

'Service Medals And Special Allowances' By Dr Marie Coleman, School Of History And Anthropology, Queen's University Belfast

APPLICATION FOR THE ISSUE OF SERVICE (1917-1921)
MEDALS

Ref. 170 31377

The attached application from
Patrick Coleman
Indigo Bush
Ballymore, Co. Mayo

is transmitted herewith for authority to issue:-

1916 Medal
Service (1917-1921) Medal with Bar
Service (1917-1921) Medal.

Membership for the period of three months up to and including the 11th July, 1921.

certified by W. H. Gowan 21/8/22 adj. 3rd Batt. Sea
W. H. Gowan 21/8/22 etc. etc. etc.

Recommended _____

Approved _____
Date _____

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F.3.e(11).
1916 Medal issued _____
Service Medal with Bar issued _____

MEDAL
DULY AWARDED
CERTIFICATE NO. ON
26247
BP
24/1/55

The first service medal recognising activity during the revolution was the 1916 medal instituted by the State and awarded to veterans with "active service" during Easter 1916 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rising in 1941. The following year the government issued a further medal to recognise service in the War of Independence. Adopting the British tradition of adding bars to medals in recognition of service in additional engagements, the service medal with bar would be issued to military service pensioners and those who would have been awarded a pension had they applied for one. A medal without bar would be awarded to those who failed to meet the active service standard for a pension. This was a way around the discontent expressed by veterans who were refused pensions by providing an alternative form of recognition.

The application and assessment process for medals without bar was considerably more streamlined than that for pensions and by 1955 36,923 medals had been issued to a total of 62,659 applicants. 13,914 applications were awaiting verification and a further 9,206 applicants withdrew from the process before a decision was made. 2,616 had been refused, representing a rejection rate of only 4 per cent, a stark contrast to the rejection rate for pensions of 77.5 per cent. One side effect of this less onerous process was that it was open to greater abuse. If awardees were subsequently found not to have been eligible they were asked to return the medal; a particular problem arose in relation to the Kerry 3 Brigade, where the eligibility of 93 medal awardees was subsequently questioned.

The lower burden of proof for receiving a medal became problematic when they were linked to a new form of welfare payment for distressed veterans. In 1943 a means-tested special allowance was introduced for those with recognised Easter Week service (either a certificate for pension under the Military Service Pensions Acts, or a wound or disability pension awarded under the Army Pensions Acts). The measure was intended to alleviate the poor financial and material conditions which some veterans had fallen into and who were advancing in age and often suffering from ill health that prevented them from earning a living through employment. Introducing the bill in 1943 the Minister for Defence, Mr Oscar Traynor, T.D., explained that it was designed 'to deal with the very special problem created by the passage of time and by economic circumstances of

men and women who fought during Easter Week, 1916, and who are incapable of self-support by reason of age or permanent infirmity.' In 1946 the legislation was amended making all medal holders eligible to apply, including those in receipt of the medal without bar.

The need for such special welfare measures reflects the absence of modern state welfare provision in 1940s Ireland. While Sir William Beveridge's seminal report Social Insurance and Allied Services (1942) paved the way for the introduction of the welfare state in Great Britain after the Second World War, state provision of social welfare and subsidised health services lagged far

behind in Ireland. Fianna Fáil introduced a limited Social Welfare Act in 1952 that was based largely on employee contributions and in the process excluded those who were self-employed. This was eventually bolstered by a wider safety net that included contributory old age pensions (1960), occupational compensation for workplace injuries (1966) and a retirement pension (1970). It was not until 1974, by which time many of the revolutionary generation had died, that social insurance was made available to all full-time employees.

Fianna Fáil's 1953 Health Act, introduced by Minister for Health and Social Welfare Dr James Ryan, T.D., a veteran of the Rising, proved to be more effective in the area of health care provision. While stopping short of free universal care similar to that available in Northern Ireland and Britain under the

National Health Service, hospital treatment was made available free or for a modest charge to most of the population. The absence of such health and social welfare provisions, which are largely taken for granted today, prior to the 1950s explains the need for additional special allowances for revolutionary veterans who had fallen on hard times by the 1940s.

By 1953, 3,180 special allowances were being paid out, 75 per cent of which were going to holders of the medal without bar. These amounted to an annual charge of £200,000 on the exchequer, compared to £382,623 paid out in military service pensions during the fiscal year 1952-3. This figure was expected to increase as medal holders were increasingly likely to apply for allowances as they aged and had reduced access to earning. The annual value of special allowances paid to single and married recipients was £78 and £97 10s respectively, with an additional £10 8s per child under 18 years. By contrast, some military service pensioners at the

ROINN COSANTA
(GENERAL REGISTRY) (13)

NÁ CHURCEAR ÉANCUAIRISC AR AN ZSLÚDÁC SO

de Súd
1973

DP.32590

30/07/1903

William Arthur
The Bridge
Rathfriland
Rathfriland
Co. Wick.


Go dtéarmaí	Data	Go dtéarmaí	Data	Go dtéarmaí	Data
A3a	18/1/63	A3/B	1/1/69		
A3/F	1/4/66	A3/M	20/1/67		
A3/H	10/6/66	A3/P	1/5/72		
A3/I	13/7/66	A3/Q	1/5/73		
A3/J	24/6/66	A3/R	1/4/74		
A3/K	11/1/66	A3/S	3/1/72		
A3/L	21/1/66	A3/T	21/1/72		
A3/M	10/1/66	A3/U	1/1/72		
A3/N	1/1/66	A3/V	10/1/76		
A3/O	1/1/66	A3/W	10/1/75		
A3/P	1/1/66	A3/X	1/1/76		
A3/Q	1/1/66	A3/Y	1/1/76		
A3/R	1/1/66	A3/Z	1/1/76		
A3/S	1/1/66				
A3/T	1/1/66				
A3/U	1/1/66				
A3/V	1/1/66				
A3/W	1/1/66				
A3/X	1/1/66				
A3/Y	1/1/66				
A3/Z	1/1/66				

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lowest grades received only £6 per year, although the situation was improved by a significant increase in the value of pensions in 1953.

Military service pensioners had to undergo a rigorous and time-consuming investigation procedure that often ended in the failure to receive a pension, or if successful often to receive a minimal pension, in contrast to medal holders who were subject to a very basic investigation procedure (resulting in some very dubious awards) and who were now entitled to apply for welfare payments that were often well in excess of the value of military service pensions. Military service pensioners thus endured the double indignity of rigorous investigation for considerably less financial benefit than medal holders who received in many cases much more lucrative compensation with little more effort than filling in a form. The situation had become so embarrassing by 1957 that the Minister for Defence, Seán MacEoin, T.D., was rumoured to be considering a total recall of the 65,000 medals issued but no new legislation was introduced, mainly due to the opposition of Minister for Finance, Mr Gerard Sweetman, T.D. In any event the pensions' process was drawing to a close by the late 1950s.

Ref. No. *D.P. 46/1*



ROINN COSANTA,
BRAINSE AIRGEADAIS
COLAISTE CAOIMHIN,
GLASNAOIDHEAN,
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

A.P. 46/1.
Roinn Cosanta
F61500
15 JAN 1960
Clárann na Dráimre
AIRGEADAIS.

APPLICATION FOR A SPECIAL ALLOWANCE UNDER THE
ARMY PENSIONS ACTS, 1943 to 1957.

Consideration of your application will
be helped if you give full answers to
the questions asked in this Form.

IN
BLOCK
CAPITALS

NAME OF APPLICANT *ARTHUR MOYNIHAN*

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS
*The BRIDGE, RATHBEG, RATHMORE,
COUNTY KERRY*

1. Were you a member of Oglagh na h-Eireann (Irish Republican Army); Irish Volunteers; Irish Citizen Army; Fianna Eireann; Hibernian Rifles; Cumann na mBan, and were you granted:—

(a) a Certificate of military service under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1924, or a service certificate under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934, in respect of service during any part of the period which commenced on the 23rd April, 1916, and ended on the 11th July, 1921:

*- h Co
5 Bth
Kerry etc
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