it can and be made accessible.

## **KAHLEEN CRAWFORD**

Casting Director

It's always great casting with Ken because he's happy to meet everyone, to be there. Some directors just want a casting director to say, 'Here are three. Pick one of them.' But we do almost everything together. We were meeting everyone in the right age groups and categories from all the theatre groups in Ireland, all of the colleges, all the actors' agents in London and the UK. We met people with long CVs, short CVs, people who had never done anything before. On Ken's work it's just about finding the right person and you can find them anywhere.

Ken's quite particular about people having the right voice from the area. It doesn't always end up that way but that's a good place to start narrowing it down. You do have a sense of what you think the person will look like. It's almost never where you end up because someone just captures you with something else. It's usually spirit and you find yourself gravitating more towards that than anything else.

We rarely end up using recognised actors. If the person were perfect that would be fine. We've met some actors who people would consider well-known and we've talked about some other people who are well-known. Everyone wants to work with Ken – I know that, though he wouldn't think that. But they just weren't right.

Barry Ward [Jimmy] came in for one of our very early casting sessions in Dublin. You can tell by his personality that he's right. It's easy to take an instant liking to him but he's also got a lot behind that – a lot of intelligence and he's well-read. I think he's got a humanity, he's considered, and he's got great energy. He may be a bit different in real life to who Jimmy was but we gave him more script than Ken sometimes does to help him with that. It was a conversation we had – we said actually he's a skilled actor, he's done a lot of brilliant theatre and so let's let him work on the character. He's read a lot about Jimmy and that's helped. But he's also just a great person to have around. He's like the glue – he sticks everything together.

We fell in love with Simone Kirby [Oonagh] the first day we met her. She's a very still, engaged, engaging presence. You just want to look at her. Aisling [Franciosi, who plays Marie] is a bit like that too. Some really brilliant people came in and did

improvisations with us but there was just something really special about those two.

Once you get one or two lynchpins you then start building up around them. It becomes a larger picture about how they fit in to the ensemble. The group dynamic has to work. We get to do a lot of chemistry casting – though Ken wouldn't call it chemistry casting, he would call it conversations. We had them in a gaggle for two or three days. You never really know until two or three weeks into the shoot if it's worked.

The problem is there aren't enough roles for everyone you meet. Paul [Lavery] actually wrote some roles in because we met some actors we felt we couldn't do without, like Martin Lucey, who also worked on *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*.

All the people we meet along the way – women's groups, local political groups, schools and colleges – we remember all these people and we stick them up on the wall of the office. So then maybe if we haven't got a little speaking part they'll be in our crowd. Some people are regulars in the crowd scenes – they've been out on eight or ten days' shooting already. They are as much a part of the cast, genuinely, as anyone else. They all get along so well. It's like the kids that we put together to do the dancing – they were all going twice a week for rehearsals to learn dancing for six weeks before filming started. They'll be part of the heart of the film, definitely. They're a huge part of the energy.

Most of them are local. It adds to the flavour if you get the right voices and the right faces and it means something to them – it's their area. They know the place. They should be involved.



## **FERGUS CLEGG**

Production Designer

### **What were your first thoughts on reading the script?**

The main issue was having to build a hall – and one that we knew we had to destroy too. Normally Ken will, wherever possible, go to any extreme not to build a set; he will always use a location. But this would never be one of those cases, so from an art department point of view it was quite a big undertaking having to build this fully functioning dance hall in rural west Ireland. On the upside it was around the same period as *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* so it was a time and place we knew.

### **How did you find Jimmy's cottage in Leitrim?**

We had several locations to look at in terms of the cottage, but none of them particularly worked well for me. They were slightly too domesticated when what I had in mind was something that was much more rural and in a much bleaker setting. The trouble was that we were trying to find the cottage very close to the location where we would build the hall but we couldn't find a cottage that had enough land. The other problem with the landscape was because a lot of it is bog, you literally are standing in a field and you start sinking. So we were up against geology as well as geography. We had a favourite cottage in mind, and we were on the verge of agreeing to use it when driving back to Sligo I just happened to look out of the car window and saw this little spot on the landscape. We stopped the car, walked half a kilometre down a track and there was this amazing, pretty much untouched cottage. It was just a perfect location for me and then I realised also the land around it was fairly suitable for building, or at least less boggy than elsewhere. That gave us the advantage of having the hall and the cottage being able to be seen in the same frame, not having to travel from one location to another.

**But the hall obviously wasn't there at that point. What was the process of designing it?**

I looked at as much reference work as I could: village halls and school buildings and that kind of vernacular architecture of the period. You end up with a quintessential hall that is basically like an agricultural building, clad in corrugated iron or tin and with a simple wooden frame that you build first. I built a computer model so that we could show it to Ken in 3D and then built a physical model. Then we changed the size so that it wasn't too large but it was large enough to film in – you always had that paradox of how you're going to make it look believable on the outside and yet like a Tardis, bigger on the inside so you can fit the people and the crew and the camera in there. Ken always works with fairly long lenses, so he wants to get as far back as possible. You always end up in the corner of every room, filming with Ken, and he's always tapping on cupboards to see if he can get the camera in there.

Once we'd worked out all those parameters then we had to work out how we were going to build it because the land on which we were building was about a metre of peat bog on top of rock and it was at a slight incline on the field as well. We didn't want to make a deep impact on the landscape, and we wanted it to be semi-permanent, so it had to meet all kinds of strange specifications that a normal building wouldn't. Eventually we made up our own method by putting something down called bog mats which are these big, wooden timbers bolted together to form a mat. They're craned into position and they just lean on top of the bog and spread the load. They laid out these mats over the grounds and we built on top of those. We'd pre-fabbed the hall in a workshop in Glasgow in order to be ahead of the game. When it arrived on a big lorry from Scotland we had about two weeks of solid sunshine so the ground was dry and we could actually get on with the work. So we were incredibly lucky, we managed to get the roof on in time before the weather turned. It was quite an epic build, but everyone really enjoyed it because for them they were building a building rather than a set.

### **Is working on a period piece more rewarding for a production designer?**

Personally I find it much more rewarding working on a period piece because you do get to do different things and the research is much more interesting. This film was slightly more difficult than *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* because that was made in 2005 and after that there was another three or four years of the Celtic Tiger – three years of rampant build, build, build. Now a lot of the landscapes in Ireland are cluttered with modern intrusions, half-built grand design dream houses. The landscapes were littered with these unfinished dreams and it was very sad to see, but it made our job even more difficult because you were having to deal with trying to remove things.

### **What does Ken Loach look for in production design?**

It's all about authenticity for Ken. The last thing he wants to do is have people look at the sets; it's all about looking at the performance and the actors. So we always play a background role in terms of supplying a space for the actors to work in. Getting a design message across is the last thing we want to do – it's just about making it authentic and real for people. We do a lot of work that's never seen in terms of rooms that are decorated from ceiling to floor though you only see a section through the middle of it where the actors' faces are. We've had to replace flooring to make it look authentic and put the right sorts of carpets down just to make the actors feel when they walk in that they're in the right place. Here, when they walk on to the set of the hall, it's a real hall. For all intents and purposes, any passer-by will just think, 'There's a village hall there.' Apart from a few light stands and generators standing nearby, you wouldn't know it hadn't been there for 100 years, hopefully.

# EIMER NI MHAOLDOMHNAIGH

Costume Designer

## **How did you come to work on *Jimmy's Hall*?**

I bumped into Rebecca [O'Brien, Producer] when she was over giving a talk in the National Film School where I also lecture. I knew she was coming so of course I door-stepped her, just because we'd kind of kept in touch a bit since I worked on *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*. She said they were coming back in the summer and would like me to do this so of course I leapt at it – working with Ken is a very special experience.

## **Where do you start with the costume design?**

The script. I always start with the script. Once I know the story, I can talk to Ken about what he wants and start planning. It is not about saying 'I think it should all be blue.' A lot of it is about what we need to get – we have to dress 100 people and a lot of it is working out facts and figures as well, making sure it all adds up.

## **What are the characteristics of the clothing of the period?**

I think that there is kind of a misunderstanding, even in Ireland, about Ireland in that period. I don't think it's right to say that people were fashionable because I don't think fashion was a huge concern. But just like every place else in Europe and any place that's rural, it's not that people are suddenly completely isolated from what's going on in the big, bad world. Clothes have to be practical but at the same time, in Ireland there has always been this notion of the Sunday best. So people would have had their work clothes and one good set of clothing, mostly. It means we get to bring out the Sunday best for the dances and things like that – but it's not *Downton Abbey*.

What's really important about working with directors like Ken is first doing all the research, knowing what way it *should* look but then, at the same time, being able to make things look like somebody has got up that morning and put them on. There's an imperfection to the perfection that you're trying to create. So you are saying, "It's okay if that hem is falling a bit." It's about knowing where it's right to let those things

go and to say, “Well, he might be going to the dance but he’s just been milking the cows so it’s okay if he doesn’t look spiffy and besuited.”

But at the same time it was the 1930s and there is a certain aesthetic and there are certain colours. For the men that means they’re wearing a three piece suit but it’s a suit that they’ve had possibly for a few years. They’re heavy cloths, they’re very durable with turn-ups on the trousers, and a waistcoat. The shirts would have spear point collars but very soft collars, skinny ties, and they would still wearing flat caps – Ken calls them pancakes – but some of the men would be wearing Trilbys.

Then for the women it’s dresses and a lot of wraparound pinnies, aprons and a lot of cotton dresses. In the evening some of the dresses might be silk but not that much. They’d be in their Sunday best dress for the dances, pretty with small floral prints, lovely and fitted, and long. The whole silhouette is very flattering.

### **How did you dress Jimmy Galton?**

When I read it at first, I thought, ‘Oh, okay, so Jimmy’s coming back from America and he’s been there for ten years so maybe he’s going to have a slightly different look,’ but I suppose for Ken it’s very important that he’s a man of the people and that he comes back and he blends in. When he arrives back he does have a good suit, but straight away, he’s working on the farm and he’s working in the fields. And so any kinds of notions I might have had about him being the returning Yank were dashed! One thing I did do that no one will notice is that on Jimmy’s trousers the pleats are turned the opposite direction to the way they would be turned if it was a British suit. I did want Jimmy to look just a little bit different without it being in your face.

### **What about the dress he brings home for Oonagh?**

Paul described it in the script as being a flapper dress, but by 1932, the whole kind of flapper thing has gone – it’s just a word that’s used as a generic term to describe a dress that’s spangly and sparkly. I knew that Paul was saying this has to be a special dress, but I knew that Oonagh wasn’t an ostentatious person. Jimmy knows her really well – he wouldn’t buy her a dress that’s beaded head to toe. But it is a dress that Oonagh would never buy in a million years. She just wouldn’t have the occasion to wear it. The important thing is the whole dancing element – I wanted it to be something that would move when they dance.

**How did you dress the priests?**

Jim Norton plays this older, conservative priest so he's wearing the cassock, or the soutane from the time. He wears a Homburg, which is like a Trilby but with an upturned brim and it's edged with a braid as well. It would have been a very popular hat but by the '30s it's really something that's quite conservative. And then Andrew Scott who plays Father Seamus, he doesn't wear the soutane – he wears a suit. You're showing him to be a little bit more progressive hopefully.

**How does the costume design here differ from your work on *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*?**

In *Barley* there was an awful lot of guerrilla warfare which meant trench coats, macs, ammunition belts, guns, flat caps, muck. In this, we've got a lot more happening indoors, in the hall with dancing. So I have set out to try and make them look like different movies. With *Barley*, there was a very definite colour scheme, which was a lot of beiges and creams; the colours of hay, barley when it's ripe. Whereas on this, I think the colours are much richer: it's browns and purples, trying to achieve a warmer colour palette.

## **ROBBIE RYAN**

Director of Photography

### **What interested you about the story?**

There was a community theatre-dance event that told the story, which was performed in Leitrim [see Introduction] and a friend of mine wrote the music so I kind of had a little bit of a connection with it already. Of course with Ken you don't actually see the script until you sign up for it so I was just hoping it would be something I'd like. I remember reading it and thinking this is really well written.

### **What stood out as potential challenges?**

I always look at the bigger scenes where there are a lot of people, but then having said that with Ken's films he revels in those kind of scenes because he can really get them quite succinct and without too much awkwardness. You also look at night-time scenes if there's any of those, and the locations that come up a lot which would have been the hall. It's anything that may involve lighting.

### **Is there an overarching look you're aiming to achieve?**

In Ken's films it's all about an observed approach as if you were somebody watching the whole proceedings from a bit of a distance. Working with Ken you soak up the way he sees a film and try and facilitate that.

### **How did this film differ to your work on *The Angels' Share*?**

This was a lot more about lighting, actually. Ken tries to keep it as natural as possible but we were able to embellish and augment a little bit. There were night-time scenes in the hall where Ken was hoping to try and do real candles and lanterns. We did have a few of those but you need a bit more on film so we needed to give it a little bit more exposure. That was quite a challenge because Ken shoots consecutively, so you go from one thing to another thing – sometimes you'd have to change the hall to go to night-time after it's just been daytime and that's quite a big turnaround, so it was a busier job than normal for the guys.

There was also far more second camera work and possibly a third camera, because there are a lot of crowd scenes in this.

### **How did you shoot the dancing and musical scenes?**

Again, Ken very much has a grand plan of how he wants that to work. That's when we had three cameras: Ken would get the whole thing going and then we'd concentrate each camera on certain things. One might be a wider shot of the room, another might be individual dancers going to feet and stuff like that, and the third one would be on the band. The great thing about that is it feels of the moment – because it is.

### **How much attention does the film give to the landscape?**

It always revolves around the characters more than anything. There's one occasion where Jimmy's back home and he's out cutting in a field and I thought, 'Oh my god we're getting a chance to do a wide shot!' Ken loves the landscape but it's not necessarily the prime focus. The general overall feeling is that we'll give you the odd nugget of this lush green space but you're not bombarded with it.

### **What was the most challenging scene to film?**

The silent dance scene when Jimmy and Oonagh dance in the moonlight at night was a challenge because it was a little bit of magical realism. Ken let me express it a little bit more magically than realistically you know, and we had a lot of fun doing that. It's a really strong scene in the film, and I guess that's pleasing because it's a mixture of my stuff and Ken's stuff.

### **What was the technical set up for the film?**

There are a lot of 'lasts' in this film. Supposedly it might be Ken's last film, it was probably the last film shot on Kodak, and it's probably one of the last films to be edited on a Steenbeck, which is a traditional editing process. It will be more than likely be the last film to be finished photo-chemically in Deluxe laboratories, because I know for a fact they're closing down in May (in fact they have closed down a month early at the end of March so we've had to finish the film digitally). It's very sad and I'm hugely bereft at what's going on. I understand it's the natural progression but watching this film the other day at a screening it looks lusher than anything I've done in a while. It was projected on film from the negative directly and even though it was dirty and there were loads of edit markings on it, when it hit the right notes it looked gorgeous.



**What have you learned from the two films you've made with Ken Loach?**

I've learnt a heck of a lot working with him on the two films. In this one particularly I felt like I was learning more because I understood the approach better. So I was able to collaborate or to help a lot more. In general I would say, I've learnt how to make a film better. He is a master at just getting what he wants and then moving on. He might rehearse for quite a while and then just shoot it quickly and move on. The guy's a leader and you know he's someone you just want to do the best for. And I reckon he's not finished yet: he might go and do something totally different but I don't think Ken ever says never again.

# **JONATHAN MORRIS**

Editor

## **What was the editing process on this film?**

When Ken's filming, it's pretty much only Rebecca [O'Brien, Producer] and me who see the rushes. If he's concerned about something or there is a technical fault of some kind or another, he'll ring me up maybe in an evening after he's finished filming and say what do you think of this or that? The rushes for *Jimmy's Hall* came through in an interesting way because there are so many flashbacks. Ken generally shoots the flashbacks first because still, chronologically, in real time they do come first. So sometimes it's a little difficult to get a handle early on of the film itself.

## **And then when you get to the cutting room what happens next?**

There's a lot of material! Ken tends to shoot more than other people because he prints everything, so if he's shot six takes, they'll all be printed. It's because there might be something in one take which is better than in another one.

## **There was a news story about you making an appeal in the edit for a specific type of tape. What happened?**

We're probably the last people if not in the world, certainly in the country, to edit the way we do. There's a kind of plastic tape that you put on the numbering machine which burns the number into the picture and the sound, so that when I have a piece of sound and a piece of picture, I know exactly where the synchronisation is. We were running out of this tape, we made a public appeal for more and Pixar in the US came up with the goods. Apparently the editors there are all fans of Ken's film, and they had a box of stuff. They also sent us a little cartoon of me and Ken as two *Monsters, Inc.* characters in the cutting room.

### **What is the actual editing method?**

I physically lace up the film picture and sound on the Steenbeck. We view a scene and then we cut the scene. I mark up where I want to start the cuts with a Chinagraph pencil, drag it off the machine and slice it with a blade, basically. Then I join it to the next piece with sellotape.

### **What are the advantages of this method?**

What's good about it is that we have the traditional atmosphere of the film editing room – it's less clinical than working on the computer. What's also good is the tactility of handling the film. But the main thing that's good is that Ken sees what I'm doing and he quite likes that. We also have a certain amount of thinking time imposed on us by the way in which you're working. When you get to the end of a roll of film, you have to either rewind it or you take it off and get it rewound. There is a certain amount of time spent when you're not editing. On the Avid it's pretty constant.

### **What were the major challenges in the edit?**

There are quite a lot of music sequences and dance sequences in the film. Ken doesn't shoot with playback – which is when the music's pre-recorded so that it makes it much, much easier to edit than when it's played live. There must be seven or eight musical sequences in the film and all of them were shot to live music. So the challenge really was cutting music and picture, which I always quite enjoy. The first film I cut for Ken was in 1980 and it was a documentary about girls, dancers, and auditions. Probably 50% of the film was cutting dance sequences to music with no playback. So it's kind of full circle for me, really, with Ken.

### **Do you think that this is the end for editing on film, and if so, what have we lost?**

It probably is. You can never say never, really. What have we lost? You'd be amazed at how many people were looking in our room whilst we're working. They're listening to the clatter of a Steenbeck, and people are getting a bit nostalgic for the old way of doing things. A whole generation who are younger than 45, I suppose, wouldn't even know how to start editing on film. That feels sad, somehow.

# **GEORGE FENTON**

Composer

## **What was your process here – did you work from a script or from a cut of the film itself?**

Usually, on the films I've done for Ken, I don't see the scripts – he likes me to see the film without any preconceptions. That's a good thing but in the case of this film I did see the script because of all the music that's in the film. We had to go through and find tunes to select and look at what kind of line up the band would be in the hall. Paul [Lavery] had done a lot of work about the fact that in the hall, when it was first opened, they played traditional music and they danced.

## **What research did you do?**

The first time I went out to Sligo we had a lot of musicians who came to visit. We all met in a pub – they took it in turns to play and people danced, and then we hung out with them and chatted about the history of what they play. The most famous tradition in Irish music really is in Sligo and it's been passed down father to son, mother to son, father to daughter. It's like there's a legacy of fine traditional music. A lot of the musicians who are famous in Sligo went to America and then came back again, so the guys that played for us were all in some way connected with that tradition, either personally or through being taught. In the course of talking to them and looking at old photos and things like that, we worked out more or less what the line up would have been in the hall and then we chose the tunes they played and the musicians to play them.

## **More broadly, what is the role of music in this story?**

The music that they play in the film has a very specific role, which is that the Church didn't like the free expression of the hall and in particular they didn't like the dancing – even the traditional Irish dancing that you see in the film. It's not what you associate now with Irish dancing. It's not like Michael Flatley, all contained, arms down by your side. It's much freer and looser – it looks much more like tap

dancing. In any case, the church didn't like that and then they particularly didn't like it when musicians came back from America and managed to borrow or buy instruments from the army that they could then play jazz on. When the jazz band plays in the hall that really is a statement. In fact it was right around this time that a priest in Dublin started a political party called 'The Anti-Jazz Movement', because jazz sounded so threatening.

### **Does your score attempt to echo the Irish musical tradition?**

I don't ignore it, but I haven't written a score that is traditional Irish music. What I was more driven by, actually, was the music of Republican songs. They're basically old-fashioned songs like 'Come out you Black and Tans,' songs that were written around that time. They're kind of 'Celtic' in feel, but *generally* 'Celtic' – they're melodies that are Irish, but could be Scottish, could almost come from anywhere really. I used a small group of cellos and basses, some percussionists and guitars and then fiddles, and tried to get a sort of earthy quality. Then there are some solo voices – Jimmy's story is introduced at the beginning with a solo trumpet which, of course, is not in any way Irish. But I did base the melody of it on a mode that's common in Irish music. The reason that I used a trumpet was because it had a sonic connection with the music of New York, and that's how the film begins, with imagery from the Great Depression, so it was quite nice to be able to use brass and it not seem peculiar. The trumpet line is like Jimmy's call, the thing that drives him. It comes at the beginning of the film, it reminds him of the hall when it was opened and then it returns when he is galvanised by the people who are evicted. It's when he decides to go, as it were, back into battle and put himself at great risk that you hear this same trumpet theme come back. So it's about both what he stood for and what he lost. The trumpet's quite good in that way because it sounds like something that's lost. It comes out of the air but, at the same time, it has a sort of determination about the sound.

**You have worked on seventeen of Ken Loach's films. How has *Jimmy's Hall* compared to previous scores?**

It's been particularly rich musically. Whenever I have done films with him which have involved telling a story that is not an English story, like *Land and Freedom*, *Carla's Song*, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* and so on, it's always slightly different. In the case of this film, because there was music also in the film and there's both jazz and traditional Irish music, it feels like it's got quite a rich canvas musically – but it's delivered in the way that Ken always does which is very particular. It's not like working for anybody else. He's very exercised about music not being manipulative and that's quite hard, particularly today when we're all so used to music all the time. You have to really strip it down and say, 'Well, where does it actually have something to say? Can it say it very simply in a glancing way and reflect what you want without somehow soliciting that?' So it's always quite a challenge – particularly when I'd just finished doing a Disney film about grizzly bears, which couldn't have been more polarised than this!

# CREDITS

*Jimmy* Barry Ward  
*Mossie* Francis Magee  
*Alice* Aileen Henry  
*Oonagh* Simone Kirby  
*Stella* Stella McGirl  
*Molly* Sorcha Fox  
*Dessie* Martin Lucey  
*Tommy* Mikel Murfi  
*Finn* Shane O'Brien  
*Tess* Denise Gough  
*Father Sheridan* Jim Norton  
*Marie* Aisling Franciosi  
*Journalist* Seán T. Ó Meallaigh  
*Sean* Karl Geary  
*Commander O'Keefe* Brían F. O'Byrne  
*Doherty* Conor McDermottroe  
*Seamus Clarke* John Cronogue  
*Ruari* Seamus Hughes  
*Father Seamus* Andrew Scott  
*Fintan* Michael Sheridan  
*Mrs. O'Keefe* Rebecca O'Mara  
*Mossie's wife* Diane Parkes  
*Roscommon IRA* Pdraig Fallon, Chris MacManus,  
Donal O'Kelly  
*Steward* John O'Dowd  
*Young Dancer* Anna Crossley  
*Young Violinist* Róisín Judge  
*Mayor* John McCarrick  
*Senior Guard* Hugh Gallagher  
*Guards* Colm Gormley, John Colleary, Shane Cullen,  
Joe Lafferty, Tom Colsh

and

Catherine Bell, Kieran Brennan, Aileen Burke, Maggie Carty, Sarah-Louise Conlon, Johnóg Conlon, Shane Cronogue, Anna Crossley, Martina Crummy, Rosemarie Dolan, Emma Duggan, Faye Dunne, Marian Edwards, Killian Filan, Paul Fox, Fiona Gallagher, Amy Gilligan, Breffni Gorman, Jennifer Healy, Brendan Joyce, Martha Keaney, Deirdre Kerins, Niamh Kerins, Grainne Langton, Deasun Lyons, Kerrie-Ann Murtagh, Dermot O'Connor, Rory O'Dowd, Eoghan O'Neill, Darragh O'Malley, Eva Murray, David O'Reilly, Christian Pinder, Colin Pryal, Kevin Sheridan, John Sweeney, Claire Tansey and many others...

**Director:** Ken Loach  
**Producer:** Rebecca O'Brien  
**Screenplay:** Paul Laverty  
**Executive Producers:** Pascal Caucheteux and Grégoire Sorlat,  
Vincent Maraval, Andrew Lowe  
and Ed Guiney  
**Production Designer:** Fergus Clegg  
**Director of Photography:** Robbie Ryan  
**Recordist:** Ray Beckett  
**Sound Editor:** Kevin Brazier  
**Casting:** Kahleen Crawford  
**Costume Designer:** Eimer Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh  
**Assistant Directors:** David Gilchrist, Michael Queen  
**Production Manager:** Eimhear McMahon  
**Editor:** Jonathan Morris  
**Music:** George Fenton  
**Production Companies:** Sixteen Films, Why Not Productions,  
Wild Bunch, Element Pictures  
**Funders:** BFI, Film4, Bord Scannán na  
hÉireann/Irish Film Board,  
France 2 Cinéma, Canal +, Cine +,  
Le Pacte, Les Films du Fleuve,  
Longridge Inc., France Télévisions



*Production Supervisor* Noëlette Buckley  
*Production Co-ordinator* Susan Holmes  
*Assistant Production Co-ordinator* Zeke Lawless  
*Production* Bernard Hayes, Margaret Moggan  
Ann Cattrall, Jack Thomas-O'Brien

*Historical Advisor* Donal Ó Drisceoil  
*Dance Choreographer* Chantelle Carey  
*Irish Dance Instructor* Edwina Guckian  
*Irish Music Co-ordinator* Édaín Ní Dhomhnaill

*Script Consultant* Roger Smith  
*Script Supervisor* Susanna Lenton  
*Stills Photographers* Joss Barratt, Bernard Walsh

*Location Manager* Niall Martin  
*Unit Manager and Key Scout* Kieran Hennessy  
*Locations Assistant* Jim King

*3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant Director* Daire Glynn  
*Trainee AD* Fiona Bonnie  
*Crowd Casting Assistant* Nicola Conlon  
*Transport* Tony Clarke, Paul Fox  
*Daily AD* Stephanie Barnes

*Focus Puller* Andrew O'Reilly  
*Clapper Loaders* Joachim Philippe, Léo Lefèvre  
*Camera Trainee* Tommy Griffin  
*Additional Camera Operators* Matt Fisher, Sarah Cunningham  
*Additional Focus Pullers* Ron Coe, Louise McEllin  
*Additional Clapper Loaders* Rory O'Riordan, Rob Flood

*Boom Operator* Pete Murphy  
*Sound Trainee* Macdaragh Lambe

*Gaffer* Andy Cole

*Best Boy* Simon Magee  
*Electricians* Laurent Van Eijs, Martin Holland

*Art Director* Stephen Daly  
*Assistant/Standby Art Director* Judith Hynes  
*Assistant Art Director* Christine Fitzgerald  
*Prop Buyer* John Neligan  
*Prop Master* Noel Walsh  
*Dressing Props* Daragh Lewis, Dermot Blighe  
*Standby Props* Chan Kin  
*Trainee Props* Jeff Dolan, Zack Vymazal  
*Assistant Prop Buyers* Sinéad McGoldrick, Naomi Britton  
*Props Drivers* Michael Cassidy, Liam Maguire  
*Greens* Matt Gardner, Lee Guckian  
*Thatcher* Jimmy Lenehan

*Horse Wranglers* John Reynolds, Niall McManus,  
Caillin Reynolds

*Cattle Wrangler* Eddie Drew

*Armoury* John McKenna

*Vehicles* John Malone, Brendan Bradley

*Cinema Playback* John Parsons, CAVS

*Construction Managers* Chris Higson, Danny Sumsion,  
Nicky MacManus

*Carpenters* Alex Robertson, Jake Drummond,  
Gabriel Coates, Alan Finglas, Jim Finnerty

*Painters* Perry Bell, Bobby Gee,  
Norman Duff, Wendy Moore

*Stagehands* Joe Clifford, Eddie Arkins

*Set Construction Glasgow* Jason Strachan, Sam Curren,  
Stewart Cunningham

*Standby Crew* Paddy Treanor, Kristian Tighe,  
Tommy O'Shaughnessy

*Hair Designer* Lorraine Glynn

*Assistant Hair* Sevlene Roddy

*Hair Dailies* Malvo Karpats, Linda Gannon, Maureen Smith,  
Lyndsey Herron, James Synott

*Make-up Designer* Lynn Johnston  
*Assistant Make-up* Catherine Biggs  
*Make-up Dailies* Elaine Finnan, Emma Moffat, Kate Donnelly,  
Tara Gannon-Carr, Martina Byrne, Blue Evans

*Wardrobe Supervisor* Judith Devlin  
*Costume Assistants* Caoimhe Stack, Cathy Young  
*Costume Trainees* Bébhinn McGrath, Slawomir Narwid

*Stunt Co-ordinator* Paul Heasman  
*Special Effects* Real SFX

*Senior Production Accountant* Tina Shadick  
*Accountants* Evelyn McLoughlin, Habib Rahman  
*Auditors* Malde & Co., Crowe Horwath

*Catering* Gary Walsh, Daniel Patachi,  
Cziko Marius, Nicoleta Rosu

*Rushes Courier* Gus Meehan, Aerfast  
*Camera Equipment* Eye Lite Group, Vast Valley  
*Lighting Equipment* B&L Lighting, Teach Solais

*Insurance* John O'Sullivan, Media Insurance Brokers  
*Script Clearance* Seeling Lafferty  
*Post Production Script* Sapex Scripts

*1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Editor* Paul Clegg  
*Effects Editor/Foley Recordist* Robert Brazier  
*Dialogue/Foley Editor* Ben Brazier  
*Foley Artist* Rowena Wilkinson, Sue Harding  
*Sound Transfers* Steve Carr  
*Cutting Room* Goldcrest Post  
*Editing Equipment* Salon Editing Equipment

*Titles Design* Martin Butterworth, Creative Partnership  
*Archive Researcher* Jacqui Edwards

*Digital Post Production* Molinare Post Production  
*Colourist* Gareth Spensley  
*Online Editors* Nick Anderson, Gareth Parry  
*Post-Production Contacts* Len Brown, Louise Stewart, Steve Knight

*Film Stock* Kodak UK  
*Laboratory Services* Deluxe Laboratories, iDailies  
*Neg Cutter* Steve Farman, PNC

*Re-recording Mixers* Ian Tapp (CAS), Andrew Caller  
*Sound Mix Technician* Rolf Martens  
*Re-recording* Pinewood Studios

*Music recorded and mixed by* Jonathan Allen  
*Pro Tools Operator* Lewis Jones  
*Recording Studio* Abbey Road Studios  
*Orchestration* Geoffrey Alexander  
*Music Preparation* Samuel Pegg  
*Orchestral Contractor* Isobel Griffiths Ltd.

*Score Musicians*

*Irish Flute* Andy Findon, *Clarinet* Barnaby Robson, *Trumpet* Andrew Crowley  
*Percussion* Frank Ricotti and Paul Clarvis, *Guitar/Fiddle* Seamie O'Dowd, *Guitars*  
John Parricelli  
*Guitars/Banjo* Steve Donnelly, *Violin* Dermot Crehan, *Harp* Skaila Kanga,  
*Celli* David Daniels and Tony Lewis, *Double Basses* Chris Laurence and Richard Pryce

*Sugar Foot Strut*

Written by Charles Schwab, Henry Myers, Billy Pierce and Georges Matis

Used by kind permission of Carlin Music Corp.

Performed by Louis Armstrong & His Savoy Ballroom Five, courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

*Goose Pimples*

Composed by Jo Trent and Fletcher Henderson

Published by Music Sales Corp. and EMI Music Publishing Ltd / EMI Mills Music Inc.

Performed by Bix Beiderbecke & His Gang, courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

*I'm Lonesome, Sweetheart*

Written By Davidson C Nelson and Joseph Oliver © Peer International Corporation

1929

Performed by King Oliver & His Orchestra, courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

*Weeping Willow Blues*

Written by Paul Carter, publisher by CR Publishing

Performed by Bessie Smith, courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

*TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC*

*Bridie Morley's* arranged and performed by

Gearóid Devane, Stephen Doherty, Thomas Doherty, Sarah Egan, Fiachra

Guihen, Cónan Marren,

Liam O'Connor, Fiachra Ó Maolagáin

*Stack of Barley* arranged and performed by

Gregory Daly, Colm Gannon, Gerry Harrington Ben Lennon, Brian McGrath, Shane Meehan

*Moving Bog, The Sailor on the Rock, Bank Of Ireland, The Taproom* arranged and performed by:

Harry Bradley, John Carty, Mary Corcoran, Charlie Harris, Mossie Martin,

Seamus O'Donnell, Seamie O'Dowd, Jesse Smith

JAZZ BAND

*That's a Plenty* written by Lew Pollack and Ray Gilbert

Courtesy of Carlin Music Corp on behalf of Redwood Music Ltd & Music Sales

Creative on behalf of George Simon Music Co.

*Boogie Woogie* written by Davidson C Nelson and Joseph Oliver © Peer International Corporation 1930

Arranged and performed by Jimmy Higgins Snr., Frank Kilkelly, Stephen Kohlmann, Eddie Lee, Seamie O'Dowd, Kieran Quinn, Cathal Roche, Ciaran Wilde

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Some scenes have been altered for dramatic purpose and certain characters are entirely  
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The private lives of the historical characters have been imagined.

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# *Jimmy Gralton – Timeline*

## **1886**

*James (Jimmy) Gralton is born in Effernagh, County Leitrim. His father Michael and mother Alice work a small farm of 25 acres of poor land. He has four sisters and two brothers, one who dies young. Two sisters emigrate to the US, two marry locally. His brother Charles stays at home on the farm. Emigration is a central fact of life in Leitrim in this era. The population more than halves through emigration in the second half of the 19th century. 'Remittances', the money sent back by emigrants, help to alleviate the widespread poverty in the area.*

## **1900-10**

*Aged 14, Jimmy leaves school and becomes a shop boy. He moves to Dublin and works as a barman before joining the British Army. Based in Scotland and later Cork. Refuses to go to India to defend 'British imperialist interests' and serves a year in prison. Deserts following his release and goes to England. Works as a docker in Liverpool and a miner in Wales. Then travels the world as a stoker on a steamer. Returns briefly to Ireland in 1907, before emigrating to New York, aged 21. Having worked at various jobs, Jimmy briefly joins the US Navy.*

## **1910-18**

*Gralton becomes politically active in New York. He is a member of Clan na Gael, the Irish-American support organisation for republicans in Ireland. He is influenced by the writings of James Connolly, the Irish socialist and republican who is executed for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising. Becomes active in the James Connolly Club in New York, established by Jim Larkin, a trade union leader and comrade of Connolly's who moved to the US in 1914. Campaigns against the First World War and in support of an Irish Republic. He is an active trade unionist. In 1915 he applies for, and gets, US citizenship.*

*Following the 1916 Rising there is rapid political change in Ireland as radical nationalism and trade unionism grow. Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers are organised countrywide, including Leitrim. The attempted extension of conscription into the British Army to Ireland in 1918 is successfully resisted, in a campaign led by Sinn Féin and the labour movement. Sinn Féin sweeps the boards in most of Ireland in the 1918 general election following the end of the First World War. The labour movement is stronger than ever at the war's end, but the Labour Party stands aside in the election to allow Sinn Féin a clear run. Meanwhile, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 offers hope to revolutionaries world-wide, and leads Galton toward communism.*

## **1919**

*Sinn Féin establishes Dáil Eireann, an independent Irish parliament, and declares an Irish Republic. The British refuse to recognise it and the War of Independence commences. The Volunteers become the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Jimmy is involved in support work for the republican cause in New York. Meets President of the Irish Republic, Eamon de Valera, who travels to the US on a fundraising and propaganda mission. Joins the newly formed Communist Party in New York*

## **1920**

*Black and Tans burn the Gowel Parochial Hall, the local, church-run 'community centre', to the ground.*

*The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries are sent by the British to take the war to the IRA and terrorise the communities that are seen to be supporting them. They attack civilians, trade unions, burn creameries and halls, towns and villages, and close down fairs and markets. The guerilla war of the IRA intensifies, mainly involving ambushes by 'flying columns'. Meanwhile, a counter-state structure is created by the Dáil, including a court system. There is significant class conflict in town and country, and the republican leadership attempts to minimise it in pursuit of the single aim of driving out the British. Many court decisions favour the status quo.*

## 1921

*Gralton returns to Leitrim in late June 1921 and joins the local IRA. He brings money for the cause and trains volunteers. A truce is declared weeks later on 11 July. Taking advantage of the temporary peace, Jimmy offers to establish a new community hall on his father's land. It is built by voluntary local labour.<sup>1</sup> The Pearse-Connolly Hall, named after two of the prominent executed leaders of the 1916 Rising, is opened on New Year's Eve 1921. It is run by an elected committee, including Gralton, who is one of three trustees.*

*In 1920 the British government pass the Government of Ireland Act, which divides the island into Northern Ireland (the six north-eastern counties) and a twenty-six county Home Rule state called Southern Ireland. The independence movement rejects the act and fights on for a united independent republic, but the state of Northern Ireland is established in the summer of 1921. On 6 December representatives of the Dáil sign the Anglo-Irish Treaty with the British. This creates an Irish Free State as a British dominion. It consolidates partition and maintains an overseeing British presence in the southern state. This divides the independence movement and lead to civil war seven months later.*

*In May-June 1921 the miners at Arigna just over the border in Roscommon take over and work the mines for two months – the so-called 'Arigna Soviet'. There are hundreds of 'soviets' in Ireland in these years, in creameries, factories, etc, but the conservative Labour leadership refuses to co-ordinate and lead workers' rank-and-file militancy. In the countryside, the conservative republican leadership tries to minimise class conflict, as small farmers and rural labourers engage in land agitation.*

## 1922

*Jimmy throws himself into land agitation. Courts are held in the Pearse-Connolly Hall to settle land disputes. A Direct Action Committee gives effect to court decisions and organises land seizures from landlords on behalf of tenants. Their actions lead to the area being dubbed the 'Gowel Soviet'. The hall is also used for dances. Because it is outside the control of the church, it meets with extreme hostility from that powerful quarter. Gralton*

1. Scene 9.

is condemned from the pulpit and rumours that the hall is frequented by prostitutes are circulated. Music and education classes are also held at the hall, which further infuriates the local Catholic Church, which seeks to monopolise schooling.<sup>2</sup> The hall is a direct challenge to its power. Galton describes it as ‘a sort of revolutionary community centre.’

In May 1922 Jimmy and the Direct Action Committee are confronted by Free State soldiers, supported by conservative anti-Treatyites and the local priest, as they reinstate an evicted tenant. They draw guns and the Free Staters back down.<sup>3</sup> Church and state are united in their determination to drive out this ‘troublemaker’. Both the pro-Treaty Free Staters and conservative local anti-Treaty IRA leaders<sup>4</sup> oppose the actions of Galton and his committee. For landlords, large farmers and business people he represents a serious threat to their position. He is condemned from the altar and is arrested by Free State troops. Protests lead to his release. Troops come to arrest him again at the hall on 24 May 1922. Galton escapes,<sup>5</sup> is later caught and briefly jailed, but escapes and flees back to New York weeks before the outbreak of civil war.

Between January and June 1922 the independence movement is split in two on the issue of the Treaty. The Catholic Church, business leaders and the mainstream press all support the Treaty. The labour movement takes a neutral position, weakening the position of socialists like Galton within the anti-Treaty movement. The IRA splits irrevocably in March 1922. There is jostling for position across the country as the British leave. In South Leitrim, the pro-Treaty (Free State) faction prevails, but there is little conflict. On 28 June the anti-Treaty IRA HQ in Dublin is shelled with British-supplied artillery by the newly formed National Army and the civil war begins. Though initially numerically stronger, the anti-Treaty IRA lacks strategy and a clear programme to rally support. It holds out in Munster until August 1922, but is eventually defeated by the National Army’s superior firepower and effectively surrenders in May 1923.

2. Scene 10.

3. Scene 10 and 11.

4. Such as ‘Docherty’.

5. Scene 12.

## **1922-32**

*Jimmy spends the next decade back in New York, working at various jobs in an era of high employment. He is active again in Irish socialist-republican solidarity work, supporting campaigns in Ireland such as that by small farmers against the payment of land annuities to Britain. He remains active in the American labour and communist movements, though they are in decline as American capitalism goes through a boom period.*

*While church and state in an economically stagnant Ireland are creating a closed, repressive and exclusivist culture that frowns on and censors modern dancing, jazz music, Hollywood films and popular culture in general, Jimmy is living in the economically buoyant and culturally vibrant New York of the 'roaring twenties'. New skyscrapers reach to the stars, African-Americans become prominent in the arts and music, especially jazz, which is popularised through the new mass medium of radio and the burgeoning record industry. Dance clubs proliferate and new dances like the Charleston and the Shim Sham are born. In New York and other big cities there is an unprecedented mixing of different ethnic groups, and a loosening of the moral strictures that are being copper-fastened in Ireland.*

*The roaring twenties come to an abrupt end with the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Mass unemployment and poverty hit the US from 1930. Jimmy and his communist comrades are temporarily energised, believing this to be the beginning of the end of capitalism. They are involved in organising the unemployed, fighting evictions and championing African-American rights. He stays in touch with events in Ireland, and sends regular subscriptions to support the new communist newspaper, the Irish Workers' Voice, and various workers' struggles.*

*In Ireland the pro-Treaty wing of Sinn Féin, now called Cumann na nGaedheal, is in government from 1922 to 1932. Anti-treaty Sinn Féin and the IRA maintain their organisations and refuse to accept the legitimacy of either the Irish Free State or Northern Ireland. In alliance with the Catholic Church, the right-wing Free State government creates a very conservative society, characterised by censorship and repression. Economic structures remain untouched, policies favour big farmers who export cattle, and the urban working class and rural poor fare badly. The Labour Party is a weak*

*and ineffectual opposition. In 1926 Eamon de Valera and his followers split from Sinn Féin, which refuses to take its seats in parliament, and forms Fianna Fáil, which takes the oath of fidelity to the British crown that had been a major plank of republican opposition to the Treaty and enters the Dáil in 1927. They take advantage of the weakness of the Labour Party and the left and attract the support of workers and small farmers.*

*The IRA begins to shift to the left, but still has a significant conservative, Catholic tendency. Republicans join with the new Irish communist movement in a range of campaigns and groups sponsored by the Comintern (the Soviet-Union backed international communist movement), including a radical campaign against the payment of land annuities to Britain. In the depression following the 1929 Wall Street crash, these radical campaigns gather momentum. In 1931 the IRA adopts a socialist platform called 'Saor Éire'. This sparks a massive red scare and church/state backlash. The IRA and a range of communist and radical groups are banned, the Catholic Church warns people about joining such 'sinful' organisations, and thousands are jailed. Fianna Fáil, promising to stop paying land annuities to Britain and to release the prisoners, among a range of other policies that appeal to the working class and rural poor, wins power in the February 1932 general election. Cumann na nGaedheal has tried to tar them with the red scare brush, but the party makes clear its Catholic credentials and reassures Irish capitalists about its intentions. Its economic protectionist policies are a major boon to Irish business interests. Fianna Fáil remains in government uninterrupted until 1948.*

## **1932**

*Jimmy's brother Charles, who has been running the farm, dies. In March 1932 Galton takes advantage of the new era in Ireland, with its short-lived atmosphere of hope, progress and political freedom, including a new communist party in the offing, to return home and help his aged parents.<sup>6</sup> He immediately sets about establishing a Revolutionary Workers' Group in his area, as part of the network of such groups that would form the basis of a new communist party. He briefly joins Fianna Fáil in an apparent effort to*

6. Scene 1.

*force some investment into the area, but is soon expelled. His group attends demonstrations, local and national, and sells copies of the Workers' Voice. Meanwhile, he works the farm.<sup>7</sup>*

*A number of local youngsters approach him to re-open the hall.<sup>8</sup> Despite his reluctance to stir up his old enemies –the Church, local big farmers and businessmen and anti-socialist, conservative elements in the IRA, as well as the Special Branch (political police) – he eventually agrees, and forms a committee to run it. Classes and meetings and dances resume. His old enemies revive their demonization campaign. Youngsters are warned to stay away from Jimmy's Hall by the local clergy, who denounce him as a dangerous communist and agent of Satan. Names are taken of those who attend dances.<sup>9</sup> The leader of the local IRA unit is hostile; stones are thrown at Gralton's house, hay is burnt and Jimmy is physically threatened. The formation of the fascistic Army Comrades Association adds to the menace.<sup>10</sup> The local parish priest demands that the hall be handed over to the Church. The hall committee invite him to join the board of trustees, but he refuses.<sup>11</sup>*

*In August, at the request of progressive IRA men from nearby Roscommon who have taken up the case, Jimmy makes a radical speech at the reinstatement of evicted tenants at the Earl of Kingston's estate.<sup>12</sup> In October, the British communist Thomas Mann, who has come to support the agitation against unemployment, is deported from Northern Ireland. The local parish priest in Gowel says in a sermon that all communists should be deported.<sup>13</sup>*

*On 27 November 1932 shots are fired into the hall during a dance. Band and dancers hit the floor and no-one is injured. The band play on and the people dance defiantly into the early hours.<sup>14</sup> A landmine explodes near the hall in early December, and on Christmas Eve 1932 it is burnt to the ground.<sup>15</sup>*

7. Scene 16.

8. Scene 7.

9. Scenes 19 and 21.

10. Scene 27.

11. Scene 26.

12. Scene 33.

13. Scene 39.

14. Scene 32.

15. Scene 37.

*Fianna Fáil withholds the payment of land annuities to Britain in June 1932 and sparks off a tariff war that impacts most heavily on cattle-exporting big farmers. IRA support for Fianna Fáil in the election has led to the formation of the Army Comrades Association (ACA), former Free State Army veterans under the leadership of the deposed head of the Garda Síochána, the fascist Eoin O'Duffy. The ACA grows in strength with the support of the disaffected ranchers, and becomes increasingly fascistic, adopting the blue-shirt uniform by which they will be known in early 1933.*

*Strict censorship of films (1923-) is followed by a draconian Censorship of Publications Act in 1929. Bishops and clergy condemn modern dancing, 'jazz', motor cars and 'immodest fashions'. In 1935 the Dancehalls Act brings dancehalls under strict, usually Catholic Church, supervision and control. The Catholicisation of the new state is crowned in June 1932 when Ireland hosts the Eucharistic Congress,<sup>16</sup> a huge international event that firmly establishes Fianna Fáil's Catholic credentials. Jimmy's sister Mary Ann, a nun in New York, travels to Ireland with thousands of others for the occasion. The IRA, in the meantime, is in the process of distancing itself from communism and left-wing politics generally, which leads to a split in 1934 with the formation of the left-wing Irish Republican Congress.*

## **1933**

*On 1 February 1933 Jimmy's father Michael dies. Two days later the police call to Gralton's farm to serve Jimmy with a deportation order; he is given one month to leave the country (he is described as 'an undesirable person' – his US citizenship provides the basis for the order.)<sup>17</sup> Jimmy escapes and goes on the run. A local and national campaign against the deportation – co-ordinated by the Gralton Defence Committee – is launched.<sup>18</sup> It is supported by communists, socialists, republicans, trade unionists and writers. On 5 March a local church-gate meeting in support of Gralton is attacked by a priest-led mob, and the speakers, including prominent novelist and socialist republican Peadar O'Donnell, are driven out of the area. At a meeting of Leitrim County Council in July 1933 Jimmy's mother Alice*

16. Scene 27.

17. Scene 40.

18. Scene 41.



*addresses the councillors, condemning the deportation order and appealing for their support, to no avail.<sup>19</sup>*

*On 10 August 1933, after six months on the run, Jimmy is finally arrested at the house of a poteen-maker near Mohill, County Leitrim. He is taken to Ballinamore barracks<sup>20</sup> and the following day to Cork Jail. The next day he is put on board the Britannic at Cobh and sent to New York, with only the clothes he is wearing. His ticket is bought with money that was found on him when arrested. He is greeted by comrades as he disembarks in New York.*

*He will never return to Ireland.*

*Fianna Fáil was initially dependant on the support of the Labour Party to govern, and in late January 1933 called a snap general election and succeeded in gaining an overall majority. The final act of the party's first Minister for Justice James Geoghegan was to sign the deportation order against Gralton. Geoghegan was a barrister and long-time Catholic activist. It is probable that he was a member of the Knights of Columbanus, a network of lay Catholic professionals and businessmen who were vehemently anti-socialist, and that it was through this channel that the plan for Jimmy's deportation was hatched and executed, the idea having been formed following the deportation of Thomas Mann from Northern Ireland in October 1932.*

## **1933-45**

*Jimmy Gralton immediately throws himself back into political activism in New York. He becomes the main driving force of the Communist Party-backed Irish Workers' Clubs (IWC) and of the Communist Party's (CP) Irish-related activities. The IWC supports left-wing struggles in Ireland and also organises Irish immigrants into unions and around various social and political issues in the US. In October 1933 Gralton stands unsuccessfully as a CP candidate in the New York Borough elections. He works at various jobs, and for a time runs a small food business. His last job is with a local radio station in New York. Jimmy marries Bessie Cronogue, from Drumsna, County Leitrim, shortly before his death on 29 December 1945. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.*

19. Referred to in Scene 42.

20. Scenes 44, 45 and 47.

# **Workers' Voice**

7 May, 1932

## **'Live Horse, and . . . !' Farmers and the Annuities**

by Jim Galton

*A vivid picture of the worsening condition of the Irish farmers and of the problems they are facing to-day is given in the following article to the WORKERS' VOICE from James Galton, a Leitrim farmer who recently returned from America.*

The farms near Leitrim consist mainly of holdings of from three to twenty acres of bad land.

To-day we farmers find ourselves in a position where we are unable to balance our yearly budget, due to the reduced prices for what we have to sell, without a proportionate drop in [the price of] shop goods we are forced to buy.

This is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, as far back as I remember fathers of families went to Scotland or England during Harvest time, leaving young children that should be attending school, to reap and gather in crops at home. In this way, and through the "Dole" received from relatives in America we were able to pay rent and taxes and help generally in supporting a horde of people who never did a useful day's work in their lives.

For example, the farm I live on is part of a grant of land given by King Billy to Lord Abermarle for services rendered in the scrap against King James which ended with the fall of Limerick. Since that time my ancestors have been paying rent to the original land thief or one of his descendants for the privilege of cultivating the soil to feed themselves and families.

Nor is this ended yet, for where the Abermarles laid off, the Irish Land Commission stepped in and is bleeding me yet.<sup>1</sup>

What I want to know from the Workers' Voice is how we small farmers will be able to maintain our already low standard of living in the face of the curtailed cheques from the United States due to the crisis there.

The reason I ask the Voice for this information is because as far as I know it is the only paper that interests itself in the economic problems of the small farmers and workers. All the other press are contenting themselves with advice, to be patient, and with giving vague promises of something in the future.

Live horse and you'll get grass is their motto! It's not mine, nor the motto of my fellow farmers.

1. A reference to the payment of land purchase annuities to the former landlords, collected by this Irish state commission from 1922. The land purchase annuities were a type of mortgage payment, paid each year by Irish tenant farmers against the amounts lent to them to purchase land from the landlords under the land acts, principally those of 1891, 1903 and 1909.

# ***Letter to Fr. O'Dowd, Gowel, Co. Leitrim from Jimmy Gralton following his deportation in 1933***

New York City, U.S.A.  
n.d. (late 1933)

Dear Father,

Some time ago you stated in a sermon that you had gained a “noble victory” in Gowel; that you did not want the credit for that victory, but shared it with Father O’Donoghue of Carrick-on-Shannon.

Now let us analyse this supposed victory of yours, and see what is noble about it. Let us see if there is anything connected with it that a decent minded man might be proud of.

You started out a crusade against Communism by demanding that the Pearse-Connolly Hall be handed over to you. You knew the cash that paid for the material was given to the people of Gowel by P. Rowley, J.P. Farrell and myself. You also know that the labour was furnished free, and that it belonged to all the people of the area, irrespective of religious or political affiliations. But despite this you, with the greedy gall of a treacherous grabber, tried to get it into your own clutches. I put it to you straight, Father: is there anything noble about this? The people answered ‘No’ when they voted unanimously that you could not have it.

The hall was in my name; you knew from experience that you could not frighten me into transferring it to you, so you organised a gang to murder me. You bullied little children, manhandled old women, lied scandalously about Russia, blathered ignorantly about Mexico and Spain, and incited young lads into becoming criminals by firing into the hall. You did all these things because you could not close it, although you bragged Sunday after Sunday that 95% of the people were behind you. You are a noble man, father; so is Father O’Donoghue for that matter. He went to Dublin but he did not succeed in having me expelled from the Drumsna Fianna Fáil club. Sure, he managed

to have a few pounds relief money put at your disposal. By the way, Father, how many lads came to you cap in hand for the job? Answer: none.

The last act (perhaps) in your “noble victory” was the deportation order, but you were only the local stoolpigeon. By this time 95% of the people were with you, if your word is to be taken for it. Still, with all these people behind you, you did not come out in the open, but carried on like a thief in the night, and with the connivance of the government tried to railroad me quietly out of the country. Here again your “noble victory” went astray, for it was only after six months, and after the case had got considerable publicity on two continents, that I was finally placed aboard ship.

You want to share this ‘victory’ of the Irish capitalists and British imperialists with Father O’Donoghue, but why stop here? Surely you got assistance from other sources? How about the Executive Council, the Knights of Columbanus, the firing squad, the petrol gang, the Standard, the gombeen press, the cads like Andrew Mooney and MacMorrow? And why forget the C.I.D. and the spies? In short, the whole motley crew who helped Buckshot Forster, Bloody Balfour, and the Tans to their “noble victory.”<sup>1</sup>

Father, another such “victory” and you will be of no further use to the criminal ruling class in Ireland (in Gowel at any rate) - even the cloak of religion can no longer cover the imperialist hooligan that hides behind it.

Yours very sincerely,  
James Galton

(Published in the Irish Socialist, February 1987)

1. The Executive Council was the cabinet of the Free State government; the Knights of Columbanus were a secret Catholic society that played a part in organising Galton’s deportation order; the Standard was a right-wing Catholic newspaper that specialised in red-scaring; Mooney, a Leitrim County Councillor and MacMorrow, a member of the Leitrim Board of Health, both spoke out in favour of the deportation; the C.I.D. was the Garda special branch (political police); ‘Buckshot Forster’ was William Edward Forster, British Chief Secretary for Ireland (1880-82) during the Land War; ‘Bloody Balfour’ was Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary (1887-91), who oversaw the implementation of the notorious coercion acts; the Tans were the Black and Tans, the infamous police auxiliary force unleashed on Ireland in 1920.