

Newspaper Articles Regarding the Murder of John Pugh of Rossnastrow

John Pew Pugh was murdered by James Haskins in Rossnastrow Jan 29, 1843. John was described as a strong man. He was 14 or 15 at the time of the rebellion. He “had money” and was in the habit of lending it. He had been heard quarreling with his wife on occasion and was also known to hit her. James Haskins was described as a bad countenanced athletic man.

Beell’s Weekly
Messenger, Feb 4,
1843

Barbarous Murder in the County Wicklow

A murder of a most barbarous and inhuman description was perpetrated on Sunday evening last in the county Wicklow. The victim is a man named Pugh, **who had acquired some few hundred pounds by lending small sums on interest to the needy neighbors** and occupied in common with his wife and **son**, a comfortable cottage in Killavanaugh, near Tinahealy. At 11 o’clock on the night in question the family was awakened from sleep by the violent knocking of two or three men, as yet unknown, who stated that **Pugh’s daughter**, who lived at a distance of two or three miles, had been taken suddenly ill in child-bed, and was so dangerously indisposed that it was likely she would not survive for half an hour. Naturally alarmed by the suffering intelligence, Mrs. Pugh left her bed and set out on foot in company with young Pugh, for the residence of her daughter, whom she was equally surprised and delighted to find an excellent health. The mother and daughter retraced their steps with as little delay as possible, but on reaching their home were horrified to find the corpse of Pugh lying across the threshold of the cottage steeped in blood. We understand that a herdsman who lives in the neighborhood of Rathdrum has been arrested on suspicion of being concerned in this atrocious deed. The circumstance which tells most against him is, that he was seen with a strange suit of clothes upon him on Monday morning. Search was made for his own clothes, and it is said that they were found in a ditch spotted with blood – *Irish Paper*

The Statesman
and Dublin
Christian Record
Feb 28, 1843

Assizes Intellegence-Wicklow

Wicklow, Feb 24- James Haskins was given a charge for the willful murder of John Pugh, as Rusnastrow, near Tinnahely, on the 29th day of January last. The prisoner was a very bad countenanced athletic man. The panel was called over, and the following jury was sworn: -Henry Evans, Thomas Eliot, Abraham Rogers, Martin Hagerty, John Booth, Henry Coates, Henry Clement, Robert Heath, Garret Graham, John Ward, Moses McDonald and William Nalty. James Scott, Esq. Q.C. stated the leading facts of the case.

Bridget Pugh examined-Is widow of the late John Pugh: remembers last Sunday night three weeks, on which he was killed; her deceased husband had some **money** in his house on that night; had gone to bed with her husband; **her son John and child** were in the house with them, when a voice came to the window and cried out, “Get up, get up, your daughter **Loughlin** is dying; one has gone for the priest and another for the young doctor;” thinks it was a man’s voice she heard; witness asked him to stop, and she would go with him; he said he would go on before her, and that she would overtake him; she got up, bundled her clothes, and went to her daughter’s; on finding her daughter well she returned as fast as she could; had gone to bed about nine o’clock, witness’s son went with her to her daughter’s; on finding the daughter well she returned; **witnesses son, daughter, and son-in law** accompanied her; on coming back through Tinnahely her son alarmed the police, some of whom followed her to her house; on getting back to the house she found her husband terribly murdered outside the house;

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he was lying on his face in a pool of water; he was dead, and well dead; cannot tell at what hour she got back; her husband was a strong man and was about **fourteen or fifteen years of age at the time of the rebellion**; on leaving the house she left her husband and a **child two years and a half old in the house.**

Cross-examined- Thinks it was about two hours, or two years and a half since she left the house [sic].

To the Court: Did not know the prisoner at the time of the murder.

John Pugh examined- Is son to the deceased; remembers the night he was murdered; it was on the night of Sunday, 29th of January; was at home that evening; went in the early part of it, about 7 o'clock, to Sally White's; when there a tap came to the door, when a young girl went to it, of whom the person asked where was John Pugh's; the girl said they were above, and the person asked if his son was going to Arkow that night, and he (witness) answered from the fire, where he was sitting, that he was not; had known the prisoner, but did not know who it was that made the inquiries; went home, eat[sic] his supper, and went to bed about 9 o'clock, and was awake about twelve o'clock by the voice of a person who came to the window and asked if they were asleep; the mother answered they were not; the person outside and said, get up, your **daughter Loughlin** is dying, you will not overtake her alive; witness got up and yoked the mule, and he and his mother went to her sister's and found her well; remained there about 10 minutes, and returned towards home; on the way he called on a neighboring boy named McDaniel; his mother and sister had returned by themselves in the car, and he came home by the Togher-road; knows Rickard's public-house; it is on the Togher-road; knows a man named Wilson, who lives at Rusnastrow, near where the deceased lived; Rickard's house is about 100 perches from the deceased's; when he reached his house he found his father in the bawn, about four yards from the door, all mangled and dead; his head was in a lough; he had no shirt on; found his shirt about the bawn; all torn in pieces; found blood on the walls and door in the house; found some blood on the board that ran at the foot of the bed, but none on the clothes of the bed; saw stones in the bawn with blood and hair on them; found a /fack/rack? in the house broken and covered with blood; knows where William Haskins lives, which is about a mile and a half from his father's; the police came to the house in about twenty minutes after he reached it; the body had not been removed from when they came.

Cross examined- Made no delay in returning home from his sister's; Togher is between his father's and Tinnahely; heard his **brother** on their return ask the child in the house where his father was, and she said he had gone out to the bawn; **had been living with his father for the last eight years**, but for about six months, when he left him and went to Dublin to see his uncle, **who lived on Clarence-Street**, about two years ago, after which he went to England and remained for about six months; had no differences on that occasion with his father; did not leave home on account of any dispute with him.

To the court- it was generally known **his father had money**; he used to be lending it out; saw him lending money in his house; **he had processed some persons at the January sessions, and had got decrees for about 50 pounds.**

Ellen Rogan examined- Lived with her brother, James Griffin; he is dead; he died since the night Pugh was murdered; her brother's house was under the same roof with the deceased; there was a ditch between the two bawns; recollects the night Pugh was killed; heard a great racket on that night in Mr. Pugh's house; it was like the knocking of timber; opened the door

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and saw a person striking down; saw but one person striking; it was a dark night; heard a heavy moan when she saw the striking; was undressed; went in and shut the door, and when dressing herself she heard a foot run by the door in the direction of Tinnahely; heard but the footstep of one person; before she had dressed herself the police came.

Cross examined by Mr. Rollestone When she heard the noise she thought it was Pugh and his wife that were quarreling; Pugh and his wife used sometimes to quarrel and he used to strike her; dressed herself as quick as she could; the police arrived just as she had dressed.

To a juror: Was a very short time dressing herself, and did not again go out that night or open the door.

Matthew Murphy examined-Remembers the Sunday Pugh was killed; was in Dublin on that day; knows the prisoner; met him this Saturday before between Newtownmountkennedy and Bonelea; spoke to him; it was about nine o'clock in the morning when he met the prisoner; he was going towards Bonelea; Tinnahely is about twenty miles from where they met him.

Thomas Cahill examined-Lives near Tinnahely; recollects the Sunday that Pugh was killed; knows the prisoner very well; met him on that day about a quarter of a mile nearer to Tinnahely than Clash; about 12 o'clock in the day; he was going slowly towards Tinnahely; he and the prisoner spoke as they passed.

Thomas Goff examined-Remembers the Sunday Pugh was murdered; was at Aughrim on that day, about four miles nearer to Tinnahely than Clash; knows the prisoner; saw him on that day about half past one o'clock, on the road going towards Tinnahely; he wore a drab coat, and reduced Caroline or beaver hat; Pugh lived about 2 miles from Tinnahely; Aughrim is about six miles from Tinnahely and about the same distance from the deceased's.

William Moulds examined-Remembers the Sunday the deceased was killed, lives about four miles from Tinnahely; saw the prisoner at his house about two o'clock that day; had no conversation with him; did not see the way he went after he left his house.

Michael Byrne examined-Remembers the Sunday that Pugh was murdered; lives at Ballyglin; saw Haskins, the prisoner, pass by the road on that day about two o'clock; he was going towards Tinnahely which is about two miles and a half from his house; Pugh lived on the road to Carnew.

Tom Byrne examined-Knows the prisoner, identifies him; remembers the day that Pugh was killed; saw the prisoner in his house that day, on the road from Aughrim to Tinnahely; he went into his house about half-past two o'clock to kindle a pipe, and asked how far it was to the Togher; witness said it was about three miles; and did not see which way the prisoner went from his house.

William Wilson examined-Knows Rusnastrow where Pugh lived; his house is from eighty to a hundred perches from Pugh's and is on the lower road to the Togher; knows Rickard's public-house; it is on the Togher road; was on the upper road on that evening; Pugh's house was in the fields between the upper and lower roads; was returning home from Kilavany between six and seven o'clock on the Sunday evening when Pugh was killed, and saw the prisoner convenient to a ditch

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opposite an old slate quarry, as if stooping, when he raised and came up to witness; after coming up he passed witness about three steps, when he stopped and asked if that way was the way to John Pugh's; witness told him it was the wrong way, but that he might go to it across the fields, that there was a gate a little lower down, and that if he went through it, and went along the ditch to the left, it would bring him to Pugh's house, which was about sixty perches from where the witness met the prisoner; the prisoner asked witness if he could tell him whether the boys were at home and he (witness) said that his **son James** had got married, and left his father, but that John was at home; had not sufficient light to see that man's features; saw him afterwards in the barracks at Tinnahely and knew him to be the same man; the night he met him he wore a reduces hat, a reduced kersey dark coat and trousers; knows where Sally White's house is; she lives on the lower road; was speaking with the prisoner about a minute and a half; when he saw him in the barracks he was standing with two other persons and immediately knew him.

Cross-examined-When he went to see the prisoner at the barracks Dr Moreton was present; heard him ask the prisoner how was his hand; it was about seven o'clock when he met the prisoner; White's house is much nearer to Pugh's than where he met the prisoner.

To the Court-Had never seen the prisoner before that night; when at the barracks he (witness) asked the prisoner if he knew him, and where he lived; the prisoner said he did not, witness then asked if he had ever worked in Rusnastrow; he said he had; thinks he could not be mistaken in the voice; looked very earnestly at the prisoner; does not say he could distinguish his features on that night by the light he had; heard prisoner speak to other persons besides himself at the barrack; his voice is very hoarse and peculiar.

Denis Byrne examined-Remembers the night Pugh was killed; he knows Rogan's house, which is next door to Pugh's; was there that evening; left about five o'clock; went into Pugh's and left at about seven o'clock to go home, in the direction of Ballybeg; about a quarter of a mile from Pugh's he met a man, who asked him how far it was from John Pugh's; it was not light enough to distinguish that man's features; thought he was acquainted with the voice; knew the prisoner well, and took it to be the prisoner's voice.

Pat Kelly examined-Lives on the townland of Ballinacur, which joins Tinnahely; his house is in a by-lane, off the road leading to Tinnahely, and on the same road with, and not more than a quarter of a mile from Wm Haskin's; went to his door about three o'clock in the morning, having occasion to get up, when you saw two men's heads going up the lane in the direction of Bill Haskin's; heard one of them say it was a bad job, and the other, who had a stoppage in his speech, muttered "it happened bad;" the men were at that time opposite his house; had known James Haskins before that; he had been out of that country for four or five years, before which he had lived at Bill Haskins; knew the prisoner and his voice well, which was coarse and hoarse; mistrusted that the voice he heard was that of the prisoner's; it was the man who spoke first he took to be the prisoner.

Thomas Haskins examined-Lives at Mangan with his father, about two miles from Pugh's; recollects the Sunday night he was killed; Pat Kelly's is not a quarter of a mile from his house; the prisoner is no relative of witness's; he was a foundling

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and was reared in his father's house; the prisoner went to his father's house about four or five o'clock in the morning of the night that Pugh was killed; witness's father let him in, and asked the prisoner how he was; he said bad enough, that he had been met by three or four men near Tinnakelly who beat him; that he had got out of Wicklow gaol the Tuesday before and had been in Dublin; Tinnakelly is about seven miles from Tinnahelly, nearer to Rathdrum; the prisoner after going in went to bed and he (witness) sat up; saw the prisoners coat the next morning, there were marks of blood on it, as if his nose had bled; saw blood on his nose as if he bled from it; in the morning he (witness) went to his work.

To the court-The prisoner went alone to the house on that night.

Eliza Haskins examined-Her father lives at Mangan; knows James Haskins; **he was reared by her father William Haskins;** had not seen him for three years before the night he went to the house; the Sunday night he went there was the night that Pugh was killed; on his going in her father asked him how he was; he said bad enough, that four men had beat him at Tinnakelly, and that he had bled a great deal from the nose; the prisoner stripped off his clothes and went to bed to her father[sic]; witness washed his clothes the next morning; she had been about to wash some flannels and he asked her to wash her shirt and clothes, and she said she would, and give him a shirt of her brothers to put on; she then washed his coat, his shirt and hat; washed the hat from its having been full of mud; had heard of the murder before she washed the clothes; after the police arrested the prisoner, she took the jacket, hat, and shirt she had washed to Brian Carey's house; the coat she threw on the ditch outside her father's house; had washed it before that; Brian Carey lives about one hundred yards from her house; the prisoner asked her for a towel to wash his face, and she gave him a shirt of her fathers with which he washed and wiped his face; there was blood on the shirt after the prisoner had used it; brought the clothes to Carey's, lest if the police got them they might take him for the murder of Pugh.

The court objected to witness giving her reason for having removed the clothes.

John Lennon examined is Head Constable; left Tinnahely at 2 o'clock on the morning of Monday; to go to Pugh's; went there with a party of police; found the body lying on the ground in a pool of water; examined the house and found at the foot of the bed, at the doorway, a pool of blood; the dresser was spattered with blood, but saw none on the bed; the outer door was covered with gore; saw a trunk open on the floor, as if rummaged; examined a parcel of papers lying about; found a spade handle outside the door with the marks the bloody fingers on it; also found some large stones with blood and hair on them; had the body brought in, and went and scoured the country; first saw the prisoner at the police-barrack; immediately after the arrest of the prisoner he went to Mr. Haskin's house and searched for his clothes; could not find them; Eliza Haskins brought him to the river and shewed him a coat which the prisoner afterwards claimed; the coat was dripping wet; saw blood on the front of it, and found blood in the buttons, which were hollow horn ones; got a hat in Brian Carey's house; Eliza Haskins was with him when he got it; got a pair of stockings on the ditch at Carey's; the hat he got was wet; it was Eliza Haskins who brought him to Carey's house; the stockings were wet when he got them; found a shirt and body coat; they were wet, and he found marks of blood on them. (The clothes were here produced).

By permission of the court Eliza Haskins was recalled and identified the coat, hat, and stockings produced as belonging to the

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prisoner, and also has those which she had had washed.

Patrick Lynch, sub-constable, produced a parcel containing a jacket and shirt, which he found near Brian Carey's house.

Eliza Haskins also identified the articles as belonging to the prisoner.

Cross-examined-First heard of the murder about two o'clock in the morning; left the barrack about that hour, and went to Pugh's; heard the clock strike two as he passed through Tinnahely; when he reached Pugh's he found the widow and her son John there; the family had reached the house before he did.

Re-examined: When he found the body there was a degree of warmth in it; thinks he was dead for about an hour.

To a juror: The head was quite covered with water; the body was to the middle of it.

Thomas Williams examined: Is a police constable, and arrested the prisoner in the house of William Haskins, at about twelve o'clock the day after the murder; the prisoner had not his own clothes on when arrested; after the prisoner had been arrested he put on a pair of shoes which had bog dirt inside and outside on them; there is a bog between Pugh's and Haskin's house; the shoes looked as if they had been wiped in grass.

Andrew Loughlin examined: Was at Pugh's the night he was murdered, at one o'clock; found a pistol at the left-hand side of the hob, identifies the pistol.

William Henry Martin, Esq., MD examined is the surgeon; went to Pugh's on Monday after the murder, about 1 o'clock in the day; examined the body; the skull was broken in two places, with the brains protruding; saw a wound over the eye where the temporal artery was cut, from which the blood must have sprouted, and have struck any object that might be opposite; saw blood in several places, and saw blood on the two posts of the door; the deceased's hands were much bruised, as were also the legs; saw two stones at the place with blood on them, before the inquest on Monday; before he went to Pugh's house he saw the prisoner; examined, and found several marks on his right hand; his thumb was burst, which must have occurred by its having come between two hard substances; saw much dried blood in his hair; the wound on his thumb could have produced the blood he saw in his hair; the prisoner told him that he had been beat by four men; that he had held up his hand to save himself; the prisoner said that he had been beat and kicked at Tinnakelly; the injuries he saw were not sufficiently severe to have been inflicted by kicks; injury on the thumb might've been inflicted by having been trod on; examined prisoners nose, and in his opinion it had not bled; the wounds on the arm looked as if they had been received by having been pushed against something, or buy a fall, and not such as a kick would inflict; a kick made inflict them; from the appearances in the house there must have had been a severe struggle; thinks there must have been two persons at the murder, from the different weapons which appeared to have been used; the prisoner said he had received the injuries on his person at Tinnakelly during the night; there was a tear on the prisoner's left cheek, which must been seen by the man of the house where he lighted his pipe; his hand was in such a state that he could not have lighted his pipe without the people seeing it; saw a spot of blood among the hair on the prisoners left forearm; the entire roots of the hair were covered with blood; the hair had been washed; there was no wound on it; a sufficiency of blood flowed from his thumb to have accounted for the blood in his hair if he had held his hand up long enough on his head.

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	<p>Cross-examined His decided impression is that the prisoner did not bleed from the nose; if he had blood from it, some clots must have remained.</p> <p>The case for the crown closed, when Mr. Rollestone at considerable length addressed the jury in a most able and ingenious speech, but called no witnesses.</p> <p>Baron Pennefather commenced to charge the jury at three o'clock, and after recapitulating the several facts which appeared in evidence, concluded about four o'clock; when the jury retired for about an hour, and returned into court with the verdict of guilty. The learned judge in a short time after had the unfortunate culprit called up, and passed upon him, and his usual eloquent strain, the awful sentence of the law, which the prisoner heard without any apparent emotion, and was removed without his having from the commencement of the trial made a single observation. <i>Saunders Newsletter</i>.</p> <p>From Our Own Correspondent James Haskins, who, as I sent you word by Saturday morning's post, was found guilty on the previous day, is to be executed on Saturday the 18th of March. The unfortunate man was originally a foundling. I have not been able to ascertain the first name he went by but he laterally adopted that of his nurse, whose name was Haskins, and who forfeited some pounds which were due to her by the institution in Dublin in order to retain him and bring him up a Roman Catholic. This should have the effect of warning those at the head of our Protestant societies to be cautious in whose hands they place the care of the youth committed to their charge.</p>
<p>The Clare Journal Monday, March 6, 1843.</p>	<p>At the Wicklow Assizes, James Harkins was found guilty of the willful murder of John Pugh, at Rossnastrow in January last. Prisoner was one of a party who knocked at the house of the deceased, and said his daughter was dying, he by this means induced them inside to open the door, the wife went to her daughter, whom she found well, and on her return, found her husband across the doorway, dreadfully mutilated, the house rifled. Prisoner is a founding and reared by the deceased.</p>
<p>Kerry Examiner, Tues March 21, 1843</p>	<p>The Late Murder in Wicklow Wicklow, Friday, March 10- On the 28th ult., Mr. Barry, the governor of Wicklow gaol, received a message to the Reverend P. O'Doherty, Roman Catholic curate of Wicklow, the James Haskins, the unfortunate man who is now under sentence of death, and who is to be executed on Saturday the 18th instant, for the murder of John Pugh, wished to see him. Mr. Barry immediately went to the unhappy convict, who at once, in the presence and, I assume, with the perfect concurrence of Mr. Doherty, voluntarily acknowledged that he, and he alone, had murdered Pugh. He declared that no other person had any knowledge of the dreadful affair until after the horrid deed had been committed. On Tuesday last Haskins made a similar declaration to Mr. Barry, and then he said that he rejoiced in his apprehension and conviction, as he would make the only atonement he could for his crime.</p>

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The house where John Pugh was murdered in 1843.

<https://www.irishpost.com/entertainment/the-murderer-me-and-my-family-tree-dylan-haskins-journey-to-find-out-the-truth-about-his-ancestors>

Land records for John Pugh Killaveney Kilpipe Ballinacor South also Rossnastrow, Kilpipe, Ballinacor South 1843 Ireland Valuation Office Books:

Name is crossed off, he let the farm to John Wilson- he died in 1843.

John Pugh 1853 Griffiths- renting from Earl Fitzwilliam In turn he let to John Wilson. Still under John's name, his widow probably continues to live there.

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Miscellany of Murder: Violent Death in 19th Century Wicklow

Violent crime in County Wicklow was almost as rare during most of the nineteenth century as it is today. Extant constabulary returns made to Dublin Castle and now in the National Archives give a concise breakdown of all reported crime year by year and county by county from 1843, (1) the year which saw the last execution to take place in County Wicklow.

Some years were of course worse than others and in the early decades a feeling of impending catastrophe prevailed in many quarters. Although the frightfulness of 1798 and its aftermath was relatively short-lived, it left its legacy of fear on both sides. Musgrave detailed 84 cases of loyalists being murdered in 1798.(4)

On the other side the numbers murdered by loyalists is probably impossible to calculate. Communities of Protestants and Catholics were still viewing each other with fear and suspicion in the 1820s and 1830s. There were periodic reports of members of one denomination gathering together to guard against imminent attack by the other. Such was the case in December 1824 when Protestants from Bray to Arklow were reported to be in a state of alarm, being apprehensive of some sudden attack. In February 1829 Catholics in Tinahely were reported to be sitting up every night expecting to be murdered by Protestants, while in 1832 Protestants around Tinahely locked themselves in the Market House due to fear of an imminent massacre.(5)

James Haskins, executed in Wicklow on 18 March 1843 for the murder of John Pew or Pugh in Rosnastraw (the last person to be executed in Wicklow)

29 January 1843, John Pugh of Rosnastraw, Tinahely murdered. Deceased had a sum of money in his house and robbery appears to have been the motive. James Haskins was executed in Wicklow for this crime on 18 March 1843.(28)

https://heritage.wicklowheritage.org/places/county_wicklow_historical_societies/wicklow_historical_society/1994_wicklow_historical_society_journal/a_miscellany_of_murder_violent_death_in_19th_century_wicklow

Dylan Haskins is a broadcaster, documentary maker and event producer. He and his father James heard James Haskin's name during an ad for Wicklow's Historic Gaol, which had just opened a tourist attraction. Having the same name they wanted to find out more, and discovered he was the last man to be executed at the Wicklow Gaol on the 18th of March, 1843. "He was a highway man".

He and his father went on a search to find out more, to no avail. His father passed away before he could find out, through DNA, that he was not related to James Haskin's, but to the original Haskin family from Wicklow. <https://www.irishpost.com/entertainment/the-murderer-me-and-my-family-tree-dylan-haskins-journey-to-find-out-the-truth-about-his-ancestor>