The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection
The Brigade Activity Reports

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ISBN: 978-1-9996875-0-2

Published by: Department of Defence, Ireland.
Designed by: Ger Garland.
Printed by: Defence Forces Printing Press.

Cover:

Members of East Cork Flying Column 1920-21 (Patrick W Cashman; MSP34REF31406)

From back cover to front cover (left to right): 'Michael Desmond (killed 20 Feb 1921), Paddy Higgins (captured at Clonmult; sentenced to death and released at the Truce), James Glavin (killed 20 Feb 1921), Donal Dennehy (killed 20 Feb 1921), Joseph Aherne (Vice-Commandant), Richard Hegarty (killed 20 Feb 1921), Joseph Morrissey (killed 20 Feb 1921), Michael Hollahan (killed 20 Feb 1921), M Moore (executed after his arrest at Clonmult, 20 Feb 1921) and Paddy White (USA)'.

Sketch map

2 Battalion, East Clare Brigade, scenes of engagements in parts of Cratloe and Meelick parishes, drawn by John McNamara, Moyhill, Cratloe, Co Clare. (see pp.156-157)

Illustration double page (p. 2-3):

Members of East Cork Flying Column (Patrick W Cashman; MSP34REF31406)

'Photo taken Jan 1921 (left to right): Daniel Cashman (Weights & Measures Dublin Castle), Michael Desmond (killed at Clonmult 21 Feb 1921), Jack Ahern (died 1923), Thomas Buckley (Sergt Garda Síochána), James Glavin (killed at Clonmult 21 Feb 1921).'

Contents

Foreword

Minister with Responsibility for Defence, Paul Kehoe, TD

The release of one hundred and fifty one Brigade Activity Report files marks a significant milestone for the important archival Military Service (1916–1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC). These files were compiled from 1935 to mid-1940s by Brigade Committees set up countrywide. They were tasked with compiling and presenting material to assist the Referee and Advisory Committee in the verification of applications for pensions in line with the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934. In general, they contain a brief description of the operations undertaken or planned, names of those engaged, the units involved, the location and numbers of the enemy engaged and sometimes, the numbers and names of casualties on either side. They also contain around four hundred and fifty sketches and maps, which is very significant. We are privileged to have these reports within the MSPC, providing a window into every parish and townland and thereby enhancing our understanding, and that of future generations, of the activities of those people whose courage and idealism inspired a nation during a defining period in Irish history.

The Military Service Pensions Archive project is a cornerstone project of the Government's Decade of Centenaries 2012-2022 Commemorative programme. This project will serve as a permanent reminder of this commemorative period and will be a resource for future generations.

It is also highly appropriate that it is headquartered in the new archive facility in Cathal Brugha Barracks, which itself was one of the seven Government flagship capital projects developed as a permanent reminder of the 1916 centenary.

As we progress through the centenary commemorations, we have a responsibility to remember the events in the full context of our history. This will ensure that all narratives are heard as we reflect appropriately on major historical events as their anniversaries unfold. It provides an opportunity for this generation to understand and empathise with our forebears who fought to gain our independence. It is akin to a bridge for us to explore our past and contributes hugely to our understanding of the circumstances and social history of the people of that period.

The former Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny T.D., launched the first release online of material from the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection at the G.P.O., O'Connell Street, Dublin in January 2014. Since that first launch this online archive, comprising some 250,000 files in total, has proven to be a great resource of primary source material for the public at home and abroad.

This publication provides the legislative framework, context and circumstances for the creation of the Brigade Activity Reports. It provides real insight into the challenges faced by the archivists while presenting documents that allow the reader to review the fascinating account of the support at a local level for maintaining a campaign during the period from 1916 up to 1923. The publication is greatly enhanced by the insightful contributions of members of the Academic Advisory Group, named individually by the Project Manager, Ms. Cécile Gordon, in her editorial, who have each chosen to present an essay on their area of interest and expertise. We are indebted to them for their continued support and invaluable expert advice and guidance.

I would also like to thank those who continue to put so much work into bringing this project to fruition, including Ms. Gordon and the staff of the MSPC. Special thanks also to the Interdepartmental Steering Committee who oversee the project and which is comprised of representatives of the Departments of the Taoiseach and Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the National Archives of Ireland, former Director of Special Projects at the National Archives, Ms. Catriona Crowe, the Defence Forces, the Military Archives and my own Department.

Editorial

Cécile Gordon – MSP Project Manager

The first release of files from the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC) took place online through the Military Archives on 16 January 2014. The imperative then was to release the records in the collection relating to the 1916 Easter Rising in order to engage with the commemorations in a timely manner. Further releases have followed and today around 95,000 files have been made available for access, either online or, in the case of the Medals Series, in the Military Archives Reading Room at Cathal Brugha Barracks.

The released files from the collection have demonstrated that archives are essential to our understanding of the events being currently commemorated. Crucially they enlighten us on the lives of those who took part in the events and shed light on their lives post-conflict. In addition, and as well as detailing the military and some civilian casualties of the Irish Revolution, the files provide the reader with unprecedented and invaluable information on the successful applicants' dependants' welfare and social circumstances during those tumultuous years and in later life.

It is now time to release a much anticipated series: the Brigade Activity Reports.

All individual memory is intertwined with the memories of others and the Brigade Activity Reports (BARs) are a perfect reminder of this permeable relationship between the individual, familial, local, organisational and wider collective memories.

Any new layer of archival material such as the MSPC will lead diligent researchers to question, assess and re-examine any given period of history. Of course archives are not neutral. They are social constructs and therefore their creation is influenced by a multitude of variables. With this in mind, it is fair to say from the outset, that the reading of the BARs will not quench the researcher's desire for a definitive and comfortable timeline of the Irish revolutionary period covering the whole of the island evenly. The series' strong points lie elsewhere.

In this publication the reader will find a comprehensive introduction aimed at presenting the nature of the series, the context to the creation of the files and how the Project archivists approached the material to fulfil their dual mission of preservation of the archives and delivery of access to the information.

An Academic Advisory Group has been central to the work of the Project from its inception. In planning for the release of the BARs the makeup of the group was internally reviewed in order to incorporate the academic input of historians from Queen's University Belfast and University College Cork. Dr Marie Coleman (QUB), Dr Donal Ó Drisceoil (UCC), Professor Fearghal McGarry (QUB) and Dr Anne Dolan (Trinity College Dublin) were invited to constitute a new Academic Advisory Group with two of the three original members Professor Diarmaid Ferriter (UCD) and Professor Eunan O'Halpin (TCD), following the retirement of Professor Charles Townshend (Keele University).

The Project is grateful that all agreed to provide their individual assessment and analysis of the series for this publication. Each chose their topic and based their analysis on the relevant files from the series, supplementing their research with other carefully selected primary sources. Indeed, while they all highlight the series' value as a 'form of retrospective narrative' (McGarry, p. 94), they also confirm that it should not be looked at in isolation from other sources and should be approached with caution. While the source is uneven, it is sure to bring a local focus as 'more names can be attached to particular events and located in particular places at specific times' (Ó Drisceoil, p. 115). Anne Dolan offers what the reader might want to focus on: 'the Reports are just the end points: the war of words behind them tell us something more significant about what was still at stake' (p. 74).

The MSPC is filled with the personal stories of common men and women caught up in significant events. The Project team's task is to reveal those stories and forgotten voices to expose the place they hold in the bigger, national narrative. This work enriches our vision of Irish history at a period when the notions of commemoration and celebration are so challenging to define. Remembering the names of veterans is also acknowledging the humanity that is brought to the fore by the collection through powerful testimonies and vivid correspondence.

The Department of Defence's commitment to release all the files contained in the collection is good news for Irish history and historians. It also demonstrates the conviction that projects of this kind do empower people to understand and therefore appreciate their own history and that archives are crucial in this process. Beyond this, Ireland will be the first country ever to systematically digitise and database the entire history of its independence movement (including a civil war), as found in the files and make this material available to all.

This is something we should all celebrate.

Acknowledgements

The support of Secretary General Maurice Quinn and the Department of Defence is central to the continuing work of the Project. We are also grateful to have the backing of the Chief of Staff Óglaigh na hÉireann, Vice Admiral Mark Mellett and the support of key Defence Forces staff members. Sincere thanks are due to the Officer Commanding Defence Forces Headquarters Communications and Information Services Company, particularly to the IT Operations Section staff for ongoing technical support, the Director of Public Relations of the Defence Forces, the Officer in Charge and staff of Military Archives, the Officer in Charge and staff of the Defence Forces Printing Press and the members of the Steering Committee.

We thank UCD Librarian Dr John B Howard and Principal Archivist Ms Kate Manning for allowing us to digitise the Brigade Activity maps relating to IRA activities in Co Longford held among the Seán MacEoin's papers[1] and for allowing us to publish a selection here. This has enhanced the release and the digitising of the maps has been mutually beneficial.

[1] IE/UCDA/P151 Papers of Seán MacEoin (1893–1973): Reproduced here by kind permission of UCD_OFM partnership.

We would also like to thank the following individuals for their critical input: all the members, past and present, of the Academic Advisory Group; Ms Audrey McGinley who conserved the BARs and all accompanying maps; Mallon Technology staff from management to each scanning operator for their consistent quality work; Dr Catriona Crowe and Mr Patrick Brennan, for their invaluable contribution and unrelenting support; finally, Ms Ger Garland who designed this publication.

Project Team

Cécile Gordon
Michael Keane
Robert McEvoy
2017-2018: Sam McGrath and Niamh Ní Charra

Opposite

Notice of martial law issued by order of military authority, Enniscorthy, 17 February 1921 (Christopher Courtney; MSP34REF25834).

G. R.

NOTICE

MARTIAL LAW

Loitering at Street Corners and in Doorways.

Cases have recently occurred in which members of the Forces of the Crown and loyal citizens have been fired upon by evilly-disposed persons lurking at Street Corners and in Doorways.

All male persons are therefore warned against the practice of loitering at or near Street Corners or in Doorways after dusk.

Any so doing will be regarded with suspicion and expose themselves to the danger of being fired upon.

By Order,

Military Authority,
Enniscorthy.

Enniscorthy, 17th February, 1921.

Introduction to the release of the Brigade Activity Files series[1]

Michael Keane, Project Archivist

The release by the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Project (MSPP) of the IRA Brigade Activity Files series is an important achievement for the Project. It is also one that has been eagerly awaited by academics and researchers interested in the 1916-1923 period. This introduction will look briefly at the background and provenance of the series, some of the challenges faced by the Project team in working with the material, and the manner in which the series and the information contained within is now being made available to the public.

Historical background

The Activity Files series is an administrative file series originally created to support the work of the Referee and Advisory Committee in the administration of the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934. The activity files were designed to create a detailed listing of activities and operations carried out by the IRA throughout the island of Ireland during the Independence struggle and would also include the names of those who participated in them.[2] The idea being that these files would then be a convenient and reliable reference for the verification and adjudication of service pension applicants' claims. They would also have the benefit of reducing the amount of time, effort and difficulty facing the officials investigating service pension claims.

The 1934 Act was the successor to the Military Service Pensions Act, 1924 introduced by the Cumann na nGaedheal government. In very general terms the 1924 act had sought to recognise through the award of service pensions those who had served with the pro-Treaty National Forces during the Civil War and, had also had "active service" with the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, Hibernian Rifles, Na Fianna Éireann or Óglaigh na hÉireann (IRA) during the 1916 Easter Rising and/or the War of Independence.

1 For further information regarding the background and provenance of the MSPC and the Activity Files series see Patrick Brennan, 'Origins, Scope and Content of the Collection', 'Active Service: changing definitions', and 'Biographies of Board of Assessors, Referees and Members of Advisory Committees in Catriona Crowe (ed) *Guide to the Military Service (1916 – 1923) Pensions Collection* (Dublin, 2012) pp. 14-30, pp. 64-74 and pp. 84-104. For MSPP methodology see Cécile Chemin, Project Methodology pp. 166-168.

2 Information regarding operations and activities which occurred outside Ireland can be found to a limited extent in the nominal rolls series. For example: MSPC/RO603 Scottish Brigade; MSPC/RO604 North of England and Liverpool; MSPC/RO605 London IRA Overseas; MSPC/RO606 New York Gun Running; MSPC/RO608 Manchester IRA; MSPC/RO610 Newcastle-on-Tyne IRA; and MSPC/RO611 Record of 'Q' Coy, G.H.Q./A.S.U.

The 1924 Act had, through its non-recognition of the service provided by members of Cumann na mBan ensured the almost total exclusion of women.[3] It had also, by its insistence on service with the National Forces during the Civil War, excluded all those who had either fought on the anti-Treaty side or remained neutral during the Civil War. It had even excluded 1916 and War of Independence veterans who served in the Provisional and Free State governments during the Civil War but, had no military service during that conflict.[4]

The 1934 Act, introduced by the Fianna Fáil government, opened the receipt of recognition and pension to all those previously excluded groups. As a result the Referee and Advisory Committee quickly found themselves deluged by applications on a much greater scale than the Board of Assessors had faced under the 1924 Act. For example, while a total of 13,355 eligible applications were processed under the 1924 Act, a total of 51,880 applications would be received under the 1934 Act by the deadline of 31 December 1935.[5] Not surprisingly this left the Referee and Advisory Committee facing an almost impossible task in attempting to ensure that applications were dealt with in a just, appropriate and timely manner.

Apart from the above mentioned qualifying criteria the 1934 Act, both legislatively and administratively, would generally follow the example of its 1924 predecessor. We know, for example, that the officials working the 1934 Act requested and got access to the papers created under the 1924 Act for use as guidance and precedent. While the Board of Assessors, who oversaw the 1924 Act, had relied on occasion on sources it deemed trustworthy to provide information regarding activities and individuals in particular geographical or military service areas, it did not do so on a formal or systematic basis.[6] The decision to compile the nominal rolls and activity files by the Referee and Advisory Committee under the 1934 Act was an important innovation.

Origins and formation of the Brigade Committees

Humphrey Murphy,[7] former Officer Commanding 2 Kerry Brigade IRA and member of the Advisory Committee, is credited with putting forward the idea that Brigade Committees be formed to assist the Referee and Advisory Committee in its work in September 1935.[8] The Referee and Advisory Committee were already working closely with former senior IRA figures throughout the country, whether in their

3 See MSPC/24SP13615 Brigid Lyons for the single successful application from a woman under the 1924 Act.

4 For example William T. Cosgrave received his service pension following the Military Service Pensions (Amendment) Act, 1949 – see MSPC/MSP34REF63429 William T. Cosgrave and Desmond Fitzgerald received his under the 1934 Act - see MSPC/34D2179 Desmond Fitzgerald.

5 Marie Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions for Veterans of the Irish Revolution, 1916-23', *War in History*, vol. 20 (2), 2013 pp. 201-221.

6 See MSPC/SPG10A/2 Special Investigation of Six County Cases for an example under the 1924 Act in relation to the gathering of evidence regarding service pension applicants from Northern Ireland.

7 MSPC/MSP34REF16470 Humphrey Murphy.

8 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (formerly G.36) General Principles - Sub-file (e) - Brigade Committees, Memorandum 4 January 1944.

capacity as witnesses and references or as representatives for the applicants from their areas. Two of the members of the Advisory Committee were always former senior IRA officers – initially Murphy and John McCoy.[9] This greatly assisted both the workings of the Advisory Committee and the establishment of links with former senior IRA figures throughout the country.

However what was now envisaged went much further. It would also, in theory at least, greatly assist the workings of the Referee and Advisory Committee by providing them with exactly the kind of accurate information they would need to fairly and speedily judge the overwhelming number of applications they were facing. Furthermore as the information was being provided by the former local officers, it would also hopefully reduce the grounds for and the number of potential complaints from disgruntled claimants.

The aim was therefore that the Brigade Committees would be a reputable and reliable resource. Not only was it envisaged that they would provide the Referee and Advisory Committee with listings of operations and activities undertaken by the Irish Volunteers and IRA, but also, with regard to major operations during 1920 and 1921. They would ultimately be asked to provide details regarding the name and nature of the operation, numbers and casualty figures for both the IRA and British forces involved, the names and addresses of the IRA participants and maps illustrating the operations. The committees would further provide detailed listings of IRA membership, down to local company level, for the two critical dates (for pension purposes) of 11 July 1921 and 1 July 1922. Furthermore it was planned that the brigade committees would also actively assist the Referee and Advisory Committee by providing listings of the most active or deserving cases in their respective areas for priority examination, as well as giving evidence in person as verifying officers regarding applicants from their area.

Recognising the necessity that the reliability and standing of the committees should be, as far as possible, above reproach, the Referee and his office was very clear about how the committees should be constituted and the manner in which they should be set up. The Referee directed that committees should where possible be "…composed … of the [former] Brigade Staffs…" Where that was not possible the committees were to be formed following a meeting "…to which all available members of the former Brigade Staff and Battalion Commanding (or next senior) Officers would be invited …" Not only that but the Referee also insisted that once formed the Secretary of the Brigade Committee forward details of the meeting held to form the committee. These details were to include "…the names, addresses and former ranks of – (a) those invited to the meeting; (b) those who attended; [and] (c) the members of the committee."[10] To further encourage the formation and efficient working of the brigade committees the Referee applied a "General Rule" that the adjudication of applications from a particular

9 MSPC/MSP34REF16473 John McCoy. A number of the civil servants appointed to and working with the Advisory Committee and the Office of the Referee also had considerable IRA service.

10 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (formerly G.36) General Principles - Sub-file (e) - Brigade Committees, Memo (Circular letter) November 1935 and Secretary, Office of the Referee to Liam Forde, 14 November 1936. See also the RO (Battalion and Company nominal rolls) series.

Brigade area would be delayed until the records of the particular Brigade had been completed to the Referee's satisfaction.[11]

It is clear from the material both on the activity files and elsewhere in the MSPC that the brigade committees were not all as successful as originally hoped. It did not help that the content, complexity and quantity of the information requested by the Office of the Referee increased over time as the process developed.[12] Brigade committees and their members were often left confused regarding the precise nature of the information required by the Referee. Face to face meetings and further correspondence with the committees could often be necessary in efforts to clarify the changing requirements.[13] Furthermore the process of providing the information requested in the required format often proved slow, cumbersome, and in some cases almost impossible. There is also much evidence in the Collection not only of dissatisfaction with some brigade committees from pension applicants and indeed the Referee and Advisory Committee but also internal strife within brigade committees themselves.[14]

Emigration, death and the effects of time on memory as well as disinterest or disillusion could also all have negative effects on the process. So too the ability, or otherwise, to meet the commitment of time and effort required to compile the requested information by individuals with already busy lives. For these and other reasons uniformity was not achieved. Just as the degree of engagement and willingness or ability to cooperate with the Referee could also vary between committees, so too the quality and quantity of information and documentation recorded in the files can vary greatly between brigades.

However it must also be said that it is clear from even a cursory examination of the Activity Files series that they contain a wealth of fascinating and important information relating to the IRA campaign during the War of Independence. Not only in relation to previously well-known or high profile IRA operations but also to the less celebrated but still absolutely essential support work so necessary for maintaining a campaign of asymmetrical warfare. Activities such as the trenching and blocking of roads, scouting, carrying despatches caring for and storing arms to name but a few – less "glamorous"

11 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (formerly G.36) General Principles - Sub-file (e) - Brigade Committees, Memo (Circular letter) November 1935.

12 Compare the discussion between the Advisory Committee and representatives from Athlone Brigade on 24 April 1936, the circulars issued to the brigade committees in April 1937 and the contents of the letter issued to Sean Riordan in October 1939. MSPC/A68_2 Athlone Brigade, '*Statements made before the Advisory Committee by deputation from Athlone Brigade - 24 April, 1936*' pp 5-6; MSPC/A34_2 West Mayo Brigade, circular letter from the Office of the Referee to J. A. Tierney, West Mayo Brigade [IRA Committee], 23 April 1937; and MSPC/A11 East Limerick Brigade, letter from [the Office of the Referee] to Seán Riordan, 28 October 1939.

13 MSPC/A11 East Limerick Brigade, correspondence between S. Ó Maoldhómhnaigh and the Secretary, [Office of the Referee], and Seán Riordan and the Secretary, [Office of the Referee], 19 June-24 July 1939 and 23-28 October 1939 respectively.

14 East Limerick Brigade is a prime example of internal strife. See MSPC/A11 East Limerick Brigade, letters from John Casey, Acting Honourary Secretary, 4th Battalion Committee, East Limerick Brigade to Daniel Grace and the Secretary, Office of the Referee, 23 October 1940-14 January 1941 and MSPC/MSP34REF17158 Seán Thomas Riordan, letter from Daniel Grace to Seán T. Riordan, 5 March 1937 and letter from Séamus O Maoileoin to [the Office of the Referee] 26 November 1937.

but still potentially deadly for participants if caught by Crown Forces – are extremely well covered in the series.

Furthermore these files do not just cover the War of Independence. Very many go back to the anti-Conscription campaign of 1918. Some go back to the mobilisations of 1916 and a few even touch, however briefly, on the very beginnings of the Irish Volunteers from late 1913 into 1914. At the other end of the time scale many activity files contain information regarding events during the Truce Period (12 July 1921 – June 1922) such as participation in training camps and the takeover of former RIC and British Army posts. Some few even go on to cover IRA activity during the Civil War itself in 1922 and 1923, although these are a minority of files.

It is also clear from examining service pension application files that the various Referees and Advisory Committee members who, between 1934 and 1958, operated the legislation under both the 1934 Act and the amending 1949 Military Service Pensions Act, came to rely heavily on the information contained in these files. Indeed when an applicant came to claim, either for an operation in which he was not named as a participant, or for an operation which was not listed in the relevant file, he would have to produce proof of his *bona fides* and an explanation for the omission would often also be required from the Brigade Committee.[15] As tools for adjudicating service medal applications these files, along with the Nominal Rolls series (RO), would remain working files within the Department of Defence (Finance Branch) beyond the winding up of the Military Service Pensions mechanisms in 1958 and, indeed, up to and beyond the commencement of the Project in 2008.

Provenance and archival treatment

As regards the physical location of the files they were held by the Office of the Referee, which was located firstly at Griffith Barracks on the South Circular Road, Dublin and later at Coláiste Caoimhín in Glasnevin, Dublin. Following the winding up of the Referee and Advisory Committee in 1958, the files passed to Finance Branch of the Department of Defence also located at Coláiste Caoimhín. They remained there until moving to Renmore, Galway following the decentralization of Finance Branch to that location in 1989. Then with the setting up of the MSPP they were transferred to the Project office in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin in July 2008 where they remain to this date.

As with the rest of the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC), the Activity Files series presented significant challenges to the Project team. Poor quality and damaged paper, poor storage conditions, the extensive use of now rusting pins, staples and fasteners, the application of sellotape, as well as considerable handling over the years, caused their own problems. As a result the intervention of a conservator was essential before preservation scanning and any processing programme could commence for this series. Work on these files therefore had to be delayed for quite some time while this necessary and invaluable work was undertaken by conservator Audrey McGinley. This delay was ultimately beneficial and not only for the physical wellbeing and survival of the series. It also allowed the Project team to build up a considerable knowledge base, both regarding the incidents and events of the period as well as on the workings of the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934, while processing other elements of the Collection. This knowledge base and experience has proved invaluable while working on the Activity Files series.

Other challenges faced the team. For example dates attributed for particular events could differ greatly within individual files and between individual IRA company returns. Correctly identifying locations named on the file and their correct spelling was also a major challenge at times. A brigade's name was not necessarily a guarantee of which county the reported incident took place in. North Mayo Brigade extending into County Sligo and East Limerick Brigade into Tipperary are just two examples of many brigades crossing county borders. Secondly IRA units and particularly Active Service Units (ASUs) could and did operate outside their own locality with or without the co-operation of units in the other location. Thirdly the location name given for an incident could be its townland or parish or could be given in relation to the nearest notable human settlement or physical feature. Finally identifying a location by its spelling on file was often difficult whether due to variations in that spelling within individual files, the quality of handwriting, typos, or the fact that the spelling of a location name had changed over the years.[16]

Providing access

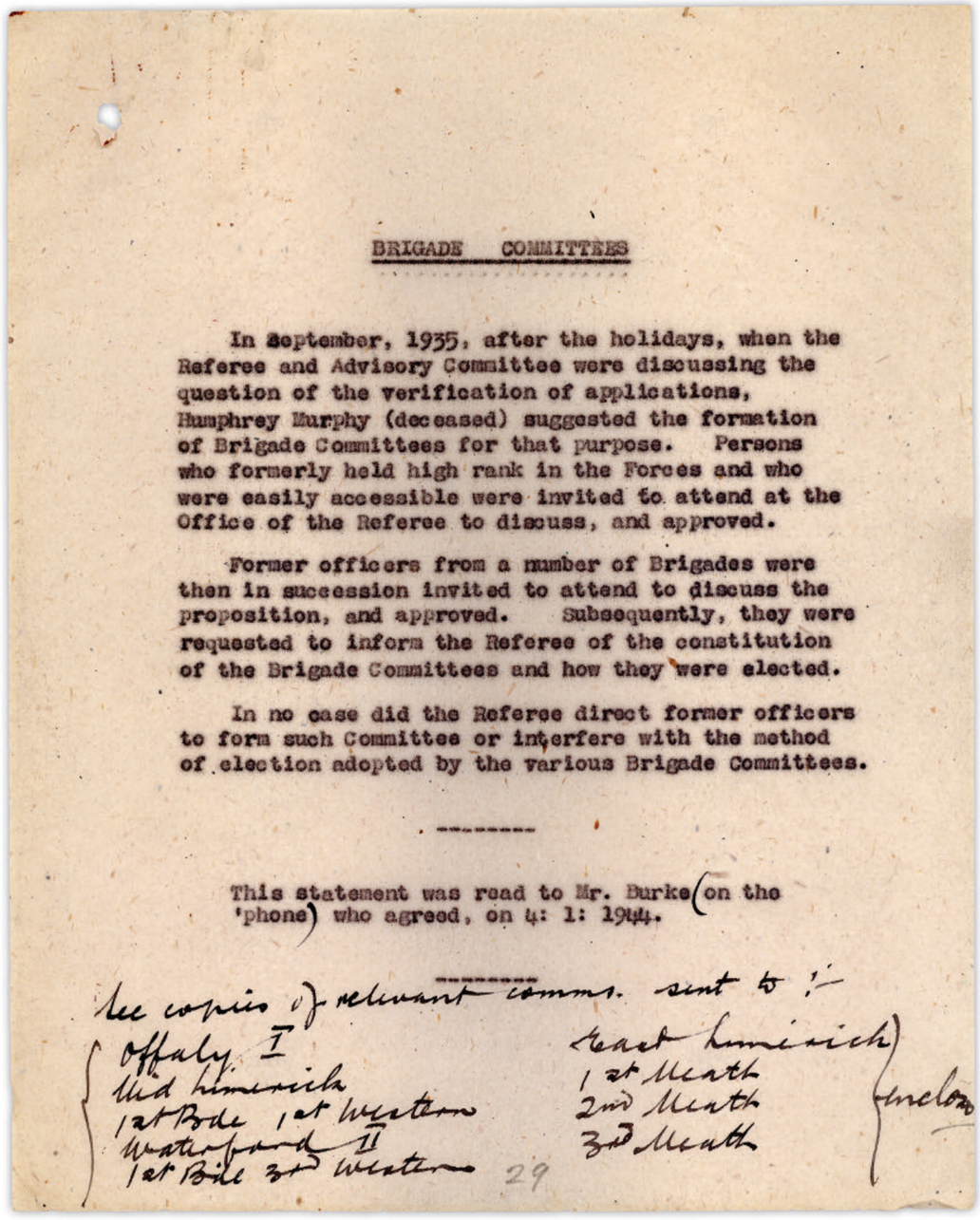
Once the conservation process was complete an initial scoping exercise was carried out by Colonel Richard Heaslip (Retd) at the request of the then Project Manager, Patrick Brennan. This allowed the Project team to gain an insight into the quantity and quality of the documentation and information contained in the series, essential before deciding on how best to proceed both in terms of processing the collection and making it available to the public. The difficulty being that a standard archival description in the series considered essential, it might not on its own be sufficient for conveying or making generally accessible the wealth of information available. Following discussions between the Project Manager, her team and the web design company, the following course of action was recommended: firstly the series would receive a standard archival description. As with the rest of the MSPC these descriptions will be made available online. Each online description will be linked to a scanned copy of the relevant file available for viewing or download. The series would also receive its own dedicated web pages on the Military Archives website. Furthermore the Project team would work to compile a database of all locations where activities or operations were carried out and a database of some of the more noteworthy operations or events. This information would then be used to create a searchable online list of locations and noteworthy activities and would also help in the creation of maps illustrating the physical locations of these operations or incidents. Links from these incidents will also be made on an ongoing basis to

15 MSPC/A11 East Limerick Brigade – see documentation from James Bond former O. C. Bruff Company, 3 Battalion, East Limerick Brigade and Tomás Ó Maoillóin, Edmond Tobin, William McCarthy and Daniel Grace of the East Limerick IRA Brigade Committee regarding the service pension applications of John O'Connor, Bruff Hill, County Limerick and William Meade, Tankardstown, Bruff, County Limerick.

16 For this purpose and for the standardisation of place names generally in the MSPC, the *logainm* and Irish townlands websites, https://www.logainm.ie and https://www.townlands.ie respectively, have been of great assistance.

other relevant files in the MSPC as they become available online – for example files relating to individual participants and/or casualties.

In this manner the Project team intends that the maximum amount of information regarding this file series can be made available as widely and as accessibly as possible. Whatever the identified shortcomings of some of the brigade committees or the files on an individual basis there can be no doubt that taken as a whole, and in conjunction with the wealth of files of the MSPC, they provide a formidable and essential resource for any researcher or academic interested in the revolutionary period.



BRIGADE COMMITTEES

In September, 1935, after the holidays, when the Referee and Advisory Committee were discussing the question of the verification of applications, Humphrey Murphy (deceased) suggested the formation of Brigade Committees for that purpose. Persons who formerly held high rank in the Forces and who were easily accessible were invited to attend at the Office of the Referee to discuss, and approved.

Former officers from a number of Brigades were then in succession invited to attend to discuss the proposition, and approved. Subsequently, they were requested to inform the Referee of the constitution of the Brigade Committees and how they were elected.

In no case did the Referee direct former officers to form such Committee or interfere with the method of election adopted by the various Brigade Committees.

This statement was read to Mr. Burke (on the 'phone) who agreed, on 4: 1: 1944.

See copies of relevant comms. sent to :-

Offaly I
Mid Limerick
1st Bde 1st Western
Waterford II
1st Bde 3rd Western
East Limerick
1st Meath
2nd Meath
3rd Meath
} Enclos

29

MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (formerly G.36) General Principles – Sub-file (e) – Brigade Committees memorandum, 4 January 1944 (p. 19).

Photograph of John McCoy [1P411; p. 29] Main pension file reference: MSP34REF16473

Opposite

MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (formerly G.36) General Principles – Sub-file (e) – Brigade Committees (p. 7) – Circular letter, November 1935.

COPY/

November, 1935.

A Chara,

I am directed by the Referee to refer to recent representations relative to the applications which have been received from former members of the (Irish Republican Army), and I am to state that as a general rule applicants are not summoned until the Organisation Records of the particular Brigade to which they were attached have been completed to the satisfaction of the Referee. With a view to having the necessary particulars supplied without delay, it is suggested that a Brigade Council or Committee be established to co-ordinate the work of the other units of the Brigade in the compilation of the necessary records. This Committee should consist, as far as possible, of the former Brigade Staff or Council. Where this is not practicable it is suggested that a meeting be held to which all available members of the former Brigade Staff and Battalion Commanding (or next senior) Officers would be invited to appoint a Committee which would act on behalf of the Brigade and to which communications from this office on matters concerning the Brigade generally might be addressed.

With reference to the Organisation Records which are required, I am to enclose for your information, copies of circulars which indicate the particulars required from the respective unit s of each Brigade. It would help to avoid subsequent delay in having lists verified if the Brigade Committee can so arrange that the Company Rolls (separate copies of which are required for each of the two dates - 11th July, 1921, and 1st July, 1922) will be submitted to the respective Battalion Councils for certification as to accuracy and transmission to the Brigade Committee, which would, in turn, if satisfied that the lists are correct, certify to that effect and forward them to the above address. A similar procedure might be adopted in the case of lists of Battalion Staffs.

As soon as these records have been completed to the satisfaction of the Referee, the Brigade Committee would be asked to submit a list of the best cases from the Brigade, i.e., cases in which the Committee are generally satisfied that the applicants in question have had the necessary qualifying service, namely, active service at any time during Easter Week 1916, or continuous active service during either of the following periods; 1st April, 1920 to 31st March, 1921, or 1st April, 1921 to 11th July, 1921. In the preparation of this list the Committee should indicate special cases of destitution &c. which, in their opinion, should receive priority. The applicants whose names are so submitted will then be summoned for examination at the earliest possible date.

Arrangements should, accordingly, be made immediately for the establishment of a Brigade Committee on the lines indicated, and as soon as it has been established, the names and addresses (and former ranks) of those appointed to act thereon should be forwarded to the above address.

Mise, le meas,

RUNAI.

Q. That difficulty - if O.C.-ship could be discussed by the three men interested, if there was a Meeting arranged between McGiffe, Paddy Morrissey, and yourself, with reference to all men who were members of the Brigade Committee?
A. Yes.

Q. We will take this regarding the question of the second date. Assuming the question of Mr. Costello's claim does not arise, and that Paddy Morrissey was Brigade O.C. up to the time he ~~ea~~ came to Dublin, - he was fighting here in Dublin, - when was his successor appointed at all?
A. I do not know about being appointed.

Q. Was there a successor?
A. I was first Battalion O.C., and did not hear anything about his being appointed.

Q. 27th July, 1922?
A. It would be after that. Tom McGiffe was acting probably. Officially Tom McGiffe was appointed after Paddy's arrest expecting Paddy to arrive back from the city. Then Tom McGiffe was appointed after that.

Q. Then if he was following the position up to date of subsequent appointment, it would be acting capacity?
A. Yes. He was appointed officially in September.

Q. Regarding Vice-O.C-ship?
A. He was Christy ~~Macken (?) (or~~ McKeown~~)~~. He was killed in the West on 28th or 29th June.

Q. Who was Brigade Adjutant on 1st July, 1922?
A. Barney McGlynn.

Q. Was P. Macken Quartermaster?
A. That is right.

Q. That would confirm our Records. For 11th July, 1921, Brigade O.C. was Con Costello; Vice-O.C. was George Adamson; the Quartermaster ~~xxxx~~ was Robert Ramsay?
A. That is right. Barney McGlynn was Adjutant on the second period, but he was arrested the first day of the Civil War, in Dublin. He is at present in Dublin, in Parkgate Street.

Q. With reference to the Company Roll - these Records you are prepared to hand in to-day, in view of the fact you have to have a Meeting to clear up the question finally of Brigade Staff on second date, ~~xxx~~ you should let us have a certified statement signed by at least two members of the Brigade Committee, and the Secretary of the Brigade Committee, so ~~xx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ it would save time to hand you back these records in order that they may be certified in the same way; that these are correct returns of "A" Company of the 1st Battalion of the Athlone Brigade on 11th July, 1921. In the same way, we would want Company Rolls for each company on both dates, and certified as being the correct copies of the Nominal Rolls of the various Units.
A. You say, to be signed by two members of the Company?

Q. Yes, to ensure that such are not prepared by one man, etc., and that the records have been passed by the Committee as authentic.
A. You want a list of the companies and the Battalions, the engagements in which they were in, and by whom carried out, whether by column or company?

Q. I do not know that we will want that, of course it will be a help; we do not want to be piling any work on the brigade. If instead of going down to each battalion and company you gave us a summary of the principal events that took place in your area it would be of material assistance?
A. The names of the men that took part in the engagements.

Q. If there was an ambush in the area the names of the men that took any part in the operation?
A. It is a bit hard to do. There is one ambush we had in 1920 there were so many men at that we could hardly count them. They all seemed to get wind of it. You could hardly get a record of it.

Q. Talking about men taking part in the ambush - you refer to the very big numbers - you may have had covering parties and parties on the blocking of roads and that sort of thing. When we ask for men we mean the men that took part in the actual operation. There is a difference between the man that is picked as a member of the attacking party on the barracks or patrol; he is assumed to have better service than the man that was blocking roads 10 miles away?
A. We had a mobilisation of this company over that area; it was a boat that went up the Shannon. We had to rush out and get men as quickly as we could, all the company seemed to get wind of it at the same time there were so many men there. It should not be hard to find out. You did not have so many men tha t day.

Q. A list like that is liable to make a mistake?
A. There were 40 or 50 under arms - shotguns etc.

Q. That does not say that a man's established service will be effected because his name was not supplied on the brigade list. The brigade might give us a list of operations and the men who took part. The Board would find out later that a man was claiming he took part and his name was not on the brigade list, it might be the fault of the brigade. We would communicate with the brigade that a man that claims he took part in the operation was not on the list as supplied by the brigade. The brigade would find out the mistake and include his name as being on the particular operation.
A. It is very hard to get all details.

Q. Each applicant, according to the Act, has the onus of proving his individual case. Assuming that the brigade testifies his having taken part in any of these operations, that wont absolve any man from the necessity of making his own case when he comes up before the Board?
A. Where a man was interned during the Tans up to the general release on 9th December 1921 and is hanging around until the Civil War is he entitled to active service from the time of the general release.

OIFIG AN RÉITEÓRA,
(Office of the Referee),
BEAIRICÍ UÍ GRÍOBHTHA
(Griffith Barracks).
CUAR-BHÓTHAR THEAS,
(South Circular Road),
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.
(DUBLIN).

Uimhir Thagartha
(Reference No.)

R.O/402.

28 April 1937

PINSIÚINÍ SEIRBHÍSE MILEATA, 1934.
(Military Service Pensions Act, 1934).

A Chara,

I am directed by the Referee to refer to the applications which have been received from former members of Belfast Brigade I.R.A., and I am to request your Committee to be good enough to submit, at the earliest possible date, a certified statement showing - by Battalions - full particulars of the major operations carried out by each Battalion in the Brigade during each of the two qualifying periods: 1st April 1920 to 31st March 1921, and 1st April 1921 to 11th July 1921, and indicating :-

(a) the name and nature of the operations;
(b) the approximate dates on which they were carried our, and
(c) the names and present addresses of the persons engaged in them.

If any delay is experienced in compiling the data requested at (c) I am to state that the particulars required at (a) and (b) should be submitted without delay when available, and the names and addresses of the persons engaged in the operations at the earliest possible subsequent date.

Mise, le meas,

RÚNAÍ

Mr. Joseph Cullen

Reminder issued 10/1/38

A/11.

28th October, 1939.

A Chara,

I am directed by the Referee to refer to your letter of the 23rd instant regarding the Operations Records of the East Limerick Brigade and to state that the Referee requires full particulars of each operation carried out during the Black-and-Tan period in the East Limerick Brigade Area. In this connection I am to enclose a copy of the Memorandum handed to each of the representatives of the East Limerick Brigade who attended a Conference on the 7th June last. From an examination of this Memorandum, with particular reference to Page 2, it will be noted that the following particulars are required in respect of each operation :-

(a) Date and full description of the Operation with a map, or at least a sketch map.
(b) The names and addresses of all participants indicating the nature of participation and showing the unit to which each participant was attached.

It is noted from the second and third point raised in your letter under reply that you appear to be under the impression that a history of the activities of former members of the I.R.A., whether they took the side of the Free State Army or not, is required. Please note, that the activities of particular individuals are only being sought in so far as the general history of an individual operation is concerned, and that in so far as each operation is concerned the names of all participants irrespective of what side they took in the Civil War or whether they have already been awarded pensions, either under the 1924 Act or the 1934 Act, are required.

Regarding the fourth point, the activities of each member of the Flying Column are only required in so far as they will be embodied in the general history of operations. Similarly regarding the fifth point, the history of the operations will cover the activities of those members of the various Companies who took part in the activities particularsnof which are being detailed.

I am to add that in case representatives of the four Battalions in question who wish to attend at Griffith Barracks to discuss in detail the requirements of the Referee, arrangements will be made to receive them, but only on the understanding that the expenses incurred in their attendance cannot be met out of public funds.

Mise, le meas,

Rúnaídhe.

Mr. Sean Reardon,
Kilmallock,
Co. Limerick.

Garrydoolis,
Pallasgrean,
March. 5th. 1937.

To Sean T O'Riordan,
Kilmallock.

A cára,

Received yours of the 27th. inst. remarks noted. Sorry we didnt meet you in the city. Seamus made some awful statements to the Board, principally lies, but the worst feature of the whole business is I fear, that S. Robinson pays too much attention to everything he has to say. Fancy Malone stating that Paddy Dalton was only a deputy of his (Malones) and that he Malone visited East Limerick every week-end from March 1922 up to the 2nd Critical Date, and that he spent two full weeks during the Easter Holidays organising in this Brigade area and held a Brigade Staff meeting in Knocklong.

In my statement to the Board, I said that so far as I could remember the Brigade Staffs in East and Mid Limerick were not superseded by Commdt. Dalton, that I as his Adjutant dealt directly with the organisation of the Battalions in both Brigade areas, that we made appointments in Batt. Staffs in both Brigades, that in the Castle Connell Batt.

COPY/ For Sean T. O'Riordan's File

EAST LIMERICK BRIGADE. I.R.A.

Grantstown,
Waterford,

S. Ó Maoilcoin

26.11.'37.

A Chara,

In reply to your letter of the 23rd instant I feel it my duty in the interests of the men who fought under me to submit a statement of the position for your consideration.

The eight officers nominated by the Board to give evidence re ranks and service, can be of very little assistance where the service of men who fought in the post-truce period is concerned. With one or two exceptions, these officers were arrested and imprisoned before any fighting had taken place in the area. The two Brigade officers appointed had been absent from the area owing to illness for several weeks before the 2nd critical date. They know even less than the Battalion officers. One Brigade officer, Daniel Grace, on the occasion of his last visit to the Board proved himself a very unreliable witness.

I fear that the Board is still being influenced by a small group who are out to impede the Brigade Committee. They are acting in the interests of four bogus claimants whose claims were turned down by the Brigade Committee. The evidence submitted to the Committee by reputable witnesses, including the Divisional Quartermaster, proved conclusively that these four men - Messrs Riordan, Keane, Morrissey and Crowley - had no claim to rank or service in the second perild. It further proved that Sean Riordan refused to co-operate with the Republican forces and was later sentenced to death as an enemy agent and that Morrissey resigned from the I.R.A. and surrendered to the enemy to avoid courtmartial. The Board evidently does not wish to hear this evidence. Had the Brigade Committee been consulted far more efficient and reliable witnesses could be appointed without calling on any whose ranks are disputed.

The failure of the Board to accede to the request of the Brigade Committee, that a Republican officer should act in conjunction with Donncadh Hannigan in examining pre-truce service, is unreasonable.

I regret that the deferred cases - Fitzgerald(Kilmallock) Raleigh (Emly), Hogan (Bruree) and Murphy (Knocklong) are not up for consideration.. These men have been very unfairly treated. I hope justice will be done them in the near future.

Having made the foregoing protest I wish to state that I welcome this effort to settle the East Limerick claims. I hope sincerely it will have the desired effect. If I can be of any assistance, the Board can count on my wholehearted co-operation.

Is mise, le meas,

Seamus O Maoileoin,

Ex.Brigade O/C.

/KB

The Brigade Activity Reports in context

Prof Eunan O'Halpin

The release of all 151 files in the Brigade Activities Reports series is a further important step in the disclosure of state records pertaining to the Irish revolution and the people affected by it, civilians as well as combatants. This material will make a considerable contribution to our understanding of the period between 1916 and the end of the Civil War.

The Activity Reports were required for the administration of the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934. Circulars were issued seeking 'a certified statement showing – by Battalions – full particulars of the major operations carried out by each Brigade in the Brigade area'.[1] However there were major difficulties in completing such an exercise coherently and consistently: the accuracy, quality and depth of reportage varied widely between and within brigades.

The production of these reports was driven primarily by the need to provide a framework for military service pensions applications: unless those administering pensions applications had a reliable account of events and activities in each area, it would be impossible to determine the validity of individual claims of involvement in specific operations or incidents. In the late 1940s a multi-volume chronology of significant events in the separatist struggle between August 1898 and July 1921 was prepared by the Bureau of Military History, based largely on contemporary newspaper reports and some extant IRA documentation. It is reliable but not definitive: for instance, it did not list the majority of IRA operations where no reference had appeared in the press to armed action against Crown Forces or civilians, or to activities such as the destruction of unoccupied RIC barracks or the obstruction of roads. Publication of the guide, although suggested by Éamon de Valera when in opposition in 1950, ran into the ground in the face of criticism from historians on the Bureau's Advisory Group and the idea was abandoned in April 1951 just two months before de Valera returned to office.[2]

Some reports attempt to cover activities throughout the years from the build-up to the 1916 Rising to the last days of the Civil War; others do not. While no one brigade's report is comprehensive or definitive, the collection will greatly assist in the exploration of the histories of regions and localities and they will be invaluable for descendants of individuals involved in or affected by the fight for independence. Difficulties and disputes which arose in the course of the composition of these reports – between historic brigade areas, adjoining brigade areas, individual veterans and groups within brigade areas and between various brigade committees and the Department of Defence - also cast a good deal of light on the intensely local nature of the memory of the War of Independence and Civil War and on its decades-long aftermath. In many cases, the initial information submitted in response to the Referee's request for material was deemed inadequate, resulting in the postponement of consideration of individual applications from the areas concerned until reliable reports in the appropriate formats were provided.

The Activity Reports were compiled and collated within brigade areas by committees consisting of local men (and Cumann na mBan members) who had been prominent in one way or another in the independence struggle. This may have been necessary, and it was probably also desirable in order to give veterans a sense that they had an appropriate say in the process of determining eligibility for state awards based on military service. Several factors influenced how smoothly such brigade committees operated.

It might be expected that the greatest of these was the deep divide of the Civil War of 1922-1923, when people who had fought together against the British turned instead to fight each other. Yet this does not appear to have created difficulties as acute as might be expected: while the committees were effectively controlled by anti-Treaty republicans, in general this does not appear to have been the cause of significant distortions or omissions in Brigade Activity Reports. There is a strong case for saying that the enormous legislative extension of military service pensions rights in 1934 to anti-Treatyites who had fought in the Civil War against the new state, and to members of Cumann na mBan and Na Fianna Éireann who had previously been ineligible for any form of service pension, had a perhaps unintended effect of softening Civil War divisions amongst separatist veterans.

It is certain that the state's refusal to grant pensions to the great majority of applicants who applied for them caused a widespread sense of grievance amongst people – women as well as men – who felt they had contributed to the military campaign for independence between 1916 and the Truce of July 1921 and in many cases after the Truce until the end of the Civil War (for pensions purposes, on 30 September 1923). But it also appears that differences over the 'split' on the Treaty and Civil War were generally set aside in the compilation of the Activities Reports as of Nominal Rolls and of references written by the various officers superior to individual pension applicants: suggestions of partiality in Brigade Reports submitted seem largely to arise from historic difficulties within brigade areas which long predated the national split.

Factors including the passage of time, the death or emigration of key figures, local disputes amongst veterans arising from differences during the revolutionary era, the Civil War split, and a general resentment at what often appeared to be bureaucratic nit-picking by civil servants in Dublin who had never risked anything for Ireland, contributed to the difficulties experienced in furnishing complete and reliable accounts of activities.

One problem with the decision to use the divisional and brigade framework as it existed – on paper at any rate - on 1 July 1921 was that the local organisation of Irish Volunteer/IRA units had changed markedly over time between 1916 and the introduction of a unitary divisional structure. The intention of such changes mandated by GHQ was to increase effectiveness at local level and to enhance central command of the IRA. Such reorganisation was sometimes welcomed, but as often resented in the areas affected.[3] In south Donegal, the OC of the 4 Brigade, 1 Northern Division, who pleaded unsuccessfully with GHQ to prevent the splitting of the former Ballintra Battalion into two units in different divisions, appealed to his men to accept the

1 MSPC/A48: 1 Brigade 3 Northern Division; Office of the Referee to Joseph Cullen (Belfast Brigade), 18 April 1937. A reminder was issued on 19 January 1938.

2 Trinity College Dublin, Michael McDunphy papers (unsorted), 'Publication of the Chronology', Éamon de Valera to Michael McDunphy, 14 December 1950 and McDunphy to de Valera, 16 April 1951.

3 Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: the Development of Military and Political Policies* (Oxford, 1975), p. 178.

outcome: 'I must rely on your discipline & obedience to fall in with the decision of HQ … Let all OCs show by example that ours is a disciplined army, & let them insist on uprightness & decency in their men'.[4]

Another officer of the same division told the Pensions Board in 1940 that he could not assemble all the requisite information about 4 Brigade activities 'as I was prior to my arrest … attached to the former South Donegal Brigade', which only later became part of the 4 Brigade: 'as I was imprisoned, I have no personal knowledge of the facts'.[5]

Furthermore, GHQ's grouping together of units within a brigade and battalion structure often encountered opposition on the ground. Examples of this can be seen in the Limerick City (Mid-Limerick Brigade) records, and those relating to the Athlone Brigade and to East Down (3 Battalion, 3 Northern Division). There was also confusion as to when GHQ-ordained divisional, brigade and battalion reorganisations actually took effect: Con Moloney of the 3 Tipperary Brigade, whose pension award also took account of his service as Divisional Adjutant of the 2 Southern Division from April 1921 to March 1922, was asked by the Pensions Board in February 1936 "When was the 2nd Southern Division formed?". He replied "I think it was formed in March 1921, others think it was not formed until May".[6] These records also suggest an element of uncertainty about where specific material should be lodged: an instance is the inclusion in the South Roscommon Brigade Activity file of a school copybook detailing the 1922-1923 activities of the Longford 6 Battalion, 3 Brigade, 2 Western Division'.[7]

The Activity Reports will be of particular use in identifying specific incidents and operations carried out by the Volunteers across the island of Ireland and in Britain. The individual brigade files also contain a miscellany of material in addition to chronological lists, some of which replicates or adds to material contained in other file series. Thus these records can most effectively be used in conjunction with the MSPC Nominal Rolls; the thousands of records in the Pensions series and the Medals series; and the Military Archive's Bureau of Military History (1913-1921) Witness Statements first released in 2003 and associated administrative files which have since been opened.

Old antagonisms and local archive sources

The 1934 Military Service Pensions Act had a galvanic impact upon veterans, not all of them from the anti-Treaty side–the legislation provided pension entitlements for members of Cumann na mBan and Na Fianna Éireann and also removed the requirement to have served in the National Forces during the Civil War. At local level a great deal of valuable material such as operational records, lists of Volunteers, details of companies and battalions and statements in support of individual pensions and medals applicants, all prepared in response to the 1934 Act, is to be found in private collections. Marie Coleman has shown that the MacEoin papers contain solicitations for support from hundreds of military service pensions and medals

4 Donegal County Archives, Joseph Murray papers, P/183/3/7/5, Murray to officers of the Ballintra Battalion, 11 August 1921.

5 MSPC/A43_1, Liam Ó Dubhtaigh to Military Service Pensions Board; 8 November 1940.

6 MSPC/MSP34REF1359, Cornelius Moloney; 13 February 1935. He was my grandfather Jim Moloney's younger brother.

7 MSPC/A27, South Roscommon Brigade (Booklet).

applicants.[8] Lesser known local collections of relevance include the Joseph Murray papers in Donegal County Archives, which contain a detailed officer list for the 3 Battalion, 4 Brigade, 1 Northern Division as of 1 December 1921, as well as material on operations not included in the very cursory and inaccurate 1 Northern Division activities report.[9] Again, the Con Casey collection in Kerry County Archives include information which complements rather than replicates what appears in the 1 Kerry Brigade activities report.[10] The Thomas Brennan papers now in Monaghan County Museum contain a handwritten account of the Monaghan 1 Battalion from the moment 'early in 1919' when 'Monaghan Brigade was formed' with Owen O'Duffy as OC, up to the spring of 1921, which seems to have been prepared for pensions purposes and which while incomplete contains a lot more information than appears in the limited and scrappy document covering 1920-21 provided by Dr Con Ward TD in the 5 Northern Division activity report. When one Defence official asked if 'there would be any use taking the matter up now' with Ward, known to be an abrasive individual, he was told 'No'.[11]

The passage of the 1934 act also revived and in some cases intensified old antagonisms within areas. At their first meeting, the Old IRA Men's Association (Cork County) agreed to add the following to the aims and objectives: 'The County Committee shall have power to negotiate with organisations of Old IRA men in other areas with a view to promoting the formation of an all-Ireland organisation with aims and objectives similar to those of this organisation.[12]

The idea of a national co-ordinating organisation to which all brigade committees would affiliate made a lot of sense in terms of pursuing the interests of veterans generally, but it never came to pass. In fact the Cork Association, like many others, soon split: a year later one member suggested that 'the Fermoy battalion be again approached with a view to effecting a reconciliation'.[13]

In counties which saw relatively little military activity during the conflict, just as much as in Cork which saw by far the greatest violence and loss of life, compilation of lists of significant activities were also complicated by local friction and deep-rooted antagonisms. Few veterans were as self-deprecating and honest as Hugh Maguire OC of Crosserlough Battalion in County Cavan in 1920-21, who when approached in the 1980s to write an account of his battalion's endeavours sent the message that he 'feels we did very little in the fight for freedom and would not agree to have our efforts published'. Yet his battalion was one of those which had responded to the Cavan Brigade Committee's call for an account of their campaign.[14] Submission of the Cavan Brigade's full record was nevertheless long delayed because, as the exasperated

8 Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2003).

9 Donegal County Archives, Joseph Murray papers, P/183/3/1/1, 'List of Officers Battn and Coys'.

10 Kerry County Archives, Con Casey papers, P36/1/1; MSPC/A6_A_1, 1 Kerry Brigade.

11 Monaghan County Museum, Thomas Brennan papers (unsorted); MSPC/A54_1 1 Brigade 5 Northern Division, minutes of 26 September and 2 October 1941. See also http://tydavnet.com/news/2018/04/museum-curator-liam-gives-presentation-tydavnet-historical-society-april-2018/, accessed 2 May 2018.

12 Cork Archives Institute, U/132, Old IRA Mens Association (Cork County), minutes of meeting, 18 February 1934.

13 *Ibid*, 30 March 1935.

14 National Library of Ireland, Seán O'Mahony papers, MS44046/1, undated, DJ McDonnell to Éamon MacThómais.

Brigade Committee's Secretary told the Pensions Board in 1941, the Cootehill Battalion 'have definitely refused to co-operate in completing records … it is the general feeling amongst us of the Old IRA that Cavan is being forgotten', which 'is most unfair to the "faithful and the few" now left undecided'.[15] In Kilkenny, the Brigade Committee Secretary wrote that 'I find it impossible to get the 1st Battalion to furnish me with the battalion record … I want to know if you will proceed with the remaining battalions that have sent on records and get their cases dealt with'.[16]

There were differences within brigades not only about who actually participated in reported activities, but also about which activities merited inclusion and which did not. In some reports there was also some scoring of points against former comrades: one Westmeath document bluntly asserted that one officer, Joe Timbs, did not obey a despatch relating to a planned operation but instead told his unit to 'stand to awaiting further orders. He tore up the dispatch and went home himself. He was removed from Co[mpan]y after this'.[17] While this report noted those who 'stand out for Republic' during the Civil War, indicating possible bias, it also lists the participation of those who went pro-Treaty. Furthermore, there was no accepted mechanism by which neighbouring brigades could decide on which unit should claim the activity as their own, particularly when IRA men from one brigade mounted an attack in another brigade area. The Athlone Brigade's report, verified in this instance from other sources, demonstrates this. On 22 October 1920, the Athlone Brigade ASU, led by Jim Tormey, an ex-soldier, ambushed a convoy of three RIC lorries at Parkwood, County Offaly. An RIC driver, Constable Harry Biggs, was killed outright. Yet this killing was included by the Offaly 2 Brigade, perhaps disingenuously, as part of their list of 'Activities in Offaly, 1920-1921'.[18] The Athlone Brigade was itself found inadequate in its reportage, as the Department of Defence observed in 1941 in response to a parliamentary question from General Seán MacEoin: delays in considering pensions applications from Athlone Brigade veterans had arisen because information sought in 1937 'was given in such a haphazard fashion that it could not be regarded as fulfilling the requirements of the Referee and Committee'.[19]

Organisation and Leadership

The Activity Reports themselves indicate that the impressive military term 'brigade' seldom reflected the reality of IRA operations. Brigades, and later divisions, were essentially the creation of IRA GHQ and were seldom the key units of organisation and command. In reality the majority of operations were planned - at the highest - at battalion or company level or, in the case of brigade or battalion flying columns, often on the initiative of the column OC. The theoretical advantages of strategic control of operations and logistics which a brigade structure offered were often more than offset by the practical complexities of co-ordinating the activities of what were essentially geographically defined local units of varying strength, morale and

15 MSPC/A56_1 Séamus McDermott to the Referee, 4 March 1941.

16 MSPC/A15_1 Kilkenny Brigade.

17 MSPC/A61 Mullingar Brigade (p32).

18 MSPC/A18_1 Offaly 2 Brigade.

19 MSPC/A68_1 Athlone Brigade.

competence.[20] A particular hazard of the assembling and use of relatively large forces of men from more than one company was that such assemblies were far more vulnerable to detection by enemy forces than were smaller groups of men who knew each other, were familiar with the area in which they were operating and could more easily disperse if necessary.

The fact that these reports carry information primarily not at brigade but at battalion, company and even individual levels also adds value and depth to the material, although the Referee deprecated the level of detail sometimes provided. On 19 April 1937 a circular was issued to the Mid-Limerick Brigade which requested 'a certified statement – by Battalions – full particulars of the major operations carried out by each battalion of the Brigade'; instead he received documentation presenting a chronology of the activities of various companies. He was more concerned to receive the history of each operation carried out in the Brigade area, whether by individual Companies, Battalions, or by the Brigade as a whole rather than a record of the activities of each Company'.[21]

Mid-Limerick also provides an illustration of how the activity file series sheds further light on significant issues of organisation and leadership within brigade areas. Veterans of C Coy, 1 Battalion, declared their outrage in 1942 when it transpired that detailed information which they claimed to have supplied to the Brigade Committee Secretary two years earlier had not been forwarded to Dublin.[22] This issue may have had its roots in a very long-running dispute within the IRA in Limerick city. Éamon Dorr recalled that eventually the Mid-Limerick Brigade was 're-organised in the spring of 1921 in an effort to get the 1 and 2 Battalions to pull together in some kind of a working arrangement', although inter-unit tensions were never fully resolved.[23]

The 3 Northern Division Activity Report is another which indicates that disputes about leadership apparently inhibited effectiveness. These centred on what in 1919 had been established as the East Down Battalion of the Belfast Brigade, but which by 1921 was termed '3rd Battalion, 3rd Northern Division'. This example is of personal as well as academic interest, as it involves my grandfather Hugh Halfpenny. Seán Cusack, sent by GHQ to take over the Antrim Brigade in 1919, described how a dispute in East Down between John Doran and Hugh Halfpenny as to who should become OC of an amalgamated East Down Battalion was inhibiting reorganisation. This 'friction between two fine Irishmen and sincere republicans' was only settled when Collins bluntly told Halfpenny, 'who seemed to be in an argumentative mood', that GHQ was appointing Doran.[24] Another OC of that battalion wrote that 'the area for years was disorganised' because of 'local dissension'.[25] Somewhat similar problems arising from local loyalties arose in the Athlone Brigade, whose boundaries were altered in the course of the conflict, with Mullingar becoming a separate brigade in late 1920.[26]

20 Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 157-64.

21 MSPC/A12 Defence to Secretary, Mid-Limerick Brigade, 13 February 1940.

22 MSPC/A12 Mid-Limerick Brigade Activities, 7 December 1942.

23 BMH/ WS515, (Éamon T Dorr), p. 5.

24 BMH/WS 402 (Seán Cusack), pp. 22-6.

25 MSPC/RO412, P Fox to Referee (undated, but c. June 1935).

26 BMH/WS1504 (Séamus O'Meara).

Contextualisation and omissions

Many documents reflect deeply-felt resentment at IRA GHQ. In Limerick city, C Company, 1 Battalion explained how what should have been a well-executed and highly successful attack when grenades were dropped from a bridge into the midst of a large party of RIC underneath went wrong: 'the bombs had been the IRA GHQ pattern and proved a complete failure'.[27] The Mid-Limerick Brigade Committee made a sustained attack on GHQ's Ernie O'Malley, 'a passing through officer' who described the brigade 'as poor in a book written later … notwithstanding the great military knowledge he told his readers he possessed at that time … he left us as he found us'.[28] O'Malley is justly famous both as a fearless IRA officer and as an admirable chronicler of the 1916-1923 era in his original memoir *On Another Man's Wound*, published in 1936 and in later publications edited by others. But his impact as a GHQ organiser appeared to vary considerably from one area to another: in Tipperary he was a hero, in other counties such as Kilkenny an overconfident, didactic figure whose carelessness in making and carrying around detailed notes of IRA matters resulted in the arrest of many Volunteer officers after he was taken unawares and captured in November 1920.[29] Crown Forces captured another cache of O'Malley's documents, covering his time in Tipperary in the autumn of 1920, in June 1921, by which time the information was out of date. This was just as well not only for the Tipperary IRA, but for GHQ: the material included a note on 1 November that 'England to go up in lumps; also intelligence officers in Dublin', the latter a reference to the planning of the 'Bloody Sunday' killings of suspected British intelligence officers on 21 November 1921.[30] GHQ's security failings were also noted: the Moyvore Company of the Mullingar Brigade recorded how in February 'Enemy capture documents relating to Mullingar Bdg [Brigade] in Dublin. Greater part of staff arrested'.[31]

The Activity Report of the Athlone Brigade provides a suitable example of how a relatively quiet area reported on local IRA actions from 1916 all the way, in the case of anti-Treaty Volunteers, up to June 1923. The ghost which haunts the Athlone Brigade is not that of 'Slickfoot', an ex-serviceman named Maher shot and thrown into the Shannon in December 1920, who had to be secretly buried after his body, buoyed up by his artificial limb, floated to the surface, who does not get a mention, but George Adamson. Adamson, who 'was considered one of the foremost officers in the Midlands', had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal while serving in the British army in Egypt during the First World War. He had gone pro-Treaty.[32] He was shot in the head in Athlone in confused circumstances in April 1922, most likely by anti-Treatyites in an episode which is still remembered and which remains controversial: a recent local study claims that 'this unfortunate incident gave the British and pro-Treaty leaders the excuse they were waiting for to launch an all-out attack' on Mullingar, 'a staunch anti-Treaty town'.[33] Yet Adamson's name, along with those of men who died on both sides during the Civil War of 1922-1923, appears on a statue, prominently positioned in the centre of Athlone, erected 'In Commemoration to those members of the Irish Republican Army Athlone Brigade 1916-1921 who gave their lives in action against British Crown Forces'. It is unclear whether the inscription reflects faulty local memory, or a decision to avoid any reference to the Civil War.

It looks as though the compilers of activities reports sometimes consciously excluded distasteful actions, and included inaccurate or false material. The Corlough Battalion of the West Cavan Brigade reported the destruction of Brackley House in Bawnmore on 12 June 1921 by a large party, but did not mention that the owner, the elderly Church of Ireland clergyman John Finlay, was killed by a blow to the back of the head in what seems to have been an act of individual indiscipline. Nor do a number of individual Volunteers who participated in the burning mention that killing.[34]

An instance of significant error or falsehood arises where the 2 Brigade, 1 Northern Division recorded 'Three Volunteers killed by Specials at Castlefin [sic]'.[35] If true, this would represent by far the most significant occurrence in Donegal during the conflict, where only a handful of deaths occurred up to July 1921. A newspaper report of 27 December 1921 did state that 'three young men named Lecky, Magee and McNulty, who reside in the district of Castlefinn and Liscooly, were arrested by unknown men and taken away in a motor car' on 27 December 1921.[36] Lecky's release was reported in *The Freeman's Journal* on 5 January.[37]

Donegal also provides a good example of what was probably an honest error: the 3 Battalion, 3 Brigade, 1 Northern Division reported in 1937 that during an attack on a six man RIC patrol in Ardara on 16 August 1920, constables 'Coonan [Cunane] & Howley were mortally wounded'. Yet on 20 August the *Belfast Newsletter* reported that Cunnane had had 100 shotgun pellets removed from his knee and lower leg while Howley was also recovering well from a wound inflicted when a bullet passed clean through his wrist.[38] In fact the RIC suffered no fatalities attributable to IRA action anywhere in County Donegal in 1920.[39] Inaccuracy is also evident in the 1 Battalion's claim to have killed two RIC men and wounded five soldiers in an ambush at Mountcharles: all other evidence indicates that one RIC man died and one soldier was wounded. Exaggeration of enemy fatalities by the IRA was commonplace (Crown Forces were no more accurate in their claims): the report by 3 Cork Brigade on the celebrated Crossbarry engagement was accurate as regards the three IRA fatalities, but wildly wrong regarding British losses: the battalion claimed

27 MSPC/A12 Mid-Limerick Brigade Activities, 3 December 1942.

28 MSPC/A12 Mid-Limerick Brigade Activities.

29 BMH/WS1205 (Thomas Treacy), pp. 73-5. Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (1st ed., London, 1936).

30 Monaghan County Museum, Thomas Brennan papers and Marron collection.

31 MSPC/A68 1 Athlone Brigade, Moyvore company report, undated, February 1941.

32 MSPC/2D2GEORGE-ADAMSON, Department of Defence Finance Officer to Minister for Defence, undated, March 1929. Adamson's British military service record at the National Archives, London, is in WO 372/1/20487.

33 Jack Kiernan, *Why Did They Lie?* (Mullingar, 2018), p. 160.

34 MSP, P24/1522, Michael O'Donnell; P24/800 (Thomas Kelleher).

35 MSPC/A41, 'Activities in Co Donegal, 1920-1921'.

36 *Weekly Irish Times*, 7 January 1922.

37 *Freeman's Journal*, 5 January 1922.

38 *Belfast Newsletter*, 20 August 1920.

39 MSPC/A42_2, 'Third Brigade, 1st Northern Division, Activities – General', report on 3 Battalion, 3 Brigade, 1 Northern Division, 22 April 1937.

one British officer and thirty soldiers died, whereas the actual total discernible in British army records was ten soldiers, itself a remarkable number of troops in a single engagement.[40]

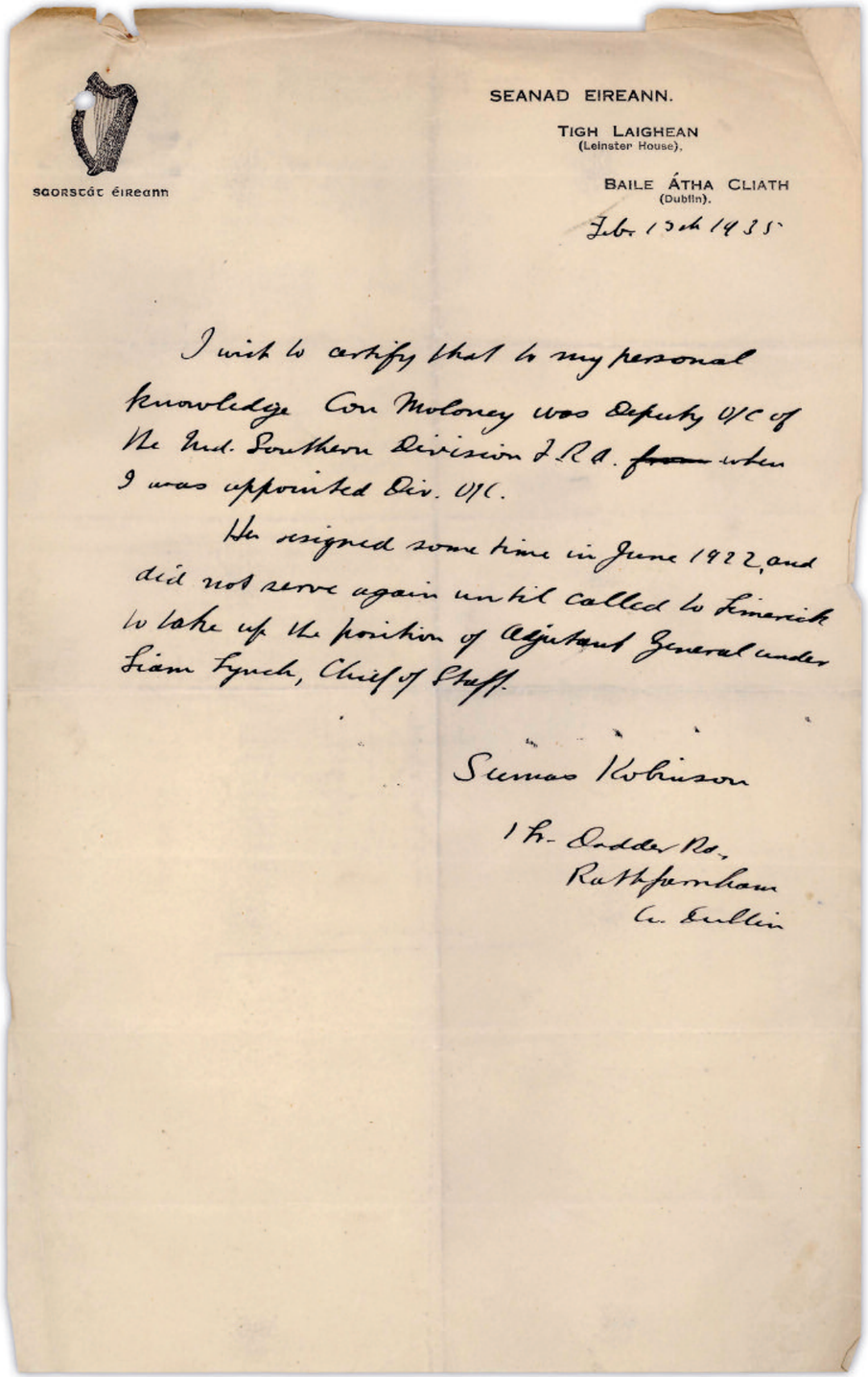
While such instances show the necessity for careful contextualisation and cross-checking of Brigade Activity Reports, they do not undermine their historical value. A striking instance of the general integrity of these exercises in certification is that of Josephine 'Min' Mulcahy, wife of General Richard 'Bloody Dick' Mulcahy who had succeeded the slain Michael Collins as military leader of the National Forces in August 1922 and whom anti-Treatyites particularly blamed for the government's ruthless use of emergency laws to execute republicans caught bearing arms. Within months of the 1934 Act, she applied for a military service pension. Her claim hinged not only on testimonials from people who had dealt with her during the 1916 Rising, but on confirmation from Cumann na mBan veterans of her service. Although anti-Treatyite women had taken over that organisation in its entirety early in 1922, Min Mulcahy was duly reported as being a member on 11 July 1921, the 'first critical date', though not on the 'second critical date', 1 July 1922, after the outbreak of the Civil War. She duly got her award.[41]

Such an exercise as the Military Service Pensions process is one of the unique aspects of the Irish revolution. Is there any other state which, scarcely a decade after enduring Civil War, established a system of state pensions and related awards which was available to veterans of both sides of the conflict? Is there any other state where the applications of individuals or their dependants for financial awards based on their military service records relied, to a considerable extent, upon confirmation of such service from people who ended up on the other side in a civil war?

The Military Pensions Collection as a whole is also a monument to the administrative competence of the Department of Defence and to the diligence and efficiency of people long gone – the great majority of them in the lowest paid, women-only, general civil service grades of clerical assistant and typist. These nameless officials, maintained in government service only for so long as they remained unmarried, meticulously created, cross-referenced and curated this extraordinary and wide-ranging archive which tells us so much not only about the revolutionary era but about the Ireland which it produced.

40 MSPC/A3_1 1 Battalion, Cork 3 Brigade.

41 MSPC/MSP34REF1691, Josephine Mulcahy.



SEANAD EIREANN.

TIGH LAIGHEAN
(Leinster House),

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
(Dublin).

Saorstát Éireann

Feb 13th 1935.

I wish to certify that to my personal knowledge Con Moloney was Deputy O/C of the 2nd. Southern Division I.R.A. from when I was appointed Div. O/C.

He resigned some time in June 1922, and did not serve again until called to Limerick to take up the position of Adjutant General under Liam Lynch, Chief of Staff.

Seumas Robinson

17a. Dodder Rd.,
Rathfarnham
Co. Dublin

MSP34REF1359 Cornelius Moloney (p. 28). Handwritten letter from Seamus Robinson, February 1935.

A.54+55.

Ruxpside,

Attached are 1st & 2nd Bde. N. Div. activity files. The matter of supplying activity records here has not apparently been pursued. These are Dr. Ward's Bdes. Pl. say if in view of Dr. Ward's recent correspondence in general, there would be any use taking the matter up now.

W.S. 26/9/41.

MSPC/A54_1-1 Brigade, 5 Northern Division (p. 2), 26 September 1941.

Opposite

MSPC/A18_1–2 Offaly Brigade (p. 3) ‘Activities in Offaly, 1920-1921’. Reference to three police lorries attacked at Park Wood, Clara.

(14)

ACTIVITIES IN OFFALY, 1920-1921.

W.E. Apl. 3rd, '20	-	General burning of evacuated barracks and general raids on Income Tax Offices.
2nd June, 1920	-	Attack on Clara Barracks.
26th June, 1920	-	Attack on Borrisokane Bks., Co.Tipperary.
8th July, 1920	-	Two soldiers kidnapped at Ballycommon Canal Bridge, near Tullamore. Attempt made to disarm a party of soldiers searching for them.
21st Sept., 1920	-	Sergeant Maguire fatally wounded at Ferbane.
22nd Octr., 1920	-	Three lorries of police attacked at Park Wood, Clara. One killed and one wounded.
31st Octr., 1920	-	Sergeant Cronin wounded returning to Barracks, at Tullamore. Died subsequently.
8th Novr., 1920	-	Military convoy ambushed between Ferbane and Limerick (?). Two wounded.
- Jany., 1921	-	Ambush at Belmont. Eight rifles and 900 rds. captured.
22nd Feby., 1921	-	Police ambushed near Phillipstown; five wounded.
22nd Feby., 1921	-	Police lorry ambushed at Mount Lucas, Edenderry.
21st March, 1921	-	Police fired on at Portarlington: one wounded.
(6th Period)	-	Blueball - planned ambush.
1st April, 1921	-	Policeman wounded in Tullamore.
18th April, 1921	-	Phillipstown Barracks attacked: one wounded.
23rd April, 1921	-	Edenderry Barracks attacked
15th May, 1921	-	Constable wounded at Edenderry.
17th May, 1921	-	Two constables killed and two wounded at Birr.
3rd June, 1921	-	Edenderry Barracks attacked.
4th July, 1921	-	Crossley tender ambushed at Ballycara.

E. de Burca. Esq. (Personal)
Gen. Sec. Pensions Board

8. Owen Roe Tce.
Cavan
4/3/41

Sir,

Re. 3rd Brig 5th N. claim "1934 M.S.P. Act"

As Cootehill Batt. have definitely refused to co-operate in completing Records, would you please urge your Board to deal with Re outstanding cases from above Brig.. from Re Records furnished by Cavan, Carrickallen, and Crossdoney Batt. Councils?

Re undertaking given by Re Referee in June 1939, that Re balance of cases from our Brigade would be dealt with when Records were examined &c., and arrangements would be made for disposal of all outstanding cases, has not yet been carried out, which is most unfair to Re "faithful and Re few" now left undecided.

Whilst we are at all times anxious to assist your Board, it is Re general feeling amongst us of Re old I.R.A. Re Cavan area is being forgotten, and it is almost impossible to get a Batt. Council or Re Brig. Comm. together for "Pension matters."

May we anticipate an early session to write "Finis" to Re whole thing with Re greatest Respect. Yours truly. Seamus MacDermott

MSPC/A56_1-3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division (p. 56). Handwritten letter by Seamus McDermott to E de Burca, 4 March 1941. “As Cootehill Batt. have definitely refused to co-operate in completing Records…”.

Opposite

MSPC/A_7 2 Kerry Brigade. Letter from Michael Murphy to the Office of the Referee on the difficulty to obtain records from B and C Coys, 5 Battalion.

To
The Office of the Referee
Military Service Pensions Board
Glasnevin
Dublin
Novr. 41

Sir.

As the Coy. Officers of B. & C. Company's 5th Batt. have not helped us to furnish the records of their Coy's we beg to state we are having nothing further to do with them. and we would be thankful if your Board would get the Officers of those Coy's to do the verifying for same. Their names are E. J. Moynihan Curraglass Glenflesk. Co. Kerry. for B. Coy. and James Daly Kilquane Headford Co Kerry for C. Coy.

Signed.

Michael Murphy Islandmore
Clonkeen P.O. Killarney. Kerry.

Manus Moynihan
Woo Bridge
Clonkeen
Killarney Kerry

MSPC/RO412-3 Brigade Down (p. 8) P Fox (Brig OC) to Referee. Reference to local dissension.

No 4. Batt. area (Dromara district)

Thos. Brannigan — Drumkeragh. Ballynahinch
Dan Branniff — 14 New Dock St. Belfast — See 1st Batt
P Fox — 23 Earlscourt St. — See 1st Batt
Wm Stewart — Post Office St. Warrenpoint

No. 5. Batt. area (Portaferry Strangford district)

Thos. Quail — Strangford — Down — Vol. 2nd Batt
Jno. Bell — Grossgar — " — Vol. 2nd Batt & III
P. Fox — 23 Earlscourt St. Belfast — See 1st Batt.

Sean Busack was in this area for a time prior to reorganisation in 1921. I should be in a position to verify service claimed by most applicants prior to May 1921. The area for years was disorganised thro. local dissension & I regret to suggest that quite a few who may be referred to for verification of service may still be actuated by biassed motives.

P. Fox Brig. OC.

P.R.O. 1934
OIFIG AN RÉITEÓRA
FAIGHTE
12 IÚL. 1935
DÚN ÚI GRIOBHTHA

M2D2 George Adamson (p. 131) – Typed letter from Sean McEoin to the Secretary of the Department of Defence, dated 9 March 1929. "Brigadier George Adamson served in the Volunteers Pre-Truce...."

LITIR DO GACH ABHAR.
UIMHIR THAGARTHA

ROINN COSANTA,
Oifig an Chinn Fhuirinne,
GEATA NA PAIRCE,
BAILE ATHA CLIATH.

9 Marta, 1929.

The Secretary,
Department of Defence.

Brigadier George Adamson served in the Volunteers Pre-Truce and took part in a number of operations against the British around Athlone. I took over the Athlone Brigade as part of the 1st Western Division in September, 1921. I found Adamson a very intelligent Officer and very loyal. In 1922, after the Treaty, Adamson was Vice Brigade O.C. A meeting was called by the Brigade O.C., Morrissey, for the purpose of inciting them to mutiny against the Dail. I heard of the meeting from Adamson, and surprised them by attending. I addressed the meeting without any result. I then called upon all loyal officers to come with me. Nobody stirred except Adamson, a Medical Officer and a Dentist. As a result of Adamson's action a few others came some days later. Adamson reorganised the Brigade, and I appointed him Brigade O.C., which appointment was later ratified by the Adjutant General. The rest of the officers of the Brigade who had turned Irregular always regarded Adamson as a traitor, that he let them down by his action at that meeting. He was later murdered in the streets of Athlone.

I am personally aware that on the receipt of pay from the Director of Organisation in 1921, he contributed monthly to the support of his parents.

His mother is now practically penniless, having no one to assist in supporting her.

I recommend her case for the most sympathetic treatment.

Sean MacEoin Major General.
(Sean MacEoin)
An Ceann Fuirinne.

The Honour of Proud Distinction? The Brigade Reports and the Battle for Recognition

Prof Diarmaid Ferriter

The first Military Service Pensions Act (MSPA) in 1924 was aimed at those 'who rendered active service' with the Irish Volunteers (pre-Truce IRA), the Irish Citizen Army, Fianna Éireann or the Hibernian Rifles and who in addition served in the National Forces (of the Provisional government in early 1922) or National Army of the Free State from July 1922 to October 1923. The 1924 Act was followed by another Act in 1934 and a crucial change with this second act was the expansion in eligibility. The 1934 Act added Cumann na mBan, the female auxiliary to the IRA, to the 'forces' recognised for pensions purposes, opened the door for those who had pre-Truce IRA service but took no further part and also those who participated in the Civil War on the anti-Treaty side.

The Board of Assessors provided for under the 1924 Act was replaced under the 1934 Act by a Referee with significant powers, including 'enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath…and for compelling the production of documents', and an Advisory Committee of two former high ranking members of the forces and two civil servants. To deal with difficulties of verification, the lapse of time since the military events and the expected increase in the volume of applications, former IRA brigades were requested to form brigade committees to assemble records of membership and activities and appoint verifying officers to assist the Referee.[1]

With the requirement of very detailed accounts of activities and the processes of verification an enormous body of supporting documentation was created and the brigade reports form an essential part of that body. The Brigade Activity Reports series is also a collection that reveals much about frustrated expectations, concern about reputation, and difficulties of corroboration. The brigade committee members responsible for compiling reports joined a big cast, including pension board members, assessors, referees, civil servants and government officials involved in administering the pension process. Collectively, over decades, these people were both keepers of a precious national record and arbiters in disputes about what precisely had or had not occurred during the revolutionary years and who was or was not involved to a significant degree.

For the purposes of recognition of active military service, piecing together the jigsaw of the Irish revolutionary period from 1916-23 was an immense challenge. It involved much hard work and careful and precise recounting but also generated many disagreements. Given the scale of the conflict and its many layers it was inevitable that many pieces of that jigsaw would not fit to the satisfaction of the assemblers, or would remain unfound. There was also the challenge of keeping administrative order and rules that would make the process manageable, coherent and consistent. This was a particular necessity after the 1934 Act as revealed by the volume of claims made under this legislation: 51,880 applications were received by the deadline of 31 December 1935 and over 30,000 applicants were interviewed between 1934 and 1943.[2] In contrast, under the 1924 Act, 21,147 applications had been made.[3]

According to one memorandum, the idea of brigade committees was first mooted in 1935, shortly before his death, by Humphrey Murphy, who had been a full-time member of the IRA in Kerry during the War of Independence and Civil War after which he returned to teaching. He was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee to the Referee under the MSPA of 1934. A number of people who formerly held high rank in the military forces were invited to attend the Office of the Referee (OR) and approved Murphy's suggestion, as did former officers from a number of brigades. It was maintained in 1944: 'In no case did the Referee direct former officers to form such a committee or interfere with the method of election adopted by the various brigade committees'.[4] The brigade committees, it was stressed, should consist 'as far as possible of the former brigade staff' or where this was not possible, all available former members should converge and choose a committee.[5]

The logic of compiling brigade reports was enunciated by the Secretary to the Office of the Referee (SOR) to Cork War of Independence veteran Séamus Mac Cos; because the assessors were moving from 'selected' cases being dealt with in 'comparatively small groups' to large groups and the 'general run'- many of which will be border line cases—'it is obviously impossible to deal with them unless the most detailed information is supplied regarding the operations of each brigade'.'[6] What needed to be included in such information was repeatedly spelt out by the OR: in relation to specific ambushes, for example, 'the account should indicate, in respect of each operation, the plan of attack, the position occupied by each of the attacking party, the result and any other details.'[7] It was also a requirement that maps and sketches outlining the operations be included. These were sent to the OR in a variety of shapes and sizes on a range of different paper, as were various lists of activities and brigade members. Some reports contained summaries of military engagements; others elaborated at considerable length; there is, as a result, a great diversity in the physical texture of this archive.

One of SOR's administrative requirements was that three members of a brigade committee needed to certify the information supplied as correct or the information would be 'of no practical use to the referee.'[8]

1 Marie Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions for Veterans of the Irish Revolution, 1916-23', *War in History*, vol. 20 (2), 2013 pp. 201-221.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 Military Archive (MA) Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC) PC/ G.36 (e) General Principles sub file: Brigade Committees. 4 January 1944.

5 *Ibid.*

6 MSPC/A2_1 1 Cork Brigade, Secretary, Office of the Referee (SOR) to Seamus Mac Cos, 4 February 1941.

7 MSPC/A62_1 7 Brigade, 1 Eastern Division, SOR to M Mac Gabhann, Kildare, 3 October 1939.

8 MSPC/A2_1 1Cork Brigade, SOR to A O'Shea, 1 June 1941.

What were also desired were lists of 'key men' in the brigade committee areas.[9] The OR was concerned that the procedures laid down by the Referee would be strictly followed, that the information would be supplied in proper form and that cases deemed 'urgent' would be disposed of as quickly as possible. It wanted the brigade committees to submit lists of the 'best cases' of the brigade; those which the brigade committee 'are generally satisfied…have had the necessary qualifying service.' Those on such lists would then be 'summoned for examination before the Referee.'[10]

In the early 1940s, a memorandum from the OR noted 'it has recently come to the notice of the Referee and Advisory Committee that in certain areas the evidence given by certain officers has not been reliable' and there was a need to bring to light 'good cases', suggesting there was an uneasiness about some of the claims of active service.[11] But there was never going to be complete consistency across the brigade committees in terms of the level of detail supplied or its accuracy. As historian Eunan O'Halpin has pointed out, this is not to dispute the importance of these reports 'but only to caution that none should be taken as representing pure and complete truth; they have to be used in conjunction with other sources including newspapers, contemporary reports to IRA GHQ by units in the field, Bureau of Military History testimonies [collected from almost 1800 veterans in the 1940s and 1950s], police and British army documents in London and Belfast and papers in private collections in Ireland and abroad.'[12]

A Referee admitted that co-operation was not uniform, with some presenting brigade reports 'in a form which did not separate active participants from the outposts'. Some old animosities died hard and this was 'especially true' of the 3 Cork Brigade committee; its most influential former officers, Tom Barry and Tom Hales, refused to co-operate with the brigade committee or act as witnesses for many applicants; they wanted, in keeping with their status as they saw it, to remain above the brigade committee mechanism. Other brigade committee members were accused of inflating the contributions of their friends and colleagues.[13] But overall, the verifying officers played a vital, unpaid and time-consuming role and in the Dáil in 1945 Minister for Defence Oscar Traynor (who had been OC of the Dublin Brigade of the IRA during the War of Independence) paid tribute to them: 'all the verifying officers from the 82 brigade areas were bent on extracting the last ounce of credit for the applicants of their areas.'[14]

Not all committees, however, wanted the information they supplied to be treated as definitive or all encompassing. In May 1938 a representative from the 1 North Louth Brigade, 4 Northern Division, was adamant that 'although there is a foundation to be had from enclosed particulars, I would respectfully suggest there must be no "hard and fast" line drawn according to them but that each applicant gets an opportunity

9 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (G.36 (e)) General Principles: sub file, Memorandum of Michael Cremen, 11 July 1942.

10 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (G.36 (e)) General Principles: sub file, Brigade Committees, SOR to Michael O'Connaill, 26 March 1936.

11 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5: General principles: sub file: memorandum of Michael Cremen, 11 July 1942.

12 Eunan O'Halpin 'The Military Service Pension Project and Irish History: a personal perspective' in Catriona Crowe (ed) *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection* (Dublin, 2012) pp. 144-166.

13 Coleman 'Military Service Pensions for Veterans'.

14 *Ibid.*

according to his claims form for stating his case.'[15] Delays were generated by death and interruptions, the SOR being informed from Cork in 1940, for example, in relation to the 1 Cork Brigade, that 'our brigade secretary has died recently and several members of the Brigade committee have joined the defence forces [a reference to the Irish Defence Forces during the Emergency of World War II].'[16]

But the OR needed to operate according to hard rules, a reminder of the relevance and resonance of the words of William T Cosgrave, the first head of government in the Free State, in 1924, when he asserted that definition of active service made it clear the government 'does not intend there should be any soft pensions'.[17] This was, and remained, the case.

Disagreements and tensions

Compiling brigade reports was a process that inevitably generated tensions over vital issues such as what constituted active service during the period and whether or not the veterans of the revolution could practically do justice to the efforts of twenty years previously, alongside the practical obstacles they faced in providing accurate information. In the 1924 MSPA there was a reference to 'active service in any rank' in the eligible forces but it was not properly defined. The Attorney General at that stage interpreted it as 'actively engaged on military service.' The 1934 MSPA did not add much greater definition: 'A person shall for the purposes of this Act be deemed to have been serving in the Forces while such person was rendering active service in any of the bodies which constitute the Forces'. It was a woefully inadequate and vague description and as Marie Coleman has observed it 'produced many myths about what it translated into in terms of volunteer actions', some believing that 'one major engagement and general service' was the benchmark which seemed to be rejected by Oscar Traynor in 1953 when he suggested it was about the ability to prove 'continuous general Volunteer service'[18]. But that was still far too vague and as had been noted by the Referee in a report in 1946, 'there are thousands of men who had some engagements with the British during the Tan War and rendered valuable routine service over a prolonged period who are not eligible for pensions under the present standards; numbers of these have served in Columns and lay in ambush on numerous occasions'[19]

In July 1942, in relation to a deputation of former members of Limerick and Kerry IRA brigades that had been received by Oscar Traynor, there was a defensive reaction from the Referee and an assertion that there was 'no foundation' to the allegation that the interpretation of 'active service' had recently undergone a change. There was also an emphatic rejection of the allegation that similar service had not been uniformly assessed, a claim made by some verifying officers, but as the Referee saw it, 'it has been invariably found [in the course of cross examination] that cases which had been alleged to be identical were, in fact, dissimilar'.

15 MSPC/A51_1, 1 North Louth Brigade, L. Gormley to SOR, 13 May 1938.

16 MSPC/A1, 1 Cork Brigade, A O'Shea to SOR, 22 August 1940.

17 Patrick Brennan, "'Active Service': Changing Definitions" in Catriona Crowe (ed) *Guide*, p. 67.

18 Coleman 'Military Service Pensions for Veterans'.

19 Patrick Brennan, '"Active Service": Changing definitions' in Crowe (ed), *Guide*, pp. 64-74.

The Referee was perturbed and annoyed by 'serious allegations made to the minister by the deputation'.[20] The OR noted that the brigade reports were of 'the greatest assistance…when carefully and conscientiously compiled'. There was a rare acknowledgement, however, that in relation to the determination not to call in those with no prima facie case for claiming active service, 'occasionally (infrequently)…there is a slight element of doubt as to whether an applicant might not suffer injustice in being deprived of an opportunity to clarify his case by oral examination'.

Because of this, a procedure was adopted to notify the brigade committee of the intention to reject a claimant unless within 14 days the brigade committee insisted the case merited further investigation: 'this arrangement did not, however, satisfy brigade committees' who wanted it to apply to all cases not discussed with verification officers.[21] Another complication was that Minister Traynor had agreed 'to look into any cases in which it appears that an injustice has been done.'[22] There were some heated disagreements by members of the Advisory Committee about cases where the 'finding of the Referee [were] not in agreement with recommendations of the Advisory committee' or 'cases in which a member or members of the advisory committee signify dissent from referees finding'. The numbers, however, were small; in June 1946 it was noted 'the Referee has to date reported on 560 cases since his appointment. In 23 of those cases a member or members of the committee disagreed with the report.'[23] Another document, however, lists 65 such cases in 1946, and this list was 'not a compete one.'[24]

A compromise of 21 days for furnishing additional evidence in the case of applicants deemed to fall short of requirements also created uneasiness. Michael Cremen, who had served as Commander of the 4 Company, 5 Battalion of the Dublin Brigade during the War of Independence and was appointed a full-time member of the Advisory Committee to the Referee in November 1944, frequently 'felt qualms' about this, as is revealed in an account of a tense discussion about an appealed case in February 1946. The Referee, Tadgh MacFirbhisigh, was defensive and trenchant in response, insisting he had to prioritise expediting the work of the OR and prevent it from 'dragging on and on'. He also maintained that witnesses had been afforded ample opportunity to make their cases - 'Haven't I summoned from here, there and everywhere?'- while adding 'I have repeatedly said that I am not for a moment attempting to control or influence or modify the state of the mind of any member of this committee at any stage of the investigation of an application, from its maker up to the point of my final report.'[25]

20 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5(G.36 (e)), General Principles: sub file: Brigade Committees, memorandum of Michael Cremen, 11 July 1942.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/6 (G.36 (F)): General Principles: Disagreements by members of the Advisory Committee, 11 June 1946.

24 *Ibid.*

25 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/6 (G 36 (F)) General Principles: Disagreements by members of Advisory Committee, Referee and advisory committee discussion of appeal, 20 February 1946.

Resentments and problems

Whatever about the preoccupation with quick processing in the OR, those working in various parts of the country to compile brigade reports and membership rolls faced numerous practical obstacles and were well aware of the difficulty of furnishing complete records. In Cork in 1939, for example, Gerald Daly wrote to the OR to note that in relation to the 1 Cork Brigade of the IRA, 'names are probably omitted through forgetfulness'; there were also men who were simply not available when the records were being prepared.'[26]

M Hynes in Thurles delivered an upbeat progress report and clearly had time on his hands: 'I have already held battalion meetings and am now visiting each coy. area personally'[27] In contrast, in December 1940, Seamus MacCos in Cork felt it necessary to point out that 'we at this end have got to earn a living and while we are prepared to do whatever we can as in the past to help the Board and our old comrades we cannot do what has been asked as it entails more time than we have at our disposal. For instance, I start work each day at 9am and finish at 7.30pm. Would the referee expect me to start another day's work when I get home or would he do so himself if placed in my position?'[28] Jason Leahy in Nenagh wrote to the SOR in February 1940 pointing out that 'no progress has yet been made…If I could travel from company to company in the area to collect the details it would be got through all right but nobody is prepared to make a start locally and I am living 25 miles away.'[29]

Other veterans were much more far flung, and the files are a reminder of the extent to which emigration was a key part of the post-revolution dispensation for many veterans. Correspondence in relation to the 1 Cork Brigade, for example, reveals that of 35 Volunteers who had been involved in an attack in Skibereen in July 1922, 8 were in the USA, including Philadelphia, Massachusetts and New York, while Michael Leahy in 1935 wrote of the whereabouts of the former members of the 4 Cork Battalion that had been involved in an attack on the National Army's headquarters in Cobh in August 1922 during the Civil War: 'Peter O'Shea, now in USA…Andy Butterley, now in England, Thomas Hayes, inmate of Cork Asylum, Maurice Twomey now deceased…'[30] Likewise, in relation to those members of the East Limerick Brigade who took part in an attack in Caherguillamore in December 1920, it was reported in 1941 that a number were in America while Ed O'Brien was in 'mental hospital, Limerick.'[31]

Compliers of reports were conscious of the geographical spread of former volunteers and the need to have their experiences incorporated; in relation to incomplete records, the complier of information on the activities of the 2 Cork Brigade, Séamus MacCos, communicating on behalf of the Old IRA Men's Association, wrote 'we realise that it is our duty to look after these men who are absent and we will make a special effort

26 MSPC/A1, 1 Cork Brigade, Gerald Daly to SOR 18 October 1939.

27 MSPC/A13_2 Tipperary Brigade, M Hynes, Thurles, to SOR, 2 May 1940.

28 MSPC/A2_1, Séamus MacCos to SOR, 2 December 1940.

29 MSPC/A13, 2 Tipperary Brigade Jas. Leahy, Nenagh to SOR, 28 February 1940.

30 MSPC/A1, 1 Cork Brigade, Michael Leahy to SOR, 25 September 1935.

31 MSPC/A11_A, East Limerick Brigade, 29 November 1941.

to do so'.[32] This was also a reminder of the welfare function of the veteran's associations alongside their role in protecting the status of former volunteers.

There were also the practical problems of trying to engage those unwilling or unavailable to co-operate. From Kildare in 1939, Patrick Dunne, Vice Chairman of the Pensions Committee of the 7 Brigade, informed the Secretary that 'despite having notified on 3 occasions the 4 Battalion Prosperous area, delegates were not in attendance with the result the particulars required by the Board relative to attacks etc are being held up in this case.'[33] The same year, Patrick Brennan of the Kildare 7 Brigade Committee sought to have a deputation of his colleagues received by the SOR but was told, in a response that was as exasperated as it was common, 'no useful purpose can be served by an interview pending the completion of the records of activities.'[34]

Resentments bubbled all over the country about perceived neglect and a hierarchy of priorities. James Gallagher wrote in 1937 of the Derry City Battalion: 'I may state bluntly that the feeling amongst the men here generally is that obstacles are being placed in the way of members from this area. Men have been brought before the Board from every area in Ireland except Derry City.'[35] Nonetheless, Gallagher persisted, while pointing out that those doing this work in Northern Ireland had to be more careful than their southern counterparts: 'the lists as enclosed are nearly as accurate as it is possible to make them in view of the fact that it is almost impossible to keep records here in the North.'[36] This was a point reiterated by one of his contemporaries, Patrick Shiels: 'owing to the activities of the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] many lists, records etc which had taken great trouble to gather had to be destroyed but the enclosed is a fairly true and authentic record.'[37]

Other qualifications in relation to information supplied were frequently made; many compilers had to record simply that the information proffered was 'correct to the best of my belief after a lapse of twenty years', in the words of the compiler of details of the activities of the 1 Kerry Brigade.[38] A Wexford deputation informed the Advisory Committee in February 1936 'the real Key men are not available' and there was also confusion over the number of men who were a part of the South Wexford Brigade of the Irish Volunteers in 1916.[39] Additional evidence before the advisory committee was not for the fainthearted; the tone of the inquisitors could be curt and sometimes impatient perhaps because, as a former member of the South Wexford Brigade was told in 1936 'we hear 20 a day.'[40]

32 MSPC/A2_1 Séamus MacCos to SOR 3 December 1941.

33 MSPC/A62_1 7 Brigade, 1 Eastern Division, Patrick Dunne to SOR, n/d c.1939.

34 *Ibid* SOR to Patrick Brennan, Kildare, 8 January 1939.

35 MSPC/A39, Derry City Battalion, James Gallagher to SOR, 25 May 1937.

36 *Ibid*, 16 July 1937.

37 *Ibid* Patrick Sheils to SOR 15 September 1939.

38 MSPC/A6_A 1 Kerry Brigade Part 2, note of Jason O'Mahony, Castleisland Coy Captain, November 1939.

39 MSPC/A65_2, South Wexford Brigade: additional evidence before Advisory Committee 3 February 1936.

40 *Ibid.*

The issue of active service continued to remain much contested throughout the process of compiling brigade reports. The statement of T.D. Sinnott, a stalwart of the Irish Volunteers in Wexford who was arrested after the 1916 Rising and was interned in England, later becoming Wexford's first county manager, contains the mix of pride and defensiveness that were characteristic of those seeking to convince the advisory board to recognise service beyond the firing of arms: 'The fact that the Enniscorthy men "went out" in spite of the defection of the officer appointed to lead them, in spite of the non-cooperation of other units of the division, in spite of the miscarriage of plans and in spite of the fact that death seemed the inevitable consequence of their action surely removes the operation from the region of "gesture."'[41]

The question of 'Keymen'

And what of those who worked in vital but non-combative roles such as the manufacture of munitions? It was pointed out in relation to the 4 Battalion of the 3 Cork Brigade that 'owing to the work in the bomb factory men from the coy were prevented from taking part in major engagements', but those engagements would not have been very effective in the absence of bomb and bullet. A further six members of the company were 'detailed to melt lead and mould buck shot to fill cartridges'.[42] These activities, however, cut little ice with the OR. E de Burca, as SOR, wrote to J.O'Connor in Thurles in relation to information pertaining to the activities of the 2 Tipperary Brigade, declaring that 'the history of the brigade operations as supplied by the Brigade committee will have very little material bearing on the attitude of the Referee and advisory committee in dealing with cases of applicants who had no actual "fighting" service and that it should, therefore be as comprehensive a history of the Brigade as possible.'[43]

But those that had no actual 'fighting experience' continued to be the cause of considerable correspondence and there was an urgent concern expressed that their sacrifices might get lost. In 1935, Liam O'Doherty, writing about the 5 Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, advocated that engineers, electricians and carpenters who played an indispensable role in the War of Independence should be treated as a 'special unit' for pensions purposes given their work in relation to the detonation of explosives, mapping, cables and manholes. To do this work they had to be withdrawn from 'ordinary infantry duties' but they had been specifically chosen by IRA GHQ 'as it was recognised that special qualifications were required' for 'this special work.'[44] This was elaborated on in a separate letter the following year; training had to be 'mainly theoretical' as practical demonstrations in the Dublin area of the theory taught could not have been safely given and therefore these individuals had to be kept 'in reserve… I stress this point because it has appeared to me that the operation of this policy might now have an adverse influence on the claims of men of the unit to "active" service.'[45]

41 *Ibid.* Statement of TD Sinnott, 7 May 1936.

42 MSPC/A3_4 4 Battalion, 3 Cork Brigade, Military Activity, 1918-22, compiled c. March 1941.

43 MSPC/A13 2 Tipperary Brigade, E de Burca to TJ O'Connor, 4 August 1939.

44 MSPC/A77_2, 5 Battalion Dublin Brigade, Liam O'Doherty to SOR, 21 October 1935.

45 *Ibid.* L S Archer to SOR, 30 March 1936.

In October 1941, Seán O Catail from Cork wrote to the SOR with the names of those who had served as dispatch carriers and receivers for the 1 Southern Division during the War of Independence, including railway employees who had taken significant risks to carry messages even though they were subjected to 'searchings, strippings and threatenings'. Most of their applications for pensions had been rejected though he asserted that those who supported the Free State side 'were each given the rank of transport officer and came out under the 1924 Act with pensions of £60 per year or over.' One of the rejected applicants was 86 years old.[46] The OR acknowledged that there were 'special cases' where service rendered 'was of such a nature that [it] was indispensable to the fighting units, although the applicant had no major engagements to his credit'; the referee would have to 'deal with each case on its merits.'[47]

A regular complaint was that some brigade reports did not meet the satisfaction of the OR and its secretary Michael Cremen also noted in October 1940 that 'the Referee has not of late been favourably impressed by the manner on which some verifying officers appear to have prepared their verifying evidence before attending sessions'. Information that had been requested three years previously 'has not been supplied in the required form' and some of the data that was supplied 'was given in such a haphazard fashion that it could not be regarded as fulfilling the requirements of the Referee and committee.'[48] There was an inevitability about irritation on this issue; it was never going to be the case that compilers of brigade reports from all over the country would provide the precision, neatness and specificity that were the hallmark of the punctilious civil servants authoring the admonishments. But there was also a notable lack of empathy with the plight of the veterans from some of their contemporaries who, as arbiters, were now seemingly poachers turned gamekeepers whose priority, it often seemed, judging by the curt and impatient tone, was to ensure that when it came to public funds, the benefit of the doubt would not be granted.

Wounded pride was also an inevitable consequence of the overall process. A statement from the 4 Northern Division in Louth was plaintive and declaratory: just a 'handful of men' in that area had imbued it with the 'spirit of their glorious forefathers' in a place where 'the population was for the most part sneeringly hostile', but their claims of active service had been rejected. That rejection was now in turn rejected by the veterans and not just because of the material consequences: 'none of them are half as much concerned with the monetary end of the matter as with the honour of proud distinction.'[49]

Wrangling and accusations of bad faith were common in private; in December 1941 Tom Crofts, chairman of the Old IRA Men's Association of the 1 Cork Brigade and his colleagues P McGrath and T O'Sullivan, complained that on their previous visit to the OR for verification purposes they had agreed they would grade Cumann na mBan members: 'we expected that our grading would be taken notice of, but, apparently, very little heed was paid to it in some cases'. They also wanted more consultation over the statutory issuing of notices requiring additional evidence in 21 days.[50] The issuing of this notice to Margaret Neenan

46 MSPC/A1 1 Cork Brigade, Seán O Catail to SOR, 20 October 1941.

47 MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (G.36 (e)), General Principles: sub file, Brigade Committees, circular of 4 January 1944 .

48 MSPC/A2_1 2 Cork Brigade, Office of the Referee circular, 7 October 1940.

49 MSPC/A51_1, 1 North Louth Brigade: 'Statement of Appeals of members of 4 Northern Division', 5 May 1941.

50 MSPC/A1, 1 Cork Brigade, Tom Crofts, P McGrath and T O'Sullivan to SOR, 2 December 1941.

was contested by the Old IRA Men's Association; it regarded Neenan as 'the best case of all the women applicants in the 2nd battalion area' and they complained that 'we should have been consulted before such a notice was sent to her.'[51]

Because of the insistence on detail, the brigade reports also created a cartography of the Irish revolution, though the requirement of a 'sketch' of military engagements was not always understood or deemed practical. Gerald Daly of the Old IRA Men's Association in Cork wrote to the SOR in November 1939: 'the request for maps or sketch maps for each activity is beyond the scope of the ability of this committee.'[52] That was hardly an unreasonable assertion given the scale of the engagements that occurred in numerous counties, but given the extent of exact and high quality sketches it is also clear that some embraced this challenge with considerable enthusiasm and even flourish. These maps were created to illustrate military plans and actions, to depict boundaries between companies and battalions and to show areas of responsibility of local IRA units. They provided yet another layer to a detailed process that generated an impressive archive of the depths of republican military endeavour during the tumultuous years of 1916-23.

51 MSPC/A1, 1 Cork Brigade, Tom Crofts to SOR 2 December 1941.

52 MSPC/A1, 1 Cork Brigade, Gerald Daly to E Burke, 24 November 1939.

A/2

4 February, 1941.

A Chara,

I am directed by the Referee to refer to your letter of the 2nd December last, regarding the submission of activity records from your Brigade and to state that the reason why records are required is given in the memorandum furnished to you at the Conference held in this office in June 1939, a copy of which was enclosed with this Department's communication of the 1st May, 1940. In this connection I am to draw your attention to Par.2 of this memorandum which states that "without the detailed information that is now sought, the Referee and Advisory Committee have had to deal with cases practically solely by discussion with the Verifying Officers and while not satisfied that this method was quite satisfactory it was considered justifiable as the cases which were under consideration were what might be termed "selected" cases, and were being dealt with in comparatively small groups. Now, however, that it is proposed to deal in fairly large groups with the "general run" - many of which will be border-line cases - it is obviously impossible to deal with them unless the most detailed information is supplied regarding the operations of each Brigade. A further reason why this information is essential is that it has recently come to the notice of the Referee and Advisory Committee that in certain areas the evidence given by certain officers has not been reliable".

I am also to state that up-to-date many Brigade Committees have furnished satisfactory activity records and verification sessions have been arranged for these Brigades in the order in which they submitted their completed records. Accordingly, as you were informed at the Conference, the date of the final verification session for the outstanding applications from your Brigade shall depend upon the submission of complete activity records.

I am to add that should no records be forthcoming from your Brigade, it will be necessary to deal with the applications solely on the evidence at present on hands.

Mise, le meas,

RÚNAIDHE.

Seamus Uas. MacCos,
10, St. Brigid Street,
Fermoy,
Co.Cork.

S.Ó'G/KC

(5) "Keymen" do not normally come within the category of 14-day notice cases. In the course of investigation "Keymen's" cases came under notice from time to time, and were generally segregated for consideration in bulk at an appropriate stage. In some instances the cases were selected on examination by the Board; in other cases, as a result of evidence given by Verifying Officers at sessions. Finally, when a stage was approached at which "Keymen" cases could be considered, the Referee issued a circular to Brigade Committees requesting them to furnish definitive lists of "Keymen" for their area. Most of the Brigade Committees complied with the request and, as might have been expected, the files already segregated in the Referee's office included the bulk of those

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MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5 (formerly G.36) General Principles – Sub-file (e) – Brigade Committees (p. 27, p. 28) – Memorandum of Michael Cremen, 11 July 1942.

Opposite

MSPC/A2_1–2 Cork Brigade (p. 6) Secretary to Seamus MacCos, 4 February 1941.

listed by the Brigade Committee. Cases not so included were added to the "Keymen" bundles, provided they had not been finally disposed of. It was found, however, that some of the cases listed by the Brigade Committees had already been finally rejected and the Referee was, therefore, precluded from any further consideration of such applications.

The remedy to be applied, if any of the closed cases did, in fact, merit consideration, is for the "Keymen", or the Brigade Committee on their behalf, to approach the Minister to have the cases re-opened on the ground that the special "Keymen" aspect of the claims was not fully considered. A similar remedy applies to the rejected border-line case included in a 14-day list, all the cases on which were rejected because the Brigade Committee did not respond to the Referee's intention regarding the 14-day notice. This is in accordance with the Minister's agreement to look into any cases in which it appears that an injustice has been done, but the Referee considers that a considerable amount of unnecessary trouble will probably be occasioned if the Minister extends that concession to the general cases outside the special "Keyman" and 14-day categories.

The present procedure under which the Secretary to the Board determines whether there is evidence not hitherto available appears fully to meet the requirements of the situation.

Your enclosures are returned herewith.

(Sgd.) M. Cremen.

11/7/42.

36

FINDING of REFEREE not in agreement with recommendations of members of Advisory Committee.

The Referee has to date reported on 560 cases (including appeal cases and quashed report cases) since his appointment. In 23 of the cases a member or members of the Committee disagreed with the report, but in no case has the Referee reported against the recommendations of all the members of the Committee.

In 6 cases the Referee reported on the advice of only one member of the Committee. In 3 of these cases, however, one of the members of the Committee was absent through illness or did not adjudicate. In 5 cases he acted on the advice of two members of the Committee, and in the remaining 12 cases he acted on the advice of three members of the Committee.

Mr. Moran disagreed with the reports in regard to three cases, and in two of those cases he was supported by Mr. Jordan and Mr. Robinson respectively.

Mr. Jordan disagreed in one case as above. Mr. Cremen disagreed in 5 cases. In two of these cases (in one of which Mr. McCoy did not adjudicate) he was supported by Mr. Robinson, and two others (in one of which Mr. Robinson did not adjudicate) by Mr. McCoy, and in the other case by Messrs. Gill and Robinson.

Mr. McCoy disagreed in 3 cases. In one case he was supportedn by Mr. Cremen and the other by Messrs. Gill and Cremen.

Mr. Robinson disagreed in 13 cases. In 10 of these he was the only dissentient. In the remaining three cases he was supported as regards two by Mr. Cremen and the other by Mr. Moran.

Mr. Gill disagreed in 4 cases. In two of these cases he was supported by Messrs. Cremen and McCoy.

Messrs. Cremen, Robinson and McCoy disagreed in one case with the issue of 21 Day Notice of Finding pending the calling of witnesses.

11/6/46

7

39/2

Reference No
R.O./ 379 A.

6/o Mr Patrick Magee
Carrigans Co Donegal
25. 5. 37

A Chara. Re your communication of 23rd April I am directed by my Committee to inform you that the information you ask. — Major engagements carried out by Battalions - and Battalions in this area. Will not be forwarded for the present from enquiries made some members of this Committee definitely state that no other Battalion had to supply similar particulars. Mr Dan Mc Cormack will on behalf of this Battalion seek an interview with you during the week end - Thursday or Friday. He will be able to inform you Why this Committee have not complied with your recent requests.

I am also directed to inform you that about 3 months ago you asked that a list of names of members of Derry Battalion that could Qualify should be sent to your Department after verification by this Committee This list was sent and no member of this Battalion has yet received a Call for Dublin - I may state bluntly that the feeling amongst the men here generally is that obstacles are being placed in the way of the members from this area. Men have been brought before Board from every area in Ireland except Derry City. I am again requested to urge that the claims of the Derry Battalion should be speeded up.

Is Mise James Gallagher

A77(2)/1

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PHONE 43432
W. O'DOHERTY
AUDITORS & ACCOUNTANTS
INCOME TAX CONSULTANTS
PUBLIC AUDITORS

9 Lower O'Connell Street,

Dublin, 21st October 1935

P.S.M. 1934
OIFIG AN BAILEÓRA FAIGHTE
22 D.F. 1935
DÚN ÚI GRIOBHTHA

It is the practice in dealing with claims to consider the matters referred to in this letter
J.Y. 23/10/35

The Secretary,
Military Pensions Board,
Griffith Barracks,
DUBLIN.

A Chara,

Military Service Pensions Act, 1934

In connection with the above I wish to claim on behalf of the 5th Battalion (Engineers) Dublin Brigade, that this Unit be treated as a special Unit for the purposes of Service Pensions. If the ordinary Active Service tests for Infantry Units were applied to the 5th Battalion it would result in an injustice to the men for the following reasons:-

This Battalion was organised on the basis of men being picked from the Infantry Battalions who had a special knowledge viz. Engineers, Electricians, Carpenters, etc. At first a Company was formed consisting of a section from each of the four Battalions. Eventually a Battalion was formed limited to a Company of twenty-five picked men from each of the four Infantry Battalions i.e. one hundred men in all. In due course this number was extended and no limit was placed to the number of men in this Battalion.

These men had to undergo a long period of instruction in the handling of explosives, detonators, calculations of amount of explosives for a particular job, etc., and in studying maps and plans of telephone cables, manholes, etc., throughout the city of Dublin with a view to the isolation of particular areas. Consequently during this period of instruction men were withdrawn from the ordinary Infantry activities which normally would constitute active service.

In addition to the above, the nature of their training precluded them, as a rule, from taking part in any military operations as their services were required only when a large military operation was being performed, viz., attempts at derailing troop trains, or isolation of large areas, as in the case of the burning of the Custom House. Had these men been allowed to continue in their Infantry Battalions they would probably have partaken in the engagements of their respective Units.

A77(2)/2

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9 Lower O'Connell Street,
Dublin, 19

P.S.M. 1934
OIFIG AN RÉITEÓRA
FAIGHTE
22 D.F. 1935
DÚN ÚI GRIOBHTHA

2.

In determining what was Active Service in the 5th Battalion, it may be argued that these men were not, generally speaking, called upon to take part in ambushes, etc., they did not run as great a risk as the Infantry. It should be pointed out that from the point of view of the enemy activities that every time during the period of instruction which continued up to the beginning of the Civil War that Sections went to test, and to familiarise themselves in the use of explosives or to be shown a Manhole and what it contained, in the streets of Dublin, they ran just as great as the men on ambush duty. Further, every time that any work had to be carried out either for training or for an actual military operation, raids had to be made for the various tools required, viz., sledge-hammers, Bolt-cutters, acetylene plants, etc.

Further, these men were recognised by Headquarters as being in a separate category, when it was found necessary, for instruction purposes at any rate, to place them under a separate Department of the I.R.A. under the Director of Engineering.

Also, Officers of the 5th Battalion were not elected by the men as in the case of Other Battalions but were appointed by Headquarters as it was recognised that special qualifications were required.

In these circumstances I shall be obliged if the Board will be good enough to give this matter special consideration so as to ensure that due recognition will be given to the men who performed this special work.

Mise, le meas,
Liam O'Doherty.

Submission handed in by Mullen, Sols. - at Session on 5/5/41.

(1)

STATEMENT ON APPEALS OF MEMBERS OF 4TH NORTHERN DIVISION. I.R.A.

This area is largly within the District known in former times as the Pale. Nevertheless there was a handful of men in this Area imbued with the spirit of their glorious forefathers and their comrades throughout Ireland. The population for the most part was sneeringly hostile. They were for the larger part members of the A.O.H. and Protestant settlers in and around Dundalk. This was a garrison Town and a large number of the households therein had at least one if not more ex-British soldier as a member. The British element and the British Shoneens, the British Camp Hangers-On, and the A.O.H. were virulently opposed to the National Movement. Considerable moral courage, not to speak of physical courage, was required of anyone having anything to do with Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. here in these days. Their task would have been more pleasant if it had to be carried out in the heart of England itself, because treachery and the very bitter hatred that was part and parcel of the Irish "Loyalist" would not be encountered, or at least would be expected and prepared for. These elements therefore in addition to the strong British garrison maintained here, constituted a very dangerous locate for the operations of the brave men who took part in the struggle. They were liable to a stab in the back at any time and their members were few having regard to the population. This important fact must be taken into consideration in considering their claims to active service in this area. The present Appellants and their comrades rendered abundant active service in the cause, and their activities and presence kept the Crown Forces in this Area fully occupied.

Again on the question of active service claims have been successfully made by comrades of these present appellants in this area for service Certificates. It can and will be proved that apart from th list of activities covered and specified within the sheets of these present appeals, no activities save perhaps some of a minor nature, were engaged in ~~xxx~~ by the entire personnal of the Companies of the 4th Northern Division in this particular area. The records kept will show this. Therefore the comrades of these men whose claims have been allowed must be considered as ~~xxxxx~~ having rendered active service in the Forces. These appellants can prove that they were actively engaged on all the operations in which their successful comrades took part and the attention of the Referee is particularly directed to this portion of this statement. These claims are well founded and in view of the claims already allowed (and actually in some cases allowed on the certification of men who took part in the services claimed by those allowed but whose own claims in respect of the very same acts of service have been rejected) I emphatically press that the present Appeals must be allowed. If they are not allowed then these men should be dealt with under the provisions of the relevant section of the Act in regard to making false statments. Their claims are either bogus or genuine. If bogus they can be dealt with as stated. If their sworn testimony is believed then they must be dealt with as their comrades have been dealt with since all of them on the records and on the entire weight of evidence are confined to certain specified

activities. If these activities have been held to constitute active service in one case the same ruling must apply to all. In the event that a conflict arises, and up to the present the Appellants have had no means of ascertaining the detailed grounds of their disallowance or what form the certification of their respective claims took, regarding the part these men played in any of the said activities or if the fact that they actually did take part in such activities is not completely accepted, I must on their behalf demand that the entire records of the area be produced and that likewise all the available witnesses, whether they be members of the Brigade Committee, certifying Officers, or independent witnesses, ~~xxxxxxx xxxx~~ be produced for examination or cross-examination on behalf of said appellants. The entire presentation of these appeals is subject to this demand and the right is reserved to take independent action of whatever nature and at whatever stage of the proceedings as may be advised if this just demand is not complied with.

Above and opposite: MSPC/A51_1–1 Northern Louth Brigade: “Statement of Appeals of members of 4th Northern Division, 5 May 1941 (extracts).

‘All we want is your best’: the Brigade Committees and the struggles to defy and to comply

Dr Anne Dolan

In April 1943 Thomas O’Donnell wrote a report to mark ‘the completion of my work here’ as Military Service Pensions’ Referee.[1] In an otherwise measured text he allowed himself a brief effusion of compliments, an appreciation of all the Brigade Committees’ good works: ‘I gladly say – and I feel that no tribute I can pay would be adequate to measure the service rendered – that never in my long experience have I found a body of men to spend so voluntarily so much time, labour and zeal, often with financial loss, upon the preparation of names, addresses, statistics, records of engagements, interviews with applicants and correspondence’. He believed ‘history’ would record ‘their service to the applicants and the state…as being invaluable and unselfish’, and that, in turn, their Brigade Reports would help history to better understand the IRA.[2] Whether giddy with good grace as he counted down the last days at his desk, or just loath to rake up old fights fought and lost, the Referee was certainly foregoing accuracy here for tact. He wrote nothing of the badgering and the hectoring, the cantankerous deputations and the testy interviews, the months and years of wrangling and hounding and demanding for something to be done. He opted for discretion over any airing of dirty linen, even though dirty linen will always tell us more than tact.

With none of the Referee’s circumspection, the Brigade Reports come in this collection with the full to and fro of correspondence, with collegiality and awkwardness, with unpleasantness warts and all.[3] There is whinging, whining, and reprimanding, some of the compliance and defiance, and eventually conceding and acknowledging what could and could not be done. There is, what O’Donnell called, all the ‘grousing’ he thought best on balance in his report to overlook.[4] But dwelling on the rows and squabbles is not about uncovering something untoward, or catching the whiff of a scandal the Referee was keen to hide. The sometimes pained and harried interactions tell us far more of use than that. They give us the attitudes of the Referee and the Brigade Committees, both to each other and to the pension process, but also towards the applicants and their sense of grievance at having to explain and justify their war.

The Brigade Reports by their nature were meant to be terse, to the point and short; they were sought as sober résumés of what happened, with as much of the when, where, why, who, how and what that the Brigade Committees could supply. But they come up somewhat short on the type of detail we have become used to from the individual pension applications, which allow us to see the very human efforts, costs and consequences of revolutionary life. The Brigade Reports will, as the Referee predicted, be the focus of attention in this collection, and rightly so. They do allow us to see the nature of IRA activity, at least as the Brigade Committees wished it to be seen, and they will fuel the fever to find out ‘what really happened’, albeit never with enough detail to definitively satisfy. Names were, by the purpose of these Reports, to be named, and that too will appeal to the curious bent on knowing exactly who did what to whom, but the Reports themselves, for all their names, say little of any individual’s experience for the sake of being matter of fact.

The Reports in their own right force us to work hard, to extrapolate and imagine from what they were keen to establish as just bare facts. We can, of course, do much beyond the obvious with lists of addresses and names. Shared surnames occur often enough to imply that brothers, cousins, relatives of some or other sort, joined and continued to soldier side by side, and the names that stay for the drilling and the early raids, but fade to a more regular few once the watching turned to shooting as the months wore on imply something altogether more.[5] The addresses of the 1930s and early 1940s give us all the many who never left, who stayed and never stirred from the home-places they fought in and over in spite of Civil War; they bring the denizens of farther-flung places, whether Milwaukee or Wisconsin, Melbourne or London; they bring hints of affluence and deprivation, and suggest how time and the tide of things may have fashioned people’s lives.[6] Although they fought together at the Custom House in May 1921, Arthur Beasley now of Ballybough and John Cullinane of the Iveagh Buildings orbited quite a different Dublin to Patrick Swanzy of leafy Mountpleasant Square.[7] Similarly, the men of the East Connemara Brigade who made their ways to Pittsburgh and Boston, to Chicago and New York, lived really very different lives to their comrade Michael Regan listed as an inmate of the asylum in Ballinasloe.[8] The names followed all too frequently by a sombre ‘deceased’ or ‘RIP’ in these curt obsequies may say more than they meant of how the revolution, how the 1920s and the 1930s, took their toll. There is a world of living and dying even in the tersest notes, but the Reports will only give us breadcrumbs of its trail.

That is not to decry the value of the Reports in their own right. This might have been an essay about the nature of active service as the Brigade Committees tried to haggle and expand how it could be defined; it might have been about the slow monotonies, the guarding of a creamery for 12 months, night after every

1 O’Donnell was the second Referee. His predecessor was Judge Joseph K. O’Connor, who served until 1938.

2 O’Donnell suggested that the Brigade Reports ‘should be collated’ ‘at some later stage’. Report of the Referee, Thomas O’Donnell, 7 April 1943, National Archives of Ireland (NAI), Department of an Taoiseach (DT), NAI, TSCH/3/S13, 602A.

3 This essay is based on reports from Brigades in the following counties: Dublin, Kerry, Cork, Tipperary, Cavan, Monaghan, Galway.

4 ‘Statements of Liam O’Doherty, James Ryan and John O’Connor before Referee and Advisory Committee on 22nd July, 1940’, MSPC/A77_1, Dublin Brigade – 5 Battalion.

5 See, for example, the names listed in the Mount Pleasant Company involved in the shooting of Thomas Bradfield. There are five Hurleys, two Barretts, and two O’Briens, MSPC/A3_1; Commandant Alec Thompson in Dublin commented on ‘about 140’ in his Company, but that ‘within the last six months of the scrap we were brought down to about 9’, ‘Commandant Alec Thompson giving evidence before advisory committee on behalf of Robert Briscoe (no.297) on 14th September, 1936’, MSPC/A76, Dublin Brigade - 4 Battalion. The fluctuation and repetition of names is clear to trace across the Collection.

6 Lists of addresses throughout the sample reflect the extent of emigration. For example, of a list of 80 men named in the Ahiohill Company in Cork 9 were in the US, 1 in Donegal, 1 in the Salesian College, London, and 2 were dead. MSPC/A3_4. This was even more notable in Connemara. Of a group of 8 men named in one covering party 4 were in the US and 1 in England. Of 5 scouts on the same operation 3 were in the US. MSPC/A36, West Connemara Brigade.

7 ‘List of members who took part in the destruction of the Custom House’, 1934, D Company, MSPC/A74, Dublin Brigade – 2 Battalion.

8 ‘Statement of operations by Battalion, 2 May 1937’, MSPC/A37, East Connemara Brigade.

jaded night, about the getting and burying and digging up arms for ambushes that then never came to pass.[9] It might have been about the less than obvious types of fights, the confiscated cattle, the seizure of land: all the things that pitted neighbour against neighbour perhaps for life.[10] It could have been about those early raids for arms, about why a dentist in Harold's Cross had such a store of weapons there to take.[11] It might have touched upon the stripping of a soldier, the deportation of a doctor, the chaining of a man to a church gate to punish him for what passed for his crime.[12] It could have been about drudgery and repetition, about all the time all of this active service took. It could have been about burying a comrade's body in a bog, about mopping up after the Kilmichael ambush, about the days or weeks of guarding your 'guests of the nation' and then watching those men taken to be shot.[13] It could have been about all the duties no Volunteer could have imagined doing when eager with the first flush of enthusiasm to fight. But rather than tackle these and the many other topics the Reports hint at and suggest, this essay will settle for the direct over the opaque. From mild and polite to abrasive and brusque, the interaction between the Brigade Committees and the Referee and Advisory Committee, between Brigade Committees and local officers, should certainly shape how we interpret the Reports, but they can tell us far more about the attitudes and assumptions, some of the snobberies and frailties, that governed the implementation of the 1934 Military Service Pensions Act.

Hierarchies, blame and compassion

The Brigade Committees charged with compiling the Reports were constituted according to local discretion, but the process began with a calling together of 'persons who formerly held high rank', which 'resulted in lists of all the important officers being compiled' and Brigade Committees from them composed.[14] So they were, by their nature, committees of what could be called the 'higher-ups', replicating old hierarchies of position and rank. As with many other conflicts, here the officer class again seemed to set the tone, to arbitrate and adjudicate, to be in charge once more. Frank Daly on behalf of B Company of the 1 Dublin Battalion sat like Solomon and divided men wheat from chaff: of John Gillis 'he was a man we could depend on', 'a very active man', while Michael Keogh fell in Daly's estimation in the wake of Easter 1916: 'he did very little afterwards. He turned out for a few funerals and things like that'.[15] There was considerable power, as a result, in such men's hands, and the Referee and Advisory Committee took advantage at every turn to stress just that: 'it is necessary to state categorically that when an applicant has a good claim for [a] pension within the ambit of the Act, states his or her case accurately and fully, that the question of whether he or she gets a pension or not depends exclusively on former officer colleagues in the Forces, and that pensions are awarded upon the evidence and verification of these officers and these officers only'.[16] Blame was something all elements of the process seemed happy to shift onto each other when veterans complained about delays in dealing with applications, about unanswered letters, about the disappointment of the amount of pension granted, or more often the failure to get any type of pension at all.

The Brigade Reports were sought, not just to speed along the process, but were hoped to bear some of the brunt of such blame: 'rejection can now be more readily attributed to the Brigade records, rather than to the evidence of individual officers', and they might even bring 'any "good" case which has not yet been considered' to light.[17] The Records were to step in to stop all sorts of sins. Where a Brigade Committee was deemed to be 'of one shade of political opinion', and where 'certain ex-members differing in such opinion were not included in "Company Rolls"…', the records were to help remedy such Civil War disputes. Equally, they were to be sober counterpoints to the evidence of more exuberant verifying officers 'inclined to exaggerate the relative importance' of every barracks burned and every fired shot. They were to provide 'proper perspective' and 'tangible evidence' on the 'actual value of ambushes or attacks'.[18] Which would be all very well if many of the same officers were not responsible for compiling or verifying these much-hoped-for Reports.

But even getting to the point of submitting a report was far more taxing than the Referee and his Advisory Committee expected, and they were perhaps naive to think that the type of succinct summaries of events they wanted could be easily and quickly trotted out. A memo for Government gave the Referee's rather jaundiced view: 'Some Brigades assisted the Board by the early and accurate rendition of these Records. Others presented them in a form which did not separate the active participants from the outposts, and others did not furnish Records as such at all or merely in part.'[19] But what this rather sour evaluation does not allow for are all the problems prompted by the Referee's seemingly straightforward request. While such harried reminders as those sent to one Dublin Brigade 'if you are yet in a position to furnish the activity records' in November 1941 and again at the end of January 1942, do suggest that some certainly did leave matters to

9 Four men guarded Ballyhaise Creamery each night for a year. MSPC/A56_1, 3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division.

10 For example, see Kenneigh Company activities; Shanaway Company activities, MSPC/A3_4, 3 Cork Brigade, 4 Battalion; Behagh Company activities, MSPC/A3_3, 3 & 4 Battalion, Cork 3 Brigade; Clogagh Company activities; Mount Pleasant Company, MA/MSPC/A/3(1), 3 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion.

11 Operations of No. 3 Company, 5 Battalion, Dublin Brigade, MSPC/A77_1, Dublin Brigade, 5 Battalion.

12 E Company, 6 Battalion, Dublin Brigade activities, MSPC/A72, 2 Dublin South Brigade; Ballineen Company activities, 1918-1919; Kilmeen Company activities, MSPC/A3_4, 3 Cork Brigade, 4 Battalion; F Company, Deansgrange, 6 Battalion, Dublin Brigade activities, MSPC/A72, 2 Dublin South Brigade.

13 For example, Aultagh Company report, 10 March 1941, MSPC/A3_3, 3 & 4 Battalion, 3 Cork Brigade; Kenneigh Company activities, MSPC/A3_4, 3 Cork Brigade, 4 Battalion; Castletara Company activities, MSPC/A/56_1, 3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division; Ardfert Company activities, MSPC/A6_A_2, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 2; MSPC/A56_1, 3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division.

14 Memo on Brigade Committees, MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5; 'Memorandum on the procedure, examination of, certification and assessment of claims under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934', NAI, TSCH/S9243.

15 'Statement made before Advisory Committee by Frank Daly, on the 9th January, 1935, on behalf of B Coy., 1 Battalion', MSPC/A73, Dublin Brigade, 1 Battalion.

16 'Memorandum on the procedure, examination of, certification and assessment of claims under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934', NAI, TSCH/S9243.

17 Memo on Brigade Committees, MSPC/1934/ADMIN/5.

18 'Memorandum on the procedure, examination of, certification and assessment of claims under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934', NAI, TSCH/S9243.

19 'Memorandum on the procedure, examination of, certification and assessment of claims under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934', NAI, TSCH/S9243.

linger on the long finger, elaborate excuses, the care taken to qualify mistakes, suggest more.[20] While local officers admitted to obvious impediments, that after '20 years it is absolutely impossible to verify with any amount of accuracy', 'that most of the men and officers [have] scattered', that 'it is difficult to remember each individual man' when there were 130 in the Company, there is a greater urgency to exonerate their old men's memories from blame.[21] 'I have done the best I can', 'I certify to the best of my knowledge', 'to the best of my belief after a lapse of 20 years', 'the task was an impossible one…an honest effort was made'.[22] The fluster over a forgotten man now remembered living in the Bronx, the urgency to include another two back from America now no longer out of sight and out of mind, the quandary of James Bird who could put names to only eight faces when he knew ten men went to kill an officer on Bloody Sunday morning, they all point to, amongst other things, the worry of being the cause of a pension application going wrong.[23] Denis Quille went out of his way to advocate for the recognition of Patrick Cox: 'this man had been away from this district for some time and in the rush I had forgotten him'.[24] Denis Quille knew he would have to live with many years of facing a maybe disappointed Patrick Cox.

While the Cootehill Battalion claimed it was refusing to co-operate in case 'it might be regarded by the applicants that we were favouring some at the expense of others', Séamus MacDermott explained Cootehill's obstinacy in slightly different terms: 'whilst we are at all times anxious to assist your Board, it is the general feeling amongst us of the Old IRA that Cavan area is being forgotten' and without some pensions granted no more help would be forthcoming from what he called 'the "faithful and the few"'.[25] He wanted action from the Board 'to write "finis" to the whole thing'.[26] While the Referee was explicit that 'the order in which the balance of cases from the various units would be dealt with to a conclusion would depend on the date of receipt of satisfactory records', that submitting no records would put a Brigade to the end of his list, such brinkmanship from either side seemed to serve the purpose of neither cause.[27] Brigade Committees were faced with the frustration of applicants and the refusal of local officers who no longer saw co-operation as having any point. 'In my own Battalion area, there is not more than 15 applicants who have not already received intimation of the rejection of their claims'; while MacDermott admitted 'I am deluged with enquiries from members', 137 of whom were placed on a list and have not since heard a word.[28] It had come to the point where 'we propose making representations to An Taoiseach (Mr de Valera) on his visit to Cavan on Sunday next'.[29] Denis Quille in Kerry admitted 'we are experiencing great difficulty in getting local men from Companies to help in this work', while in the 2 Tipperary Brigade 'it was only after meeting Seamus Robinson I was able to get the crowd working'.[30] And so the Brigade Committees were stuck between the demands of the Referee and increasingly obstreperous local disgruntlement as time wore on and still few pensions came.

A deputation from the 1 Battalion, Dublin Brigade, in September 1940, made that sense of being caught in the middle clear to the Referee: '…a man named O'Neill who is in America…He was a member of the A.S.U. I have proof of that and still his award has been held up. That man is in dire straits in America. His mother and people are coming to me every day telling me of his poor circumstances.'[31] The Referee admitted in the same meeting, when the deputation again raised 'cases of urgent and definite distress', the scale of the problem he faced: 'If I am to open the door for hardship, I can tell you that I will have about a thousand cases within a week of hardship…I am afraid from the letters that I have been getting that the number of cases of hardship will be almost alarming'. When the Referee admitted that his committee would consider 'hardship cases', the reply of one of the deputation highlights some of the lesser instincts that came of that awkward intermediary position held: 'I would not like that [that] would get out', worried, no doubt, that the thousand cases would rush now to his door.[32] But that same pressure of penury, the pleading for relief from 'mothers and people', perhaps explains why officers such as Seán MacEoin supported so many applicants' cases.

Yet the Referee's compassion only went so far. In a report written in December 1945, and prompted by the criminal investigation of a case in Longford, the Referee concluded that 'to say that the Chairman of the Brigade Committee, Seán MacEoin, was irresponsibly credulous is to strain charity', but the Referee did not have to live and hope to be re-elected in that place.[33] But these men caught in the middle could not seem to win with the Referee. Defending his position in front of another deputation, the Referee bemoaned those who did not, as he saw it, do enough: 'I did think gratitude was still living amongst our people. I am

20 M Cremin to A McDonnell, 21 November 1941 & M Cremin to A McDonnell, 26 January 1942, MSPC/A72, 2 Dublin South Brigade.

21 'Deputation consisting of Messrs Holohan, Seán O'Moore, P. O'Connor and Michael Byrne, First Battalion, Dublin Brigade, heard on 9th September, 1940, by Referee', MSPC/A73, 1 Battalion, Dublin Brigade; James Leahy to the Referee, 22 August 1941, MSPC/A13_a, Mid Tipperary Brigade; 'Statement made before Advisory Committee by Frank Daly, on the 9th January 1935, on behalf of B Coy., 1 Battalion', MSPC/A73, 1 Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

22 Seán Moriarty to Tadg, 18 February 1940, MSPC/A6_A_1, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 1; William Leen to 'Kerry Head Company', no date, MSPC/A6_B_2, Old Records, 1Kerry Brigade, Part 2; James O'Mahony, Castleisland Company, no date, MSPC/A6_A_2, 1Kerry Brigade, Part 2; J. O'Connor to Office of the Referee, 14 November 1939, MSPC/A75, Dublin Brigade, 3 Battalion.

23 Tadg Ó Cinnéide to the Office of the Referee, 18 March 1941, MSPC/A6_B_1, Old Records, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 1; Members of the Ballydavid Company, MSPC/A6_A_1, 1Kerry Brigade, Part 1; List of participants in the operation at Morehampton Road, MSPC/A85, Dublin Brigade, General Activities.

24 Denis Quille to E. Burke, 19 April 1935, MSPC/A6_B_2, Old Records, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 2.

25 D McDonald, to the Referee, 9 December 1940; Séamus MacDermott to de Burca, 4 March 1941, MSPC/A56_1, 3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division.

26 *Ibid*.

27 De Burca to J O'Connor, 28 November 1939, MSPC/A75, Dublin Brigade, 3 Battalion.

28 P Smith, to M Cremin, 12 August 1940; Séamus MacDermott to the Secretary of the Department of Defence, 10 February 1940, MSPC/A56_1, 3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division.

29 Séamus MacDermott to the Secretary of the Department of Defence, 10 February 1940, MSPC/A56_1, 3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division.

30 Denis Quille, 1 Kerry Brigade, 6 Battalion, to Office of the Referee, 10 June 1940, MSPC/A6_B_2, Old Records, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 2; M. Hynes to the Referee, 15 February 1940, MSPC/A13, 2 Tipperary Brigade. Robinson served on the Referee's Advisory Committee.

31 'Deputation consisting of Messrs Holohan, Seán O'Moore, P. O'Connor and Michael Byrne, First Battalion, Dublin Brigade, heard on 9th September, 1940, by Referee', MSPC/A73, Dublin Brigade, 1 Battalion.

32 *Ibid*.

33 Report of the Referee, 11 December 1945, NAI, DT S13602A.

sorry to say that in numerous cases where men have got their own pension they took no further interest in the men who have not got them'.[34] Dáil debates criticised the same instinct with the phrase 'feathered their own nests'.[35]

Volunteering, service and disagreements

None of this seemed to take account of the expansive nature of the work, nor some of the much more basic factors prohibiting its completion in the middle of the Second World War. While one officer reminded that Referee very bluntly that he should remember that many applicants 'are serving now in the Volunteer services despite the fact that they have a right to consider that they have been badly treated in their case not being heard before this', the War might be reckoned in much more prosaic ways.[36] 'It is not possible under present conditions to hold a meeting of the Brigade Committee', Captain McDonnell wrote in February 1942 on behalf of the West Connemara Brigade.[37] Seamus Mac Cos noted to the Referee in December 1940 that 'I fear that the final version for this Brigade will not take place for a long time', that 'I might also add that the Brigade Commdt., Brigade V.C. and the Chairman of the…Committee & Battn. Commdt. are at present serving with the forces and are not available'.[38] But Mac Cos's objections was also more mundane; he was browned off with all the work, and what seemed the ever-coming calls for more: 'It must be borne in mind by the Referee & Committee that we at this end have got to earn a living and while we are prepared to do whatever we can as in the past to help the Board and our old Comrades we cannot do what has been asked as it entails more time than we have at our disposal. For instance, I start work each day at 9am and finish at 7.30 would the Referee expect me to start another day's work when I get home or would he do so himself if placed in my position[?]'[39] 'I think I might mention', MacCos fumed, 'that my expenses for attendance at the Conference in June last have not yet been paid'.[40] While the odd letter ending in 'hoping ye are all OK', or 'trusting yourself, Mrs and family are in best of health. Wishing you A Very Happy Xmas', suggest that for some this work was a slightly lighter task, that it was even a way to rekindle old friendships, more ardent seemed the letters of complaint.[41] James Leahy grumbled that 'nobody is prepared to make a start locally', while Tadg Ó Cadhain of East Connemara wrote to throw in the towel: 'I called a meeting of the Bde Cttee on Nov. 4th and nobody attended'.[42] He didn't see the point of going on.

What some of these complaints and cantankerousness did prompt were quite revealing reactions from the Referee. Stung into action by some of this disgruntlement, the Referee mounted many different lines of defence. Wounded, he fended off attacks on the integrity of the process: 'I have been here for nearly two years and rejection is no pleasant matter to any of us', 'our intentions are perfectly alright', 'I think it should be assumed by the public that the work here is honest'.[43] However, the almost plaintive 'I do not think we are too strict', was not the line for everyone.[44] A Dublin delegation was put firmly in its place: 'Don't forget that we sit here every day.…You tell me it is difficult for you to make up a record in your own little district; but just put yourselves in the Board's position. They are dealing with sixty thousand cases from every part of the country…I think I have rejected, signed rejections in thirty thousand cases…All we want is your best.'[45] In 'your own little district': he knew how to dish out a cutting and dismissive tone.

But in the course of these discussions the Referee let other things slip too. Denying that 'because we asked for records we were casting doubt on the records of the men who came here', insisting that 'there was no suggestion with us of not believing men', he confirmed just how much the *amour propre* of many applicants, of the Brigade Committees, could be hurt by his apparently straightforward requests.[46] But he could be heavy-handed in his blunders as well. Emphasising why he needed Brigade Committees to provide more material, the Referee admitted an attitude that would be echoed a number of times when pensions were later discussed in the Dáil. 'I am from the country myself and I can quite understand that many of these country boys would not make a full or complete statement in the file', or 'I know in the country some of them are not the most intelligent', and while not as patronising as Captain Giles's description in the Dáil of 'a poor country gám', 'who cannot write his name', shivering at the gate of Griffith Barracks before he goes in to see the pension board, it is a telling attitude all the same.[47] Indeed, it may well explain some of the rather feisty responses from the brigades.

In different ways different Brigades put forward a sense of grievance, of being hard-done-by, by a confluence of circumstances and the application of deeply inflexible rules. The 5 Battalion of the Dublin Brigade

34 'Tom Barry and Tom Hales before Referee and Advisory Committee, 10 June 1941', NAI, TSCH/S9243.

35 Deputy Keane was so fond of his phrase 'feathered their own nests first and then proceeded to feather their friends' nests' that he used a version of it in two debates: Dáil Debates, vol. 118, no. 5, col. 654, 9 November 1949 & vol. 136, no. 1, col. 74, 4 February 1953.

36 'Deputation consisting of Messrs Holohan, Seán O'Moore, P. O'Connor and Michael Byrne, First Battalion, Dublin Brigade, heard on 9th September, 1940, by Referee', MSPC/A73, Dublin Brigade, 1 Battalion.

37 Captain PJ McDonnell to the Office of the Referee, 6 February 1942, MSPC/A36, West Connemara Brigade.

38 Séamus Mac Cos to the Referee, 2 December 1940, MSPC/A2_1, 2 Cork Brigade.

39 *Ibid*.; he had already made the same complaint in a letter of 8 April 1940.

40 Séamus Mac Cos to the Referee, 8 April 1940, MSPC/A2_1, 2 Cork Brigade. Tadg Ó Cinnéide from Tralee made a similar complaint, 9 September 1939, MSPC/A6_B_2, Old Records, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 2. Seán MacEoin noted the expense Committees were put to, that 'the Government' could have done was 'to give the brigade committees copies of the Ordnance Survey maps. Even these were not given.', Dáil Debates, vol. 96, no. 1, col. 98, 14 February 1945.

41 Seán Moriarty to Tadg, 18 February 1940, MSPC/A6_A_1, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 1; Liam O'Sullivan to Tadg, 19 December 1940, MSPC/A6_A_4, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 4.

42 James Leahy to the Office of the Referee, 24 August 1940, MSPC/A13, 2 Tipperary Brigade; Tadg Ó Cadhain to the Office of the Referee, 26 November 1940, MSPC/A37, East Connemara Brigade.

43 'Statements of Liam O'Doherty, James Ryan and John O'Connor before Referee and Advisory Committee on 22nd July, 1940', MSPC/A77_1, 5 Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

44 *Ibid*.

45 'Deputation consisting of Messrs Holohan, Seán O'Moore, P. O'Connor and Michael Byrne, First Battalion, Dublin Brigade, heard on 9th September, 1940, by Referee', MSPC/A73, 1 Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

46 *Ibid*.

47 *Ibid*.; Captain Giles, Dáil Debates, vol. 118, no. 5, col. 672, 9 November 1949. Similar attitudes were expressed by Deputies Keane and Corry in the same debate.

complained of bias because it was restricted to 'engineering work purely and simply', was not allowed an ordinary sort of fight.[48] JJ O'Connell believed some applicants from Kerry were wont to 'trespass in activities' that were not theirs, that they were 'indulging in other people's rights'.[49] Country places bemoaned the preference given to Dublin, while Dublin men complained 'the Board is treating them harshly in comparison with fellows in Cork and Kerry and Tipperary', that being on an outpost in Dublin was part of the 'scrap' while 'a fellow would be quite safe in the country' doing the same job.[50] Dublin felt it suffered because 'there would be lads up in the city for work', because 'there are so many claimants', making it all harder to verify, and the Referee's retorts about the efficiency of Cork's verifying officers and their records certainly did nothing to ease Dublin's sense of its own discontent.[51] While Seán Dowling in Dublin had the luxury to admit 'I have omitted as unnecessary the large number of operations unsuccessfully attempted and have only included those which resulted in actual exchange of fire with enemy', he may have made it harder for the Cavans, and the Monaghans, and the Connemaras, for those small companies whose Records were made up almost entirely of his omitted things.[52] But others felt hampered by the reputation of activity; that in quieter places just 'a stump of an engagement of any sort' was enough for men to qualify.[53] Married men, too, were thought to be victimized by the scruples of their Company Officers, suffering now because 'married men were not sent out' on riskier 'jobs', 'yet they were the backbone of the Company; they were the fellows that kept it together'. 'If they were depending on the young fellows' the routine work would not have been done; 'certainly the married men…are getting a very bad deal': an easier time was always being had by other men.[54]

This sense of unfairness prompted some to make excuses for what might have happened, for the more they could have done. Wicklow's defence that 'had the truce not come till a month later and had we O'Brien a month earlier I am confident this column and the Battn. on the whole would have rendered a very good report of themselves' was a wistful ode to what might have been.[55] It was very different to Flor Begley's defence of Bandon, 'a town occupied one might say by the direct descendants of the Planters', that 'Volunteers in Bandon were up against it all the time'.[56] The Ballinspittle Company, alone in this sample, admitted that the 'Coy's misfortunes' were because 'the 2nd Lieut of Coy., Madden by name, was giving the game away'.[57] Much more will no doubt be said of what these Reports do not say, the things they choose not to explain – why note is made of Mrs Lindsay's arrest but not her death, why we learn of the burning of Sean McGarry's house but not how his son, Emmet, perished in the flames; and the gaps throw the detail when it is given into almost starker relief.[58] The inclusion of the transcribed last letter of James Kane to 'all my dear children', instructing them what bills to pay, what things to sell, which watch to give to which son, not to 'go to much expense' for his funeral, to 'bury me near my loving wife', is quite unusual in this sample, but it is made all the more striking by the level of detail recorded by Denis Quille.[59] He recounted Kane's two requests: to be 'shot on the main road to Listowel so that his body would be found quickly', and to 'be shot in such a manner so that there would be no lingering death'.[60] After twenty years some things were easier and some harder to forget.

On 10 June 1941 the Referee met with Tom Barry and Tom Hales. They wanted to be heard, to know why they were not allowed to verify service, or be part of the Brigade Committee of the '3rd Battalion, Cork 3 Brigade'.[61] Barry had been in prison, Hales had ignored multiple invitations, when the Committee was founded in early 1935, but now over six years later they both wanted to have their say; they wanted their word to be enough, 'either we can qualify him or we cannot'; 'if recognition is denied we claim the right in the Brigade to issue service or even leather medals of our own'.[62] For Hales there was a lot at stake: 'If the men I have in mind in Bandon are turned down I am finished. It is recognition I want.'[63] The Referee sought the view of Flor Begley, Honorary Secretary of the Cork 3 Brigade Committee, and asked him to consider co-opting Barry and Hales to smooth the whole thing out. Within the week Begley sent on his thoughts: 'In the first instance I am rather surprised that your Board should give ear to the two gents mentioned'. He pondered what prompted them after so many years to realise 'they had a duty to perform', but to whom: 'to the men or to their own vanity', he mused. He admitted the delays in processing applications meant that 'Mr Hales & Mr Barry have fertile ground now to till amongst the men', that those 'kept waiting…the

48 'Statements of Liam O'Doherty, James Ryan and John O'Connor before Referee and Advisory Committee on 22nd July, 1940', MSPC/A77_1, Dublin Brigade, 5 Battalion.

49 JJ O'Connell to the Referee, 15 January 1941, MSPC/A6_A_2, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 2.

50 'Statements of Liam O'Doherty, James Ryan and John O'Connor before Referee and Advisory Committee on 22nd July, 1940', MSPC/A_77_1, Dublin Brigade, 5 Battalion; 'Commandant Alec Thompson giving evidence before advisory committee on behalf of Robert Briscoe (no.297) on 14th September, 1936', MSPC/A_76, Dublin Brigade, 4 Battalion.

51 'Commandant Alec Thompson giving evidence before Advisory Committee on behalf of Robert Briscoe (no.297) on 14th September, 1936', MSPC/A76, Dublin Brigade, 4 Battalion.

52 Seán Dowling to the Secretary to the Referee, 25 October 1939, MSPC/A76, 4 Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

53 Seán MacEoin, Dáil Debates, vol. 136, no. 1, col. 105, 4 February 1953. MacEoin also detailed the belief that 'in Meath and Leitrim one engagement will immediately render an applicant eligible for a military service pension. In Longford it takes two or three, on the grounds that there were so many engagements you should have been engaged in them all if you were active.'

54 'Deputation consisting of Messrs Holohan, Seán O'Moore, P O'Connor and Michael Byrne, First Battalion, Dublin Brigade, heard on 9th September, 1940, by Referee', MSPC/A73, 1 Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

55 'Pre-Truce IRA East Wicklow', by CM O'Byrne, MSPC/A72, 2 South Dublin Brigade.

56 'General conditions governing operations or position in Bandon Coy. 1 Batt', by Flor Begley, c.1941, MSPC/A3_1, 1 Battalion, 3 Cork Brigade.

57 Report from Ballinspittle Company, verified 10 March 1941, MSPC/A3_1, 1 Battalion, 3 Cork Brigade.

58 See for example, MSPC/A2_1, 2 Cork Brigade; 'Dublin Brigade – list of principal activities after evacuation of O'Connell Street Buildings July 1922', MSPC/A85, Dublin Brigade (General Activities).

59 'Copy of last letter of Fishery Inspector James Kane, Ex Sergeant RIC shot for espionage 16th June 1921 at Shanacool', MSPC/A6_B_2, Old Record, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 2.

60 'Shooting of Fishery Inspector James Kane of the Square Listowel (formerly Sergeant RIC) for espionage (12th June 1921)', Denis Quille, Column Commander, 6 Battalion Flying Column, North Kerry 1921. Quille provided a map and other details of Kane's death. MSPC/A6_A_4, 1 Kerry Brigade, Part 4.

61 The Committee was founded in 'early 1935', and a list of those invited to attend was forwarded on to the Referee in June 1936. Hales was marked absent. Cremin to the Secretary of the Department of Defence, 28 September 1942, NAI, TSCH/S9243.

62 'Tom Barry and Tom Hales before Referee and Advisory Committee, 10 June 1941', NAI, TSCH/S9243.

63 *Ibid*.

unfortunate men are inclined to grasp at any straw’. He was adamant there would be no co-option of the pair, that he ‘must part company with [the] Bde Committee if a decision is taken to take both of them back to the fold’. The Referee’s suggestion had touched a nerve he could not have known was so exposed. Begley finished: ‘I am sorry I cannot take them seriously and strange to say I have not done so even in the strenuous days of the long past’.[64] Finding himself caught in this way between gruff protagonists in what was a hoary old fight, may be an extreme example, but it is a salutary reminder of the hornets’ nests the Referee’s seemingly simple request for information could stir up. By asking for reports someone got to say what happened, got to be rewarded and believed; someone got to pose as arbiter of truth from lies. So the Reports are just the end points: the wars of words behind them tell us something more significant about what was still at stake.

64 Flor Begley to Cremin, 17 June 1941, NAI, TSCH/S9243.

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STATEMENTS OF LIAM O'DOHERTY, JAMES RYAN AND JOHN O'CONNOR
BEFORE REFEREE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON 22nd JULY, 1940.

Ref. Q Will you give me your names please?
A James Ryan, Liam O'Doherty and John O'Connor.
Q I got a letter from Mr. O'Doherty, the substance of which is that he wanted to draw my attention and the attention of the Board to the large number of rejection cases that had been issued and asking for an interview. I gladly availed of the opportunity to hear your views on the matter. This Committee has been working for some time; I have been here for nearly two years and rejection is no pleasant matter to any of us. I am sure you can appreciate and understand that we are tied and bound by statutes, and, if you can assist us by showing that we can interpret the statute in a different way to what we have been doing, we shall be only too glad. I would like to hear from you exactly what it is that you wish we should do and could do. I have looked up a list, - I think it is as correct as it is possible to get it. - I have asked the Secretary to get me a list of the position of your Battn. and he tells me that the number of applications is 167, from the 5th Battn., Dublin, and the number of awards in that Battn. is 59 up to the present, and the number of rejection cases, (not final but initial rejection) is 73, which have been confirmed by me and sent out to the applicants. There are 30 more not finally dealt with, of that 167. You have 59 awards (granted pensions) out of the 167 and I have sent out rejections, to which, of course, the applicants can appeal and if he wishes to forward additional evidence, or if he has not been examined orally and desires to be examined, he can do so - to give every applicant a full opportunity of stating his case. That is the position. What is it that you wish to speak to us about?
L.O'D. A We wish to thank you first for receiving this deputation. To begin with the figures given surprise me, the number of applicants, 167.
Ref. Q It was only on Fri. that I asked the Secretary and he is not quite satisfied that the numbers are correct.
L.O'D. A I would be inclined to think it would be well over 200 but I am not questioning the figures; it is only in relation to the number turned down, and the number getting pensions. What we feel about it is that this Board does not fully understand the position of the 5th Battn. as a unit of the I.R.A., and we want first to emphasise the point that the 5th Battn. had no counterpart in this country. It was a separate and distinct Battn. created by Hqrs. under the Director of Engineering, the late Rory O'Connor, with the sanction of the Dáil Cabinet. It was on a separate foundation having separate functions from any other unit of the I.R.A. As it was a separate unit, it had to have separate functions and the functions required special training. That special training took a tremendous amount of time. It was training in the use of explosives for demolition purposes, it meant going through the city and tracing cables, finding out what they were and all that sort of thing, and as I say this resulted in the men being on a completely separate basis from any other unit, having special training in the separate qualifications. As this training proceeded, there were two departments opened; these were the chemical department and the munitions department. The staffs of these departments were xxix men recruited from the engineering Battn., that is the 5th Battn. The reason was fairly obvious, that these men had separate qualifications as the result of their separate training in the 5th Battn. That brings us to the first point. The men of those units, the chemicals unit and the munitions unit, I understand were given pensions because of their special work, the men in the chemicals and munitions departments.

MSPC/A77_1 Dublin Brigade, 5 Battalion (p. 17) – Statements of Liam O'Doherty, James Ryan and John O'Connor before Referee and Advisory Committee on 22 July 1940 [extract].

Q. Would you say the same in every ambush. That the men on outpost would be just as important as the men in the ambush?
A. In the degree of importance naturally the man on the particular jon does more work of a military nature.

Q. Would you draw a distinction there?
A. I will qualify it. But going back to the other - either one or other of them must do the outpost work, and I hold the two are of equal importance.

Q. Comparing this ambush with the Dartmouth Square ambush is rather unfair, because it was one of the biggest jobs carried out, but take 'C' Company of the 3rd Battalion - they carried out 7, 8 or 10 ambushes in the Dardanelles. We have no difficulty about qualifying them if a man was in one of these fights and doing his usual Volunteer work. Would you compare either the Royal Air Force ambush at or the Inchicore Works business with one of these ambushes in the Dardanelles?
A. To be quite honest, I would not. I would say that the personal danger in one is very much outweighed as against the other job, but then you have to take operations such as that in the help given to the movement generally.

Q. Would you hold that the Dartmouth-Square Dardanelles was more dangerous than Inchicore?
A. Yes, but that is due to the way both turned out. If the men in the Inchicore Works were pounched on they were in for a bad time, and thinking on these lines I would not draw a very big distinction. I know the Board have a very difficult job trying to draw a line of demarkation.

Q. Take an outpost in an ambush in the City. A fellow on outpost was not actually in the firing. We have two types of outpost work, one in the city and an outpost in the country where a man might have been anything from a mile to five miles away from where the scrap occurred. You would not put the outpost in both cases in the same category?
A. I will take the Dardanelles outpost. That man would have as much difficulty getting out of that as the man in the heart of the scrap. I do not think that the man down the country would have the same difficulty. I say that from practical experience.

Q. A fellow would be quite safe in the country if he was not in the vicinity of the firing?
A. Yes. It is rather hard on the man down the country.

Q. We are being criticised because are qualification standards are too high?
A. The outpost things are very troublesome I know, and a very difficult thing to properly estimate at their proper value.

Q. Any man who has a good scrap and is doing everything he possible can in other small jobs -always obeying orders; armed patrols, etc. - here in Dublin we are qualifying?
A. A man could not be always on outpost, ht would have to come into the heart of the thing at sometime. When I say that, it shows that a man, through a bit of either luck or ill luck , who was o outpost one night, would be quite willing to be in the other.

Q. It would appear a fact that a man like the Commandant when told to do a particular job he went to his Company Captain or Captain and it was the general rule that the best men were picked if they were available?
A. Absolutely. I do know that in our own Company we had a very big number of men - about 140 - at one time and within the last

six months of the scrap we were brought down to about 9. As a matter of fact within the last six or eight months of the scrap you did not know what end of you was up. You were never off duty and were either on outpost or actual scrapping. At the end of the period you were certainly not fit for very much. The truce to a lot of us meant a good sleep.

Q. We are up against this - some of the Company Officers all over the different battalions in Dublin do not like to be asked details about a man's service . They think that if they say a man was an active Volunteer and obeyed all orders of his Commanding Officer it should be sufficient qualification for us to qualify him. In the 3rd Battalion Joe O'Connor is findin considerable difficulty in getting answers to queries we sent to him. The Company Officers consider that because a man was an active Volunteer - carrying out orders - he should qualify for a pension, which means that every member of the Volunteers in Dublin should get a pension?
A. There are only certain cases to my mind that I would be prepared to make a sweeping statement about, such as that, and that would be for a man who was over age, or due to family ties - where he would have a very large family. Our own Company Captain, who wa a very conscientious man, would not bring a man on a job with ties such as those. That particular man might be bursting to do that particular type of work -

Q. In our opinion it was an unfortunate circumstance -
A. I do not know if you would have a very big number of these cases

Q. I am afraid the world is full of good intentions?
A. There are a lot of bad ones too.

Q. There is only one thing you can be quite sure about, and that is results?
A. Yes, I know you must have a definite avenue to go down. I do th think that if Joe O'Connor did what was done in connection with the Roll of the 1916 men - that is,have an unofficial Board outside for segregation and verification of them before they come along here. It would be very helpful to the Board. It took nearly twelve months to complete the enquiries, but you wer either satisfied or dissatisfied at the end of the time and came to a decision accordingly.

Q. Some of the Southern men are doing that?
A. I am not saying it was not done -

Q. It is being done alright?
A. I know that they went minutely into the claims in the signing of the 1916 Roll.

Q. The Cork fellows when they were filling in the claims in the 1st Southern Division they had a Committee formed in Cork and they scrutinised the claims. If a claimant claimed anything he was not in the claim was sent back, and they kept in the offices in Cork a copy of all claims, verified by the Battalion or Company Officers that the matter contained in the claim was correct, and when we got the Cork officers up here they had the men's claims in front of them, and their notes about it, and the can tell us exactly the importance of each operation?
A. Yes.

Q. And if any questions arise on the claims they can answer then?
A. It is a business-like way of doing it.

MSPC/A76 Dublin Brigade, 4 Battalion (p. 12 and p. 13) – Commandant Alec. Thompson giving evidence before advisory committee on behalf of Robert Briscoe (no.297) on 14th September 1936.

12 copies Supplied by Frank Henderson

A/74/1

D Company 2nd Battalion Dublin Brigade

List of Members who took part in the destruction of the Custom House

James Foley	100 Shelmartin Av. Fairview
Arthur Beasley	2 Clonmore Tce, Ballybough
Peter Farrell	60 Shandon Park Phibsboro
Patrick Spanzy	33 Mountpleasant Sqr. Ranelagh
John Mooney	433 E 51 Street, New York City, U.S.A.
John Cullinane	9H Iveagh Bldgs Old Bride St.
Daniel Heade	Killed in action
Richard McGrath	32 Lindsay Rd, Glasnevin
Michael Walshorne	Blind Asylum
Patrick Harold	Coachford, Macroom, Co. Cork
Michael Kelly	serving in Army.

P. S. M. 1934 OIFIG AN RÉITEÓRA FAIGHTE - 6 BEAL 1935 DÚN ÚI GRIOBHTHA

(Original on R.O./25)

See R.O/102 for signature

OIFIG AN RÉITEÓRA FAIGHTE 1934

(1)

WEWST CONNEMARA. BRIGADE. I. R. A.

Major Operations carried out by Brigade 1921.

There were only 3 Major Operations carried out by the Brigade during 1921. viz:- Clifden 16.3.21. Screebe, 5.4.21. Mounterowen 25.4.21.

CLIFDEN. 16.3.21 After failing to contact a Patrol of 8 R.I.C. men who were on patrol in Clifden on the night of the 15th. March. 1921. the Column retired to an unoccupied house about a mile from Clifden. We again approached the town on the night of the 16th. and getting in touch with our Scouts on the outskirts of the town, we learned that a Patrol of four were on the Main St. - 2 R.I.C. & 2 Tans.

After discussion it was decided that 6 men should carry out the attack with small arms, theremainder of the Column beingso disposed that they could bring fire to bear on the R.I.C. Barracks to prevent reinforcements coming out, and to cover the retreat of the attacking party.

The Plan of attach was :- The Party to walk through Market St. into Main St. 3 abreast; the leading 3 men 15 paces ahead of their comrades; when the leading 3 got past the Patrol, they were to turn about and get the Patrol between two fires.

This was successfully carried out, the Patrol being met on the Main St. about 100 yards from the Barracks. Only 2 men of the Patrol were met with as the other 2 had - we afterwards learned- gone into a Hotel a few minutes before our arrival.

The 2 Police were shot dead. 2 Webley revolvers & ammunition and I, Lee Enfield rifle and 50 rds. of ammunition were captured. The attackers suffered no casualties.

Intensive fire was opened from the Barracks, as soon as the firing started on the street, this was immediately replied to by the Column, thus preventing any reinforcements coming out, and ensuring the safe return of the attacking party.

The following is the list of men taking part in this operation:-

ATTACKING PARTY.

P.J.McDonnell.	Newcastle. Galway.
Gerald Bartley.	Clifden Co. Galway.
John Feehan.	Leenane. "
Rd. Joyce.	Clifden. " (Dealt with under 1924 Act).
Michael Joyce.	Glanagimla, Leenane, Co. Galway.
Peter Wallace.	Letterass. " "

Covering Party.

James King.	Donadea, Kilcock, Co. Kildare.
Michael Conroy.	U.S.A.
John C.King.	Leenane. now in U.S.A.
John King.	Roundstone. " "
Denis Keane.	Roundstone. Co. Galway.
Stephen Mannion.	" "
John Conneely.	" now in U.S.A.
Patrick Wallace.	Letterass Leenane. Co. Galway.
Padraic O'Maille.	Dublin.
Christie Breen.	"
Thomas Madden.	Ballinaboy. Clifden. Co. Galway.
Laurence O'Toole.	Tullycross, Renvyle. "
Paul Bartley.	Bunowen Clifden. "
Thomas Coyne.	Glanagimla. Leenane. now in England.
John King.	Rossroe. Leenane Co. ~~Roy~~ Galway

A77(1)/5

OPERATIONS OF NO.3 COMPANY.

DATE	OPERATION	NAMES OF MEN ENGAGED-REMARKS.
Whit 1918	Forced march to Coronation Plantation with tools and explosives, Cyclists with explosives arrested.	J. Ryan, D. Hannon, H. Kenny, J. Timmons, P. Brady, J. Croker, P. Mullins, Kit Mullins (arrested).
April 1918	General training in explosives) and Demolitions.	Coy. at this time attached to 3rd Bat.
Jan. 1919	Raids for Shotguns on Lauder, Dentist, Harolds Cross.	T. Atkins, T. Byrne, J.H. Doyle
1919 April	Maynooth Town Hall blown up (by order of Rory O'Connor)	J. Ryan, S. J. O'Reilly.
do	Raid for Arms, Leeson Street	A. Doyle, J. O'Brien.
Dec. 21	Raid on "Independent" Office	J. Ryan, P. Larkin, T. Bryan, D. McArt, M. McEvoy, H. Kenny, T. Byrne, T. McEvoy.
1920	Raid on D.&S.E.Ry. for rails.	J. Ryan, P. Mullins, D. Coates etc.
Aug. 12th	Dismantling fake mines in Stepaside Bks.	J. Ryan & J. Plunkett
	Firing of Stepaside Barracks.	M. McEvoy, J. Ryan, H. Kenny, J. O'Hara, S. J. O'Reilly, T. Bryan, M. Kellegher, D. O'Driscoll, T. McEvoy, J. J. O'Nes, T. Duffy, A. Doyle, J. Daly J. Kiernan, T. Barry J. Greene P. Kavanagh, J. Christie, P. McLoughlin, J. Tully, L. Broe, L. Brennan, P. Drennan P. McEvoy, T. Treacy, B. Short, M. Duggan, P. Mullins, D. Coates, J.H. Doyle, Sean Burke, J. Grimes, G. Hampton D. Hannon, P. Byrne, G. Brogan.
19. Sept.	Ambush by Auxies at Killmashogue	Gen. Batt. Parade-Arrested- T. O'Keefe. A. Doyle, S. Ledwidge L. McLoughlin, J. Grimes, P. McEvoy, H. Larkin, W. McGrath E. Kirwin, J. Ryan.
do	Removal of Coy's dump to 'Plunketts' Fitzwilliam Street.	T. Byrne, J. O'Brien, J. Kelly T. Treacy.
Dec.	* Disarming British Officer in North King St.	D. O'Driscoll.
	Start of armed Patrols - one Section each night, 3 nights per week i/c Coy. Captain, 1st, and 2nd Lieutenant.	
1920	Raid for Arms on Fletcher & Phillipsons	A. Doyle, T. Treacy.
	Raid on Dalkey Castle.	H. Kenny, P. Larkin, T. McEvoy.
	Removal of P. McGrath's dump from Aungier Street	.....
	Raid on University Church for Mauser rifle	T. McLoughlin, J. Dunne. H. Kenny, J. Tully, J. Grimes,
	Raid in Clonliffe Rd. for arms	J. Tully, T. Bryan.
	Removal of dump from T. Bryan's Henrietta St. to J. Ryans.	J. Grimes, T. Byrne.
	Raid on Stephens, Aston Quay.	J. Tully, J. Dunne, D. Hannon, P. Larkin.
	Attempt to Ambush Gen. Tudor at Dublin Castle	L. Roche, T. McGuire, P. Drennan H. Kenny, P. Larkin, G. Hampton, L. Brennan etc.

* additional particulars asked for.

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(9)

No. 7. FANLOBBUS ATTEMPTED AMBUSH

NAMES OF MEN who took part in ambush:-

David Crowley, John Nyhan, Dan Coakley, Cornelius Crowley, John Keane.

Men who removed arms and ~~materile~~ materials for mine for it -

John Brady, James Murphy, Denis Coakly. Dispatch Rider in connection with it - Michael O'Driscoll.

No. 8. DEMOLITION OF BALLINEEN BARRACKS & COURTHOUSE

FULL COY TOOK PART.

Armed Sentries - Michael O'Driscoll, Patrick McCarthy, John Brady at Manch on main road from Bandon to Dunmanway:

John Crowley, Denis Hurley, Dan Coakley on street on main road from Enniskeane to Bandon:

The remainder of the Coy were engaged in the demolition of the Barrack & Courthouse.

No. 9. KILMICHAEL AMBUSH.

The Column was mobilised in Coy area camp at Ahilinane for 6 days previous to the ambush. Full Coy was on duty this time either day or night attending, catering, guarding, scouting and dispatch work and doing armed sentry.

Names of Men who scouted Column into Camp: MICHAEL CROWLEY & JEREMIAH COUGHLAN.

The Crown forces were only about one mile away at the village of Castletown [redacted]. Two British soldiers came near and Richard Lordan got orders from Comdt Barry to arrest them. He did and brought them into camp.

Tim Crowley of Castletown repairing arms for the fight.

John Crowley, Clonamara provided Dr Crowley of Enniskean for service to Column.

Jeremiah Coughlan, Connagh, transferred the British soldiers in company with M. Drummy into the Behaugh area.

John Nyhan, Konnagh, remained at camp the day of the fight with the most of the Coy by orders of Comdt Barry. John Nyhan was then in charge. David Crowley, who was then Capt, was in the Column. They had to clear up the camp and return all the material used by the Column while in camp. They afterwards travelled to Aha-keera to guard the houses of people fearing reprisals. The men who were engaged in digging the graves were - Pat Buckley, Dan O'Leary, Michael Crowley, Jeremiah Coughlan, Jeremiah Murphy & Pat Keane. Tim Crowley prepared the picks for it. The remaindor of the Coy present were doing scouting and sentry during the night of the burial.

No. 10. PREVIOUS TO CROSSBARRY AMBUSH Column camped at Droumfeigh & Gurtaloon.

COY'S Activities during that time: Attending, catering, scouting and doing sentry for Column while in area, provided transport and scouted them into another area. Full Coy engaged.

2

A/73/14

OOM 7.

9th September, 1940. - 5 -

Referee Q. I accept every word you say. It is a long time ago. I accept all that. The Board do not expect impossibilities; they expect you to do all you can. You say you cannot do it. It may be true in your case but in numbers of cases through the country they have it done: we have their records here. What promise did I make to every Brigade as it appeared before me: I explained how valuable these records would be, what assistance they would be, etc., in getting pensions for men who otherwise might not get them. I explained further that in dealing -there are 60,000 applicants - I stated that the Brigade that sent its records in first, we would deal first with them fully and completely: the second Brigade in the list of sending in its records, and so on right along until we had finished these Brigades who had sent in records. Then we would come to the Brigades who had sent in no records.

The only difference with such Brigades is that they will have to stay back until we have completely dealt with the Brigades that have sent in their records and they give us material to deal fully and satisfactorily with the applications.

That is what I promised men from all parts of the country at that time.

I made another promise and possibly that is what you are referring to. I made a further promise: men who had been turned down merely on the statement they made on their file - I am from the country myself and I can quite understand that many of these country boys would not make a full or complete statement in the file. When we had these fellows before us that was all we had and if the evidence was not sufficient we had only to turn it down, but at the initial stage I felt that men should get an opportunity of making a statement and giving evidence orally and I told every person concerned throughout the country to convey to the members of their Brigade that any man whose case is turned down on the evidence on his file if they wish to appeal and to be heard orally that an opportunity would be given to them, so that if any man thinks he has a grievance because of the evidence in his file then it is not the fault of the Board and myself: we do everything in our power to make it known to the responsible persons whom we thought would convey it to the applicants if their case is turned down on the evidence on file that they could appeal. A number of such cases have come before us?

A. And have succeeded -

Q. I could not answer that - some of them must have. That is so far as that portion of your case is concerned?

A. Any man whose case was turned down would get a hearing before the Board - I have particulars of my company.

Q. In each man's case there is a file which he signed and filled himself - that file is gone over and if the evidence on that file is not sufficient that case is rejected and he is informed - he has the right of appeal he knows. The procedure is this: he comes up here; he is sworn; he goes before two men who take his evidence, which is typed and put into his file and there it stays until such time as the Verifying Officer from his Brigade comes up to hear it finally?

A. Yes.

Copy last letter of Fishery Inspector James Kane, Ex Sergeant R.I.C. shot for espionage 16th June 1921 at Shanacool

My dear Children,

I am condemned die. I had the Priest today thank God.

I give you all my blessing and pray God may protect you all. Pray for me and get some Masses said for me.

There is £170 coming from Barrack (R.I.C.) contract and some £70 from the military contract of which you and Hannon will get share and share alike from the profits. There £24 coming to you for first contract which I did alone at the military barracks, when cheques come for the two bigger contracts the cost of labour and all work and material is first to be deducted from total sum and given to you and balance evenly divided between you and Hannon; when you the money in pay Faley and McKenna as far as possible and see to Mrs Elders, Mr OCarrolls bills also Mrs Breens and butchers bills. Mr Johnson will tell you how the purchase money for house stands. There is a bill in the Bank of Ireland for renewal and also one in National Bank (£5) for renewal also. See Mr Byrne and he will put you right as regards the purchase of the hous. It might be well to consider the selling of the house and premises when purchase is paid off and get a good cottage But as matters stand you can get along well by pooling income. Patt Quille will tell you what Con Keane owes for balance of trap Mr Stack paid £5 for pony cart but balance is due. Quill will tell you how much Mrs Nagle owes £6.10.0 for dresser and rail. Mr Jeffers owes £1.10.0 for balance of wardrobe you can give smaller wardrobe to Mr Kennelly to pay off bill for hardware. Carpenters will tell you what is due to them. Mr Purcell owes £4.17.0 balance of cost of painting trap and new cushions. Ned Molyneux is owed about £6 for wood some of which is outside yet which he will point out. I bought £25 worth of scaffolding poles from Mr Gentleman 8 of which are in yard of National Bank and 22 cut in wood. Ifyou dont get these in to work you may be able to sell.

Dont go to much expense of funeral and have no drink or public wake. I am told my body will be got near home. I got the greatest kindness from men who were in charge of me.

Good by now and God bless you and God bless Ireland. Pray for me constantly and give my love to all my firends and neighbours and thank them for all their kindness to me.

Good by

From loving father

All my dear children

JAMES KANE

Bury me near my loving wife if possible

Give my gold watch to Eddie and watch in desk to Frank.

P. S. M. 1934
OIFIG AN RÉITEÓRA
FAIGHTE
23 ABR 1935
DÚN ÚI GRIOBHTHA

True Copy of letter from James Kane. SG.

17

‘Living under an alien despotism’: the IRA campaign in Ulster

Prof Fearghal McGarry

Introduction

Only in recent years has the War of Independence in Ulster received much scholarly attention.[1] Local studies, the principal means of analysing Ireland’s revolution, focused on areas of significant republican violence in the South, while the IRA’s campaign in predominantly unionist areas was largely overlooked.[2] The debates about sectarian violence which dominated much recent historiography have also focused on southern counties despite the greater role played by religious identity in structuring the North’s violence. One reason for this is the difficulty of integrating northern events within the national picture. In many respects, Ulster was a place apart. The IRA campaign there was largely confined to areas with Catholic majorities, such as County Monaghan and south Armagh. Belfast, where over 450 people were killed between 1920 and 1922, was one of the most violent places in Ireland, but the IRA and crown forces accounted for relatively few of these fatalities.[3] Differing patterns of chronology also presented interpretive challenges: violence in Northern Ireland peaked after the Truce of July 1921, but the Civil War left it largely undisturbed.

However, even the sectarian conflict which accounted for much of Ulster’s revolutionary violence was directly connected to the wider revolution. The assassination of a Banbridge-born RIC officer, Colonel Gerard Smyth, by the IRA in Cork on 17 July 1920 helped spark the first major wave of communal violence, leading to the expulsion of around 5,500 Catholics and 1,900 ‘rotten Prods’ from Belfast’s shipyards. The assassination in Lisburn of D.I. Oswald Swanzy by Cork IRA men in revenge for the murder of Tomás MacCurtain provoked the burning of three hundred homes and the expulsion of the town’s Catholic population by loyalists in August. Outnumbered, and often confined to vulnerable enclaves, Ulster Catholics were disproportionately affected: although only 23 per cent of the population in Belfast, they accounted for 56 per cent of its fatalities, 75 per cent of workplace expulsions, and 80 per cent of the displaced.[4]

Coming to terms with this traumatic period presented challenges for northern republicans.[5] It was not possible to depict the War of Independence – or the IRA’s role in it – in successful terms. The IRA failed to live up to its image as defenders of the nationalist community: in Belfast, its leaders had been divided over the extent to which it should defend Catholic areas or attack Crown Forces given the inevitability of sectarian reprisals, and many Catholics had turned against it by June 1922. The Northern IRA failed not only to prevent partition but to influence the shape of the border. Following the collapse of the poorly-coordinated northern offensive in May 1922, many Volunteers travelled south where they sat out the Civil War in the Curragh, or enlisted in the Free State army. Successful IRA leaders such as Frank Aiken established careers across the border, reinforcing northern nationalists’ sense of themselves as an abandoned people. Defeated, demoralised, and subject to draconian security legislation, northern republicans would not threaten Northern Ireland for the next fifty years.

This essay surveys Brigade Activity Reports (BARs) from three divisional areas within Ulster. These reports were generated in response to the Military Service Pension Referee’s request for certified statements outlining major operations carried out by IRA brigades during two qualifying periods: 1 April 1920 to 31 March 1921 and 1 April 1921 to 11 July 1921. Information indicating the name and nature of operations, the dates on which they occurred, and names and addresses of those involved was sought, although widely varying levels of information were provided by brigade committees in response.

Monaghan, 5 Northern Division

Monaghan’s well-organised brigades were the most violent in Ulster, and third most lethal outside Munster (where most fighting took place).[6] This was partly due to demography – 75% of the county were Catholics – but it also reflected the drive and ability of local leaders like Eoin O’Duffy. The 5 Division’s BARs include three files relating to IRA activity in County Monaghan: ten pages of documents on the activities of the 1(Monaghan) Brigade (A/54 (1)); a two-page intelligence report (A/54 (2)); and eleven pages relating to the 2 (Monaghan) Brigade (A/55). Submitted by Fianna Fáil TD and IRA veteran, Dr Con Ward, in 1939, this is considerably less than exists for the IRA in many other areas, as is acknowledged by a covering note which observes, somewhat obliquely, that ‘The matter of supplying activity records here has not apparently been pursued. These are Dr [Con] Ward’s B[riga]des.’[7]

The files nonetheless contain useful information such as the composition of the 5 Division’s three brigades and the names of senior officers.[8] A brief summary of ‘Activities in Co. Monaghan 1920-21’ (included for both brigades) lists eleven attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), resulting in four fatalities. The 2 Brigade file provides two, more detailed, lists outlining 23 operations. Despite some minor inaccuracies and inconsistencies, the number of engagements and RIC and ‘Black and Tan’ fatalities (five) recorded appears accurate.

The best-known operation in Monaghan was the capture of Ballytrain Barracks in February 1920 (which helped establish the reputation of Eoin O’Duffy who would later become IRA chief of staff). Less

1 R. Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition, 1920-1922* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006); Matthew Lewis, *Frank Aiken’s War. The Irish Revolution 1916-1923* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2014); Terence Dooley, *The Irish Revolution, 1912-23. Monaghan* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017).

2 One exception is Christopher Magill, ‘East Ulster and the Irish Revolution’, 1920-1922 (Queen’s University Belfast PhD, 2014).

3 Lynch, ‘Belfast’, John Crowley *et al* (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork University Press, 2017), pp. 630-635.

4 Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at War, 1916-1923* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 241-259.

5 Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp. 1-5.

6 Hart, *The I.R.A. at War*, p. 39.

7 MSPC/A54_1, p. 2.

8 The 5 Division’s 3 (Cavan) Brigade report was not consulted for this essay.

successful attacks are also noted. A failed attempt to take Ballybay Barracks in April 1921 was followed by attacks on barracks at Castleblayney and Carrickmacross. As in other counties, vacated police barracks were burned in April 1920, including in Emyvale, Rockcorry, Clontibret, Smithboro, and Middletown. Ambushes against the RIC, Ulster Special Constabulary (USC), Black and Tans and – less frequently – British army soldiers are recorded: most ended inconclusively, although the intention was often to seize arms rather than kill. The threat posed by the IRA varied across the county: Carrickmacross battalion listed only four operations, three resulting in IRA casualties.[9]

Reports summarising activities at battalion level offer greater insights into the IRA campaign. Common activities included raids on houses for arms, attacks on B Specials, and the burning of bread vans. The latter resulted from the 'Belfast Boycott', imposed by the Dáil in response to the victimisation of northern Catholics. Great Northern Railway trains were also raided and, occasionally, burned. Courthouses were raided, and rate books seized. Efforts were made to impose the Dáil's authority. Republican Court decrees were enforced by the IRA, which also conducted raids for poitín. IRA activities ranged from the mundane – the blocking of roads and destruction of bridges – to the audacious, such as the daring rescue of Commandant Matt Fitzpatrick, under the nose of soldiers, from Monaghan Infirmary in March 1921.

Given the local demography, there was an unavoidable sectarian dimension to the conflict in Monaghan. It was Protestants who were mainly targeted in raids for arms, whether because they were thought to possess UVF rifles, or in an effort to cow potential loyalist resistance.[10] The 'Intensive enforcement of Belfast Boycott' fell heavily on local Protestant traders.[11] Raids on mail trains involved the intimidation of Protestant workers, particularly those thought to belong to the B Specials: Monaghan Battalion's report refers to 'enemy employees of the GNR', while Ballybay Battalion recorded the 'Capture of hostile workers of train at Newbliss R[ai]l[wa]y'.[12]

The establishment of the Ulster Special Constabulary intensified the sectarian dynamics of the conflict. The USC was formed in November 1920 when, under pressure from James Craig, Northern Ireland's prime minister in waiting, the British cabinet ignored warnings from senior officials about the likely consequences of arming one side in a sectarian civil war. Despite mobilising over thirty-five thousand men at its peak, and enduring around seventy fatalities between 1920-1922, the USC has received remarkably little attention from historians.[13] The ill-disciplined B Specials, locally-recruited part-timers who were allowed to keep their weapons at home, gained most notoriety. Republicans regarded them as unionist paramilitaries rather than policemen: 'there was a big Unionist population who were well organised, first in the Ulster Volunteers and later at the end of 1920 in the B Specials'.[14] IRA military operations against Specials could assume a sectarian character, with large numbers of Volunteers raiding Protestant communities at night, aiming to kill Specials or burn them out of their homes. The repeated targeting of particular families and areas led to cyclical violence, as rebuffed raids or loyalist reprisals prompted further attacks.

Conflict between Volunteers and B Specials heightened a sectarian sense of territoriality. A battalion (in 1 Brigade) sought to burn Augher village, in Co. Tyrone, on the grounds that its 'population was about seventy-fire per cent Unionist and the young men mostly members of the Special Constabulary.'[15] Protestant Drum is described simply as 'Hostile village'.[16] Inevitably, sectarian violence became more diffuse as it escalated. In February 1921, George Lester's threats against Catholics in Rosslea led the IRA to shoot the belligerent trader, an action which prompted the sacking of Catholic houses by Specials, which in turn led to the burning of fourteen houses and killing of three Protestants (including two Specials) by the IRA.[17] Dependent on local knowledge, such operations were often described in terms of the individual families targeted. Ballybay battalion, for example, reported: 'General raid for arms; fight at Millars and Crawfords (man killed); fight at Hawthornes. (Hawthorne wounded and two of our men wounded); fight at Fleming's (man killed); fight at Moffet's and Lester's (man wounded).'[18]

Some IRA actions were probably sectarian. Mullahara Orange Hall was burned down, and prominent Big Houses were targeted for destruction: 'Burning Leslie Castle, Ballybay . . . Burning Fitzherbert's Castle at Lougheagish'.[19] The rationale for such attacks was rarely provided. They may have been partly motivated by military considerations but were likely also to have reflected agrarian and sectarian grievances.[20] The terminology used by the IRA to describe unionists is noteworthy. They were frequently described as enemies or imperialists but rarely as Protestants. However, the IRA often described nationalists as Catholics, suggesting that it did not regard its own violence, in contrast to loyalist violence, as sectarian. A 2 Brigade report, for example, notes: 'Reprisals on enemy population for burning and looting of Catholic property at Rosslea, Co. Fermanagh. Armed struggles took place with the enemy population defending their property.'[21]

The focus in BARs on major operations obscures other acts of IRA violence, reinforcing an old-fashioned, rather sanitised, 'raids and rallies' narrative. In reality, the IRA's victims were often killed while alone and unarmed, and many were civilians. A rare reference to these killings is recorded by Ballybay battalion: 'Shooting spies and informers at Tullycorbett, Drumgarra and Lattan (April).'[22] A memorandum

9 The battalion's ineffectiveness was partly attributed to P.J. O'Daly's poor leadership. Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*. *A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 33.

10 McGarry, O'*Duffy*, pp. 52-58.

11 MSPC/A55, p. 4; Dooley, *Monaghan*, pp. 95-97.

12 MSPC/A55, p. 3, p. 9.

13 The USC archive at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland remains closed to the public. Access requests must be submitted to the Police Service of Northern Ireland's records management team.

14 BMH WS520 (Patrick McMeel).

15 *Ibid.*

16 MSPC/A55, p. 8.

17 McGarry, *O'Duffy*, pp 59-61.

18 MSPC/A55, p. 8.

19 MSPC/A55, p. 9.

20 Dooley, *Monaghan*, pp. 111-122.

21 MSPC/A55, p.3.

22 MSPC/A55, p. 9.

ordering the formation of a Secret Service Intelligence Department offers some insights into this strand of revolutionary violence. The intimate nature of intelligence-gathering is conveyed by chilling references to the importance of overheard conversations and the observation of everyday habits. The threat posed by the enemy within, as well as by outsiders, is highlighted:

> 4. Informers among civil population – there are many of these. Watch movements and associations of suspected persons, ex-police, Unionists, hostile members of the A.O.H. [Ancient Order of Hibernians], travellers, pedlars, tramps, girls assisting in draperies and pubs, and servants in houses who are not local.
> 5. Spies. Every stranger or suspicious looking individual in your area must be kept under close observation, and movements carefully noted . . . pay particular attention to accent.[23]

The extent to which the IRA's civilian victims were spies or informers has produced an extensive if inconclusive literature.[24] Accounting for around half of the approximately twenty individuals killed by the IRA, civilian fatalities formed a larger proportion of republican violence in Monaghan than in most counties.[25] Reflecting the tenor of the intelligence memorandum, civilian victims in Monaghan included members of the (Irish Party-aligned) A.O.H., Protestants, ex-soldiers, pedlars, the 'weak-minded', and others on the margins, including a female poitín-distiller, whose perceived lack of respectability increased their vulnerability in a climate of terror. Although some were innocent, their deaths, one Volunteer observed, 'had the effect of keeping our own weak ones right.'[26]

The 5 Division's BARs are also notable for what is omitted. There is no reference to internal rivalries, largely – but not entirely – rooted in differences that emerged over the Treaty. Little insight is provided into how key figures influenced the brigade and its activities. There is no reference to the role of the IRB which formed an important inner circle within the IRA's formal structures. Despite these limitations, BARs provide a valuable snapshot of IRA activities in Monaghan.

4 Northern Division

Led by Frank Aiken, the 4 Northern Division straddled the border, encompassing much of Armagh, south Down and north Louth. Emanating from a nucleus of militant IRA companies in Newry and south Armagh, it comprised three brigades: the 1 (Louth) Brigade (A51 (1)); 2 (Newry) Brigade (A/52); and 3 (Armagh/Lurgan) Brigade (A/53). Alongside Monaghan, it was one of few regions in Ulster to produce significant republican violence, and largely for similar reasons, with a determined IRA leader, and a local Catholic majority, proving important factors.[27] Other parallels with Monaghan included the sectarian nature of the conflict, and the critical role played by the Ulster Special Constabulary.

The 4 Northern Division BARs provide far more information, including detailed lists of individuals involved in military operations, than those for Monaghan. The chronologies also differ markedly. In contrast to Monaghan BARs, which adhere to the 'qualifying periods' set out by the 1934 Pensions Act, the 4 Division's reports largely ignore them. Accounts of republican activity begin as early as 1911, while the cut-off date of the Truce is ignored. Volunteers in Armagh record attacks against crown forces as late as 1923. This reflects how, north of the border, the Truce and Civil War had little significance as chronological turning points.[28]

Partition, made tangible by the establishment of the USC, provided a more significant local development than the 'So Called Truce' which was widely ignored by both Volunteers and Specials.[29] IRA reports note engagements with British soldiers, Specials, and pro-Treaty soldiers, conveying the complex nature of the conflict in border areas. Partition, and the subsequent establishment of the Irish Free State, also constrained anti-Treaty units such as Mayobridge Company which recorded the difficulty of transferring arms across the Border 'with Free State Forces on one side, and Ulster Constabulary on the other'. Interestingly, a degree of collusion is alleged by anti-Treatyites: 'it was generally understood that there was some kind of arrangement between this [Irish Free State] force and the Six County Police'.[30]

Also striking is the extent to which accounts of the Civil War intrude into 4 Division BARs. Two 1 (Louth) Brigade Battalions, and the 1 Brigade staff, supported the anti-Treaty IRA leadership from March 1922, while the rest of the division remained loyal to GHQ until the pro-Treatyite assault on the Four Courts on 28 June 1922. The BAR contains a contemporary letter by Aiken outlining his unsuccessful efforts to preserve his Division's neutrality in the face of provocation from Free State forces: 'I awoke with two Thompsons at my nose'.[31]

Company-level reports provide revealing insights into the struggle on the ground. Geographical and demographic factors were key determinants of effectiveness: 'Greencastle is a point of land surrounded on both sides with water and fairly close to [unionist] Kilkeel. It was impossible to do much'.[32] Volunteers in Sheepstown noted how, 'owing to its position and strength and isolation surrounded by Unionists & "B" Specials', they 'could not be expected to take part in any big operation'. The IRA in unionist-dominated Lurgan and Armagh record few significant military engagements.

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23 MSPC/A54_2, p. 3. Headed 'I.R.A. No. 2 Division (Ulster) – Intelligence Department', it is not clear whether this document was generated by the 5 Northern Division.

24 Charles Townshend, *The Republic. The fight for Irish independence* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), pp. 369-376. For sectarian violence in Ulster, see T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

25 Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, '"Spies and informers beware!". IRA executions of alleged civilian spies during the War of Independence', Crowley *et al* (eds), *Atlas*, pp. 433-436.

26 McGarry, *O'Duffy*, p. 65. See pp. 58-73 for the rationale for these executions. The question of where responsibility lay for the killing of several (Catholic) civilians led to a public spat between Eoin O'Duffy and Con Ward in the 1930s.

27 Lewis, *Aiken's War*, p. 4.

28 The periodisation applied by the MSP body, which reflected the Southern pattern of conflict, was one of several factors disadvantaging Northern veterans who applied for pensions. See Barry-John McCann, 'The administration of military service pensions to six county veterans' (QUB MA, 2017).

29 MSPC/A52, p. 26.

30 The parliamentary constituency of South Armagh was 68% Catholic. North Louth was 90% Catholic, while South Down was 53.5% Catholic.

31 Aiken to 'All Officers and Men', 17 July 1922, A51_2.

32 MSPC/A52, p. 62.

The often belligerent opposition of Irish Party supporters, particularly Hibernians, is also frequently highlighted. IRA men in Dundalk saw themselves as facing a ‘sneeringly hostile’ population of ‘A.O.H. and Protestant settlers’ in a ‘garrison town’ lying within ‘the Pale’. Such rhetoric must be understood in the context of Volunteers’ desire to assert their claim to military service pensions in areas where few operations had taken place: ‘The British element and the British Shoneens, the British Camp Hangers-On, and the A.O.H. were virulently opposed to the National Movement . . . This important fact must be taken into consideration in considering their claims to active service in this area.’[33]

But weak areas could also play a role. In Sheepstown, an ‘IRA levy’ was imposed on residents, and shops in Warrenpoint were ordered to close to mark Terence MacSwiney’s funeral. BARs make clear the importance of the political dimension of IRA activity including electioneering in the face of opposition from A.O.H. and Orange ‘hooligans’: ‘The electorate being subject to threats, intimidation, and personal abuse in many instances. The Volunteers were required to maintain order at meetings, protect canvassers, guard election rooms and speakers, and generally speaking were on active service night and day for two weeks prior to the election.’[34]

Dáil loans were collected, and republican court decrees at district and parish level were enforced, helping to ensure the Dáil’s authority on the ground. IRA activities could shade into intolerance and intimidation. Newry Volunteers burned ‘English Sunday Newspapers’ at railway stations. A federalist political initiative by the former Redmondite MP Stephen Gwynn was suppressed in 1919: ‘The meeting was smashed by the Newry Coy with the result that the “Centre Party” died the night of its birth.’[35] Resident magistrates were targeted: James Woulfe-Flanagan was murdered as he left Newry’s Catholic Cathedral.

As in Monaghan, the conflict increasingly took the form of a struggle between two communities. It was unionist homes which republicans raided for arms: ‘Cars were commandeered, the drivers and owners taken to the marshes about 1 mile outside Newry and kept prisoner under guard until the raid was over’.[36] Big Houses, such as Ballyedmond Castle, were raided, and the Belfast Boycott was imposed in much the same way as in Monaghan. IRA activities in Armagh and Lurgan reflected the Catholic community’s beleaguered status. Lurgan Volunteers guarded the Convent of Mercy, while the IRA in Armagh and Lurgan saw their role as one of defending nationalist areas from attack by B Specials and Orangemen.

Much revolutionary violence centred on the conflict between the IRA and Specials. Operations against British soldiers were rarer and more dangerous, with the unsuccessful Egyptian Arch ambush resulting in the death of three Volunteers. As in Monaghan, the conflict was increasingly characterised by cyclical violence which escalated over time. IRA terminology reflected the intensity of this conflict, with Specials described as an ‘official British murder gang’. Specials, often disguised, raided at night, taking advantage of the curfew: William Hickey, a furniture-store manager with republican sympathies, was abducted from his Newry home by a party of masked Specials. His mutilated body was recovered from a cowshed outside the town the following day. Four young IRA Volunteers were killed at Altnaveigh on the same night.[37]

Although the IRA also killed civilians, they rationalised their actions as legitimate reprisals for the Specials’ ‘Reign of terror’.[38] Two days before the Truce, for example, a Protestant railway worker, Draper Holmes, was shot near Altnaveigh in retaliation for the killing of four IRA men in the same townland. Although Holmes, a civilian whom an IRA reprisal party had stumbled upon, was ‘shot in a panicked effort to ensure that he did not draw attention’ to the IRA’s position, the BAR misleadingly records: ‘B Special Draper Holmes executed at Altnaveigh’.[39] The sense of ‘unfinished business’ resulting from the death of four comrades may have contributed to the subsequent violence inflicted by the IRA on isolated Protestant communities at Altnaveigh and Lisdrumliska where six Protestants were killed and a dozen properties burned in June 1922. Aged between seventeen and sixty, the victims – including a woman who had recognised her attacker – were all civilians but they are described in the BAR as ‘“B” men and their friends’.[40] Although ‘the sectarianism of horrific acts of violence’ made visible the ‘hidden dynamics of conflict between hostile communities’ which structured violence along the border, these atrocities were the exception rather than the rule.[41] In Dundalk, members of the same IRA division protected Protestants from sectarian reprisals. Revolutionary violence on the south-east Ulster frontier, Matthew Lewis argues, was motivated more by the underlying political logic of communal divisions than sectarian hatreds.[42]

The 4 Northern Division BARs feature some notable elisions. Although names are provided for significant military engagements, the Newry Company Volunteers involved in the Altnaveigh shootings are not named, probably due to concerns that participants who continued to live in the area might be identified.[43] Little information is provided on the demoralising collapse of the Northern IRA. Few insights into the reasons for internal divisions are provided. Divisional areas, created near the end of the War of Independence, were far from homogenous. The decision of the IRA in Louth to break with the neutral policy initially adopted by the rest of the division reflected local circumstances. Less well integrated within the Division than the other brigades, the 1 Brigade’s position south of the border made partition and the northern campaign less pressing concerns, and its poor relationship with GHQ (which had criticised its ineffectiveness) may have resulted in a more critical attitude to the Treaty settlement.[44]

33 MSPC/A51, p. 17.

34 MSPC/A52, p. 46.

35 MSPC/A52, p. 47.

36 MSPC/A52, p. 49.

37 BMH WS 890 (Edward Fullerton); A/52, p. 51; Matthew Lewis, ‘Sectarianism and Irish Republican Violence on the South-Easter Ulster Frontier, 1919-1922’, *Contemporary European History*, 26/1 (2017), p. 11.

38 Lewis, ‘Sectarianism’, p. 11.

39 *Ibid*, p. 11. A52, pp. 9, 52.

40 Lewis, ‘Sectarianism’, p. 16. See also Robert Lynch, ‘Explaining the Altnaveigh Massacre’, *Éire-Ireland*, 45/3-4 (2010); A52, p. 53.

41 *Ibid*, p. 21; Robert Lynch, ‘Altnaveigh’, p. 210.

42 Lewis, ‘Sectarianism’, p. 21.

43 Niall Murray, ‘Military archives’, *Irish Examiner*, 11 May 1921.

44 Lewis, *Frank Aiken’s War*, pp. 124-5.

Limited information about the rationale for operations is provided. Unsurprisingly, given their relationship to pensions applications, BARs were often framed to indicate the effectiveness of individual unit's efforts. The Altnaveigh massacre, for example, is described as 'largely responsible for the toning down of the reign of Terror which had been carried on by the RUC and Specials for a considerable time in Newry and district.'[45] However, Matthew Lewis argues that it was the IRA's decision to suspend its campaign later that month which de-escalated violence.[46]

Antrim and East Down 3 Northern Division

Few IRA units were more isolated than the 3 Northern Division's 2 (Antrim) and 3 (East Down) Brigades.[47] Despite encompassing some towns with significant Catholic populations, such as Downpatrick, largely unionist east Down represented unpromising territory for the IRA. The material gathered for the 3 Brigade (A/50), such as Willie Byrne's personal account, 'East Down Activities 1918-1924', conveys the challenges faced by republicans. Downpatrick failed to establish an IRA company until the summer of 1920, and the brigade conducted only one significant operation, an attack on Crossgar Barracks on 2 June 1920. Although unsuccessful, several policemen were wounded, and the barracks was subsequently vacated.[48] Other low-level activities included arms raids, 'raids on Excise Offices, wire cutting, [and] blocking roads'. The BAR emphasises the difficulties of fighting in 'a hostile area where every loyal[i]st was a B Special'.[49] These were compounded by the impact of the Treaty split in an area where, as in most of Northern Ireland, a majority of the IRA supported the Irish Free State. Byrne's small Active Service Unit of thirteen anti-Treatyites participated in the '1922 fight'. Captured by Crown Forces on 22 May, one was killed, two escaped, while the other ten were sentenced to hard labour, followed by internment in brutal conditions on the *Argenta* prison ship.

The 2 Brigade's reports (A/49) present a similarly bleak picture: 'even the simplest Military movement in County Antrim was attended by extreme danger and difficulty owing to the overwhelming hostility of the Imperial population, which embraced over 80% of the inhabitants in our area'. As in other parts of Ulster, the role of the Specials proved critical: 'we had to contend not only with a hostile civil population, but with armed yeomanry who had been organised from 1913 in Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force . . . the B Special Constabulary were established which gave these people official powers.'[50]

Antrim's four IRA battalions were nonetheless relatively active. Its most significant engagement was a daylight raid on Ballycastle RIC barracks in August 1920 which resulted in the capture and burning of the barracks and the removal of its arms and equipment. Barracks at Loughgiel and Cullybackey were burned, while police stations were attacked at Cushendall, Martinstown, and Rasharkin. Coast guard stations were raided and destroyed, as were railway stations, customs offices and businesses including a creamery, timber-yard, and sawmill. Mail trains, post offices and banks were raided, roads were blocked, and bridges destroyed. The Truce had little impact on this campaign: 'The homes of our men were being constantly raided'.[51] The spring offensive of May 1922 (directed against the RUC and Specials) saw violence escalate, with increasingly effective repression by Specials forcing many Volunteers to join flying columns: 'a state of open war was now ensuing between the Imperial forces and Catholic population'.[52]

Antrim's BAR makes clear how republicans felt let down by GHQ's prioritisation of Southern objectives. The most obvious example was the failure to support the spring offensive which local republicans had regarded as an opportunity to destabilise the Northern state prior to its consolidation: 'In this decision we were encouraged and definite active assistance promised by the 1, 4, and 5 Northern Divisions, which was agreed to by General Collins . . . we were sadly disappointed.' The offensive, which began in Antrim on 19 May, left 2 Brigade dangerously isolated: 'We had started something which we could not hope to carry out successfully alone, and had taken up a position from which we could not withdraw.'[53] Its collapse marked a bitter end to the struggle for independence: 'murders of innocent people were taking place until late in the summer of 1922.'[54] 1 Battalion Volunteers eventually 'filtered back to be arrested or allowed to resume their ordinary lives under stringent enemy conditions'.[55] The 4 Battalion similarly recorded that 'our men, who now were well-known to the enemy, were secretly removed from the area. Some were able to return to their homes later. But the majority were forced to find employment in other parts of Ireland or abroad.'[56] The sense of abandonment felt by Northern republicans was compounded by the outbreak of the Civil War which ended Southern republican interest in Northern intervention. A large number of Volunteers fled south to the Curragh where many resisted pressure to take part in the Civil War: 'We never knew if our position was clearly understood in Dublin'.[57]

Conclusion

Generated in response to a request for information about major operations, Brigade Activity Reports should not be regarded as a comprehensive guide to IRA activity. They vary widely in terms of the level of detail supplied: some provide comprehensive accounts of activities, while others focus on significant military engagements. The latter constituted a relatively minor proportion of IRA activities given the extent of low-level and non-

45 MSPC/A52, p. 53.

46 Lewis, *Aiken's War*, p. 160.

47 This essay does not consider the 3 Northern Division's 1 (Belfast) Brigade which was involved in very different forms of violence, and at much greater levels than the 2 and 3 Brigades, reflecting the radically different circumstances in Belfast.

48 MSPC/A50, p. 3.

49 MSPC/A50, p. 12.

50 MSPC/A49, p. 3.

51 MSPC/A49, p. 3.

52 MSPC/A49, p. 6.

53 MSPC/A49, p. 3.

54 MSPC/A49, p. 6.

55 MSPC/A49, p. 5.

56 MSPC/A49, p. 10.

57 MSPC/A49, p. 4.

military activity carried out by Volunteers. Another omission resulting from the emphasis on major operations is consideration of the important auxiliary and intelligence roles played by Cumann na mBan.[58]

Compiled almost two decades after the Truce, BARs are not necessarily a reliable or accurate source. Written from the perspective of the IRA, often with the intention of establishing or justifying local achievements, these reports should be carefully contextualised. Their analysis requires an understanding of the context within each brigade area, and the role of such factors as personal rivalries, internal differences over strategy, and the local impact of partition and the Civil War. They should be analysed in conjunction with other sources, particularly contemporary press, police and IRA reports. A particular value may lie in approaching BARs as a form of retrospective narrative: a reflection, after a considerable length of time, on the challenges, achievements, and constraints faced by the IRA. They are usefully analysed alongside the witness statements of the Bureau of Military History and individual Military Service Pension applications, and it is likely that a fuller appreciation of the relationship between each of these sources will shed more light on the whole.

Approached carefully, BARs offer another valuable addition to the remarkable wealth of sources on Ireland’s revolution. They also offer insights into the aftermath of the revolution, providing useful details, for example, on the emigration of veterans. It seems likely that parts of the six counties saw much higher levels of emigration than occurred south of the border. A large majority of IRA men in several south Down companies, for example, had left Northern Ireland, many for the United States, by the late 1930s. The immediate, traumatic, context for this was the ‘forced exile and resettlement’ of a largely ‘forgotten exodus’ of thousands of IRA activists who fled Ulster in fear of persecution in 1922.[59] Many were unable or unwilling to return, while those who did so lived under surveillance and fear of punishment, concerns that are evident from the circumspect or even non-engagement of northern veterans with the Military Service Pensions body. Unsurprisingly, these reports present an unsettling picture of the conflict in Ulster, with some of the incidents described reminiscent of more recent acts of violence in the same region.

Coinciding with renewed tensions over the status of the Irish border, commemoration of events such as the massacre at Altnaveigh – which remain very much alive in local collective memory – may present greater challenges than the more widely anticipated difficulties likely to arise from the Civil War’s centenary.[60] With few exceptions, this was a region where the IRA failed to present a significant challenge to British power. For the same reason, it was the part of the country where revolutionary violence was most polarising. If the distinction between political and sectarian violence was unavoidably blurred in a province that saw two communities pitted against each other, it is important to acknowledge the restrained scale of fatalities in Ulster compared to similar border disputes elsewhere. The horrors inflicted on Protestants at Altnaveigh or the Catholic McMahon family in north Belfast were memorable because they were exceptional.[61]

Nonetheless, it is clear that, prior to partition in 1920, the contours of two opposed Irelands were being carved out on the ground. The precise location of the lines on the map, it transpired, would be determined by decisions made in London rather than the violence of local gunmen. Writing three decades after partition, Patrick McMeel acknowledged the arbitrary outcome of the struggle for independence in Ireland’s bitterly contested borderlands: That the Volunteers of our Battalion area justified their existence from a purely military point of view is a matter of little doubt. ‘That we reaped some of the benefits we hoped and fought for by the establishment of a native Government, which included most of our Battalion area, is a matter of pure chance. A few miles to our North are located men who were up against the same forces as we had to contend against and who are now separated from us and living under an alien despotism.’[62]

58 This also reflected a tendency by male republicans, officials and politicians to minimise the contribution of revolutionary women. See, for example, Fearghal McGarry, *The Abbey Rebels of 1916. A Lost Revolution* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2015), pp. 331-332.

59 Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Ulster Says Go’, *Irish Times*, 17 June 2015.

60 Attempts were made to burn Altnaveigh Orange Hall, which contains a memorial plaque to Orangemen murdered during the Troubles, and where an annual parade is held to remember the Protestants killed in 1922, as recently as 2017.

61 T.K. Wilson, ‘“The most terrible assassination that has yet strained the name of Belfast”: the McMahon Murders in Context’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 37,145 (2010).

62 BMH WS520 (Patrick McMeel).

one (1) C Catholic Belfast Pogrom 1920-21-22 P Protestant

* Killed Military Fire. (Red + and Hospital)

1920 List of Killed. 452 Unknown 3. Wounded 2,300

July 21st

C. × " Finnegan, Francis Clonard St
" " Noad, maggie Anderson St.
" " Devlin, Bernard Alexandra St.
" 22 Morgan, Br. Michael Clonard.
" " Downey, John Roden St.
" " Giles, Joseph Kashmir Rd.
" " Gawlan, Alex M. Tralee St.
" " Robinson, Thos. Kane St.
" " McAuley, albert Stanfield St.
" " Hennessey, Henry Ardilea St.
P. × " Godfrey, wm Argyle St.
" " Dunning, wm Belvoir St.
" " Stewart, James Clydebank
" " Conn, James A James St. Frome St.
" * 23 Watson, ann 24 Welland St.
" " Mc Bune, wm. Clonallen St.
" 25 Mc Grogan, Nellie Frome St.
C. × " Mc Cartney, John Lucknow St.
P. × 26 Dinbar, Private David Sylvia St.
Aug. 9 Parker, Private Mathew Lawther St.
" * 25 Mc Cartney, James Frome St.
" * " Burrowes, Ethel Bright St.
C. 28 Burns, Jerry Massarene St.
" 29 Kinney Henry Ardilea St.
" " Murray John Glenview St.
" " Jones Thomas Ardilea St.
" " Moan Owen Glenview St.
" " Cassidy Wm J. Glenpark St.
" " Lynch Robt. Massarene St.
" " Gilmore Patk. Campbell Row.
P. 30 Hobson Henry Cromwell Rd.
" " Thompson John Henry St.
" " Mc Alpine Robt. 21 York St.
" " Board wm Lawther St.

C. Aug. 30 Mc Lean Adam Southwell St.
P. " Chapman Paul Matilda St.
" " Orr, Grace Edendirry St.
C. 31 Burns Ed. Grove St.
P. " Colville Saml. Rowan St.
" " Jamison Private Scottish Rifles
" " Laye Fred Donegal Pass
" " shot after Curfew in Orange dist.
C. Sept. 1. Mc Cann Henry Wall St.
" " Cromie James Trafalgar St.
P. " Cawsard James Benwell St.
" " Macwell Thos. N. Boundary St.
C. 2 Hobbs Fred Boundary St.
P. " Boyd Thos. Northland St.
" 3 Mc Murtry wm R.V.H. Derry St.
C. " O'Brien John Kildare St.
P. 4 Harold Charles Private Mill St.
C. 10 O'Neill Charles Glenpark St.
" (12 Toner John Cable St.)
— (shot after Curfew.) —
P. 12 Laymon Robt. Sandy Row
" 20 Mathers J. D. Hartley St.
C. " Leonard Const. RIC
" 21 × Trodden Ed. Falls Rd.
" " × Mc Fadden J. Springfield Rd.
" " × Gaynor John Springfield Rd.
P. 28 Blair Fred Louisa St.
C. 29 Gordon Robt. Falls Rd.
" " Barkley Thos Roumania St.
" " Shields James Milan St.
" " Teer wm mill St.
P. " Lawther John Everton St.
Oct. 16 Gibson John Byron Place
" " Mitchell Wm J. Downing St.

Oct. 1920

P. 16 × Mc Master Matt. Corlig St.
" × Ardoyne Fight. Killed Armoured Car
" 25 Mc Leod Joseph Church St. E.
Nov. 4 Mc Lean John C. Glenallen St.
" " Lucas Saml. W. RIC.
" 21 Bundry Arthur Soldier
Dec. C. 2 Bell wm Broom St.
" " 3 Mullan wm Verney St.
P. 27 Morrison Joseph Boyne St.

C. "1921"

Jan. 5 7 Horner Danl. Kent St.
" 26 Heffron Const RIC Ry View Hotel
" " Quinn Const RIC " " "
" " Garvey Mc chemist Crumlin Rd.
P. Feb. 11 Crooks RE Blk + Tan
" " Mc Intosh John Blk + Tan
" 25 Hepworth A.N. Soldier Aldergrove
" " Bray Ex Rosemount Gdns
" Jan. 12 Allan Alex. military Hospl.
C. " 13 Capper Const. Blk + Tan.
" " Graham John Emily Place
" " 22 Jamison Annie Moffat St.
P. " " Boyd Hd Const. RIC.
April 23 Bolan Ernest "Aux. C. Police"
" " Bales John R. "Aux. Police"
C. " Duffin Patk Clonard Gdns
" " Duffin Danl. Clonard Gdns
P. May 11 Craig Alfred ship St.
C. 18 Smyth John Seaforde St.
" 19 Kelly Eleanor Kilmood St.
" 22 Carrol Mary Carntaul St.
Prime 10 Glover James Const RIC.
C. " 11 Mc Ginley Terry N. Thomas St.
" " Mc Ride Alex. Cliftonville Rd.
" " Kerr Wm O'Lodge Rd.
" " Halfpenny Malachy Herbert St.
" " Milligan Patk. Dockland

C. Pogrom

June 11 Millar Joseph Sackville
" 13 Collins Kathleen Cupar
" " Mallon Thos. N. Thomas
" 14 Mc Asee Hugh Sackville
P. 23 Blackburn Joseph Kilman
C. July 6 Galvin James R.I.C. Const
" 10 Mulholland Henry Bombay St.
" " Lenaghan James Lucan St.
" " Hughes Danl Durham St.
" " Hickland Patk Hamilton St.
" " Conlon Thos Const RIC Springfield Rd.
" " Hamilton Alex. Pleura St.
" " Robinson Frank Brown St.
" " Monaghan Bernard Abyssinia St.
" " Tierney wm Oman St.
" " Mc Guinness James McMillan Place
" × Unknown boy aged 13. ×
" " Hughes Danl Mc Cleery St.
P. " Mullan Wm J. James St.
" " Mc Mullan David Lisbrook Ave.
" " Baxter Wm J. Argyle St.
" " Park Ernest Moyola St.
C. " 11 Craig James Turin St.
" " Reddy James Pleora St.
" " 14 Mc Kenney Maggie Balkan St.
" " Mc Kenna Patk. R.V. Hospl.
P. " Welsh Margt. Ellen Court
C. " 15 Mooney Bernard Spamount St.
P. " 19 Brown Wm "R.V." March St.
" " 21 Walker George Eight St.
C. " 23 Magowan Mary Derby St.
Aug. 15 Fox Fred Durham St.
P. " 25 Green Charles "R.V." Lincoln Ave.
" " 29 Rafter Thomas Lepper St.
" " Fogg Colin Lowther St.
" " 30 Barnes Robt. Cambridge St.

MSCP/RO/402 1 Brigade (Belfast), 4 Northern Division – Belfast Pogrom, list 1920-1922.

Pogrom 1921

three Aug[t]

P.	30	Kennedy Wm	Grove St.	P.	23	Patton Andrew
"	"	Lack Stephen	Sussex Pl.	C.		"(Keating J.P. clerk Lab." Exc.) Jocely
"	"	Walson Annie	N'Queen St.	"		"Mc Convey Neil (Shot IN ONE HOUSE) Thomas
"	"	Smith Wm	Earl St.	"		"Mc Convey Mrs. (Shot IN ONE HOUSE) Thomas
"	"	Bowers Henry	Cambridge St.	"		"Kelly Miss (Shot IN ONE HOUSE) Thomas
C	"	Harvey Charles	Columbia St.	"		"Malone Patk. B'bridge
"	"	Coogan John	Valentia St.	"		"Connolly Patk. Duncairn
"	"	Mullan Thos	N'Queen St.	"		"Brunton Patk. Vere
"	31	Bradley James	Mc Cleery St.	"		"Bell Ellen Lepper
"	"	Cuff Alice	Academy St.	"		"Spallen Michael Moffett
"	"	Finnegan Thos.	Heylands Place	"		"Mc Nally John Park
"	"	Mc Keown Wm	Thomas St.	"	24	Fleming Jerry Glenvale
"	"	Bradley Francis	Boyd St.	"		"Kelly John Crumlin
"	"	Duffin Richard	N'Lodge Rd.	"		"Millar Mrs (5 of this family shot) Dock
"	"	Mc Fadden James	Malvern St. P.	"		"Graham Richard Beverley
P.	"	Lee John	Manor St.	"		"Thomson Thomas Ohio
"	"	Ferguson Saml.	Donegall St.	"	25	Graham Robt. B'bridge
"	"	Campbell Walter	Silvio St. C.	"		"Mc Ivor James L'Patrick
a. Sept	6	Burgess, Leonard Leafold	Dover St.	"		"Mc Henry John Hr. Const. Islandbridge
C.	"	Harvey Charles	Columbia St.	"		"Kelly Eugene Crumlin
P.	18	Johnston James	Louisa St.	"	29	Mc Namera Mrs Keegan
"	"	Ardis Margt.	Bute St.	DEC.	14	Crudden Michael Old Park
"	"	Blair Eva	Vere St.	"	17	Brennan Edwd St. Stanfield
"	25	Mc Minn F.S.	Reids Pl. Nas. Rd. P.	"		"Pritchard Wallie Malcom St.
"	"	Harrison Alex. (Hamilton?)	Frazer St.	"		"Mc Meigan J. Le Mount St.
C	"	Mc Adoocker Murty	Moira St. C.	19		Mc Callion Charles
"	"	Kelly Eliza (mrs)	Seaforde St.	"		"Donnelly Mrs Ravenhill Rd
"	"	Barry George	Shore St.	"	27	Morrison David Ardoyne
P	29	Orr John	Derwent St.			
Nov.	9	Blakely Joseph	Campbell St.			
"	21	Hanna Wm	Montrose St.			
"	"	Stuart Andrew J.	Nelson St.			
C.	"	O'Hagan James	Station St. C.			
P.	23	Mc Phillips Bertie	Michael St.	"		"Murphy John (shot in Shop) York St.
"	"	Cunningham David	Kendrick St. P	"		"Curtle Alex. Mc Colgen Rd
"	"	(Mc Mordie Wm)	Landhurst St.	"		"Barnes, Private C.G. Norfolk Regt.
		(Porter Labour Exchange)				

Pogrom. 1922.

Jan[ry]

four Jan[ry] P.	2.	Iwittle Alexander				
Roe. C.	3.	Campbell Saml.				
n St.	"	" Gibson John	Arnon St.	"		
n St. P.	4	Mc Crea Albert	Roundhill St.	"		
n St. C.	7.	Mc Donagh John	Dock St.	"		
Rd.	"	8 Allwell Wm	Coates St.	"		
Rd.	"	11 Hogg Mary	Fifth St.	"		
St.	"	" Devlin Bridget Mrs	Coates St.	C		
St. P	"	Anderson Andrew	Hooker St.	"		
St.	"	" Anderson Mrs	Hooker St.	"		
St.	C.	12. Kelly Hugh (Barman,	Clarke, Bentick St.	"		
	FEB.	6 Grey Thos. (Barman)	Earl St.	"		
	"	11 Page Mrs	N'Queen St.	P.	"	
Lane	P.	" Boyd David	Stanhope St.	"		
t.	"	13 Brown James	Eighth St.	"		
	"	" Lundy Benj[mn]	Upr Meadow St.	C.	"	
	C	" Nearey Francis	Peters St.	"		
	"	" Gregg James	Kildare St.	"		
	"	" Mathers James	Jude St.	P.	"	
	"	" Lamb Patk	York St.	"		
	"	" Mc Fields Peter	Foy St.	"		
	"	" Sadleir Anthony	Tyrone St.	C.	"	
	"	" Mc Neil Rose	Mary St.	"		
	"	" Kennedy Catherine	Weaver St.	"		
	"	" Johnston Mary	Weaver St.	"		
	"	" Jennyson W.	Cavendish St.	"		
	"	14 Mc Coy Frank	Forfar St.	P.	"	
	"	" Gallagher Henry	L'patrick St.	"		
	"	" O'Hanlon Eliza	Weaver St.	"		
	"	" Rice James	Avondale St.	"		
	"	" Robinson Mary	Lancaster St.	C.	"	
	P.	" Harper George	Earl St.	"		
	"	" Waring Wm O'Hall	Clifton St.	P.	"	
	⁂	" Unknown Wallace or Wells		"		
	"	" Brothers Joshua	Ivan St.	C.	"	

P.	Feb[y] 14	Mc Clelland John,	Christopher St.			
"	"	Blair Thos. (Saml.?)	Burnaby St.			
"	15	Duffin W.H. Fine Tk. Spin[g] Co.				
"	"	Law James (Wm.?)	Hunter St.			
"	"	Stewart H. "B." Spd.	Ships St.			
"	"	Fferench Hugh	O'Lodge Rd.			
"	"	Neal Thos.	Devaris St.			
"	"	Morrison James	Sultan St.			
"	"	Mc Call Peter	Tyrone St.			
"	"	O'Brennan Mrs	My Ladys Rd			
"	"	Bond Owen	Stanfield St.			
"	16	Devlin John	Huddleston Pl.			
"	"	Mc Cormack James				
"	24	Hardy Ed.	Brookhill Ave.			
"	"	Hutton James	Central St.			
"	"	Reilly James	O'Lodge Rd.			
"	26	Mc Millan Charles	Sherwood St.			
"	"	Hughes James	Crumlin Rd.			
"	"	Mc Millan Isaac				
"	27	Fay David (Fryer?)	Mc Clure St.			
"	Mar. 4	Martin James R.	Clerk N.C.R.			
"	"	Hughes Owen	Skegoniel St.			
"	6	Eastwood Thos.	Upton St.			
"	"	Lynch Catherine	Letitia St.			
"	7	Thomson James	Kane St.			
"	"	Mullan John	Wall St.			
"	"	Waider Wm	La Verney St.			
"	"	Morrison John	Gardiner St.			
"	8	Johnson W.	Cavour St.			
"	"	Hayyard P.				
"	"	Duffy Stewart	Gormoyle St.			
"	9	Morgan Patk.	Upton St.			
P.	"	Roddy John	Broadbent St.			
"	10	Bruce Lieut.	Seaforth St.			
C.	"	Kerr Wm J. (Mr Pearson				

MSCP/RO/402 1 Brigade (Belfast), 4 Northern Division – Belfast Pogrom list, 1920-1922.

Pogrom 1922

March	5	five					
C.	10	Connor	Patk.	Const. R.I.C.			
"	"	Cullen	John	Const. R.I.C.			
"	11	Treeson	Catherine Mrs	Lr George	St.		
"	"	Leith	Benedict	Regent	St.		
"	"	Murphy	Terry	Hartley	St		
"	"	Keyes	Sarah	Hillman	St.		
P.	"	Woods	Herbert	California	St.		
"	"	Vokes	Charles "A" spcl	N. Meadow	St		
C.	12	McNally	Hugh	Maple	Ter.		
"	13	Clarke	Christopher	Sergt R.I.C.			
"	"	Leonard	Andy.	Duffy	St.		
"	15	Wilson	Mary	Norfolk	St.		
"	"	Rooney	Patk.	Corporation	St		
"	16	Kane	Wm	D'murray			
P.	"	Taylor	John	Duncairn	Gdns		
"	18/19	Murphy	Margt.	Campbell	St.		
"	"	Geavey	Henry Martin				
"	"	Devanney	Alice.	Church	St.		
C.	"	Orange	Agustus	Ravenhill	Rd		
"	"	Mullan	Mary	Thomson	St.		
"	"	Rogan	Danl.	Lincoln	St.		
"	20	Magee	James	Harding	St.		
"	"	Hillis	James	Nail	St.		
P.	"	Harkness	John	Lackagh	St.		
C	22	Mullan	Thos.	St.	Strand		
"	"	Kearney	John	Youngs	Row		
P.	23	Cunningham	Thos (Spcl.)	Gosford	St.		
"	"	Chirnside	Wm (Spcl.)	Gosford	St. P.		
C.	† 24	McMahon	Owen	Father			
"	"	McMahon	Joseph	Son.			
"	"	McMahon	Francis	Son.			
"	"	McMahon	Patrick	Son.			
"	"	McMahon	Dermot	Son.			
"	"	McKinney	Edward (Barman)				

Known as "McMahon Massacre" in one room on same night.

March		Filgiamons	Patk.	Frederick	St.		
C.	24						
P.	"	Campbell	Wm	Oldpodge	Rd.		
"	25	Allen	Wm J.	Sackville	Pl.		
"	"	Bell	John	Wry Lady's	Rd.		
"	"	McGarry	John	Glenwherry	St.		
"	"	Brennan	H.	Donegall	Rd.		
"	×	Treeson	Isaac	Roumania	St.		
C.	"	McGreevey	Mrs Rose				
"	"	Savage	Maggie	Barker	St.		
"	"	Magee	James	McDonnell	St.		
"	30	Dempsey	John	M'Collyer	Ave.		
"	31	Lucceney	John	Stanhope	St.		
P.	"	Hale	Thos.	Spcl. Const.			
April	12	Turner	J.	Const. R.I.C.			
C.	"	McKenna	Bernard	Cark	St.		
"	"	McRory	John	Stanhope	St.		
"	"	Spallen	Wm	Arnon	St.		
"	"	Walsh	Joseph	Arnon	St.		
"	"	Walsh	Robert	Alton	St.		
"	"	Mallon	John	Grove Lodge	Stones		
P.	4	Donnelly	Joseph	Brown	St.		
"	"	Donnelly	Francis	Brown	St.		
C.	6	Hannigan	Joseph	Marsden	St.		
"	×	Owens	Mary ×	shore	St.		
"	×	victim of weaver St. bomb outrage					
"	14	Beattie	Danl.	Herbert	St.		
"	"	Gillen	Thomas	Engine Driver	NCR		
"	"	Carmichael	Matthew	Moyola	St.		
"	"	Sloan	John	Harrison	St.		
"	"	Cowan	Wm	Templemore	Ave.		
"	18	Johnston	Wm	Louisa	St.		
C.	"	Hearson	James	Glenpark	Ave.		
"	"	McGoldrick	Patk	Madrid	St.		
"	19	Hobbs	Francis	Kilmood	St.		
"	"	Berry	Mary	Arran	St.		

Newry Coy 2 Batt 2 Brigade 4 Northern Div
Engagements and Names (15) (H)

of June 1922 Wolfe Hannaghan R. M. shot in Newry
Edw O'Hare. Edw Fullerton. Tom Kelly (Drivers
Pat McAvoy

16/17 June 1922 Fight at Dromgooley. Armagh and Louth Border
Joseph Hughes Nick Gray Edw O'Hare
Edw McCourt P. Little Andy O'Hare John Quinn
Ned Fitzpatrick Isaac Carr. Pat McAnulty
J. Cunningham P. Little. Tom Carr

Ladies several days (Divisional)

1922
16/17 June Altnaveigh shootings.

17 June 22 Dromintee Fight.
Joseph Hughes Wm McCormack Michael Dearon
Paddy Carr. [redacted]. Frank McMahon Andy
O'Hare. Thomas Campbell Nick O'Hare Ed O'Hare
John Quinn [redacted] Pat Casey,
James McBride James Landy

MSPC/A52 (p28) 2 Brigade (Newry), 4 Northern Division – Altnaveigh shootings report left blank.

Opposite

MSCP/RO/402 1 Brigade (Belfast), 4 Northern Division – Belfast Pogrom list, 1920-1922.

MSP34REF318 Pension file of James Marron (p. 26 of DP3395). Individual statement of James Marron in which he details the physical and mental impact of his activities.

STATEMENT OF JAMES MARRON.

I claim for stomach trouble and nerves.

In May, 1920, after capturing Newtownhamilton R.I.C. Barracks, and carrying out a successful raid for arms, I was taken by the Military in Newry and thence to Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast. While awaiting our trial we half smashed the prison and for this we received some abuse by the prison authorities. Shortly after this we were sentenced and deported to Walton Prison, Liverpool. On the journey we were abused by the soldiers as they were all drunk, only for the R.I.C. some of us might have been killed. After two hours /When we arrived in Walton Prison, we refused to don the prison clothes, we were then taken by four convicts each, and our clothes torn off us and battered, given no food for that day. I was then transferred to Northamptom. After doing the first year, my stomach gave up. I could no longer take the prison food. I was given a special diet and kept on it till I was released in 1922. There was no hospital in Northampton Prison but the prison doctor treated me in my cell and gave me a special bed.

When I got home to Newry, Dr. H. Grant attended me for two months while confined to bed. Things got very hot for us in Newry, as the B Force Murder gang were out all the time after us. So, I had with others of our men to clear out, and sleep here and there. I then reported to the Company and joined up. This left me worse and my stomach got bad again. I could not take any solid food, only milk. Some days we only could get one meal. We got orders then from Frank Aiken and John McCoy, and John Quinn (R.I.P.) to take over Dundalk Military Barracks from the B Military. We did this and with keeping guard at night and the rough food I was upset again and could not take my food. While in Dundalk Barracks, we got word that two of our men were done to death outside Newry. I saw Mick Fearon who was in charge of Ravensdale Park. He asked would I go as one of a party of 30 men to carry out a reprisal (or in other words to go on the Murder Gang). I accepted as it was past the time for us to get some of our own back.

We were given each one of us, a service rifle, 250 rounds 303, a service revolver and grenades. We had to walk four miles from Ravensdale which is in Co. Louth to the nearest point of attack, which was Altneveigh overlooking Newry. It was a strong hold of the B Force Murder Gang, the crowd who done in our two men. Our orders were to burn every house and shoot dead every male we could get. We burned 12 houses to the ground and shot dead 8 of the B men. But the unfortunate part of it all was; we shot dead one woman (accidently) the head of a large family. This got on my nerves and preyed on my mind. When we got back of Ravensdale Park I was exhausted and in a state of collapse, as we covered 9 miles on foot and it took us four hours to funish our job.

After this I had to go home and for a long time I could not sleep thinking of the woman and the others we shot. I got the nerve paralysis in the left side of my face shortly after this, some time in 1923 before the Cease Fire Order, and was under the care of Dr. R. Flood, who I have a lot to thank for. I could not stay in Newry so I left it in 1926 and came to Carlingford, where I now reside. I still visit Dr. Flood as I get upset periodically with stomach and nerves. My concentration and retention is not good by any means. When I try to concentrate my face (left side) gets stiff after a while; the same when I try to remember. When I get a cold it upsets me a lot as my eye (left eye) runs water. The months of January, February, March and April are the worst on me with the stiffness of my face.

Over/

MSPC/A52-2 Newry Brigade, 4 Northern Division. Typed copy letter from Frank Aiken issued from HQ 4 Northern Division: 'To all Officers and Men – Position of the 4th Northern Division from January 1922, to July 17th, 1922 – 3pm).

H.Q. 4TH NORTHERN DIVISION,
July 17th 1922.

TO ALL OFFICERS AND MEN

Position of the 4th Northern Division from January 1922, to July 17th,1922 - 3 p.m.

Jan. 1922. As a result of a letter of Comdt. Gen. Rory O'Connor and Comdt. Gen. Liam Lynch and other officers to the Minister for Defence demanding an immediate Convention of the I.R.A., a meeting of Div. Comdts. and H.Q. Staff was held. At that meeting I proposed that, as at that time if a Convention was held a split was inevitable, the Convention should not be held until after the publication of the Constitution, and then we would be able to see if we had to split and with whom we had to split. The meeting ended in Comdt. Gen Rory O'Connor and Minister of Defence agreeing that the Convention should be held in March.

The Convention in March was proclaimed by the President of Dail Eireann, on the advice of the Minister of Defence. Comdt. Gen. O'Connor and Comdt. Gen. Lynch and the other officers called on all delegates to attend. No representatives of the 4th Northern Divn. attended, and the night before I wrote asking Comdt. Gen. O'Connor to postpone it until after the Constitution was published.

The Convention was held, and the Executive formed. Only one Brigade Staff and two Batts. of that Brigade went over to the Executive. The Div. Staff and the rest of the Division decided to remain under the Dail Ministry of Defence until the publication of the Constitution, unless they were asked to do something that they could not honourably do.

On the 6th July I wrote the Minister of Defence to ask him to call a truce, so that the Dail might get at the Constitution, and to call a Convention of the Army. He said he could not see his way to advise the Government to do so. I told him then that, if ordered, I would not attack the Executive forces; but, on the other hand, I thought that the Executive should quit, and if I had to leave his Army I would not fight him because that fight would only ruin the country without gaining any ground for the Republic. When leaving him I said I would try and get Commdt. Gen. Lynch to quit.

On leaving the Minister of Defence I went South to see Comdt. Gen. Lynch. I saw him the 8th July and put to him that he could do more for the Republic by propaganda than by fighting men of the old Army, most of whom thought they were doing the best for the Republic, and who would never countenance the King as in the Constitution, and also that, although he had the moral right to fight, it was bad tactics, since he could only fight for a few months or years, without any chance of a successful revolution. I failed in my mission and returned to my Division.

v When I reached my Divisional H.Q. I found there orders to attack the Executive forces in my area, and also an order for myself, Div. Staff and Brigadiers to report at G.H.Q. on Saturday, July 15th.

On Friday, July 14th, I met all (including Executive) Brigade and Batt. Comdts. and Div. Staff. We agreed that if the Provisional Government did not give the Anti-Treaty parties, civil and military, a constitutional way of carrying on for the Republic, such as withdrawing the oath for admission to Parliament, we would give them no support, moral or material. On that day, July 14th, I ordered all arms and war material in the Division to be concealed, and that if we finally broke with G.H.Q. all military posts and camps were to be evacuated, the Divisional organisation to be kept intact along Volunteer lines until - an ordered state of government obtaining in the south - we could attack the North, with a chance of getting an united Ireland, which was always the immediate job to us as Northerners.

We reported as ordered to the Minister of Defence and laid our views before him. He told us his position, and the Government's, and advised me to give more detailed plans as to how I thought the position could be fixed up, and also to write a memo. to the members of the Government on the subject. I returned to our barracks to do so.

I wrote the memo that night, the 15th-16th July, and at 5.30 on the morning of the 16th I awoke with two Thompsons at my nose.

An officer who had been reduced for inefficiency, some men who were under arrest for drunkenness, opened the gates, and so - Brilliant Victory of National Army! 300 Irregulars arrested! Not a shot fired.

I got parole that evening and went to the Minister of Defence and demanded my own release and that of my officers and men, and that the full truth be published, so that it could not be said that 300 of the I.R.A. meant to fight, and were such military fools or such cowards as to be arrested without firing a shot.

The Minister of Defence assured me - and I believe him - he did not know our barracks was to be attacked on that particular morning. He told me also that G.H.Q. had information that some of my officers had arranged at a meeting to attack Government troops. I told him that they had got an untrue account - from an officer who had been reduced - of that meeting, which simply decided that they would not take any part in the fighting, and would protect their area and keep law and order in it. I told him also - that however Dick Mulcahy might didlike it - that if the Minister for Defence attempted to govern without the consent of the best people, he would be driven to use rotten men and means.

He asked me to get my arrested officers to sign an assurance that, if released, they would not attack the Government or destroy life or property. I told him that, although I could assure him they would not do so, I was sure they would not sign any guarantee unless the Government withdrew the oath of allegiance to the British King from the Constitution, that there would never be peace in the country while it (the oath) was in it. Before I left he sent orders to the Officer i/c. of his troops in Dundalk Barracks that my officers were to be treated as officers confined to quarters and that I was to get parole to try and fix up the mess that had been made of the situation.

Today (Monday, 17th July) I applied to Officer i/c. here for parole to visit my men outside. He refused. I asked him by what authority. He said not by O/C. 5th Northern Division, but by the officer over him. I asked him to press that officer for my parole and to inform the Minister of Defence. I guaranteed to him in writing that if I got parole I would accept absolute responsibility for all that would occur in my Divisional area, xxx three hours afterwards

At 3 o'clock he came and told me that my request for parole had been refused, and that my officers, who had been arrested were to be sent to prison. I asked him was the Minister of Defence aware of that. He said not. I said then that I washed my hands of the whole business, and declared if anyone was killed in this area, on one side or the other, that the officer over the O/C. 5th Northern Division, was guilty of murder. Finally I besought him (the O.i/c) not to attack our men further without the sanction of the Minister of Defence.

Now, there must be no ill-will borne to the men who attacked this barrack. They did not know the circumstances and, from a military point of view, it was a nice, well-organised bit of work, carried out well. But I ask all my men, for the country's sake,

not to join the Army of the Government with that oath in the Constitution, no matter what the pay may be, or that the alternatives to joining are starving or going back to Ulster to fight at a time that the disordered state of Southern Ireland ensures failure.

The best thing to do for the country's sake is to put your trust in God and keep your powder dry, and make sure you don't lose it.

Dail o Dhia orraibh uilig.

Mise,

Sgd. Frank Aiken, Laoiseach

Ceann Roinne.

Above and opposite: MSPC/A52 2 Newry Brigade, 4 Northern Division. Typed copy letter from Frank Aiken issued from HQ 4 Northern Division: 'To all Officers and Men – Position of the 4th Northern Division from January 1922, to July 17th, 1922 – 3pm).

MSPC/A49 2 Brigade, 3 Northern Division (Antrim) (p. 3, p. 4) – Undated typed and signed letter from Brigade Committee members to the MSPB Secretary.

2nd Brigade,
3rd Northern Division,

(1)

Secretary,
Military Service Pensions Board,
Dublin.

A Chara,

Replying to yours of the 28th April, I937 (R.D. 407), we enclose the information you desire under headings A and B. We very much regret the delay in letting you have this report as we experienced considerable difficulty in getting it together. We have had talks with former officers and men of the different units and have consulted files of the local press of the period, to verify dates. Altogether we are satisfied that these statements are a true account of activities and operations carried out in the various Battalion areas over the periods concerned.

While we put forward these Battalion statements as being our major operations, we would like your Board to appreciate that even the simplest Military movement in County Antrim was attended by extreme danger and difficulty owing to the overwhelming hostility of the Imperial population, which embraced over 80% of the inhabitants of our area. Our men ran grave risks in being even indentified with an extreme National movement. More so than any area in Ulster we had to contend not only with a hostile civil population, but with armed yeomanry, who had been organised from I9I3 in Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force and were well armed and trained. Again in I9I9 the B Special Constabulary were established which gave these people official powers. These forces together with strong posts of British Military and ordinary Police made the work of organising and training our units very difficult indeed. Notwithstanding these obstacles an efficient force was established and maintained, which merited the expressed approval of General Collins at a convention in Dublin before the truce, when he asserted that the state of the movement in County Antrim compared favourably with any Brigade in Ireland.

We should like to refer to the position which arose in this area in the spring of I922. The truce with Great Britain and this country never properly applied here. The homes of our men were being constantly raided and offence given to our people by British agents. Our Division and Brigade officers felt that a useful blow could be struck at the Craigavon power before it was definitely established and arranged a wide spread attack on Unionist points, civil and military. In this decision we were encouraged and definite active assistance promised by the Ist, 4th, and 5th Northern Divisions, which was agreed to by General Collins. After details had been arranged we struck on the I9th May expecting all Divisions North and South of the Border to take part, but in this we were sadly disappointed. We had started something which we could not hope to carry out successfully alone, and had taken up a position from which we could not withdraw. These Divisions on whom we relied for support became concerned in the civil war, on either side. With the result that our only option was offering what protection we could to our people until active hostilities died down.

(WE)

We then concentrated on removing our men to places of safety. We were accommodated at the Curragh Camp until the spring of I923. We would make it clear that as a unit we took no part in the struggle in the southern counties in I922 - 23. (2)

We never knew if our position was clearly understood in Dublin, as on account of the bitter struggle which was taking place in the South at the same time our position may have been eclipsed or misunderstood. Thereforewe hope that your Board will give these matters their careful attention in determining our claims for Military Service Certificates. Any further enquiries you may care to make shall have our prompt attention.

Hugh Mc Sparran O.C. 3rd Batt (EX)
B McCuckian Brigade Q M (EX)

Denis O'Neill Ex Vice Bgde O.C.

W.J. Lynn Hon. Secy.

Storm Centre: the Brigade Activity Reports from County Cork

Dr Donal Ó Drisceoil

County Cork was the storm centre of the Irish War of Independence and the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC) Brigade Activity Reports from the largest and most active IRA units in the country have been eagerly anticipated. In terms of the sheer volume of activities recorded, the Cork battalion and company reports confirm the county's high level of activity and its centrality to the conflict. Cork's status has been based on a multiplicity of measurement criteria and categories - fatalities and violent incidents, IRA membership, Crown force strength and reprisals, number of attacks on the Crown forces, and so on – and has been illustrated most recently, cartographically and otherwise, in the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017). The activities list from one of the more active West Cork companies (companies were the smallest organisational units; a number of companies made up a battalion, and a number of battalions made up a brigade) shows a level of sustained activity throughout the revolutionary years that almost matches that for the whole of neighbouring County Waterford. The material relating to the other highly active counties in the Munster 'war zone' – Tipperary, Clare and Limerick – likewise confirms existing knowledge about these areas, while many may be surprised at the number of incidents throughout the period in Kerry. The latter was famously far more central to the Civil War than the War of Independence during which, according to Eoin O'Duffy's mischievous statement of 1933, its 'entire record . . . consisted in shooting an unfortunate soldier the day of the Truce.' T. Ryle Dwyer and Sinéad Joy have already demonstrated the falseness of O'Duffy's claim in some detail,[1] and these reports add significantly to the picture of a county that was far from quiet, if never on a par with its neighbours.

Returning to Cork, the level of detail in and the format of reports from the battalions and companies in the county's brigade areas varies; some failed to make any returns, others are perfunctory and minimalist, but many are comprehensive, with clear narratives, excellent detail and some revealing insights. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the most active brigades in the country – those in West Cork (3 Cork Brigade) and North Cork (2 and 4 Cork Brigades) – provide the most comprehensive and compelling reports. The membership, locations and respective strengths of IRA units has already been made available in the MSPC Battalion and Company Rolls (or Nominal Rolls) series (RO/1-611). This allowed us to produce a series of maps in the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, examples of which are reproduced here. They show IRA unit locations in South-West Munster (map 1, see p. 116), IRA membership by battalion area (map 2, see p. 117), and the strength of IRA Active Service Units (flying columns) by brigade area (map 3, see p. 118) all for July 1921. The most detailed company returns in the Brigade Activity Reports offer exciting opportunities to map revolutionary activity at a much more local level, thus enriching the geographical visualisation of the conflict and contributing to the broader task of producing a comprehensive historical geography of the Irish revolution. In general, the reports are most detailed for the period of most intense conflict in 1920-21. There are interesting overviews of IRA activity in the 1917-18 period (parades, arms raids, collections, anti-conscription and election activity, and so on), but the volume and quality of material relating to the Truce and Civil War periods is disappointing and patchy.

The additional information provided in these reports allows us, in many cases, to connect individuals with specific events and operations to complete a fuller picture of IRA activity. Local and family historians will find much of interest here. There is little that changes the big picture for the historian of the Cork IRA or the Irish revolution, *per se*, in terms of the nature of the conflict or its general course. What we get, however, is an enhancement of the general pattern with personal and local detail. We can now connect individuals to actions, activities and episodes in a way that was never possible in a sustained way before. The reports add a layer to the quantitative evidence of the Nominal Rolls, while also providing an entry point to the more qualitatively rich material in the Bureau of Military History (BMH) witness statements and MSPC individual applications. At times, they provide additional details not available in these other source bases. For example, the specific locations of arms dumps and dug-outs, safe houses, bomb and arms factories, and so on, in many areas are outlined in more detail than hitherto available, and will fill in many blanks. Useful also are the details of operations that never came off for a variety of reasons, and the mundane realities of such episodes are far more representative of the experience of guerrillas in these years than the rare spectacular successes. As we shall see, however, those who hoped that the reports would throw some light on some of the darker and more controversial episodes of the Cork IRA campaign will be disappointed.

Fulfilling the requirements for Reports

Seven substantial files record the activities of the seven battalions of the 3 (West Cork) Brigade, whose strength of 5,661 in July 1921 made it the country's second largest, after 1 Cork Brigade. Although its famous, and large, flying column or Active Service Unit (ASU) is not featured in a discrete report, its presence is everywhere from late 1920 into 1921, as we will discuss. There are full reports from the majority of individual companies in the Brigade area, which gives fascinating insights into local variations. (Some of these reports already appear in other collections, such as that for the Timoleague Company, which is contained in full in the BMH witness statement of John O'Driscoll, who was captain of the company).[2] The North Cork reports are more streamlined and focused, which echoes in some ways the record of the IRA in this area during the War of Independence. Initially part of 2 Cork Brigade, but forming 4 Cork Brigade from the Truce and filed under No. 4 in the series, this Brigade consisted of five battalions with a strength in July 1921 of 3,523. In a cover document, it claimed that 'for every engagement brought off, there were at least three attempts made. Considering the number of engagements which are reported, it will be realised that this Brigade was one of the most active Brigades in Ireland', which indeed it was.[3] Given the high level of self-regard that comes

1 T Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, Terror and Troubles: Kerry's Real Fighting Story 1913-23* (Cork, 2001) and Sinead Joy, *The IRA in Kerry 1916-1921* (Cork, 2005).

2 BMH, WS 1250.

3 Undated memo (1940); Séamus MacCos to Secretary, 17 March 1938 and 8 April 1940, MSPC/A4_2.

through in this report, it is not surprising that these were the men who posed for Sean Keating's iconic painting, *Men of the South*. However, the professionalism of the report, with a clear map produced to accompany each of the twenty-two major operations detailed, is also reflective of the Brigade's efficiency during the conflict. The report focuses more than most others on major engagements only, listing only the incidents where the Brigade initiated the action and inflicted material damage on the Crown forces.

The sprawling 1 Cork Brigade area extended from Youghal in the east to the Kerry border in the west, and included the city and its environs. Reports from its ten battalions are patchy and lack the overall coherence provided in the 4 Cork Brigade reports, or the detail in the 3 Brigade returns. But they are much better than what came from the northeast battalions of 2 Cork Brigade. A memo from the Office of the Referee outlines that the information sought from the Brigade Committees in the 2 Brigade area were not supplied in the required form in many cases; some data was provided by some but in 'such a haphazard fashion that it could not be regarded as fulfilling the requirements'. A letter from the Fermoy and Castletownroche Battalion areas explains (with regard to the request to supply lists of the men who took part in various engagements) that 'it is not now possible after all these years to compile with any degree of accuracy these lists but my Committee are prepared to deal with the application of each man as it arises.' It did, however, supply a list of operations, but pointed out testily in response to repeated requests for maps and further information that 'every member of the Brigade committee has to work for a living and cannot devote the time that work of this nature requires.'[4]

There were often significant delays in making returns, in Cork as elsewhere, and this doubtless influenced the fate of applications of many veterans in those areas, whose claims lacked the verification required. The failure of many in the Cobh area to secure pension awards provoked outrage and a protest meeting in the town in July 1942 at which a resolution was passed condemning the grave injustice and demanding a re-examination of the rejected claims. Kevin Murphy of the Cobh branch of the Old IRA Men's Association wrote a protest letter to the board (cc'ed to de Valera), outlining the achievements of the Cobh IRA, despite being situated on an island 'which can be considered a British Fortress and surrounded by a hostile poplace [sic]'.[5] The outlining of extenuating circumstances such as these is a common feature of reports, especially from areas that saw few major operations.

The city centre based B Company of the 2 Battalion, 1 Brigade, for example, explained in a cover note that: the geographical position of the [company's] area, (a peninsula adjacent to R.I.C. HQ at Union Quay) and the type of people who mainly inhabit it made military activities extremely difficult. The area was inhabited mainly by wealthy merchants of Cork City who were, generally speaking, hostile, and there is abundant evidence in the accompanying list of activities to show that there was constant communication with the British forces.[6]

H Company of the 1 Battalion, based in the western suburbs and outskirts of the city, explained that its lack of 'qualifying operations' arose from the absence of military and police posts. Its area was used by the battalion as a 'get-away district, and for the removal of spies, prisoners, etc.'. The company carried out its orders to raid for cattle, arms, stores and so on, and the report insisted that its 'Officers and men were quite prepared to carry out any operations of a more serious nature, if the occasion had arisen.'[7] The Kilmeen Company of the 1 Battalion, 3 Cork Brigade (located between Dunmanway and Clonakilty) specialised in bomb-making, and explained that 'owing to the work in the bomb factory men from the Coy. were prevented from taking part in major engagements.' The Kilpatrick Company (north of Bandon) of the same battalion made the point that its activities were hindered because of 'the hostile influence of large numbers of Unionists living in the area.'[8] The Ballinspittle Company of the 1 Battalion, 3 Cork Brigade in West Cork had a more direct explanation for its lack of successful operations (thrown into stark relief by its report coming after the remarkable thirty-eight-page return of the Kilbrittain Company). It 'was not through lack of attempts that they had not engagements', but because of the presence of a spy in their ranks. It was discovered late in the day that a Second Lieutenant of the company was 'giving the game away'.[9]

Identifying 'keymen' in support roles

The advocacy of the claims of those companies and individuals whose main activity was of the 'supportive' kind, rather than direct military involvement with the Crown Forces, is a constant theme in the reports. As a note from the Bantry Company (5 Cork Brigade) put it, in addition to important military operations performed under arms, the board should take into account 'the multitudes of services – both collectively and individually – which go to make a company a valuable unit and to render it a useful link in the vast chain of the Republican Army.'[10] The North Cork battalions had no shortage of 'important military operations performed under arms', but emphasised repeatedly the roles of others, such as engineers, 'who, while they may not have been actually concerned in any engagement, should have as good a claim to full-time military service as the men actually attached to the columns.' Daniel E. Murphy of E Company, 2 Battalion, 4 Brigade (North Cork) was an organiser who lived on the Cork-Kerry-Limerick border and acted as a liaison officer between the three brigades – 'the only man who claims no engagement but whose work was of exceptional value'.[11]

Flor Begley in West Cork did sterling work in organising reports from a majority of the over eighty companies in the 3 Brigade area. He suggested that each company provide a supplementary list outlining activities such as road trenching and the destruction of bridges, which became the dominant activity for most in the first half of 1921 as the IRA set out to destroy the transport network. This was incredibly laborious and dangerous work, mainly done at night. Transport had to be commandeered so that the material from the trenches could be carried some distance away to hinder easy repair by 'the enemy', which refilled trenches using commandeered labour. As well as the 'pick and shovel' work, whole companies were mobilised to

4 MSPC/A2_1.

5 Kevin Murphy to Referee, 13 July 1942, MA/MSPC/A1_4.

6 MSPC/A1_B_2.

7 MSPC/A1_H_2.

8 MSPC/A3_1.

9 MSPC/A3_1.

10 MSPC/A5.

11 MSPC/A4_2.

provide scouting, signalling, armed protection and carting. According the Quarry Cross Company, trenching and bridge destruction 'was a whole-time job engaging all the men' in the months leading up to the truce. The Clogagh Company stressed the importance of the work for the safety of the Brigade's flying column and the movements of small armed parties through the battalion area, and also its risks, which it argued were greater than those taken by column members as the latter could see the enemy approach and were well-armed, while the trenchers worked in the dark and were lucky if they had four armed guards. The risks were highlighted in February 1921 when trenchers from the Kilbrittain Company were surprised by Crown forces at Crushnalanav Cross and four were killed.[12]

Railways were another crucial battleground in the conflict. They were central to the operations of both sides, which is why the railway workers' munitions strike of 1920 was so significant. Most of the IRA members employed by the Great Southern & Western Railway Company at Glanmire railway station were members of A Company, 1 Battalion, Cork Brigade, but the company report surprisingly contains little detail on this vital work. Fortunately, we have a number of witness statements from IRA railway workers from A Company, like Patrick Crowe, as well as by those who dealt with them closely, like Seán Healy. The latter estimated that of the 600 employed at Glanmire, 100 were IRA members.[13] What the files do contain, however, is an interesting list of railway workers in Cork, Mallow and Dublin who were 'Despatch Carriers and Receivers' for 1 Southern Division HQ. These sixteen men are listed: for special consideration of the Tribunal as nearly all these men had instructions from their Company or Battalion Officers that they were "not to publicly identify themselves with the I.R.A." as they were most useful in conveying intelligence about Military operations and the movements of I.O.s [British Intelligence Officers] and the transport of military goods and they were thus prevented from taking any part in major operations of the I.R.A.'.[14]

Seven were passenger guards, three were goods guards, two porters, a messenger, cloakroom attendant, a foreman and a train examiner. The five station staff at Mallow received inward despatches and handed sorted ones for their respective destinations (e.g. GHQ or HQ of the Cork, Kerry and Waterford Brigades) to carriers who were guards on these routes. Besides despatches, these IRA men monitored the movements of British agents, kept suspects under observation, and searched baggage, appropriating 'anything of value to the Cause' or identifying material for destruction.[15]

Controversy, spies and large scale support for ASU

The 1 Battalion, A Company's area was a particularly 'hostile' one from an IRA perspective. It included Victoria Military Barracks, King Street, St. Luke's and Lower Road RIC stations, and Empress Place, HQ of the Auxiliary Division of the RIC. There were strong interconnections between local businesses and families and

12 MSPC/A3_1.

13 BMH, WS 1479 (Healy) and WS 775 (Crowe).

14 Gerald Daly to Secretary, 18 October 1939, MSPC/A1.

15 MSPC/A1; reproduced in Catriona Crowe (ed.), *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 82-3.

the military and police, and, according to Seán Healy, '90% of the residents in our area could be regarded as being definitely pro-British and hostile to the I.R.A. . . . The area was also infested with British spies and informers and only for taking drastic action against these people we could never have survived.' The shooting of suspected spies and informers is a controversial issue in relation to the Cork IRA; over a third of all civilians executed by the IRA across the country were killed in Cork, and Andy Bielenberg and James S. Donnelly Jr.'s 'Cork Spy Files' reveal that the 1 Cork Brigade Brigade area accounted for the vast majority (49/78) of those executed. The Brigade Activity files do not shy away from these executions; many of cases that feature in the 'Spy Files' database are referred to.[16] In many cases, however, the dates given are inaccurate. The primary addition to our knowledge in this regard from the reports is the frequent detailing of those who took part in the killings – not just the executioners, but those who identified them, kidnapped them, drivers, armed guards, lookouts, and those who disposed of the bodies.

The need for caution and corroboration is highlighted by a claim in the return from the Riverstown Company of the 5 Battalion, 1 Cork Brigade. The claim was that due to the activities of the company, the 'noted spy' Daniel Shields (often referred to as Shiels) was captured, court-martialled and executed following a confession that he sold out an IRA ambush at Mourneabbey. The consensus in the historiography and in several BMH witness statements from North Cork IRA activists was that Shields – an ex-British soldier and a member of the Kanturk Battalion column - had absconded to England following his discovery and was never found. I was briefly excited by this revelation that Shields had, after all, been caught and executed. It was corroborated by the witness statement of Joseph Cashman, a member of the Riverstown Company, who specified that Shields was 'arrested in the Carrignavar area where he was also tried and shot dead as a spy.'[17] On further research, however, what becomes clear is that the author of the company report and Cashman were both confusing Shields with another suspected spy called James Saunders, who had been recruited by Shields and had confessed to having informed about Mourneabbey and other operations before being executed.[18]

The report of E Company (Knockraha), 4 Battalion, 1 Cork Brigade by Martin Corry gives extensive details about the grenade factory there, but little about 'Sing Sing', the Brigade prison, or the infamous executions in the Rea, which has been the subject of much controversy and debate, beyond the bald statement that 'Some 27 enemy spies and Intelligence Officers were captured by the Coy. and duly executed.' Corry, in any case, is a highly unreliable witness, based on previous contradictory accounts of his. Likewise, those hoping for new insights into or details of the controversial sectarian killings of thirteen Protestants in the Bandon Valley in April 1922 will be disappointed.

Another controversial event – the Kilmichael ambush by the ASU of the 3 Cork Brigade – receives several mentions, but only in terms of logistics and names of participants; nothing is added to our knowledge of the events during the ambush itself and the thorny question of the 'false surrender' (though some of the newly-released individual MSPC applications do add some intriguing details in this case). What is fascinating,

16 'Cork Spy Files', http://theirishrevolution.ie/cork-spy-files [accessed, 10 April 2018].

17 MSPC/A1_5; BMH WS, 1466.

18 See 'Cork Spy Files' database, pp. 67-99 [http://theirishrevolution.ie/cork-spy-files].

however, is the detail on the level of support and back-up by nearby companies for the column before and after the ambush. For example, the Ballinacarriga Company guarded the column in the company area, some 20 km south of Kilmichael, for two days and three nights after the ambush, while five members of the company took part in the ambush itself. The demands placed on companies by the flying column is everywhere evident. The same Ballinacarriga company was mobilised in full, for example, to relieve the column when it was surrounded following a failed ambush, but the column managed to escape. This highlighted the danger posed by the concentration of forces into one large column. The North Cork IRA used the less risky strategy of smaller columns attached to each of its battalions, which came together and broke up again very quickly. As these reports show, companies right across the West Cork region were frequently burdened with the responsibility of billeting Tom Barry's large column and providing guards, sentries, scouts, guides, transport, and so on. The members of Clubhouse (near Dunmanway) Company were probably less-than-delighted to find Barry's seventy-strong column waiting to be fed, watered and protected when they returned to base at daybreak following a long-night's road trenching in March 1921. The column was preparing for the famously successful attack on Rosscarbery RIC barracks, which many had thought to be impregnable.

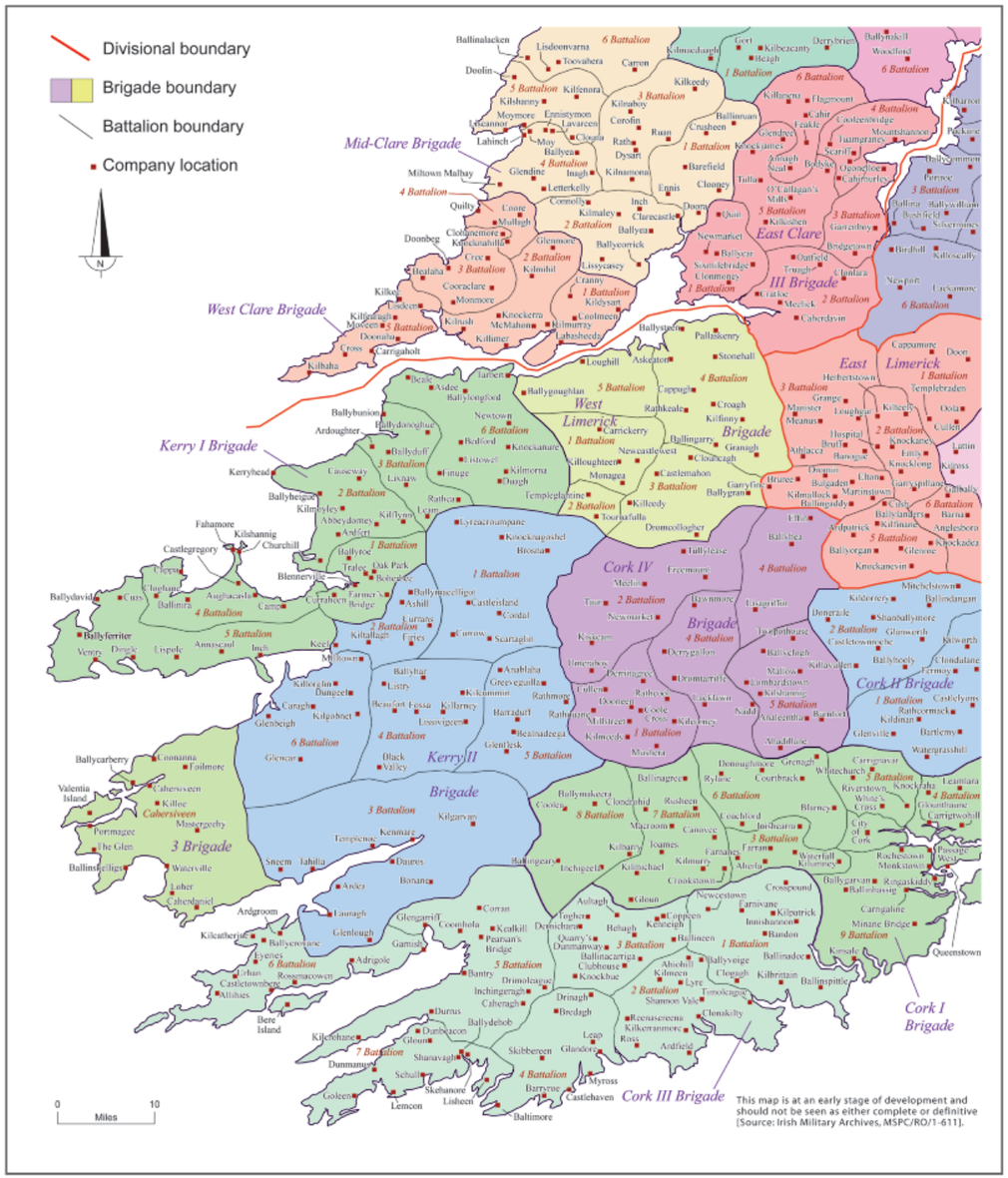
Rosscarberry Barracks was one of the dozen barracks that had remained open into 1921 in West Cork (nineteen others had been abandoned under IRA pressure). The IRA's countrywide offensive against RIC stations had begun in Cork in January 1920, and by early 1921 65 per cent of those in the county had been abandoned. Some barrack attacks were straightforward, but sometimes they entailed a huge mobilisation, as indicated in these reports by the references to the Blarney Barracks attack of early June 1920. Blarney is situated about six miles from Cork city and four miles from Ballincollig, with their large concentrations of Crown forces. While only thirty or so men were involved in the attack itself, several hundred from the 1 and 6 Battalions of 1 Cork Brigade are listed as being on duty that night ensuring that reinforcements were blocked from coming to the rescue. This involved felling trees and creating other obstructions on all approach roads, cutting wires and launching diversionary attacks.

The Brigade Activity Reports, by their nature and because of their function, offer little in the way of attention to the broader, non-military aspects of the revolutionary years. There are some interesting exceptions, however, especially in the reports from North Cork, where there are frequent references to the IRA's role in the success of the Dáil Loan and in facilitating the holding of Dáil Courts and enforcing their decisions. Of particular interest is the account from the 1 (Millstreet) Battalion of 4 Cork Brigade, which details the famous case of the Ballydaly 'bank robbery' in November 1919, when a local criminal gang stole over £18,000 from two bank officials. The IRA's desire to establish its credentials as an alternative authority to the British state led it to recover £10,000 of the money and return it to the banks, and to try five members of the gang at an IRA court, which 'deported' them in April 1920. While the case is well-known, having received extensive coverage in the Dáil's *Irish Bulletin* and in the national and international press, what is interesting here is the admission that the IRA's pursuit of the gang, and its attempts at maintaining 'law and order' more generally in the area, were met with a good deal of hostility: 'The activities of the I.R.A. in this matter were curiously enough resented by a great number of people. This was due to the fact that the criminals had a wide circle of relatives. The work of the I.R.A. was difficult, dangerous and unpopular'. However, all was well in the end, as the report concludes that the IRA's work was eventually 'justified by its success and the final winning over of the people to the right view point.'[19] The 2 (Newmarket) Battalion report describes the robberies, assaults and land disputes resulting from the withdrawal of the RIC as placing a heavy burden on the work of the Battalion, but this ultimately helped it to develop 'an esprit-de-corps and an independence in outlook and action which were needful to them in the days ahead.'[20]

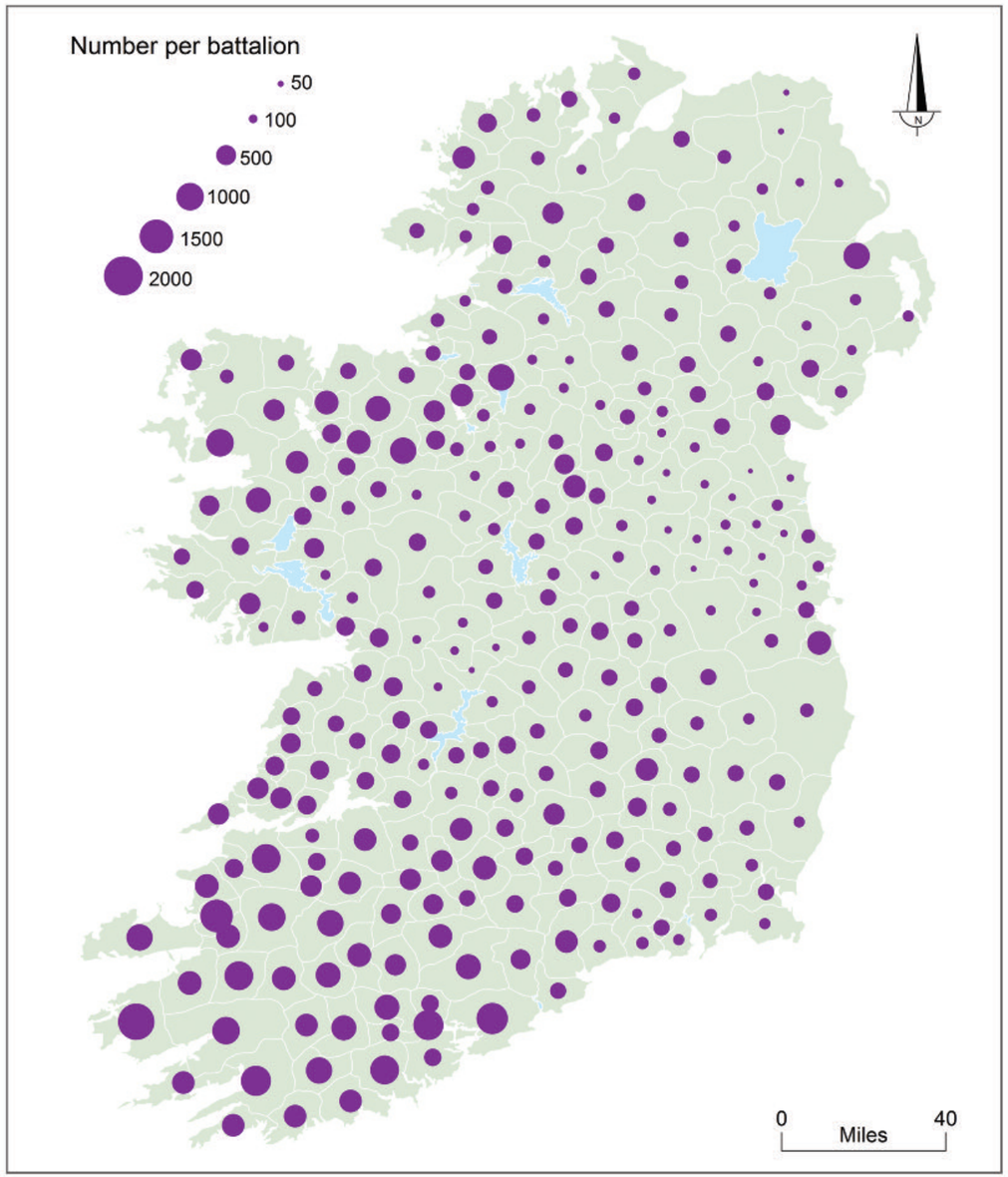
The ready availability of this material raises the bar for established historians and postgraduate researchers, as much past research endeavour in this field was concerned with the establishment of the detail of the 'what, where, who and when'. Lacunae in the source base often led to speculative gap-filling, while empirical fatigue partly contributed to underdeveloped analysis and interpretation. Much of this detail is now delivered to us on a plate, so to speak, provided by those 'who were there' via the exhaustive work of the original MSPC team, and those overseeing the current digitisation and release phase. While source criticism must obviously still be rigorously applied, and corroboration established, this is still a major advance and challenges historians of the revolution in general to up their game with regard to analysis and interpretation; to broaden and deepen comparative perspectives, and engage more directly with the historical geography of the revolutionary years. For those with a more local focus, meanwhile, more names can be attached to particular events, and located in particular places at specific times. Both the ground-level view and the broader perspective are enhanced, and will feed off each other in what is promising to be an exciting phase of research that will lay the basis for a new revolutionary history.

19 MSPC/A4_3.

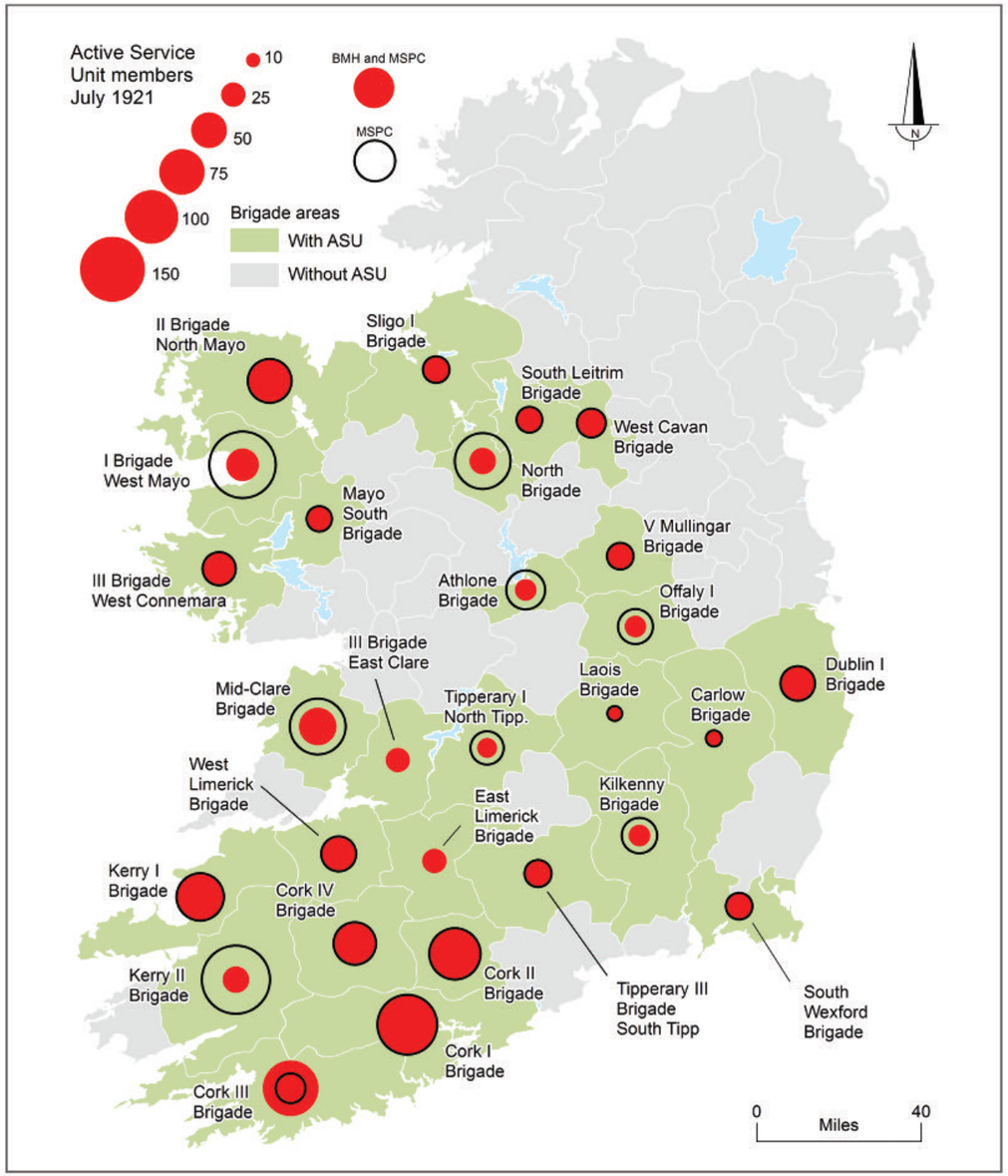
20 MSPC/A4_4.



MAP 1: South West Munster IRA unit locations, July 1921, based on data in the MSPC Battalion and Company Rolls series (RO/1-611). [Map: Mike Murphy. Courtesy Cork University Press].



MAP 2: IRA membership by battalion area, July 1921, based on data in the MSPC Battalion and Company Rolls series (RO/1-611). [Map: Mike Murphy. Courtesy Cork University Press].



MAP 3: IRA 'Active Service Unit' (flying column) strengths by brigade area, July 1921, based on data in the MSPC Battalion and Company Rolls series (RO/1-611) and BMH witness statements. Where there are discrepancies between the MSPC and BMH evidence, the figures from both are given. [Map: Mike Murphy. Courtesy Cork University Press].

1921
JAN. Cattle seized in lieu of Arms Levy in January and February

The large number of Unionists living in this Area made a hostile influence in the District and as they all refused to subscrice to the Arms Levy, the value was taken from them and during the months of Jan. and Feb. all those seizures were carried out by this Coy.

POINTS OF IMPORTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH I.R.A. WORK IN THE COMPANY
)))----------(((

The hostile influence of the large number of Unionists living in the Area

The Main Roads Cork - Bandon,- Macroom - Ballincollig through the Area and the Coy. Area bordering on the strongly garrisoned Town of Bandon, which meant that all such work as cutting of roads , seizing of farm stock, raids for arms, carrying dispatches, needed a number of armed scouts and sentries.

This meant a lot of work on the local men and all such work was carried out by men of this Coy.
Names and addresses of the men arrested and interned

WILLIAM COVNEY, BANDON
DENIS DESMOND, Castlack, Bandon
John Lynch, Kilmore, Bandon
Jerh. Doyle, Do
Jerh, Crowley, Crookstown
John Turner, England
Wm. Connell, Brinny, Upton
Daniel Lordan, Brinny
Michael Lordan, Castlack, Bandon

MSPC/A3_1-3 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, Bandon. 2 extracts. Reference to the "hostile influence of the large number of Unionists living in the Area'.

42

Conditions governing activities of Ballinspittle Coy.
Ist. Batt. Cork III.

I0/I2/4I.

It may be noticed that Ballinspittle Coy. as a Unit did not have any engagement in area, though on a number of occasions preparations were made and men proceeded to action stations or positions, only, to be frustrated by Enemy on each occasion. It is obvious that there was something radically wrong but unfortunately the cause of Coy's. misfortunes was not discovered until too late to be of any use.

The discovery made was that the 2nd. Lieut. of Coy. Madden by name, was giving the game away over a long period.

The men of Coy. who gave whole-time service numbered roughly 30 though Coy. strength was xxxxxx approx. 70 or more and the morale of the 30 men at least was unquestionable, and it is considered that such men should be given the credit due to them for services rendered under the most trying circumstances and the fact that it was not through lack of attempts that they had not engagements. You had at least one informer within the ranks and one outside. The man within the ranks being the greatest menace.

If your Board referred to the evidence given by Mr. Denis Collins, Oldcourt, Ballinspittle, when he was before Board some years ago, it will find confirmation of the existence of an informer within the ranks of Ballinspittle Coy.

MSPC/A3_1-3 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, Bandon. “Conditions governing activities of Ballinspittle Coy. – 1st Batt. Cork III” (p. 46). “The discovery made was that the 2nd. Lieut. of Coy. Madden by name, was giving the game away over a long period”.

Opposite

MSPC/A4_2-4 Cork Brigade (p. 10) – Brigade and battalion reports submitted by Mr Moylan. “Daniel M. Murphy of E. Company, 2nd Battalion, had no engagement but he was the organiser of his district and its real leader”.

There were some men in the Brigade who while they may not have participated in an engagement during the pre-truce period should be able to claim equal service with A.S.U. men because of their particular work. In the third Battalion Area John Joe Cronin, leader of the Fianna, gave as much useful service as any man in the Brigade, Owing to his youth and courage he was able to carry out work which would be impossible for grown men. He was concerned whole-time in the Civil War.

In the 3rd Battalion also the work of Martin Burke, Patrick Mahony and Vincent McCabe was invaluable. These men worked in Buttevant Barracks and Railway Station, and were always able to report movements or proposed movements of enemy troops and stores. This led to the capture or destruction of quantities of equipment and stores in this Battalion Area and in the 5th Battalion Area. The information secured by them enabled men to avoid capture, etc.

In the 2nd Battalion, Michael Bohan, Jerh. Scannell, Bernard Columbia, and Con Kennedy worked whole-time during pre-truce and truce periods in the manufacture of munitions. These men fought through the Civil War Period.

Daniel M. Murphy of E. Company, 2nd Battalion, had no engagement but he was the organiser of his district and its real leader. He lived on the Cork-Kerry-Limerick Borders and acted as liaison officer between the three Brigades. He was a whole-time worker and his name is submitted as that of the only man who claims no engagement but whose work was of exceptional value.

The name of Daniel Vaughan does not appear in any Battalion Report as while attached to the 4th Battalion all his service was with the 2nd Battalion. Vaughan was on the run from a very early date and was attached to the first A.S.U. formed in the Brigade. His service was pre-truce and he can claim participation in at least ten engagements. He was Q/M. of the 4th Battalion before his transfer to A.S.U., his place being filled by Michael Courtney.

On information received that British Courtmartial Officers used to tour this Coy. district. Volunteers from this Coy lay in waiting to ambush them in a part of the area known as the "Black Glen" after waiting in positions all day. when the enemy failed to turn up the ambush was called off.

The following day the British Military machine-gunned our selected positions of previous day which gave us a definite clue that that a spy had sold our positions

Owing to the activities of the Riverstown Coy. Shields the noted spy for British Military was captured. courtmartialed and finally executed. we may also state that before this spy was executed he confessed to having sold the planned ambush at Mourne Abbey.

where a number of Volunteers were killed and also a number later executed

MSPC/A_1_5-1 Cork Brigade, 5 Battalion – Extracts from p. 15 and p. 16. References to a spy.

Opposite

MSPC/A4_3-4 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion (p. 23) – Reference to the 'Ballydaly' bank robbery, November 1919.

The only arrest effected by the R.I.C. in connection with the robbery was the then Battalion Q.M. but after a few days detention he was released. The public believed that the Q.M.'s arrest was meant to bring discredit on the I.R.A. Organisation.

Acting on the instructions of the Brigade O.C. the Intelligence section of the Battalion set itself to procure information which, being secured, eventually led to the arrest by the Battalion Forces of six men, on April 24th 1920. Two others wanted in connection with this crime were not at home when other forces of the Brigade called to their homes on that date. The Brigade O.C. was in charge of the Party who carried out the arrests and presided at the I.R.A. Court which found five of the prisoners guilty of Armed Robbery.

Those convicted admitted their part in the Robbery and at the interrogation which preceded the trial some also admitted that they were part of an armed gang who contemplated further robberies, as well as murder. The whole gang, taking confederates into account, numbered about twenty.

The convicted prisoners were sentenced to deportation and about £10,000 of the money which was robbed, was surrendered by the prisoners and handed over to the Banks. During the five days that the prisoners were in custody three of them were spent approximately a mile from Millstreet R.I.C. Barracks.

Regarding the other men mentioned, one was captured in the September of that year by the Brigade Column with the assistance of members of H. Company, while the other was never taken. Although it was known that these men had the bulk of the balance of the missing money, it was not recovered.

The Longford Brigade Activity Report and the reliability of archival evidence

Dr Marie Coleman

The Longford Brigade Activity Report (BAR) was compiled around 1941 by former members of the IRA there who formed the Longford Brigade Committee. The chairman of the committee was General Seán MacEoin, reflecting his role as the most senior IRA leader in the county during the War of Independence. At the time of the Brigade Committee's deliberations and report compiling in the 1930s and 1940s he was also the local Fine Gael TD for Athlone-Longford.

Republicanism in north Longford

The greater strength of republicanism in north Longford during the War of Independence emerges clearly from the BAR. Of fifty-nine IRA actions listed, thirty-two took place in north Longford, twenty-one in south Longford, with six in neighbouring counties, four in Westmeath (around Streete and Rathowen) and two in Arva, County Cavan. In some instances there are references to co-operating with IRA units in neighbouring Roscommon, Westmeath and Cavan but to a large extent the Longford Brigade acted in isolation, reflecting the greater strength of the IRA in that county than in the surrounding midlands.[1]

Within the northern half of the county, activity was concentrated around Ballinalee and Granard; 18 of the incidents described took place in Ballinalee, six in Granard, with a further five in the neighbouring townlands and villages of Drumlish, Ballinamuck and Aughnacliffe.[2] The weakness of the IRA organisation in the south of the county is verified by the list of volunteers named as participating in the capture of Ballymahon RIC barracks in August 1920. This was led by the northern commanders, Seán Connolly and Seán MacEoin, and carried out by the battalions located in the north of the county.[3]

The War of Independence in Longford

The two most significant engagements with the Crown forces in the county were the defence of Ballinalee by the IRA on 3-4 November 1920[4] and the Clonfin ambush on 2 February 1921.[5] The interlude between the two events saw a series of sniping raids by the IRA at various police and Black and Tan outposts, mostly buildings occupied by the latter in Ballinalee in December 1920 and January 1921. The chronological section of the report dealing with the period from November 1920 to February 1921 illustrates well the intense level of activity concentrated around Ballinalee. One of these is described as an attack on a temporary Barracks occupied by the East Yorkshire regiment, which is notable for being one of the few engagements with the British army.[6] The vast majority of ambushes and engagements initiated by the Longford IRA involved the RIC and their supplementary forces, the Black and Tans and Auxiliary Division. Following Clonfin, and the arrest of Seán MacEoin at Mullingar railway station in March, the activity of the Longford Brigade and its ability to carry out large-scale successful assaults on the Crown forces decreased noticeably.

The activities of the Longford Brigade that are recorded here begin in January 1920 with the attack on Drumlish RIC barracks. A small number of incidents from 1919 are not listed. In spite of the relatively low level of violence during 1919 the RIC withdrew from its smaller outposts within the county, including Smear, Abbeyshrule, Ballina, Killashee and Larkfield. This was part of a national policy of consolidating the force within larger and more defensible stations.[7] These evacuated police barracks, along with Kenagh, Ballinalee and Lisryan which were vacated subsequently, were destroyed by the IRA in May 1920, sending a stark message that the Crown Forces had been driven out of large parts of rural Longford, never to return.[8]

The BAR does not provide a very detailed account of the Drumlish barracks attack as it does for subsequent similar raids, though it is described in detail elsewhere by participants.[9] The action was part of a concerted campaign spear-headed by IRA General Headquarters against the most tangible manifestation of British rule in Ireland. Neutralising the RIC would have the added benefit of removing a valuable source of local intelligence, and as an armed police force, attacking the constabulary conformed to the tenet of guerrilla warfare that the enemy was the best source of arms and ammunition, an important factor for the relatively poorly-equipped army of the Irish Republic.

Guerrilla warfare in Longford

The significance of these attacks for arming the IRA is illustrated by the report of the attack on Ballymahon RIC barracks in August 1920. The BAR summary indicates that twenty-two rifles, thirty shotguns, two grenades and two pistols were captured.[10] Different estimates were given by other participants – suggesting the haul was ten rifles, four revolvers and twelve grenades.[11] The varying estimates suggest that caution should be employed in using the information contained in these reports. Regardless of the exact figure which may be unreliable, the general impression that barrack attacks yielded a significant arsenal is likely to be correct.

1 Marie Coleman, 'Leinster', in John Crowley *et al* (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), pp. 579-82.

2 'Major Operations Longford Brigade, 1 April 1920 - 11th July 19[21]', MSPC/A70, pp. 133-4.

3 MSPC/A70, pp. 17-23.

4 MSPC/A70, p. 40; this action is mislabelled as an ambush of military and RIC from Kildare.

5 MSPC/A70, pp. 79-80.

6 MSPC/A70, p. 50.

7 Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 116-7.

8 MSPC/A70, p. 133.

9 UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/121: Séamus Conway.

10 MSPC/A70, p. 17.

11 UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/121: Séamus Conway, Frank Davis.

Drumlish was one of ten RIC barracks attacked throughout the country in January 1920 and while this 'helped to create a sense of coherent purpose and momentum' for the IRA nationally, the overall impact was mixed and the 'few successful attacks were heavily outnumbered by failures.'[12] Drumlish could be considered a success from the perspective of signalling the intentions of the local IRA but logistically and strategically did not achieve the desired impact: 'The plan was to throw in some home-made bombs [and] to rush the place. The bombs failed to explode and the affair just ended in an exchange of shots.'[13]

The reference to 'home-made' bombs, underlines the scarcity of munitions, especially in the early part of 1920, and the IRA's reliance on what would today be described as improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These were either stolen from businesses (gelignite from county councils), bought or stolen from the Crown forces (Mills bombs), or manufactured in makeshift bomb factories by local IRA units. One of the most successful IEDs deployed by the IRA in Longford was the roadside explosive manufactured in MacEoin's forge and used in the Clonfin ambush.[14] The amateur nature of such munitions often accounts for the limited success of IRA actions.

The vicissitudes of guerrilla warfare in this regard are clear from the report. While there were some notable successes, such as the defence of Ballinalee and Clonfin, many planned attacks met with only partial success or outright failure. When a plan to attack Mostrim (Edgeworthstown) RIC barracks in June 1920 was abandoned, an alternative assault on Ballinamuck resulted in a two-and-a-half hour engagement with the police who retreated but did not surrender.[15] The positioning of some barracks made it difficult to get within adequate range to carry out a successful assault. At Lanesboro in December 1920: 'we tried to force the enemy by throwing Bombs from [a]cross [the] road onto [the] roof. We found after several attempts all our bombs were falling short of [the] Barracks as the distance was too far and also from our position, a high wall prevented us getting a direct hit on the Bks. We then tried from [the] rear of [the] Bks. and also failed but kept up a constant fire for six hours and then retired.'[16]

On occasion, such as the abortive Clonthumper ambush (August 1920), 'The enemy failed to come' and there was 'No action as [a] result.' Possible indications that the police had some prior knowledge or suspicion of planned assaults can be inferred from last minute diversions of routes taken by the Crown forces, as at Ballinascraw near Ballinalee (August 1920). Some failures were attributable to human error; a plan to attack a troop train travelling from Boyle to the Curragh at Clonwhelan in February 1921 did not materialise because of a delay in delivering a despatch.[17]

12 Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2013), p. 114.

13 UCD Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17b/121: Séamus Conway.

14 For a detailed account of the IRA's use of IEDs see WH Kautt, *Ambushes and armour: The Irish rebellion, 1919-1921* (Dublin, 2010), pp. 152-84. The manufacture of the Clonfin bomb is described in Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, pp. 137-8.

15 MSPC/A70, p. 6.

16 MSPC/A70, p. 38.

17 MSPC/A70, pp. 26-7 and p. 75.

The successful assaults on RIC outposts in the first half of 1920 became noticeably less frequent as the police's growing awareness of their vulnerability led to improved defensive measures, both to barracks and to travelling patrols. By September 1920, Lanesboro barracks 'was enclosed in a heavy barbed wire entanglement, extending about twenty feet in front of the Bks and continued up the roof. On the rear and left flank the Entanglement extended for fifty yards and on the right flank was protected by the River Shannon to which there was sheer drops of fifteen feet. There were two machine guns in [the] Turret on [the] roof.'[18] As a result a four-hour barrage ended in the IRA's retreat and the failure to force an enemy surrender.

The plans for certain attacks, such as that on Ballymahon RIC barracks in August 1920, resulted from directions from IRA General Headquarters (GHQ).[19] Throughout the War of Independence the Longford IRA maintained close links with GHQ and appears to have been more amenable to central direction than some regional units. This is reinforced by other evidence from the report. The intelligence informing the IRA of the planned movement of troops from Boyle to the Curragh, and the subsequent order to try to intercept them at Clonwhelan, came from Dublin: 'Collins got information to this effect and order[ed] the Longford Column to attack'.[20]

Cumann na mBan and the War of Independence

In many cases the lists provided of Volunteers who participated in particular actions are supplemented by lists of Cumann na mBan women who accompanied the IRA units to the site of planned actions in the event of first aid being required. These lists can be cross-referenced against individual pension applications from Longford Cumann na mBan women to illustrate the type of activities they undertook.

In addition to accompanying the IRA ambush units in order to render first aid if necessary, the report highlights some other significant roles undertaken by women to support and facilitate military action by the IRA. When the Black and Tans were in occupation of Ballinalee village and the IRA sought to dislodge them from temporary accommodation, intelligence gathering was undertaken by women: 'Mrs Nellie Eivers was sent to Ballinalee to map [the] position which [the] enemy had taken up.'[21]

The lists of names provided by the Longford Brigade Committee for Volunteers and Cumann na mBan who participated in various actions, allows for an estimate of the strength of both organisations in the county during the War of Independence. Nominal rolls (RO series) available elsewhere in the MSPC suggest that the strength of the Longford Brigade at the time of the Truce was 2,625, with a further 800 in Cumann na mBan.[22] Most individual pension applications from Longford volunteers and Cumann na mBan have yet to be released, complicating further the task of estimating those organisations' strength in the county. An

18 MSPC/A70, p. 34.

19 MSPC/A70, p. 17.

20 MSPC/A70, p. 75.

21 MSPC/A70, p. 44.

22 Marie Coleman, 'Longford', in Crowley *et al* (eds), *Atlas of the Irish revolution*, p. 599; MSPC, RO575-580A; MSPC, CMB136-142.

extensive collection of documents relating to applications from Longford pensioners is held in the Seán MacEoin papers in the UCD archives, and these detail over 400 pension applications from men and over 100 from women.[23]

The reliability of evidence in the BAR

Cross-referencing BARs with individual applications highlights inconsistencies that should caution researchers on being overly-reliant on the veracity of the information contained in the former. Kate Slevin's case illustrates this situation effectively. In the BAR she is listed as accompanying the IRA to the attack on Ballinamuck barracks and the defence of Ballinalee in November 1920, and on her pension application form she refers to mobilising for duty at Ballinamuck, Arva and Ballinalee. However, in oral testimony to the assessors she denied ever having gone on any attacks and did not answer the question of what she meant by being mobilised for duty at Ballinamuck, Arva and Ballinalee, leading the assessors to infer 'You don't know apparently.'[24]

There could be any number of reasons for this lapse, considering that she was being asked to recall events from 1920, twenty years later in 1940. Nevertheless, such inconsistencies and the inability to verify during oral questioning claims made in applications should lead researchers to exercise caution in using BARs. A closer examination of the content of BARs, in conjunction with an analysis of the language used in applications written simultaneously might yield some evidence of orchestration of the information contained in applications by local Brigade Committees.

The incorrect fatality figures cited in the Longford report further underlines the need for caution in accepting uncritically the information contained in these reports without seeking alternative sources of verification. My research on Longford and the statistical evidence compiled by the 'Dead of the Irish Revolution' project, identified fifteen members of the Crown forces who were killed as a result of engagements with the IRA in the county during the War of Independence.[25] The first such fatality was RIC Constable John Mullan, killed when a police patrol was ambushed between Ballinamuck and Drumlish on 27 August 1920. The description of this event in the BAR claims incorrectly that '3 RIC were killed and two wounded out of a Patrol of five.'[26] Such an error appears unusual when all reports of the incident at the time indicated clearly that Mullan was the only fatal victim; the *Longford Leader* reported 'Policemen Shot. One Dead. Three Wounded'.[27]

The next police fatalities were the shooting dead of District Inspector Philip Kelleher in Granard on 31 October 1920 and Constable Peter Cooney near Ballinalee on the following day. These attacks resulted

23 Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution*, pp. 227-39.

24 MSP34REF56681 Kate Slevin.

25 The figure cited by DoIR is only fourteen as one Auxiliary died in Dr Steevens' Hospital in Dublin two days after the ambush as a result of the wounds he received. For the purposes of this essay I am including him as a Longford fatality. I am grateful to Professor Eunan O'Halpin for providing the DoIR statistics.

26 MSPC/A70, p. 15.

27 *Longford Leader*, 4 September 1920.

in the reprisal burning of Granard and a similar assault by Black and Tans on Ballinalee which the IRA defended successfully. A period of intense activity followed, that included the occupation of Ballinalee by Black and Tans throughout December 1920 and January 1921 and a number of smaller-scale engagements with the IRA in the district that resulted in another police fatality, Constable Frederick Taylor at Ballinalee on 13 December 1920, an incident in which the BAR (which dates it to 9 December) records three deaths.[28]

The attacks resulting in the deaths of Mullan and Taylor are among a number in which an inflated death toll is recorded in the BAR. Four, rather than six, Auxiliaries were killed in the Clonfin ambush in February 1921; John Houghton and Francis Worthington Craven died at the scene, George Bush later that day in Longford Infirmary, and Harold Clayton on 4 February in Dr Steevens' Hospital in Dublin.[29]

An ambush at Turlough in June 1921 that claimed the life of Constable Edward Kenyon is recorded as leading to three police deaths.[30] The ambush that resulted in Kenyon's death was at Rathcline, near Lanesboro, but occurred on 17 May. Another ambush, three days later on 20 May at Killeter, near Ballinalee, resulted in the deaths on Constables Leonard Booth and William Stewart, but is recorded as having taken place in July.[31]

In addition to providing exaggerated fatality figures for incidents in which police were killed, deaths are attributed where none occurred. The most glaring example of this is the so-called Battle of Ballinalee in November 1920 in which it is claimed that there were fifteen deaths among the Black and Tans.[32] There are no recorded fatalities from this engagement. 'Two of the Enemy' are reported as 'killed and two wounded' at an ambush at Tarmonbarry on 6 November, and one policeman in an ambush of the RIC at Clondra in November 1920.[33] No records exist to verify these deaths. There are two further vague references to a fatal attack on an unspecified number of Black and Tans, whose bodies are said never to have been recovered, at Rathcline in February 1921, and an ambush at Carrickboy, which supposedly resulted in the 'killing and wounding of several of the enemy.'[34]

In effect, the number of known Crown force fatalities in Longford is over-stated by at least 27, not accounting for the alleged multiple fatalities at Rathcline and Clondra. This would suggest that the fatalities suffered by the Crown forces in the county were almost three times the recorded figure. This is highly unlikely as no other evidence exists to verify such a figure, either in British official documents, contemporary newspaper reports, or indeed personal statements given by Volunteers to the Bureau of Military History.

Such glaring inaccuracies raise serious concerns about the overall reliability of the Longford Brigade Activity Report as an accurate source of evidence for the IRA campaign in Longford. Its unreliability

28 MSPC/A70, p. 46.

29 MSPC/A70, p. 78; Reports of the military courts of enquiry into these deaths are held in The British National Archives (TNA), WO 35/148/39 (Craven, Houghton and Bush) and WO 35/147A/76 (Clayton).

30 MSPC/A70, p. 95.

31 Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland, 1919-1922* (Dublin/Cork, 2000), pp. 242 and 245.

32 MSPC/A70, p. 39.

33 MSPC/A70, pp. 41-2.

34 MSPC/A70, pp. 80 and 98.

is underlined by the difficulties which the assessors themselves had in identifying evidence to corroborate some of the incidents which the Brigade Committee claimed credit for. They could find no contemporary newspaper evidence for a number of ambushes at Gowlan and Lanesboro, in either the *Freeman's Journal, Irish Independent or Roscommon Herald*.[35]

This glaring level of inaccuracy raises the question of why such unsubstantiated claims would be made by the Brigade Committee. The potential reasons can only be subject to conjecture in the absence of evidence. In the worst case scenario, the Longford Brigade Committee was falsifying death tolls and inventing incidents to enhance the chances of pensioners from the brigade area. The Referee and Advisory Committee at this time in the 1940s applied a standard of having taken part in 'at least one major operation' when deciding to award pensions.[36] Engagements that led to multiple fatalities would have a better chance of being characterised as such.

At least one Referee, Tadgh MacFirbisigh, had a very jaundiced view of the information supplied by the Longford Brigade Committee and the claims of the county's pension applicants. He expressed 'grave grounds for suspicion, but no positive proof to date, that there were a good many other cases of blatant fraud on this county.' He was especially critical of the Brigade Committee's chairman, Seán MacEoin, for his overly permissive attitude towards applications in order to enhance the chances of his former colleagues, most of whom were also his Dáil constituents: 'To say only that … Seán MacEoin, was irresponsibly credulous is to strain charity.' One Longford case was considered such a serious case of 'gross fraud on the part of a group of applicants' that criminal proceedings were taken.[37] This appears to refer to the case of Michael Ryan, a pensioner who was acquitted in 1946, on grounds of insufficient evidence, of falsely claiming a higher rank in the IRA in order to get a better pension.[38]

Other less sinister explanations are also plausible. The lapse of twenty years between the actions and their recollection, the absence of contemporary documentation which would have been scant to avoid incrimination if captured by the Crown forces, press controls, memory lapses, and the general confusion during the conflict must all be considered as factors also. Nevertheless, in the case of the ambush in which Constable Mullan was killed, contemporary evidence did exist that was available to the Longford Brigade and could have been consulted to verify the accuracy of their claims. On the day after the ambush, the *Freeman's Journal* reported that 'Constable Mullan was shot dead and Constables Reidy, Brogan, and King were seriously wounded.'[39] The pension assessors consulted newspapers in the National Library; the Longford Brigade Committee could have done likewise (after all, it was located next door to Leinster House where Seán MacEoin was a TD). In compiling its activity report the Longford Brigade Committee was careless and negligent to say the least.

35 MSPC/A70, see document p. 14.

36 UCD Archives, Seán MacEoin Papers, P151/526: 'Military Service Pensions Acts (1934-1949). Memorandum from Referee [Eugene Sheehy] to Advisory Committee [c. 1955]'.

37 Report of the Referee, 11 December 1945, NAI, TSCH/13602(A).

38 *Irish Times*, 25 and 26 April 1946.

39 *Freeman's Journal*, 28 August 1920.

Civilian and IRA casualties

The only fatalities for which the Longford Brigade claimed responsibility in this report are those of policemen. There is no reference to the execution of a small number of civilian spies. At least five such deaths have been recorded.[40] References in pension applications indicate that there might have been more, but the absence of any official inquiries into such deaths raises questions of the accuracy of such recollections. Two of these five civilians were Protestants and, with the exception of a reference to James Mackay Wilson and Rev. Henry Johnson, the local Church of Ireland rector in Ballinalee, the BAR throws no light on the IRA's attitude to Protestants or loyalists.[41]

The IRA suffered only three fatalities in Longford during the War of Independence. An ambush near Drumlish in June 1921 that claimed the life of Thomas Kelleher is described here.[42] The important role of the Cumann na mBan first aid parties was highlighted during this action. Sean MacEoin subsequently praised the role of the women who saved the life of Peadar Conlon, who was badly wounded in the same action.[43] It is notable that in the lists of names and addresses of Volunteers provided in the BAR, that for Conlon is Grangegorman psychiatric asylum.[44] From the late 1920s Conlon was an in-patient of various psychiatric hospitals. Whether his subsequent illness was linked to his experience during the revolution is unclear but he is one of a number of revolutionary veterans whose physical and mental health broke down in later years and it is highly likely that the trauma of their experience contributed to what would be recognised today as combat-related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Similarly, John Lavley is described as 'now [an] inmate [of] Mullingar mental hospital'.[45]

Maps

A significant feature of the Longford Brigade Activity Report is a series of maps created to accompany the textual description of IRA activities. The original maps are held in the Seán MacEoin Papers in the UCD Archives Department, with scanned images made available for use by the Military Service Pensions Collection.[46] The maps and the written BAR are intended to complement each other and researchers will gain maximum use by using both in conjunction with each other. There are over sixty maps, most of which

40 TNA, WO35/147A/56 (William Charters), WO35/149B/10 (William Elliott), WO35/153B/5 (Thomas Leacock), WO35/147A/20 (Thomas Beirne). The DoIR also record the death of John McNamee, see Eunan O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing during the War of Independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers', in James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical perspectives* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 339-40.

41 MSPC/A70, p. 57.

42 MSPC/A70, p. 95; see also TNA, WO35/152/62 (Thomas Kelleher).

43 UCD Archives, Seán MacEoin Papers, P151/1407, 1635: pension application of Delia Gunshinan.

44 MSPC/A70, p. 44.

45 A70, p. 17.

46 UCD Archives, Seán MacEoin Papers, P151/1489-1549.

correspond to the actions described in the report, which provides the relevant map references. The maps were traced from Ordnance Survey maps, based on a scale of six inches to one mile, and the majority measure 75 x 50 cms in size. These maps provide a useful visualisation of how IRA units were positioned in advance of planned ambushes and give some indications as to why specific sites were chosen, such as availability of cover and ease of retreat for guerrilla fighters familiar with the local terrain.

Conclusion

Brigade Activity Reports were compiled twenty years after the events which they describe to assist the Referee and Advisory Committee who assessed military service pension applications by outlining the principal activities undertaken by individual IRA brigades in the War of Independence. The reliance on potentially flawed memory at the remove of twenty years emerges clearly, especially in certain instances in the case of the Longford Brigade's report. The Longford report was clearly written in such a manner as to enhance the chances of pension applicants by indicating that many of its activities were the sort of 'major operations' that were at that time the standard upon which pension applications were assessed.

Time lapse, flawed memory and the careful construction of the report to meet the pension criteria are not sufficient explanations for the level of inaccuracies contained in it. There are glaring errors of fact, especially regarding the number of known and recorded police fatalities, which indicate the pitfalls of researchers relying too heavily on the accuracy of these reports. BARs should not be taken at face value without seeking other evidence to verify the actuality and detail of events described in them.

Nevertheless the BARs are in many other ways valuable sources of evidence about the nature of guerrilla warfare during the Irish War of Independence. They contain clues on the role of women, the estimated numbers of activists, the geographical strength of republicanism and the nature of guerrilla actions and how these changed over the course of the war. In the case of Longford, the maps provide visual evidence for the execution of guerrilla ambushes. The reports are an important addition to the growing body of archival evidence on the IRA's guerrilla campaign between 1919 and 1921, but sight should not be lost of the chief purpose for which they were constructed, that of enhancing the chances of former IRA and Cumann na mBan activists in their efforts to secure pensions from the state based on the meritorious nature of their service in the conflict.

Ballinamuck R.I.C. Barracks, County Longford (BMH/P2/001).

Some of the members of North Longford Flying Column (BMH/P14/001).

Opposite

MSPC/A70 (p133) Longford Brigade – Major Operations Longford Brigade, 1st April 1920-11th July 19[21].

MAJOR OPERATIONS LONGFORD BRIGADE 1st. APR. 1920- 11th.Jul.19

Operation.	App. Date.
Destruction of Smear Barracks.	18th.Apr'20
Destruction of Ballina Barracks.	April 1920.
Destruction of Ballinalee Barracks.	May. 1920.
Destruction of Lisryan Barracks.	May. 1920.
Destruction of Larkfield Barracks.	May. 1920.
Destruction of Kenagh Barracks.	May. 1921.
Capture of Cycles from Patrol Cloonagh.	May. 1920.
Attack and Destruction of Ballinamuck Barracks	19th.Jun.1920.
Attack on Mostrim Barracks. (Attempted).	June 1920.
Capture and detention of spies at Lanesboro.	July 1920.
Attack on Police Patrol at Ballinamuck.	Aug. 1920.
Attack and Capture of Ballymahon Barracks.	Aug. 1920.
Attempted ambush at Ballinascraw	Aug. 1920.
Capture of Longford Upper Mil Barracks Guardroom.	Aug. 1920.
Attack of Military and capture of Arms at Gowlan.	Aug. 1920.
Attack and capture of Arva Barracks.	Sept. 1920.
Attack on Patrol and shooting of R.I.C.Inspector at Granard.	1st.Novr. 1920.
Ambush of Patrol at Granard.	2nd.Novr. 1920.
Execution of R.I.C. Constable at Clonbroney.	Novr. 1920.
Ambush at Ballinalee of Special detachment of Military and R.I.C. in charge of Div.Inspector from Kildare.	Novr. 1920.
Attempted ambush at Ardgullion.	Decr. 1920.
Attack and destruction of Temporary R.IC. Barracks (Farrells) Ballinalee.	8thDecr. 1920.
Attack on temporary Barracks Ballinalee.	10th.Decr. 1920.
Ambush on R.I.C. at Ballinalee.	10yh.Decr. 1920.
Attack on R.I.C. Post,Schoolhouse Ballinalee	18th.Dec. 1920.
Destruction of Military Post Ballinallee	22nd.Decr. 1920.
Raid on Sir H. Wilsons at Ballinalee	Decr. 1920.
Raid on Rev. Mr Johnston's Ballinalee.	Decr. 1920.
Raid on Dr Ryan's Finea for Aux. officers & Petrol "	1920.
Attack on R.I.C. Barracks at Lanesboro.	Decr. 1920.
Attack on Military posts Schoolhouse and Reynold's ballinalee.	Jany. 1921.
Shooting of D.I. Mc.Grath at Kilshrewley.	Jany. 1921.
Ambush of R.I.C. Patrol at Ballinalee.	Jany. 1921.
Execution of Spies at Ballinalee.	Jany. 1921.
Attack on Military post at Longford.	Jany. 1921.
Attack on Patrol at Granard.	Jany. 1921.
Ambush at Terlicken.	Jany. 1921.
Attack on Patrol at Arva.	Jany. 1921.
Ambush at Clonfin	Feb. 1921.
Blowing up Canal Bridge at Ballymahon.	Feb. 1921.
Attack on R.I.C. Patrol at Granard.	Feb. 1921.
Ambush of Black & Tans at Rathcline.	Feb. 1921
~~Attempted~~	

See map 13 for original

LONGFORD sheet 9. (13)

AMBUSH OF SPECIAL DETACHMENT OF MILITARY AND R.I.C.
IN CHARGE OF DIV. INSPECTOR FROM KILDARE - 3rd NOV.1920.

HISTORY: Acting under the General Order of Sept. 1920, D.I.Kelleher was shot in Granard, and Constable Cooney shot near Fr. Markey's and the attempt having been made to burn Markey's in Granard (see Granard) and the British having sentenced Canon Markey to death, the column had to be divided into three parts, one part in Granard with rifles, one at Fr. Markey's and one in Ballinalee. These parts were reinforced by Volunteers from Abbeylara, Granard, Ballymore, Mullinalaghta, Columbkilne and Killoe and Edgeworthstown Companies armed with shotguns. The orders were to prevent burning of Granard, Ballinalee and Canon Markey's, and Edgeworthstown where Legan, Edgeworthstown and Ardagh Volunteers were mobilised . We had no information as to where enemy was likely to strike. They arrived in Ballinalee at 1 a.m. on night Nov. 3rd and 4th, eleven lorry loads from Granard direction and turned to their right leaving the leading lorry below the R.C. church and the last one 50 yards from the crossroads. The party in No. 1 Post were placed lying on the road and and fire was opened on the whole lot. Seamus Conway worked down along the lorries and threw three mills bombs amongst the lorries and unmounted R.I.C. and military. The party at No. 2 Post opened fire upon the enemy from the right flank, but after a short time had to withdraw. A maxim machine gun was opened up by the enemy and the party at the Protestant Church and at Harte's came under fire. They all had to withdraw leaving the party at the cross the only one in action. At 6 a.m. this party's ammunition had dwindled to five rounds each and they had to cease fire allowing the enemy to escape the road marked in red arrows to Longford. Result - 15 killed and over 30 wounded. When daylight came and a collection of the spoils left was made we got 6 revolvers, 8 rifles and over 2,000 rds. .303, melodeons, whiskey, chocolate, boot polish, etc.etc. All forces were then mobilised to defend the town. Sean Connolly, R.I.P. and several Roscommon Brigade officers with 12 rifles, 6 from Cavan, Brigade etc. turned in to assist us as we expected the enemy to return. They never came until Dec. 6th. (See Ardagullion ambush).

POSTS:

No. 1 Post:
Sean MacEoin (Rose Cottage).
Sean Sexton
Seamus Conway - Deputy O/C.
Seamus MacEoin
Thomas Early
Frank Farrell.

No. 2 Post:
Sean Duffy (Harte's)
Andy MacEoin (Garda)
Michael MacEoin, Kilshrewly
Joe Connolly
Con Hosey
M. Treacy
H. Flaherty
P. Sweeney
Red Fealy
Thos.McDowell
Thomas Smith
John Treacy
Brian O'Neill
Pat Dalton
Jn.McCarthy
Pat Mullally.

No. 3 Post:
Frank Davis O/C.
Patrick Callaghan
John McNally
Frank Farrell
John Doyle
John McNally, Aughacoradrinan

No. 4 Post:
Hugh Hourican O/C. Protestant Church
Brian Keegan, Esker
Joe Keenan, Kilshrewly
Hugh Canavan, Garvagh
James Reynolds, Soran
Thomas Reynolds, Garda

Over/

MAP OF BALLINALEE

SHOWING AMBUSH OF SPECIAL DETACHMENT OF MILITARY AND R.I.C. IN CHARGE OF DIV. INSPECTOR FROM KILDARE. 3rd NOVEMBER. 1920.

HISTORY

Acting under the General order of Sept. 1920. D.I. Kelleher was shot in Granard and Constable Cooney shot near Fr. Markey's and the attempt having been made to burn Markey's in Granard see Granard. and the Police having sentenced Canon Markey to death, the Column had to be divided into three parts, one part in Ballinalee, one at Ballymahon and one in Edgeworthstown. Abbeylara, Granard. Ballymore. Mullingar Moate. Columbkille and Killoe and Edgeworthstown Coys armed with shot guns. The orders were to prevent burning of Granard. Ballinalee and Canon and Markeys and Ardagh Volunteers were mobilized we had no information as to where enemy was likely to strike. They arrived in Ballinalee at 1 AM on night Nov. 3rd and left Eleven lorry loads from Granard direction and turned to their right leaving the leading lorry below the R.C. Church and the last one 50yds from the cross roads. The party in No.1 Post were placed lying on the road and fire was opened the whole lot. Seamus Conway worked down along the lorrys and threw three mills Bombs amongst the lorries and unmounted R.I.C. and Military: the party at No.2 Post opened fire upon the enemy from the right flank. but after a short time had to withdraw. A machine gun was opened up by the enemy and the party at the Protestant church and at Harte's came under fire. they all had to withdraw leaving the party at the cross the only one in action at 6 AM. this party had ammunition withdrawn ordered to fire rounds each and they had to cease fire allowing the enemy to escape the Road marked in Red arrows to Longford. Result, 16 Killed and over 30 wounded. when day light came and a collections of the Spoils left was made. we got 6 revolvers, 8 Rifles and over 2000 Rds. 303 melodieans Whiskey Chocolate, Rost Polish etc. etc. all forces were then mobilized to defend the town. Sean Connolly R.I.P. and several Roscommon Brigade officers with 12 Rifles. 6 from Cappan. Brigade etc. turned in to assist us as we expected the enemy to return. they never came until Dec. 6th see Ardaguillion ambush.

Certified Correct
Sean Mac Eoin Chairman
Thomas Brady Sec
Sean Mac Eoin V.C.
Sean Duffy Sec
16-2-61

No 1. Sean Mac Eoin (Rose Cottage)
Sean Sexton
Seamus Conway Deputy O/C.
Seamus Mac Eoin
Thomas Early.
Frank Farrell.

Frank Davis O/C.

No 3. Patrick Callaghan (Early)
John McNally
Frank Farrell.
John Doyle Molly
John McNally. Aughacoradinan

No 2. Sean Duffy (Harte)
Andy Mac Eoin Kilshrewly Garda.
Michael Mac Eoin Kilshrewly
Joe Connolly.
Con Hosey
John Treacy
Brian O'Neill
Pat Dalton
John Mc Carthy
Pat Mullally
Mr Treacy
H. Flaherty
P. Sweeney
Red Healy
Joe Connolly
Thomas Mc Dowell
Thomas Smith

No 4. Hugh Hourican K. Protestant Church
Brian Keegan Cater.
Joe Keenan Kilshrewly
Hugh Donavan Garagh
James Reynolds. Doran
Thos. Reynolds Garda
Joseph Duffy Curry Grane
William Isdell. Garda.
James King Lisaneen
Joe Keely. U.D.A.
John Donnell. Doran.
Pat. Mc Gratta. Ballinalee

LONGFORD SHEET 9

and Edgeworthstown where Lynam Edgeworthstown and

To ARVAGH

C.W.B. M.B. 1ST. AID POSTS.
No.1 POST. O'FORRELLS. CHAPEL.
Mrs. Annie Duffy Hughes R. Gowna.
Miss Annie Gorman Garragh. Head.
Miss Julia Duffy. Carns Ballinalee
Mrs. James Mac. Garragh.
Miss Rose Mc Carthy. U.S.A.
Mrs. Maura McLoughlin Donegal.
Mrs. M.A. Corcoran. Aughagraigh.
Mrs. Mary Lynam. Breany Ho. Ardagh.

No.2 POST. DOORIS Aughnashinna.
Mrs. Helena Donahoe Pt. Kislea.
Mrs. Ruth Mc Grath. Ballinalee
Mrs. Bridget Corcoran. U.S.A.
Mrs. Julia Bonniwell U.S.A.
Mrs. Hugh. Brady. Gelasha.
Mrs. Rose Murphy Dalton. Doran.
Mrs. R.A. Duffy Murphy. Doran.
Mrs. B. Healy. Farrell. Ballinalee
Miss B. Hourican. U.S.A.
Miss Kizzie Keenan. Aughnashinna.

No.3 POST. GILLHARDS
Mrs. Millie Cleary Pt. Glanagh.
Mrs. Mary Ann. Davis. U.S.A.
Miss Maggie Davis. U.S.A.
Mrs. Julia Doherty. Doran.
Miss Rizzie Farrell Breaghy.
To GRANARD Mrs. Ed. Reilly. Doran.
Miss Annie Hannigan
Mrs. T. Farrell, Trance.

No.4 POST.
Mrs. O'Neill Kane
Miss Martha Mc Loughlin
Mrs. Brady Healy
Mrs. Briody
Mrs. Tom Mc Manus
Miss M.R. Mulvey
Mrs. Reynolds Glavin
Mrs. Cooke.
Mrs. Kate Boyle
Mrs. Mac Keon. Pancor.

No.2 Barles.
No.3 Post M. K. Harte
No.4 Post
Post No1 Rose Cottage

FROM LONGFORD
LORRIES
ARDAGH BRIDGE
CAMLIN RIVER
COOLMILL
NEW PARK RD.
BALLINALEE BRIDGE
R.C. CHURCH
POST OFFICE Ballinalee
BALLINALEE SCHOOL
SCHOOL HOUSE
KILLOE POST OFFICE
RHINE HOUSE
KILLOE R.C. CHURCH
KILLOE SCHOOL
KILLOE CROSS ROADS
CARAN HOUSE
CARTEEN HOUSE
GORTEEN LOUGH
GARRAGH HOUSE
CURRYGRANE DEMESNE
TO EDGEWORTHSTOWN
KILLOE PARK
KILLOE DEMESNE
LANE

SCALE – SIX INCHES TO ONE STATUTE MILE
M.S. O'Kiely
Lanesboro

See map 35 for original

LONGFORD SHEET 9. (35)

AMBUSH AT CLONFIN - FEBRUARY 1921.

HISTORY: Clonfin Ambush: Column marked to Ballymore and took up position facing Granard, prepared mines and ammunition distributed. Day previous survey made by O/C of ambush area and plans made. Moved into position at 10.a.m. 1st Feb. Placed mines in road. Engagement started at 2 p.m. 2nd Feb. surrender took place at about 3 p.m. = Result - 6 killed, 14 wounded. All arms and Lewis guns captured. Enemy reinforcements numbering over 100 arrived and new engagements commenced which continued until dark at No. 6 position at New Land Commission ditch running N.S. to Clonfin Wood shown on map. Result 11 enemy wounded. We had only one wounded namely, Tom. Brady, Secretary, Bde.Committee, Granard. We withdrrw to Aughakilmore, mobilising remainder of Ballinalee and Columbkilne boys took up new positions in Aughakilmore. Blocked all roads in the area and remained in position for two days and nights until pressure eased off.

POSTS:

No. 1 Post:

Sean MacEoin, O/C.	Garvagh, Ballinalee.
Sean Duffy	Cavan
Seamus Conway	Faryhall, Rathowen
Jack Hughes	Gowna, Co. Cavan
Thomas Brady	Granard
Patk. Finnigan	Molly,Aughnacliffe (decd)
John McDowell	Kilshrewly, Ballinalee
Michael Gormley	Esker
Michael Kenny	Ballinalee
James Killane	Streete, Westmeath
Jack Moore	Granard.

No. 2 Post: (in charge of mine explosion).

James Sheeran, O/C.	Cullyfad, Killoe
Pat Callaghan	Clonbroney (decd.)
Mick Kenny	Ballinalee
Ml. Tynan	Aughagreagh
Thos. Duffy	Clonfin

No. 3 Post:

Patk. Callaghan
Hugh Hourican O/C.
Pat Monahan
James Farrelly (Nap).
Pat Cooke
Patk. Geraghty
James McKeon
Mick Mulligan.

F. McCabe
for Sean MacEoin

No. 4 Post:

M. Francis Reynolds O/C.
James J. Brady
Paddy Lynch
Micky Murray
Thomas Quinn
James Lee
Peter Connor

No. 5 Post:

Matthew Smiths
Jack Moore, Granard
Sean Sexton, Longford
Harry Greer, Roose and Defence Forces
Michael Robinson, U.S.A.
Thomas Kelleher, Decd.)
Thomas Burke, Killeen, Granard
Laurence Geraghty, Killeen
Bernard Keegan, Esker
Dan Burke, Clonfin

(1)

1st Aid Stations.

No 1 Post. Pettits. Ballinlough
Some members of Ballinalee Branch.
C.NA.Ht.
Mrs. Helena Donohoe &c. Leslea
~~No. 2 Post Rodgers Aughakilmore~~
Miss Eilish Brady.
Mrs. Kate Anne Browne Clonfin
Mrs. Path Cooke. Lubber.
Miss Bridget Soraghan.
Mrs. B. Farrell. Ballinalee
No. 2. POST Rodgers. Aughakilmore.
Miss Cissie Cooke, Aughagreagh.

CORRAGH RIVER

HISTORY:

Clonfin Ambush: Column marched to Ballymore and took up positions facing Granard, prepared mines and ammunition destributed. Day previous survey made by o/c. of ambush area. and plans made. moved into position at 10. A.M. 1st Feb. Placed mines in Road. Engagement started at 2P.M. 2nd Feb. Surrender took place at about 3 P.M. Result. 6 killed. 14 wounded. All arms and Lewis guns captured. Enemy Reinforcements numbering over 100 arrived and new engagements commenced which continued until dark. at No. 6 Position at New Land commission Ditch running N.S. to Clonfin Wood shown on map. Result 11 enemy wounded. We had only one wounded namely Tom Brady Secy. Brigade Ctte Granard. we withdrew to Aughakilmore mobilizing Remainder of Ballinalee and Columbkilne boys took up new positions in Aughakilmore. Blocked all Roads in the area and remained in position for two days and nights until pressure eased off.

Declared Correct Sean MacEoin O/C. Chairman. Thomas Brady Secy.

(details) UCDA P151/1523 Clonfin ambush.

Opposite

MSPC/A70 (p. 79) Ambush at Clonfin, February 1921.

MAP OF CLONFIN AMBUSH
FEBRUARY 1921

LONGFORD SHEET 9

LONGFORD SHEET 10

No 1 Post
Seán Mac Eoin O/C. Ganagh Ballinalee
Seán Duffy. Cavan
Seamus Conway. Fary hall Rathowen
Jack Hughes. Gouna. Co Cavan
Thomas Brady. Granard
Patrick Finnigan. Dead (molly Hughes Cloffe
Johnnie Dowell. Kilshrewley Ballinalee
Michael Gormley. Eaker
Michael Kenny. Ballinalee
James Killane Streete Colehill
Jack Moore. Granard
Ned Tynan
ammunition to Post.

No 2 Post in charge
James Sheeran O/C. Cullyfad Kellos
Pat Callaghan (Dead) Clonbroney
Mich Kenny Ballinalee
Mt. Tynan Aughnagreagh
Thomas Duffy Clonfin

To Arigna

Ashtonhead Bridge

Longford Reinforcements coming

Gen Hill

Ballinalee Bridge

R.C. Church

Soran Bridge

all journeys here & turned

Rices

Post Office Ballinalee

Ballinalee School

Corrycahill School

+ R.C. Church

Clerk House

Carteen House

Gorteen Lough

Carnagh House

Currygrane Demesne

(Sir Henry Wilsons)

Camlin River

Saw Mill

Kilmorley Manor

Lisclarence Lough

Clonbony School

R.C. Church

No 3 Post Jim Sheeran
Patrick Callaghan
Hugh Hourican O/C
Pat Monahan.
James Farrelly (Wap)
Pat Cooke
Pat Geraghty.
James McKeon
Mick Mulligan

Sand Pit

Granard Reinforcements coming

1st Aid Stations.
No 1 Post. Pollitts. Ballinlough
Some members of Ballinalee Branch.
C.A.M.H.
Mrs. Helena Donohoe. Killea
Mrs. Hodges Aughalomore
Miss Elliott Brady.
Mrs. Kate Anna Browne Clonfin
Mrs. Pat Cooke. Lisbler.
Miss Bridget Scraghan.
Mrs. B. Farrell. Ballinalee
No 2 Post Hodges Aughalomore.
Miss Cissie Cooke Aughagreagh.

No 3 Post. Duffys. Spring Park.
Mrs. James J. Killane & Curryane
Mrs. Anne Hughes. Gouna.
Mrs. Nellie Rivers. Glanmagh.
Mrs. Julia Bonniveen. U.S.A.
Julia Dawson. U.S.A.
Lizzie Farrell. Breaghy.

No 5 Post Mathew Smiths
Jack Moane. Granard.
Seán Bepton. Longford
Harry Greer. Roose. & Defence Forces.
Michael Robinson. U.S.A
Thomas Kelleher Dead?
Thomas Burke Killeen. Granard
Lawrence Geraghty. Killeen.
Bernard Reegan Esker. Longford
Dan Burke. Clonfin

HISTORY
Clonfin Ambush: Column marched to Ballymore and took up position facing Granard, prepared mines and ammunition distributed. Day previous survey made by Off. of ambush area and plans made, moved into position at 10 P.M. 1st Feb. Placed mines in road. Engagement started at 2 P.M. 2nd Feb. Surrender took place at about 3 P.M. Result: 6 killed. 11 wounded. All arms and Lewis guns captured. Enemy Reinforcements numbering over 100 arrived and new engagements commenced which continued until dark. At No 6 Position at new Land commission Ditch running N.S. to Clonfin wood shown as on map. Result 11 enemy wounded. We had only one wounded namely Tom Brady Sect. Brigade Adjt Granard. We withdrew to Aughalomore mobilizing Remainder of Ballinalee and Columbkille boys took up new positions in Aughalomore. Blocked all Roads in the area and remained in position for two days and nights until Postage ceased 4th.
I declared Correct Seán MacEoin O/C Thomas Brady Sect.

Stephenstown New Rotten Ballinalee House

Ballin Lough

Killoge Killoge Lough Lake

Coolnagun River

Final Battle Rearguard

Clonfin Wood

Right Flank

Final Battle No 6. Position against Seán MacEoin & all other forces
Michael Murray in Browns Rear Pillar Ballinlough named
John Coyle Cartronmarkey
Pat Mc Ely Aughagreagh
Michael Tynan Aughagreagh
Dan Burke Killeen
Pat Donohoe
Thomas Feeney Ballymore (Thomas)
Peter Mc Grath. Moatfarnee
Andy Mc Ban. Gouna
Michael Mc Cann Gouna Kilshrewley
Jack Mc Cann Gouna Kilshrewley
James Donohue Kenshee
Thomas Keeney Lodge Keelogues

No 4 Post. Mr Frances Reynolds O/C.
James J. Brady
Paddy Tynch
Mick Murray
Reinforcements in Browns
Thomas Quinn
James Kelly
Peter Lennon
Left Flank Battle Reinforcements

Clonfin Lough

Lisclarence Lough

River Camlin

Four Mile Demesne Convent Ruins
Old Church Ruins

Gorteen House

Lodge

Ford of Ballinalee Bridge

Enemy Reinforcements coming all day

Ballymore Lough

Ballymore N.S.

To Granard

Killabrook

No 7 Post. McNerneys
Peter Mc Guire.
Mr. Farrell.
Wm. Monahan.
Christy Browne.
Peter Gill
Simon Sorahan
Ed. Drake.
Thos. Sorahan
Thos. Tynch
Thos. Murray
Mr. Reilly
Mr. Fagan
Wm. Higgins
Pat. Reilly.

No 8 Post
A.F. Royotte

No 4 Post.

No 1 Post Pollitts Ballinlough
Flying Column Staff Duffy
D Company

No 2 Post

Lodge

Yard

Home

Orangefort House

Spring Park Post

Scale — Six inches to one statute mile.
M. S. Geary
Lieutenant

See map 17 for original (17)

COPY/

AMBUSH OF R.I.C. AT BALLINALEE,
9TH DECEMBER, 1920.

HISTORY: On the day following attack on Farrells which was occupied by Tans and R.I.C. a very large reinforcement of military and R.I.C. arrived in the village. They proceeded up the France Road and set fire to Connolly's. The Column turned out and moved in open order across country to Connolly's but when they arrived there the enemy had returned to Ballinalee. The Column was then divided into two parts, one part under Seán MacEoin to Ballinalee and the other part into two more parts, one section going to a position over McEoins at Kilshrewly and the other to a prepared position over Canon Markeys the P.P. of Clonbroney who had already been sentenced to death by the British and the O/C. felt that the enemy might attack either or all three places. The Section for Ballinalee moved down the France Road (see red arrows) and when they arrived at McGrath's corner the enemy had set fire to a number of houses in the village, including Heratys, Hannigan's two houses, Foxes and Earlies. The latter owner had a son Tom with the Column. The Section opened fire upon the enemy who were congregated in large numbers on the street, killing three and wounding six. The enemy hurriedly withdrew from the village to the priest's house, Fr. Montford's, and the school house on the Granard Road where they took up fortified positions, but that ended the burning. See attack on joint posts school and Montford's three days later.

POST NO.1. McGrath's Corner.

Seán MacEoin, O/C.	Con Hosey.
Bernard Kilbride.	Thos. Smyth.
Frank Davis.	William Lee.
John McDowell.	Hugh McLoughlin.
Hugh Hourican.	Andrew McKeon.
Seamus Mackeon.	Charles Collumb, Sonnagh.
Seamus Conway.	Thomas Smith, Drumnacross.
Hugh Canavan.	Seán Duffy, Cavan.
Pat Carolan.	Frank Farrell, Kilshrewly.
Thos. Reynolds.	Brian Fitzpatrick.
Thos Early.	Laurence Kumeen.
Joe Connolly.	Michael Fagan.

C. na mB. 1st Aid Posts.

Mrs. J.J. Killane in charge of all three Posts.

No.1 Post. Killanes, Currygrane.

Mrs. Annie Duffy Hughes, O/C., Gowna.
Miss Julia Duffy, Cavan, Ballinalee.
Mrs. James Lee, Garvagh, do.
Miss Elizabeth Keenan, Aughnashinagh.
Miss Annie Gorman (Dead), Garvagh.

No.2 Post. Corbeagh House.

Mrs. Helena Donohoe, O/C., Lislea.
Miss Julia Mulligan Dawson, U.S.A.
Mrs. Bridget Martin McDermott, Co.Kildare.
Mrs. Patk. Farrell, Ballinalee.
Mrs. Molly Tynen, Breany, Ardagh.

1st. Aid Stations. TO GRANARD

No.1 Pat Kiernan's Drumeel

Some members of Ballinalee Branch. C.N.A.mB.

Mrs. Annie Hughes. Gowna. Ct. Mrs. Helena Donohoe.
Mrs. V. Divers. Glannagh. Miss Julia Duffy. Cavan.
Mrs. Mary Lynan, Breany. Miss Bridget Hourican. U.S.A.
Mrs. B. Farrell, Ballinalee, Mrs. U.B. Canavan. Aughnagh.

No.2 Post. O'FARRELL'S Corbeagh House.

Mrs. J. J. Killane. C/C. Currygrane.
Mrs. Julia Farrell. Bonnaweel, U.S.A.
Miss Rose Mc. Carthy. U.S.A.
Mrs. Julia Doherty. Soran.
Mrs. John Lynan. Esker.
Mrs. Rose Murphy Dalton.
Miss Annie Gorman. Garvagh. Dead.
Mrs. Elizabeth Reilly. Soran.
Mrs. Mary Mc Guire. Glannagh.

Attacks Pat Farrells. Column marched to Kiernans Drumeel from Ardaguillion ambush position where we had been in position for two days and two nights (see Ardaguillion ambush). We brought mines from Ardaguillion which we had in road. Mrs. Nellie Divers was sent to Ballinalee to map position which enemy had taken up. She reported their occupation of Farrell's big shop and house and that steel shutters, sand Bags and Barb wire was put up. Plans made for attack on night Dec. 8th. We rested one night at Kiernan's Drumeel. Brigade engineer and Qr and two others pushed up mine Cutting through Barb Wire and mined Gable end of shop which had Concrete floor. but from which enemy had removed all shelves. Battle opened at 12.30 P.M. and Gable end was blown up. Hay and Petrol was carried into shop and set on fire but did not.. rest of house. Battle lasted until 6.30 A.M. with result as stated. Column fell back to Drumeel and went into action again next day see. (MAP McGRATH'S CORNER)

Seán Duffy V.C. O/C Seán Lee Chairman Thomas Brady T.C.

(details) UCDA P151-1505 Map of Ballinalee/ Attack on temporary RIC Barracks (Farrens).

Opposite

MSPC/A70 (p. 46) Ambush of RIC at Ballinalee, 9 December 1920.

MAP of BALLINALEE SHOWING

ATTACK ON TEMPORARY R.I.C. BARRACKS (FARRENS)
DESTROYED 8th DEC 1920 8-9 Dec
ENGAGEMENT. FROM 11.30 P.M. TO 6-30 A.M.
RESULT. 4 ENEMY KILLED. 10 WOUNDED. BARRACKS - NOT CAPTURED

No 2. Post. Seamus Conway O/C.
Thomas Redington Brigade O/C. 2nd in/C. Dead.
Eugene Lynch.
Sean Lynch. Aughnacliffe
Ml. Lynan. Aughagreagh
Tim Donlon. Derryhawn
Joseph Duffy. Cunnygrane
Ignatius Reavey. Castlenugent
John Kenny. Drumreal
Tom Quinn. Doran
John Heslin. Glontumpher.
James Mulligan Aughakine

No 7 Post. Comdy. Carrigys Cross Roads. Names not available above 5 men posted

No 6 Post. M. F. Reynolds O/C. Eaker.
James Mc Goldrick Rapidestaff Campaign.
Edward Keogh (Dead).
John moore, Castlebawn
Ml. Donlan, Ohiea
James Mc High. Kilmoyle
John Kelly Eaker.
Ml. Guilty, Loonedians.

No 6 Post. Contd.
Hugh Mc Loughlin. Doran.
Jas. J. Trapp. Garda.
John Lally. Doran.
John Connell, Doran.
Mc. Connell, Doran.
Thos. Hanlon, Demacrods.
Ed. Hughes. Eaker.
Pat Donlan, Kellether.
James Mc Guinness Rhyne
Joe Lee Doran
Michael Gormley Eaker
Thomas Hanson Demacrods.
Hugh Boclumt Littergunnell.
Thomas Quinn Carrickadenish
John Clarke. U.S.A.
Joe Casey.
Peter Quinn. Dead.
James Quinn. Killoe
Thomas Casserly Killoe (Dead.
James Sheeran, Cullyfad Killoe
Patk. Reynolds. Corlea.
John Deming Kinnavagh
John Mc Vally Crieve.
William Mc Glynn U.S.A.
John Doherty. Rhyne

Brian Doherty. Guards
Pat Corrigan. Eaker
Patk. Cooney. Doorus.
michael Mahon. Aughaboy
Jim Thompson Eaker
Patk. Quinn
John Lally (Asst) Corlinan
John Reynolds Dr. Corlea.

No 1. Post. End of Barracks.
Sean Mac Eoin O/C. Garvagh Ballinalee
Sean Duffy. Cavan Ballinalee
Bernard Kilbride Clonmel
Edward Lynan Braney Ho. Ardagh.
James Macken Guns. Aughagreagh
Michall Mulligan Wellsbrook.
Andrew Mc Eoin. Garda.
John Tracy. Aughagreagh.

No 4 Post. A. Farrelly O/C.
Larry Kiernan
Seamus Mac Eoin
Mc. Donohoe
Frank Farrell
Thos. Smyth.
Wm. Lee
Peter Mc Guire. Doran
Patk. Doherty. Eaker
Patk. Quinn. Aghnacroll
James Thompson. Eaker
William Thrapp.
James Lee. Doran.
James Dale. Mooly.
Jack Hughes. Granard
Peter Kelly. Aughakeenan
Patk. Mc Cabe. Aughnacliffe

No 5 Post.
P.J. Finnigan O/C. Ballinalee
Michael Kenny
Sean Sexton
Thomas Brady.
James King.
John Mc Guinness.
Pat Mc Grath.

No 8 Post.
Joe Connolly.
Pat Mullarky.
Joseph Dalton

No 3 Post. Frank Davis O/C. Main St. Longford.
[redacted]
Brian Fitzpatrick Mallinalaphta.
Frank Martin. Longford.
Peader Conlon. Grange Gowran mental Hospital
M. Kiernan
John (Bury Mc Dowell. Ballinlough.
Lubber. Granard
Pat Burke.
Thomas Early. Ballinalee.
Peter Monahan Granard.
John Colum. Gowna.
Peter Connor. Bunlahy.
Ed. O Reilly. Wooly.

1st Aid Stations.
No 1 Post Kiernan's Drumreal
Some members of Ballinalee Branch C.W.A.M.
Mrs. Annie Hughes. Gabra. Qu. Mrs. Helena Donohoe.
Mrs. M. Divers. Glamagh. Miss Julia Reilly. Caravan
Mrs. P. Farrell. Ballinalee. Mrs. Reilly. Caravan. U.S.A.
No 2 Post D'Arrell's Corbeagh House.
Mrs. J. J. Killane. Qu. Cunnygrane.
Miss Rose Mc Carthy. U.S.A.
Mrs. Julia Doherty. Doran.
Mrs. John Lynan. Eaker.
Mrs. Rose Murphy Dalton.
Miss Annie Gorman. Garragh. Dead.
Mrs. Elizabeth Reilly. Doran.
Mrs. Mary Mc Guire. Glamagh.

Runners & Dispatch Riders.
Joseph Reilly, Aughatawn.
Peter Mc Keon Kilcloony.

SCALE – SIX INCHES TO ONE STATUTE MILE

M. S. O'Reilly
Lanesboro

LONGFORD BRIGADE.

1.	Gowlan Ambush - Aug.1920. Disarming of Cycling Patrol of R.I.C. -	"Roscommon Herald" "Freeman's Journal" "Irish Independent"	- - -	No Trace. No Trace. No Trace.
2.	Attack on Lanesboro' Bks. Sept. 1920. 50 R.I.C. in Bks. 48 I.R.A. Four hours duration.-	"Roscommon Herald" "Freeman's Journal" "Irish Independent"	- - -	No Trace. No Trace. No Trace.
3.	Attack on R.I.C.Lanesboro' Bks. Oct. 1920. (Decr. 1920 ?)	"Freeman's Journal" "Irish Independent" "Roscommon Herald" Do. Do.	- - - 	No trace Oct.or Dec. No trace Oct.or Dec. No trace in Oct. No copy in Library for Decr. '20.
4.	Attack on Lanesboro' Bks. December 1920. Attack lasted two hours.	"Freeman's Journal" "Irish Independent" "Roscommon Herald"	- - -	No trace. No trace. No copy in Library for Decr. 1920.
5.	Attack on Lanesboro' R.I.C. Bks. - Jan. '21. Attack lasted two hours. 56 I.R.A. took part plus Roscommon Brigade.	"Freeman's Journal" "Irish Independent" "Roscommon Herald"	- - -	No trace. No trace. No trace.
6.	Ambush of Tans at Fallons, Lanesboro'- April 1921. Const. Smyth shot in Fallon's (Tailor's establishment) Lanesboro'. John O'Sullivan arrested a few minutes after shooting. Courtmartialed and acquitted. 13 I.R.A. took part.	"Roscommon Herald" "Freeman's Journal" "Irish Independent"	- - -	See note attached. No trace. See note attached. (No reference to O'Sullivan or I.R.A attack)

I have today (1.4.'42) and yesterday (31.3.'42) examined the files of the newspapers referred to in the National Library and can find no trace of any references to the alleged incidents with the exception of item No. 6 regarding which I attach statements taken from newspapers described.

1st April, 1942.

Teresa Magee 1/4/42

See map 24 for original (24)

RAID ON RESIDENCES OF JAMES MACKEY WILSON & REV. MR. JOHNSTONS - DECEMBER 1920

HISTORY: The British had burned Heraty's, Harnigans, Earlies, Foxes, Ballinalee, Connollys, Frances, McKeon's House and forge, Kilshrewly and had just set fire Duffy's Cavan, Ballinalee. The Column dispersed for Christmas. The O/C. Sean MacEoin moved forward to save Duffys but was too late. He mobilized all the available Volunteers and some members of the Roscommon Brigade who were in the area and proceeded to Wilsons. He took out James Mackay Wilson and pointed out the fire at Duffys. Informed Wilson that his brother General Wilson was the chief of their forces and warned him that the next house burned as Duffy's had been burned that this his place would be burned and he himself shot, and that he could inform his Field Marshal brother to this effect, and that the O/C assured him in the name of the Republic that if no further burnings took place that his person and property would be safe. There was no further burnings.

2. Canon Markey had been sentenced to death by the British. The Rev. Mr. Johnston was Archdeacon of Ardagh, Chaplain to the British Forces, Chaplain to the Orange Lodge, Member of the Masonic Order and an Hon. Col. of the Ulster Volunteers. He was taken out on the same night and informed that he held those posts and titles and that whatever indignity, injury or hardships might be imposed on Canon Markey by the British would be imposed on him by us and that Canon Markey would be at home from 8 a.m. the following morning. The Column was moved up to positions around Canon Markey's and he was taken hom at 11 a.m. Two lorries of Military and R.I.C. arrived at Canon Markey's a D.I. and an officer met him and asked him "Did he need protection. That ended this".

Sean Mac Eoin O/C.
Sean Connolly, Director Operation Roscommon Brigade
William Doherty, Strokestown
Pat Mullally, Kilshrewley
Tommy Early, Ballinalee
Pat Quinn, Dunbegan, Longford
Laurence Gray, Aughamore, Aughnacliff
Hugh Canavan, Garvagh
John Kiernan, Longford
Ml. Connell, Soran
John Denning, Lisnanagh
Andrew McEoin, Garda
Michael Mc Eoin, Kilshrewley
Con. Donohoe, Lislea, Ballinalee
Andrew McKeon, Molly
John O'Neill, Carrickatare

1/

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Anne Dolan is Associate Professor of modern Irish history in the Department of History at Trinity College Dublin. She is author of *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1922-2000* (Cambridge, 2003), and, with Cormac O'Malley, is co-editor of *'No Surrender Here!: The Civil War Papers of Ernie O'Malley* (Dublin, 2008). She is currently working on a history of violence in post-war Ireland.

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BRIGADE ACTIVITY SERIES LISTING

Only available for viewing online: www.militaryarchives.ie

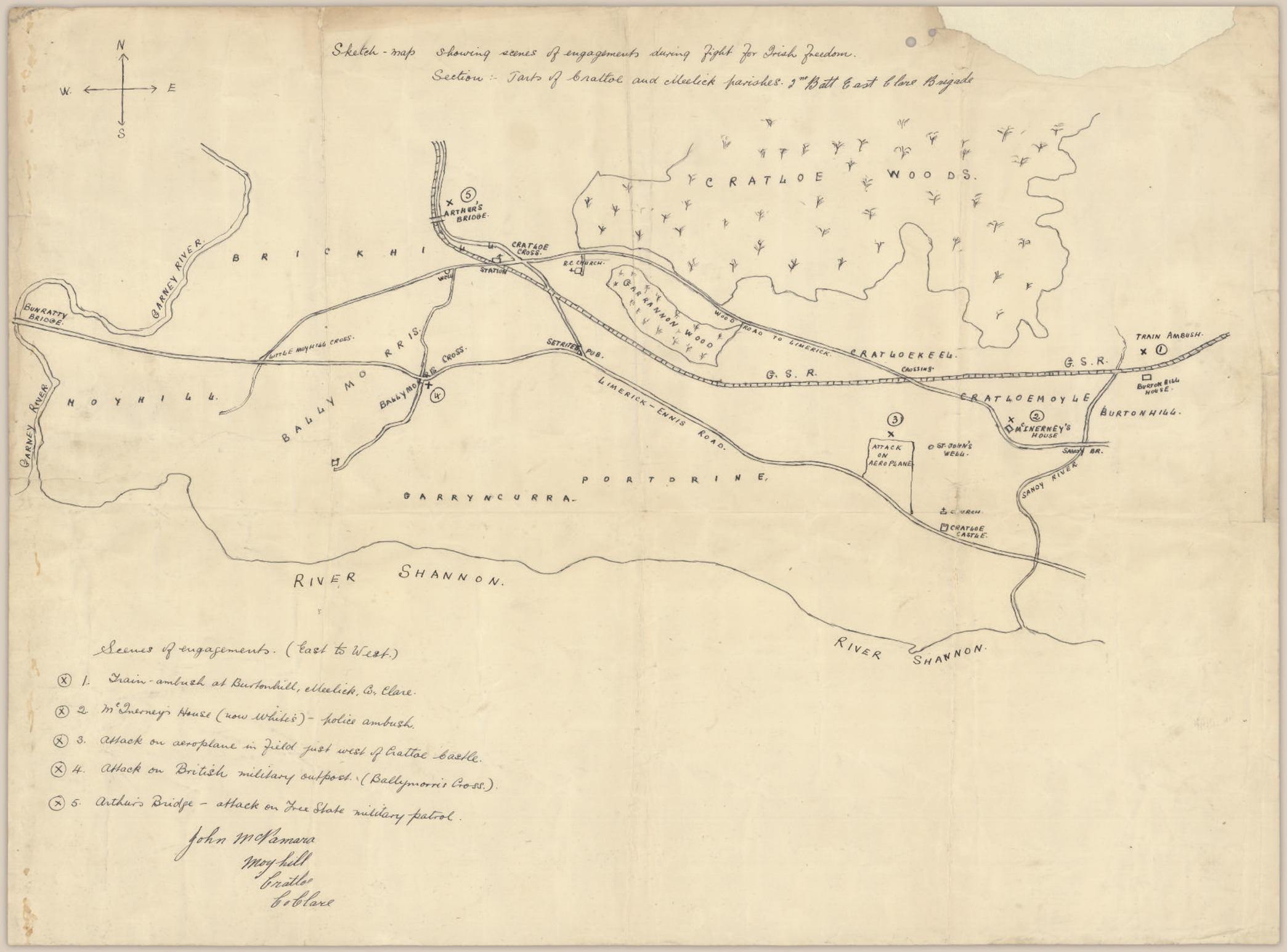
A1	1 Cork Brigade (1 Southern Division)
A1_A	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'A' Coy
A1_B_1	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'Boy' coy
A1_B_2	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'B' Coy
A1_C_1	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'C' Coy
A1_C_2	1 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion, 'C' Coy
A1_D_1	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'D' Coy
A1_D_2	1 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion, 'D' Coy
A1_E_1	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'E' Coy
A1_E_2	1 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion, 'E' Coy
A1_F_1	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'F' Coy
A1_F_2	1 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion, 'F' Coy
A1_G_1	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'G' Coy
A1_G_2	1 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion, 'G' Coy
A1_H_1	1 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, 'H' Coy
A1_H_2	1 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion, 'H' Coy
A1_3	1 Cork Brigade, 3 Battalion, 'A, B, C, D, E, F' Coys
A1_4	1 Cork Brigade, 4 Battalion
A1_5	1 Cork Brigade, 5 Battalion
A1_6	1 Cork Brigade, 6 Battalion
A1_7	1 Cork Brigade, 7 Battalion
A1_8	1 Cork Brigade, 8 Battalion
A1_10	1 Cork Brigade, 10 Battalion
A2_1	2 Cork Brigade
A3_1	3 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion, Bandon
A3_2	3 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion
A3_3	3 Cork Brigade, 3 and 4 Battalion
A3_4	3 Cork Brigade, 4 Battalion
A3_5	3 Cork Brigade, 5 Battalion
A3_6	3 Cork Brigade
A3_7	3 Cork Brigade/Old Records
A4	4 Cork Brigade
A4_1	4 Cork Brigade/Maps
A4_2	4 Cork Brigade
A4_3	4 Cork Brigade, 1 Battalion
A4_4	4 Cork Brigade, 2 Battalion
A4_5	4 Cork Brigade, 3 Battalion
A4_6	4 Cork Brigade, 4 Battalion

A4_7	4 Cork Brigade, 5 Battalion
A5	5 Cork Brigade
A6_A_1	1 Kerry Brigade – Part 1 (1 Southern Division)
A6_A_2	1 Kerry Brigade – Part 2
A6_A_3	1 Kerry Brigade – Part 3
A6_A_4	1 Kerry Brigade – Part 4
A6_B_1	1 Kerry Brigade - ‘Old records’ Part 1
A6_B_2	1 Kerry Brigade - ‘Old records’ Part 2
A7	2 Kerry Brigade
A8	3 Kerry Brigade
A9	Waterford Brigade, 1 Southern Division
A10	West Limerick Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A11	East Limerick Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A11_A	East Limerick Brigade/Summary, 2 Southern Division
A12	Mid-Limerick Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A13	2 Tipperary Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A13_A	Mid-Tipperary Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A14	3 (South Tipperary) Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A15_1	Kilkenny Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A15_2	7 Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, 2 Southern Division
A16	Laois Brigade, 3 Southern Brigade
A17	1 Offaly Brigade, 3 Southern Brigade
A18_1	2 Offaly 2 Brigade, 3 Southern Brigade
A18_2	2 Offaly 2 Brigade, 3 Southern Brigade
A19	Tipperary (North) Brigade, 3 Southern Brigade
A20	1 South East Galway Brigade, 1 Western Division
A21_1	2 South West Galway Brigade, 1 Western Division
A21_2	2 South-West Galway Brigade, 1 Western Division
A21_3	Galway 1 Brigade, 1 Western Division
A21_4_A	Easter Week 1916 – County Galway
A21_4_B	Easter Week 1916- County Galway – Awards under MSP, 1934
A22	East Clare Brigade, 1 Western Division
A23	Mid-Clare Brigade, 1 Western Division
A24	West Clare Brigade, 1 Western Division
A25_1	Castlerea Brigade, 2 Western Division
A25_2	Castlerea Brigade – Glenamaddy, Castlerea and Oran Battalions
A26	South Mayo Brigade (1 Brigade, 2 Western Division)
A27	South Roscommon, 2 Western Division
A28	4 North Galway (Tuam) Brigade, 1 Western Division
A29	1 Sligo (North Sligo), Brigade, 3 Western Division
A30	2 Arigna Brigade, 3 Western Division
A31_1	North Roscommon Brigade – April 1920-July 1921
A31_2	North Roscommon Brigade – ‘Old Records’
A31_3	North Roscommon Brigade - ‘New Records’
A31_4	South Leitrim/North Roscommon Brigade
A32	4 South Sligo Brigade, 3 Western Division
A33	5 East Mayo Brigade, 3 Western Division
A34_1	West Mayo Brigade, 4 Western Division
A34_2	West Mayo Brigade – General
A35	North Mayo Brigade, 4 Western Division
A36	West Connemara Brigade, 4 Western Division
A37	East Connemara Brigade, 4 Western Division
A38_1	5 Brigade (West Mayo Brigade), 4 Western Division
A38_2	North West Mayo Brigade, 4 Western Division
A39	Derry City Battalions
A40_1	1 Donegal Brigade, 1 Northern Division
A40_2	1 Donegal Brigade, 1 Northern Division - ‘Old Records’
A41	2 Donegal Brigade, 1 Northern Division
A42_1	3 Donegal Brigade, 1 Northern Division
A42_2	3 Donegal Brigade, 1 Northern Division
A43_1	4 South Donegal Brigade, 1 Northern Division
A43_2	4 South Donegal Brigade, 1 Northern Division
A44_1	1 Tyrone Brigade, 2 Northern Division
A44_2	1 Tyrone Brigade, 2 Northern Division - ‘Old Records’
A44_3	1 Tyrone Brigade, 2 Northern Division – General
A45_1	2 Tyrone Brigade, 2 Northern Division
A45_2	2 Tyrone Brigade, 2 Northern Division
A46_1	3 Tyrone Brigade, 2 Northern Division
A46_2	3 Tyrone Brigade, 2 Northern Division
A 47	4 Maghera Brigade, 2 Northern Division
A48	1 Belfast Brigade, 3 Northern Division – Belfast Activities
A49	2 Antrim Brigade, 3 Northern Division
A50	3 Down Brigade, 3 Northern Division
A51_1	1 North Louth Brigade, 4 Northern Division
A51_2	4 Northern Division – General
A51_3	1 Louth Brigade, 4 Northern Division – Easter Week 1916
A52	2 Newry Brigade, 4 Northern Division
A53	3 Armagh/Lurgan Brigade, 4 Northern Division
A54_1	1 Monaghan Brigade, 5 Northern Division
A54_2	5 Northern Division – IRA Intelligence
A55	2 Monaghan Brigade, 5 Northern Division
A56_1	3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division

A56_2	3 Cavan Brigade, 5 Northern Division - ‘Old Records’
A57_1	1 Meath Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A57_2	1 Meath Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A58	2 Meath Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A59	3 Meath Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A60	4 Meath Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A61	Mullingar Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A62_1	7 Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A62_2	7 North Kildare Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A63	9 South Louth Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A64	Fingal Brigade, 1 Eastern Division
A65_1	South Wexford Brigade, 3 Eastern Division
A65_2	South Wexford Brigade, 3 Eastern Division
A66_1	North Wexford Brigade, 3 Eastern Division
A66_2	North Wexford Brigade – Easter Week 1916
A67	Carlow Brigade, 3 Eastern Division
A68_1	Athlone Brigade, 1 Midland Division
A68_2	Athlone Brigade - ‘Old Records’
A69	West Cavan Brigade, 1 Midland Division
A70	Longford Brigade, 1 Midland Division
A71	Fermanagh Brigade, 1 Midland Division
A72	2 South Dublin Brigade, 2 Eastern Division
A73	Dublin Brigade – 1 Battalion, 2 Eastern Division
A74	Dublin Brigade – 2 Battalion
A75	Dublin Brigade – 3 Battalion
A76	Dublin Brigade – 4 Battalion
A77_1	Dublin Brigade – 5 Battalion
A77_2	Dublin Brigade – 5 Battalion
A85	Dublin Brigade – General
A91	Irish Citizen Army
A92	Cork Fianna Eireann

Sketches

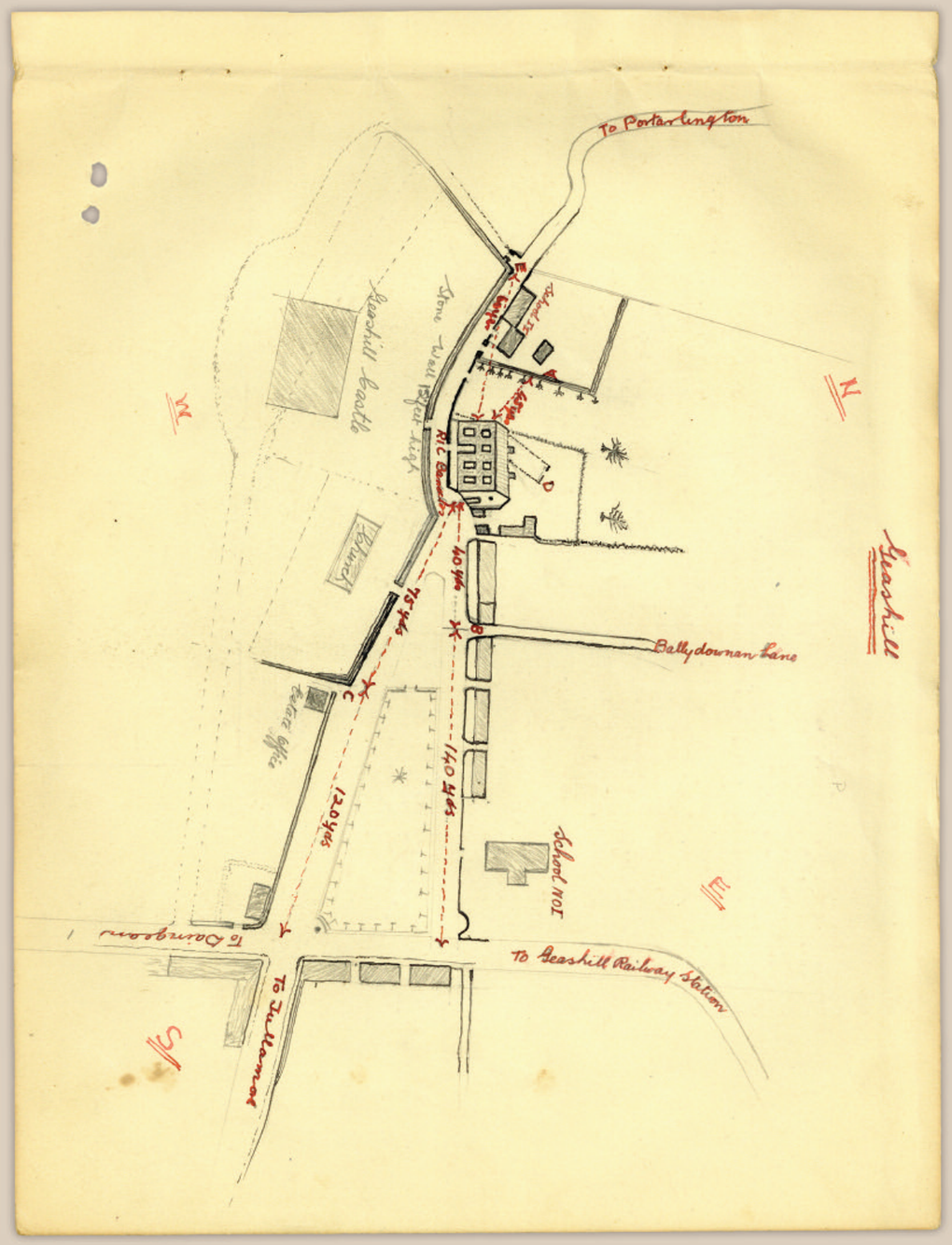
The Brigade Activity Series contains more than 400 sketches and maps of various sizes. They provide a better understanding of selected operations and military organisation (attack on RIC barracks, laying of mines or ambushes for instance) but they also offer a unique visual immediacy which enhances our vision of the period through localised events. The maps and sketches vary from basic representations to more elaborate illustrations. A small selection is included in the following section.



A22 - East Clare Brigade, 1 Western Division

"Sketch map showing scenes of engagements during fight for Irish Freedom – Section: Parts of Cratloe and Meelick parishes, 2nd Batt East Clare Brigade". Drawn and submitted by John McNamara, Moyhill, Cratloe, Co Clare (member of East Clare Brigade Committee).

The 2 Battalion strength on 11 July 1921 was 80 all ranks. The companies of the 2nd Battalion were located as follows: Cratloe, Meelick, Clonlara, Truagh, Oatfield, Caherdavin and Sixmilebridge. (See also Nominal Rolls for more information; file: RO/209).



A17 – 1 Offaly Brigade

Attack on Geashill RIC Barracks, 1 June 1920.

Attack on Geashill R.I.C. Barracks Ist.June '20

The Barrack in Geashill was to be attacked Ist. June '20, at the same hour as the Clara Barrack, but in the case of Geashill it was only to be a covering for the Clara attack, further there was to be no attempt to take the place. Patrick Quinn was in charge. Arrangements proceeded and at about II.45 p.m. the men having moved to the positions as indicated, opened and kept up fire on building for about two hours which was returned by Barrack occupants. Men. names as under scattered around the different positions as indicated.

A. Coy. Daingean--Denis Finlay, Jas. O'Brien, Jas. Dunne, John Shaughnessy, John Lynch, John Whyte, Patk. Cuskelly, John Brien, John Grace.

B. Coy. Walsh. Island--Patrick Quinn, Chas. Kelly, Chas. Mallin, Chas. Dunne, Michael Quinn, Ml. Fennelly, Edw. Quinn, John Hickey.

C. Coy. Ballinagar--Chas. Kelly, Patk. McElduff, Jas. Scully, Thos. Hackett, Patk. McGovern, Daniel Dunne, John Tracey, Jas. Kelly, Denis Kelly, Murt. Kelly, John Aspell, Patk. Whelehan, Jas. O'Brien, Patk O'Brien, Thos. Tracey, Thos. Cronly.

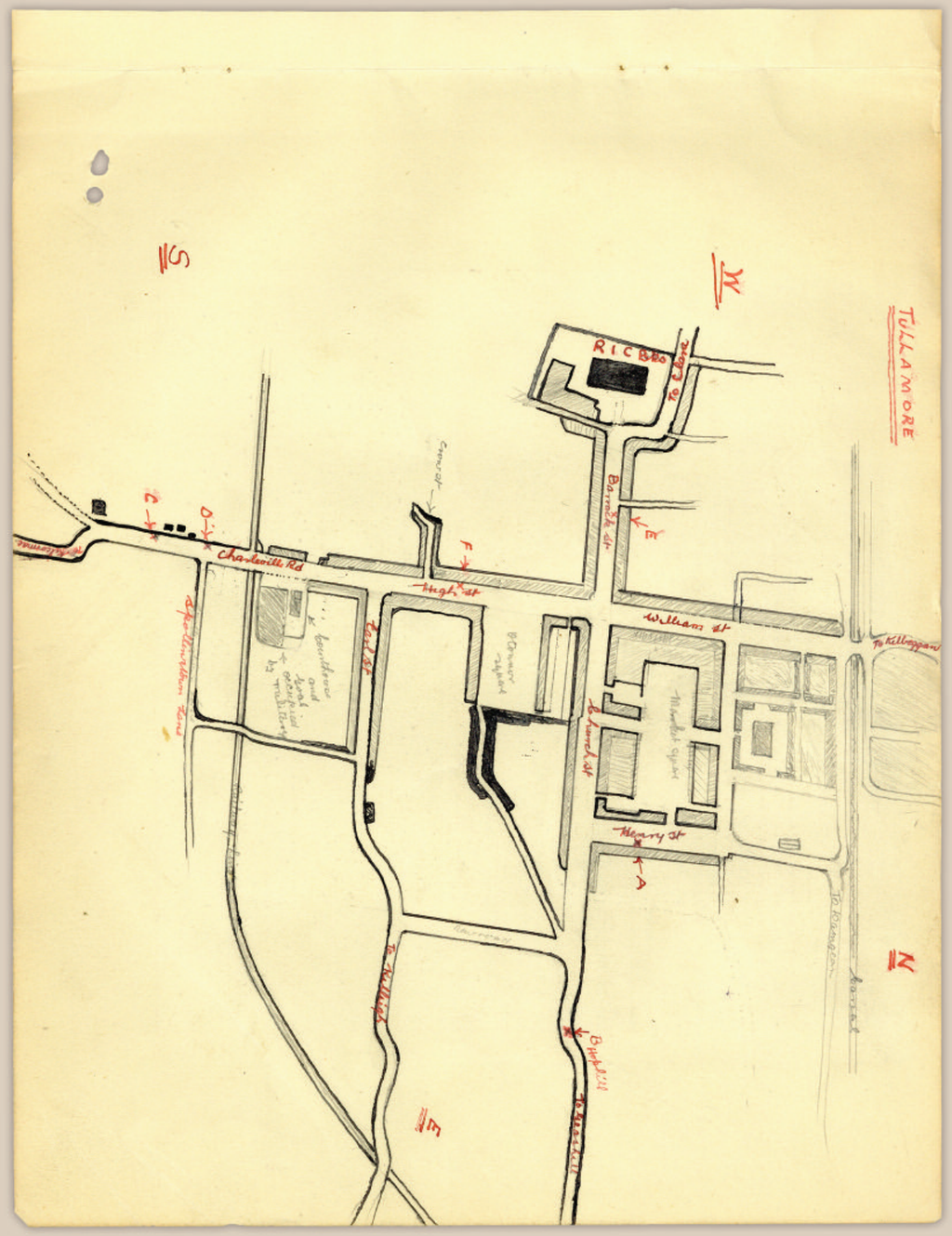
D. Coy. Cloneygowan --John McEvoy, Christ. McEvoy, Daniel Finlay, Lar. Aspell. Joe Guigan, Ml. Feeney, John Dunne, Wm. Dunne, Peter Dunne

E. Coy. Ballycommon -- James Mahon.

The three men who were at position marked (D) on sketch were the nearest to the barrack and were armed with revolvers and carried one bomb each which they threw into building. which although part of barrack building was not directly connected, the petrol was also thrown in but no damage resulted. Men were :-

Chas. Mallon armed revolver and bomb
Charles Kelly " "
Patrick McElduff " petrol

all the rest of the men concerned carried shotguns, some also had revolvers. All roads leading towards Geashill were blocked on the occassion.



A17 – 1 Offaly Brigade

Attack on Tans at Tullamore, 1 April 1921.

Attack on Tans in Tullamore Ist April '21

Attacks were to be made at different points in and about Tullamore town on night of Ist. April. all to take place about 9 o'clock at points indicated on sketch, attacks were carried out as follows;-

B. Place known as Hophill, four men in two parties were to get Tans coming from Hophill who would be returning to barracks after walking both our parties of men would be about 50yds. apart; men named John Conroy and Matthew Keane (dec'd) attacked a Tan who was walking with a girl at point (B), Conroy got wounded in shoulder and on the other two men namely Seamus Kelly and Michael Carry running to the scene they opened fire on the Tan, who had come meeting them and who returned their fire; eventually when the firing was over Conroy was badly woundedand was carried to safety about one mile across fields by Seamus Kelly under great difficulties as he was a very big man and the searchlight was playing on them constantly. Keane was nowhere to be seen but he was found next morning about 200 yds. away riddled with bullet wounds, which had been plugged.

C. Place known as Lavin's Gate, Charleville Rd. one Tan who was in company with a girl was attacked at this point by two men Sean Killeavy and Chas. Bracken (dec'd). Tan was severely wounded in the shoulder but returned the fire and as another Tan was coming on behind, the boys having emptied their revolvers had to retreat through the fields.

D. Place known as Spollinstown Lane. the Tan who was coming on after the one mentioned at C. was badly wounded and it has not been established who attacked him but shooting occurred about this place. Men around this area were:- Ed. Brennan. Patk. Egan, Thos. Mullins, Jas. Whelan.
Thos. McDonald & Sean Talbot were scouts Charleville Rd. area

E. Barrack St. place known as Distillery Gate, shots were fired at Tans returning to barracks with what result not known, men operating around this area were:- Seamus McGuinness (dec'd), John Drum, Sean McGuinness, Wm. Killoram, Patk. Guilfoyle, Patk, Crowley, Jos. Pidgeon.

Results of above attacks--- Believed two Tans died from wounds, three others wounded.
One I.R.A. man killed, one wounded.

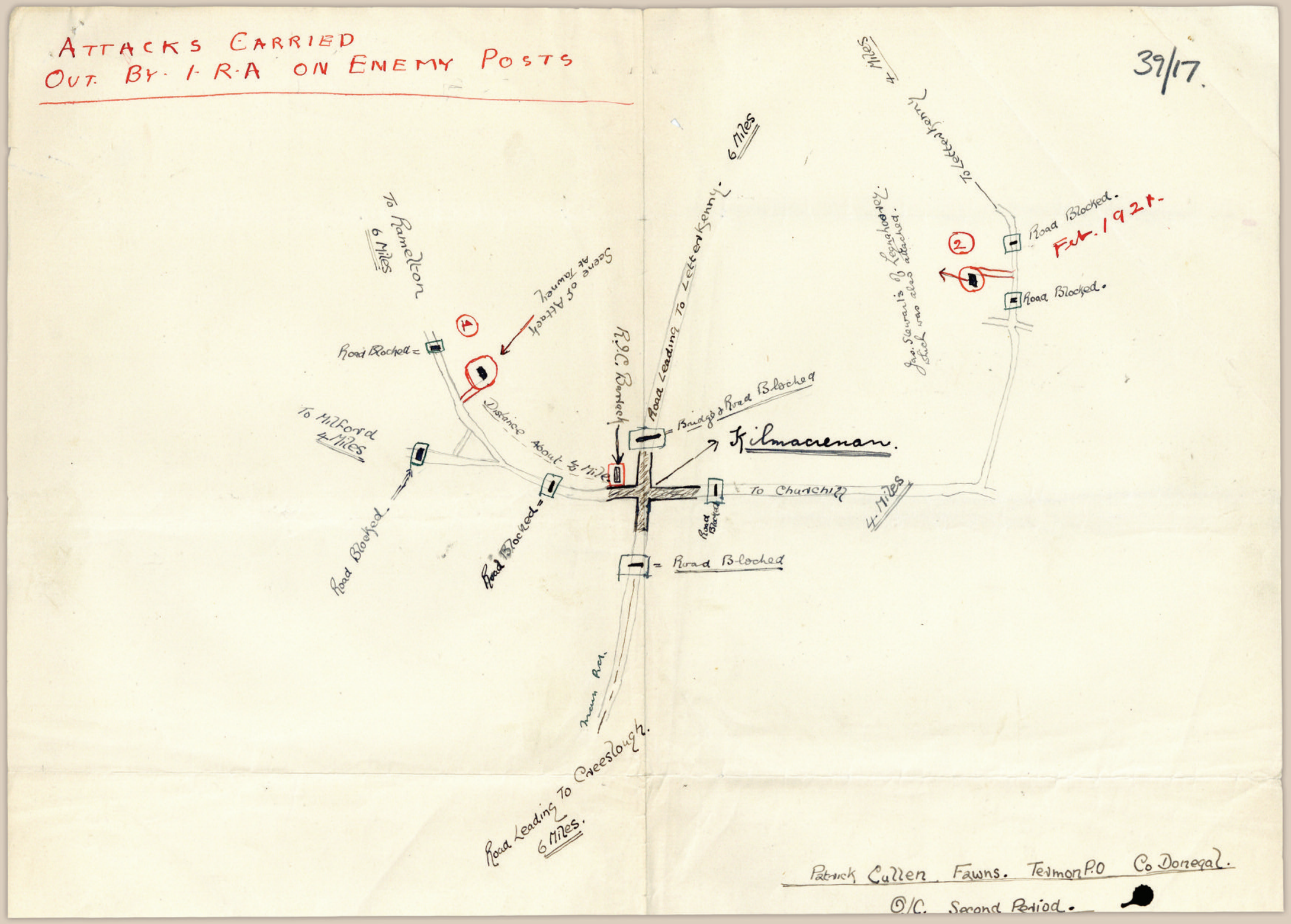
Attack on R.I.C. at Tullamore Ist. Nov. '20

As a reprisal for the death of the Lord Mayor of Cork an attack was planned on the most prominent of the R.I.C. who had to deal with the Criminal and political side of their duties. In Tullamore R.I.C. Bks. two men were picked out and a number of our men detailed off to deal with them. Sergt. Cronin left his house to return to barracks at 7 p.m. and he was dealt with by at point shown in Henry St. by :-
Sean Barry (dec'd) & Sean Killeavy, both of Tullamore.
The other R.I.C. man returned to Barracks about 10 or 15 mins. earlier than usual and so escaped.
Remarks--- A large number of men were mobilised at a place called "Round Lock" about one mile from town to counteract any reprisals by R.I.C. or Tans, but the man who had custody of the guns was held up in Tullamore after the shooting of Sergt Cronin and it was too late to do any good when he got clear.

Result --- one R.I.C. killed.

ATTACKS CARRIED OUT BY I.R.A ON ENEMY POSTS

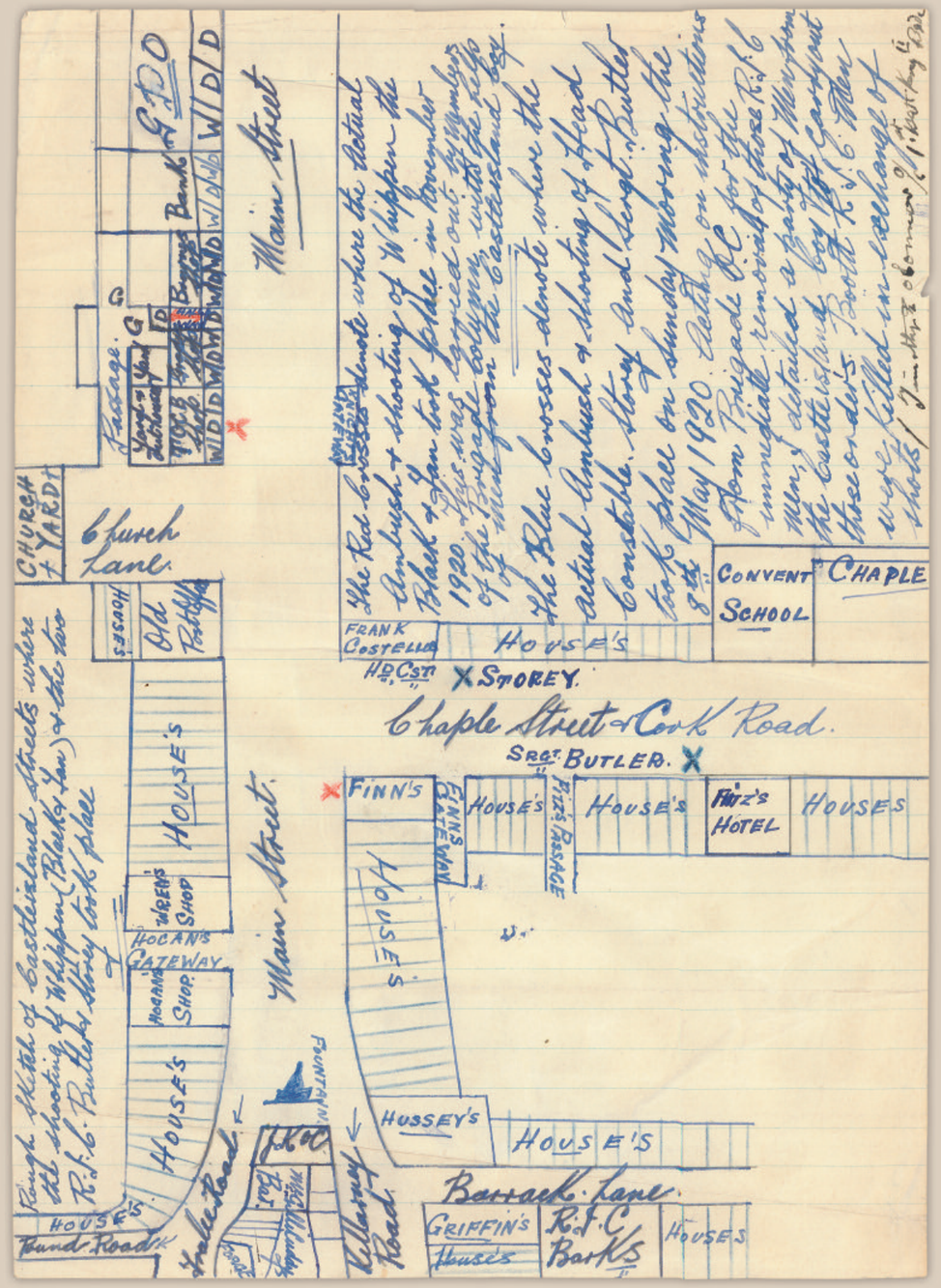
39/17.



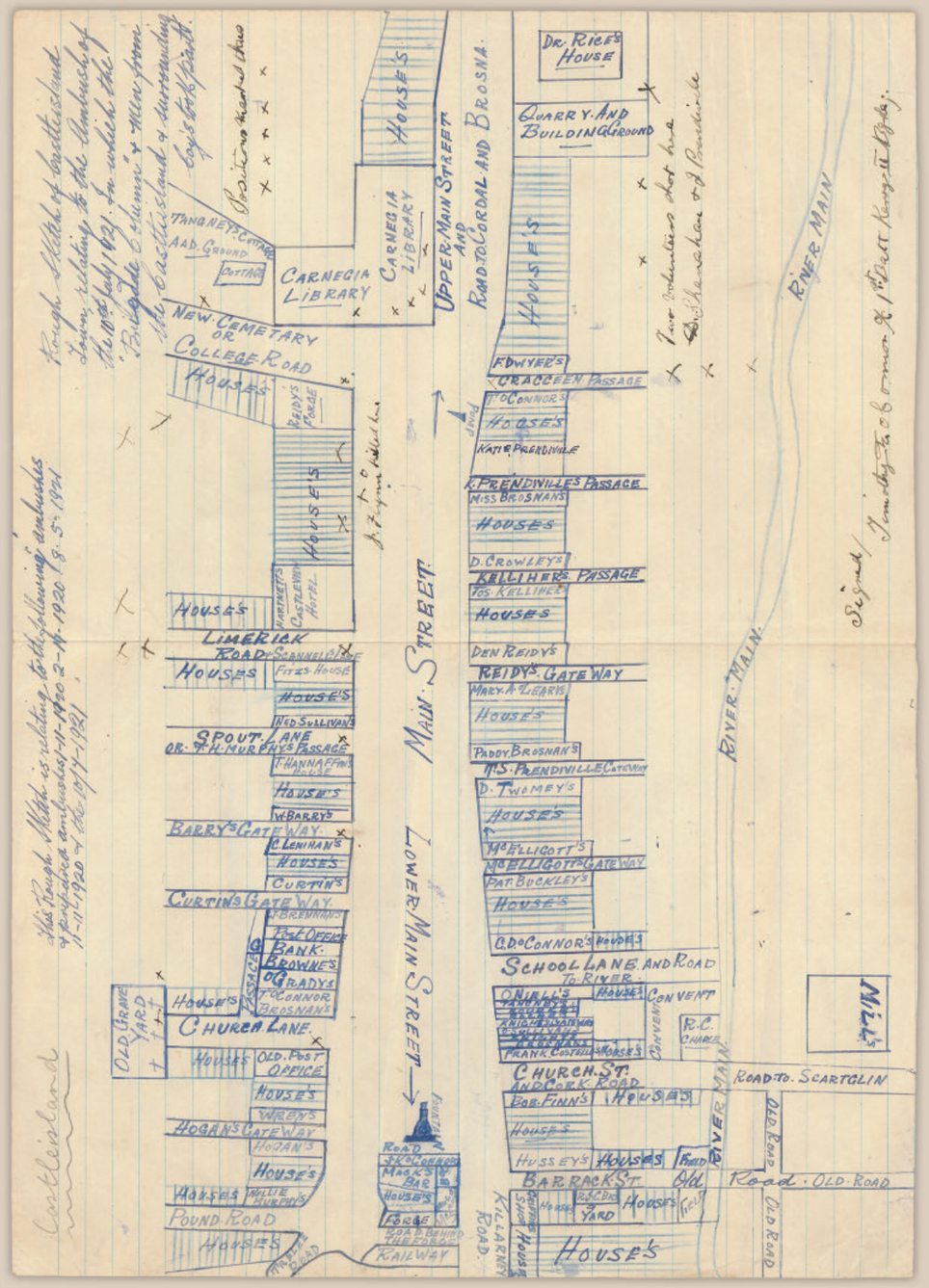
Patrick Cullen. Fawns. Termon P.O Co Donegal.
O/C. Second Period.

A39 – Derry City Battalion

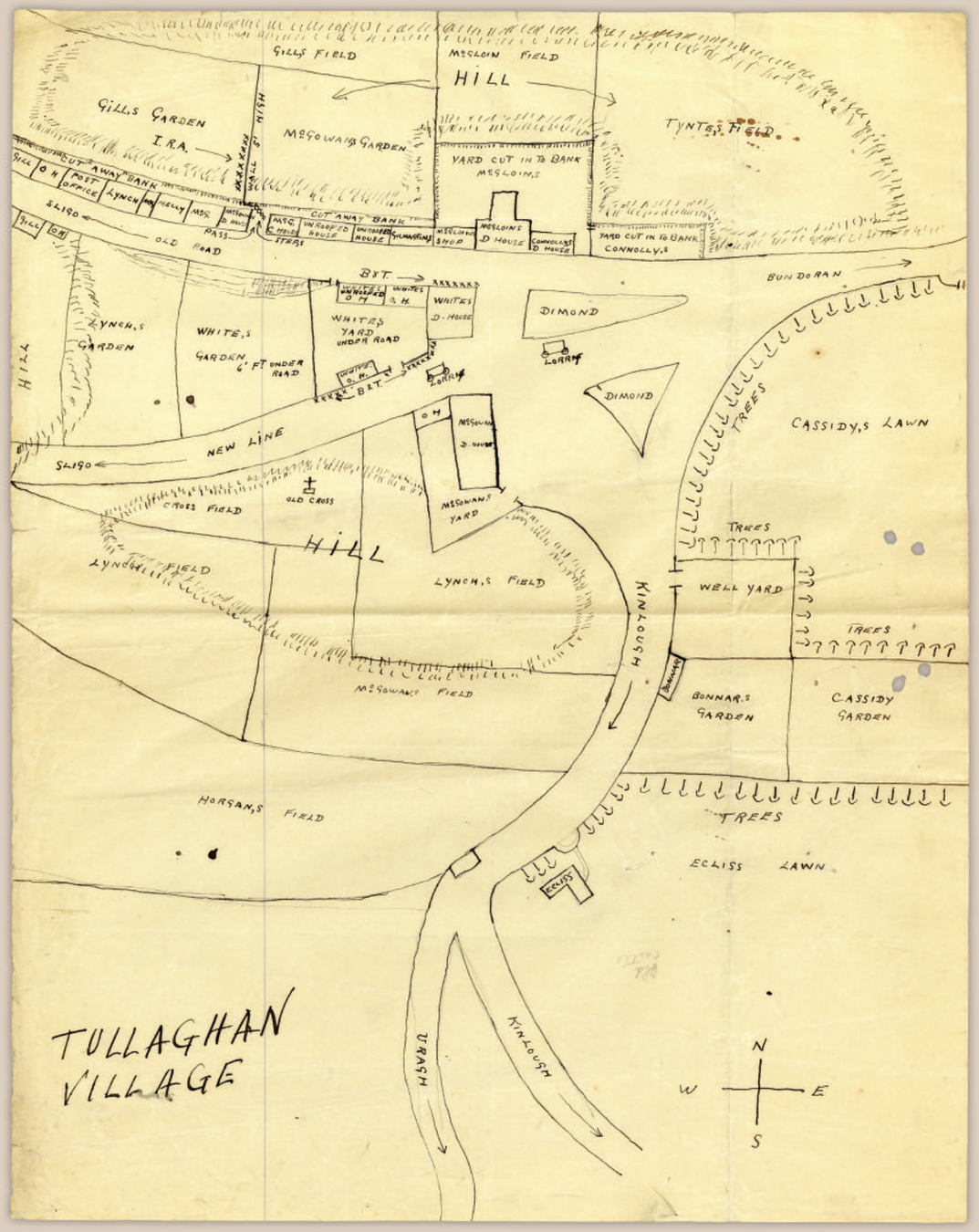
"Attacks carried out by IRA on enemy posts". Sketch signed by Patrick Cullen , Fawns [Termon. PO], Co Donegal; OC Second Period.

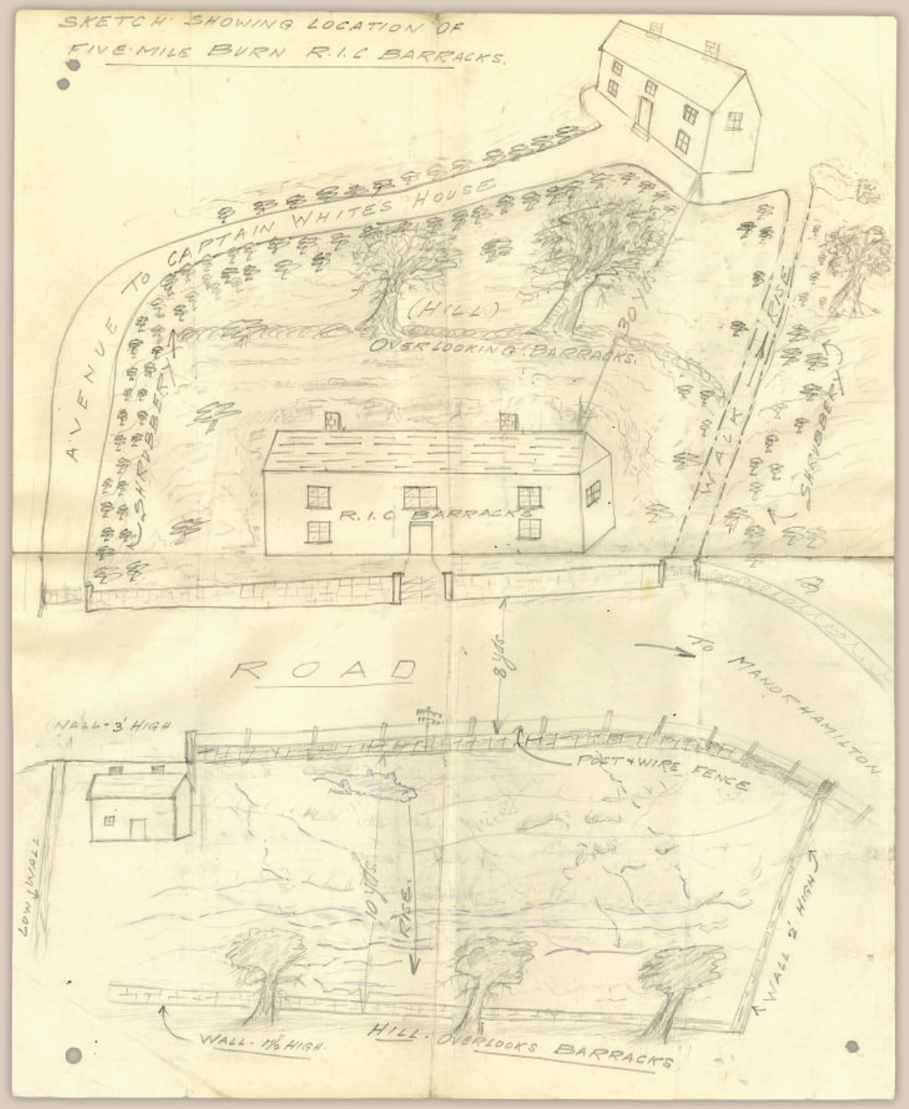


A6 (a)(b) "Sketch map of Castleisland Town, relating to the ambush of the 10 July 1921 in which the 'Brigade Column' and men from the Castleisland and surrounding Coys took part", signed by Timothy O'Connor, OC 1 Battalion, 2 Kerry Brigade. Castleisland Company was part of 1 Battalion, 2 Kerry Brigade. (See RO/103).



A6(a)(b) "Rough sketch of Castleisland streets where the shooting of Whippen (Black & Tan) and the two RIC Butler + Storey took place".

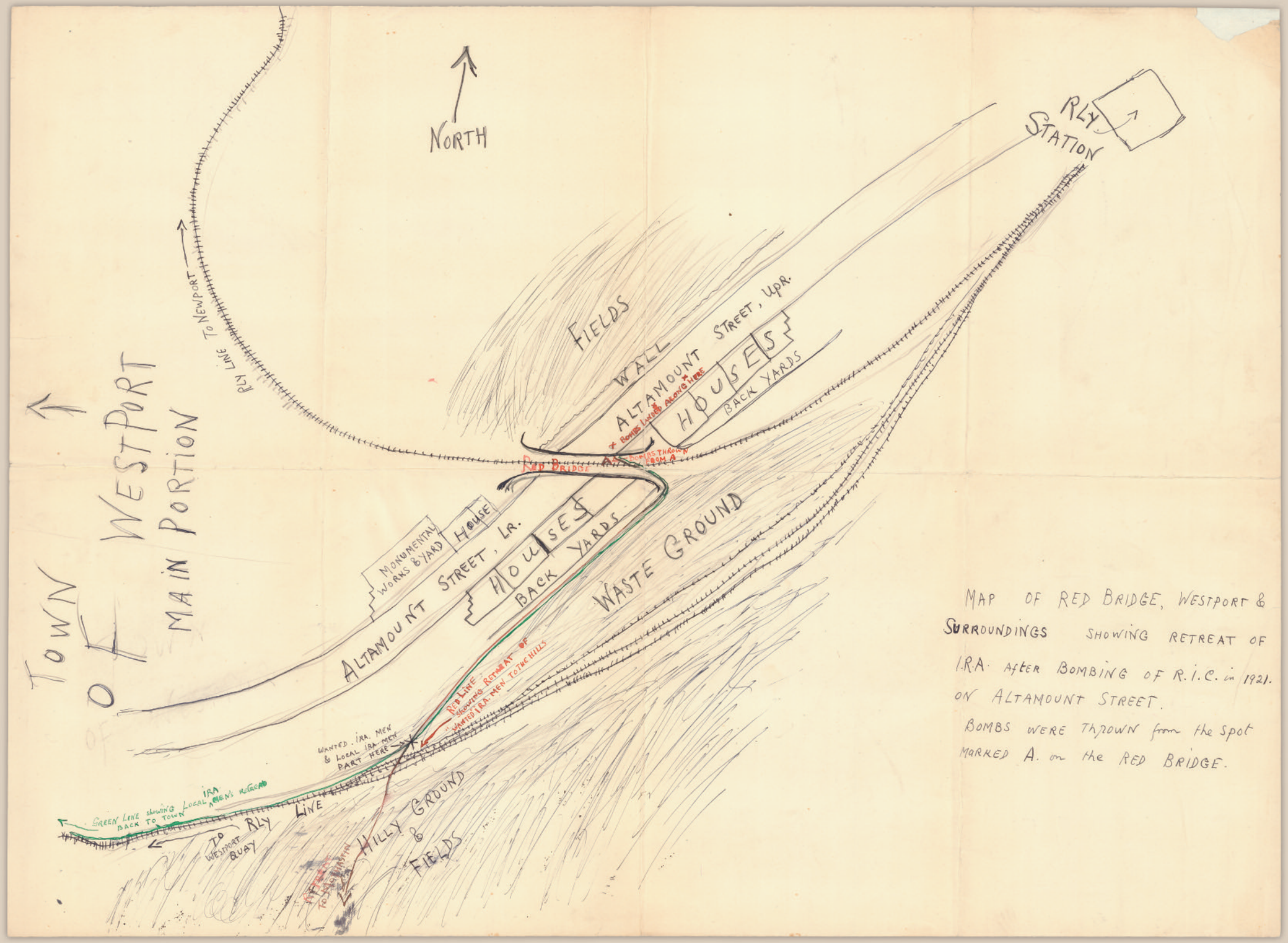




A29-1 Sligo Brigade (North Sligo), 3 Western Division

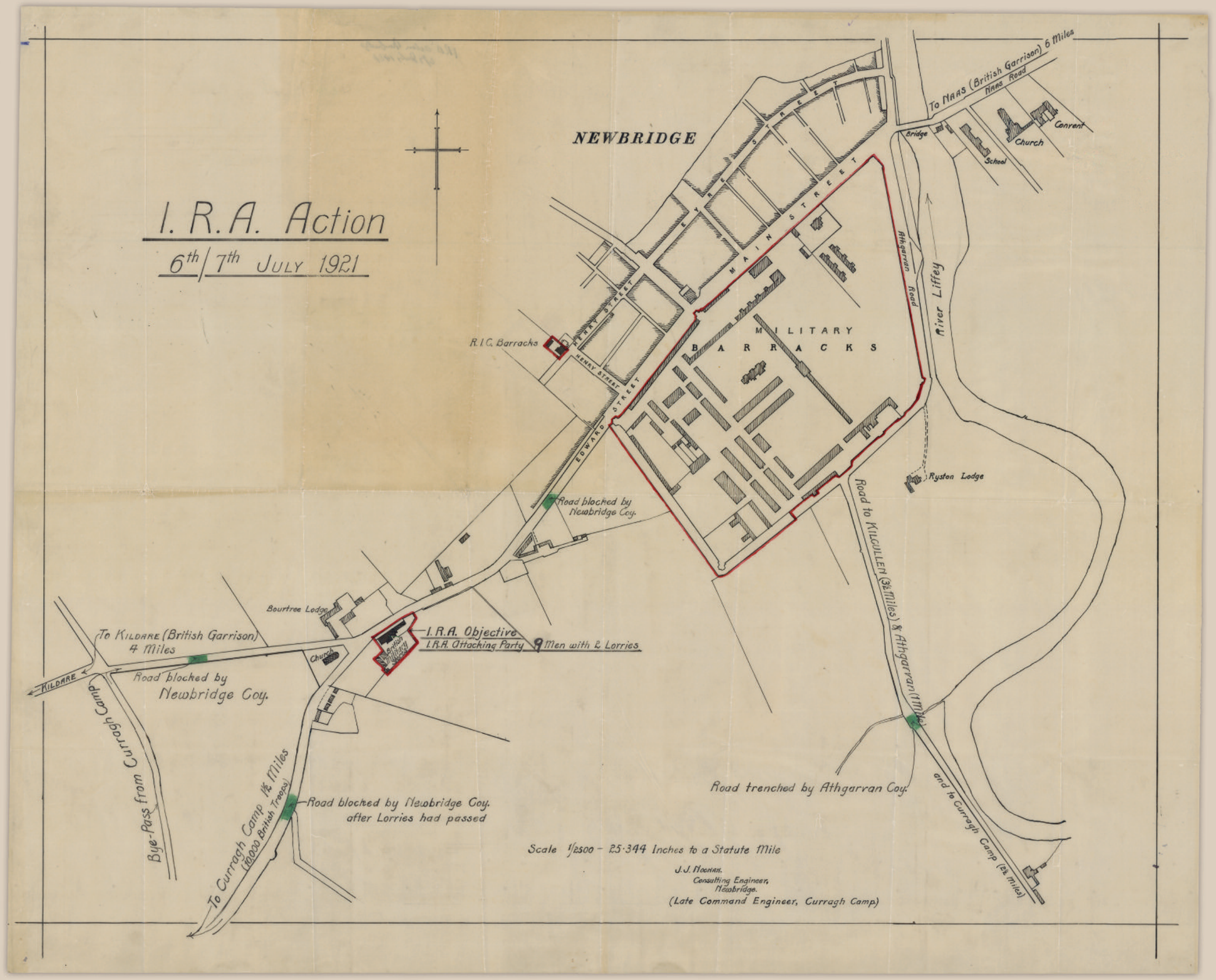
Opposite: Sketch map of Tullaghan Village, Co Leitrim. (Tullaghan Company, 3 Battalion (Bundoran), 1 Sligo Brigade (North Sligo), 3 Western Division).

Above: Sketch showing location of Five Mile B[o]urn RIC Barracks (Co Leitrim).



A34_2-1 West Mayo Brigade, 4 Western Division

Map of Red Bridge, Westport and surroundings showing retreat of IRA after bombing of RIC in 1921 on Altamount Street.



A62 (1)-7 Brigade, 1 Eastern Division

Sketch map of part of Newbridge, Co Kildare, showing Military Barracks and surroundings, in relation to an armed attack on British Military stores – (IRA action 6-7 July 1921). Drawn by JJ Noonan, Consulting Engineer, Newbridge (Late Command Engineer, Curragh Camp).